

12. D&C 9:7–8; italics added.
13. See 1 Nephi 14:28–30; 2 Nephi 32:7; Alma 12:9–11.
14. D&C 85:6.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 151.
16. 1 Nephi 17:45; italics added.
17. D&C 110:1.
18. D&C 8:2.
19. D&C 6:15.
20. D&C 100:5.
21. Enos 1:10.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 124; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, p. 506.
23. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 457.
24. See Alma 32:27–28, 38.
25. D&C 63:23; see also John 4:14; Jeremiah 2:13.
26. See D&C 89.
27. D&C 89:19.
28. D&C 25:12; italics added.
29. Ephesians 5:18–19; italics added.
30. William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, act 2, scene 2, lines 136–37.
31. Psalm 46:10.
32. D&C 50:2; see also v. 3.
33. Moroni 7:17.
34. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 205.
35. See D&C 43:25.
36. D&C 1:38.
37. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 21.
38. 1 Nephi 4:6.
39. John 14:15–18.

The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us. The Tabernacle Choir then sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." We shall then hear from Elder L. Aldin Porter, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder L. Aldin Porter

"I have warned you, and forewarn you"

A few years ago I was in a Salt Lake hospital emergency room with my sons and a neighbor boy—the result of a backyard touch football game.

While we waited in the emergency room for the doctor to put one of the participants back together, we saw a young lady brought into the hospital. She may have been seventeen—tall, willowy, well dressed, and having a wild reaction to an overdose of drugs. As we watched, she collapsed, and I thought, There is no way this child can survive this experience. I wondered how she had come to this sad situation in her life.

Had she not heard the words of the prophets? Had she heard them and laughed as if they were the warnings of men out of touch with the realities of a modern world? Had one of us been negligent in our opportunities to teach her? Had her parents known the truth but not been willing or able to help her understand?

While waiting in that hospital thinking, pondering, and praying for her, I recalled a principle the Lord teaches us in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is found in the fourth verse:

"Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and

designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation."

Consider carefully the principle: "I have warned you, and forewarn you, . . . by revelation."

How do we respond to prophets?

We in this church stand before the world, in all humility and sincerity, and declare that Joseph Smith Jr. was raised up by the Lord Jesus Christ and appointed to be the mortal instrument through which the doctrines, powers, keys, priesthood, and ordinances were restored to the earth. Since that day there has been a continual flow of revelation through those who have followed as the Lord's appointed apostles and prophets.

Yesterday we sustained Howard W. Hunter as the President of the Church and as the prophet, seer, and revelator. I wonder if we have any concept of the importance of that event. It is worth some pondering and some praying. But let me point out that President Hunter has sat as one of those men who hold this sacred revelatory power for thirty-five years. He whom the Lord has called and we have sustained is not a novice in the principles, process, and practice of receiving divine direction.

There is a question that each of us must deal with in a most solemn and serious way if our lives are to be what the Father of us all would have them be: "What is our response when the living prophets declare the mind and the will of the Lord?" This is the test of mankind in every dispensation.

The prophets will not lead us astray

I sat in this tabernacle some years ago as President Joseph Fielding Smith stood at this pulpit. It was the general

priesthood meeting of April 1972, the last general conference before President Smith passed away. He said: "There is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord."¹

There came to me that evening a witness of the Spirit that he spoke the truth. I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and assurance that the Lord loved us and would not leave us without direction.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. drew a very important distinction concerning revelation from the Lord:

"Some of the General Authorities have had assigned to them a special calling; they possess a special gift; they are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of the people. They have the right, the power, and authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the over-all power and authority of the President of the Church."

President Clark continues: "Others of the General Authorities are not given this special spiritual endowment and authority covering their teaching; they have a resulting limitation, and the resulting limitation upon their power and authority in teaching applies to every other officer and member of the Church, for none of them is spiritually endowed as a prophet, seer, and revelator."²

I emphasize that the rest of us do not have that specific power and authority. The Seventy have an endowment that is uniquely theirs; temple presidents and matrons, stake presidents and bishops, as well as fathers and mothers have an endowment that is uniquely theirs; but none of us has the power, authority,

or responsibility that is given to the First Presidency and the Twelve.

Only the prophets declare doctrine

You may wonder why I stress this point so strongly. It is because a misunderstanding here can cause us deep pain and can be the means of misleading many others. Those who claim similar powers often declare that they are doing it with purity of heart and with total sincerity.

One's intentions may be of the purest kind. The sincerity may be total and complete. Nevertheless, pure intentions and heartfelt sincerity do not give members of the Church authority to declare doctrine which is not sustained by the living prophets. While we are members of the Church, we are not authorized to *publicly declare* our speculations as doctrine nor to extend doctrinal positions to other conclusions based upon the reasoning of men and women, even by the brightest and most well-read among us.

The prophets are called not only to receive the doctrine and direct the ordinances through the keys they hold. They are also responsible to keep the saving doctrine pure so that people can hear and feel that doctrine in its sure and certain form.

Criticizing prophets leads to apostasy

Occasionally we have those who become a law unto themselves in these matters. Sadly, their pride leads them down a road which President Spencer W. Kimball warned us about:

"Apostasy usually begins with question and doubt and criticism. . . .

"They who garnish the sepulchres of the dead prophets begin now by stoning the living ones. They return to the pronouncements of the dead leaders and interpret them to be incompatible with present programs. They convince themselves that there are discrepancies between the practices of the deceased

and the leaders of the present. . . . They allege love for the gospel and the Church but charge that leaders are a little 'off the beam'! . . . Next they say that while the gospel and the Church are divine, the leaders are fallen. Up to this time it may be a passive thing, but now it becomes an active resistance, and frequently the blooming apostate begins to air his views and to crusade. . . . He now begins to expect persecution and adopts a martyr complex, and when finally excommunication comes he associates himself with other apostates to develop and strengthen cults. At this stage he is likely to claim revelation for himself, revelations from the Lord directing him in his interpretations and his actions. These manifestations are superior to anything from living leaders, he claims."³

Almost without exception, as one finds himself or herself walking the road President Kimball just outlined, there will be priesthood leaders who will counsel and advise and even admonish the person. Many heed the counsel, but some do not.

Counseling comes not just for our own benefit but for the blessing of those who might be misled by something we might say or do. I have been deeply grateful to my brethren that they have cared enough to speak to me, on occasion, in plain words.

How to become receptive to counsel

Surrounded as we are by worldly influences, how can we maintain a sweetness of spirit and a humility that will make us receptive to such counsel? I fear that we have become so enamored with recreation, with fame and fortune, with videos, with television, and with what money can buy that we have little time for eternal things. We cannot take the time to obtain a knowledge of the doctrines of eternity, for that requires sacrifice, effort, and struggle. Furthermore, we have learned to live in a world

of clamor and noise and haste and hurry to the extent that we have often become immune to the Spirit of the Lord and the "peaceable things of the kingdom."⁴

How do we prepare ourselves to be in harmony with the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve?

On one occasion during the Savior's mortal ministry, he was challenged by those who were opposing him. They wondered how a person could speak with such certainty without the education of the world.

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will *do* his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."⁵

We must learn the will of our Father in Heaven by earnest study. Next, we must act upon it. Study alone is not sufficient; we must act upon the words of revelation before we know of a surety of the truthfulness of the doctrines. On the day the Church was organized in 1830, the Lord gave a wonderful promise to those *who labor in the vineyard*:

"For, behold, I will bless all those *who labor in my vineyard* with a mighty blessing, and *they shall believe on his [Joseph Smith's] words*, which are given him through me by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart."⁶

If we will follow, with diligence, the counsel and instruction that is the united voice of these Brethren, we will know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether they speak of themselves.

We need listening ears, not greater prophets

In all solemnity and soberness—with a clear understanding of the consequences of a testimony borne in this setting—may I state that God has made known to me in an unmistakable way

that he has called and he sustains those who are the living prophets, seers, and revelators. The Lord God of Israel will direct them, and they will not lead us astray. When you see any document, any address, any letter, any instruction that is issued by the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, it should be recognized for what it surely is—the mind and the will of the Lord to his people in this day.

We do not need greater prophets. We need listening ears. We need hearts that we are sufficiently pure that we can *feel* their words. We need souls that will commit to the keeping of our covenants.

My prayer is that each of us may have that watershed experience of life of having the Spirit carry with power—even fire—to our souls the assurance that we are being directed by His appointed servants. I pray that there will enter our hearts the peace that comes from knowing by a power beyond all human ability to transmit that God is aware of us and has raised up servants in our day to lead us under the power and inspiration of his close attention.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, p. 99; or *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 88.
2. "When Are Church Leaders' Words Entitled to Claim of Scripture?" *Church News*, 31 July 1954, pp. 9-10
3. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 462.
4. D&C 36:2.
5. John 7:16-17; italics added.
6. D&C 21:9; italics added.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.