

President James E. Faust

“The rising up of my church”

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, as we begin this historic conference I am confident that we will hear the word of the Lord during all of the proceedings. That divine guidance has directed the affairs of this Church for over 166 years today, since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was legally organized on April 6, 1830. What has happened in this work in this relatively short time is a miracle. As a small boy I remember hearing my great-uncle William Wetzel tell about walking with his family across the American plains to the Salt Lake Valley. His stories of struggle, sacrifice, and faith made an indelible impression on my young heart.

When Great-grandfather's family arrived in this valley, most of the members of the Church lived in a group of small, dusty settlements in the territory of Deseret. Many had braved the ocean to come to the United States. Then they traveled by wagon and handcart through the searing heat and the intense cold of the American plains and the high mountain peaks to find peace and worship God.

In large measure, members of our faith were at that time a despised, persecuted, and driven people. But since then has come the fulfillment of the Lord's statement, “In this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun.”¹ No one can fully understand how and why the Church has come “out of obscurity”² and blossomed without knowing some of the fundamental prophetic truths on which the Church rests.

Follow the Brethren

When I was first named as a General Authority many years ago, I went to see

President Hugh B. Brown, then in the First Presidency, and asked him, “President Brown, what advice have you got for a new, young, inexperienced General Authority?” This wise and venerable man responded simply and directly, “Stick with the Brethren.” Who are the Brethren? The Brethren are those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. They are the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, each of whom is an apostle and prophet; the Seventy; and, in temporal matters, the Presiding Bishopric.

The rise of the Church from Palmyra to Kirtland, from Kirtland to Nauvoo, from Nauvoo to the West, and in over 150 countries all over the world has come about because the body of the Church, wherever it was, has been loyal to the Brethren. Millions of men and women have followed the prophets of God. I wish to pay special tribute to all of the faithful women since the time of the Restoration who have listened to the prophetic voice of the Church. Their supernal womanly gifts and talents have blessed the work of God in a most important and indispensable way.

Those who have stayed with the Brethren have a firm testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God who, under divine authority, reestablished the Church of Jesus Christ in our time. Such solid faith is the foundation of the loyalty manifested by the great majority of faithful members who, throughout the history of the Church, have received the confirming witness concerning the reality of continuing revelation. This revelation has come in its time from each of the Presidents of the Church, their counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who serve under the direction of the President.

Only those with authority may lead

The dispensation of divine truth in which we now live, in distinction from previous dispensations, will not be destroyed by apostasy. This is in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy that "the God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" nor "left to other people."³ President John Taylor affirmed this also when he said: "There is one thing very certain, . . . and that is, whatever men may think, and however they may plot and contrive, that this Kingdom will never be given into the hands of another people. It will grow and spread and increase, and no man living can stop its progress."⁴

From the beginning some from both inside and outside of the Church have sought to persuade members of the Church against following the inspired declarations of those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. Some of those seeking to mislead have done so claiming special endowments of intelligence or inspiration beyond the established order of the Church. As a warning against those so claiming special authority, the Lord made it clear "that it shall not be given to any one . . . to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church."⁵

Apostasy and return of Oliver Cowdery

In the early days of the Restoration, Oliver Cowdery became the second elder of the Church and participated with Joseph in the marvelous Restoration experiences. He was ordained with the Prophet Joseph in 1829 under the hands of a heavenly messenger when the priesthood was restored to the earth. Oliver served as a scribe, writing down the translation of the Book of Mormon as it poured forth from the mouth of the

Prophet Joseph. He shared with the Prophet Joseph the great visions manifested in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 and witnessed the bestowal of the keys by Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

In an early revelation the Lord warned Oliver: "Behold, thou art blessed, and art under no condemnation. But beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation."⁶ Oliver had great intellect and enjoyed marvelous spiritual blessings. However, over time he forgot the Lord's warning, and pride entered into his heart. Brigham Young later said of this pride:

"I have seen men who belonged to this kingdom, and who really thought that if they were not associated with it, it could not progress. One man especially, whom I now think of, . . . was peculiarly gifted in self-reliance and general ability. He said as much to the Prophet Joseph a number of times as to say that if he left this kingdom, it could not progress any further. I speak of Oliver Cowdery. He forsook it, and it still rolled on, and still triumphed over every opposing foe, and bore off safely all those who clung to it."⁷

In October 1848, 10 years after leaving the Church, Oliver Cowdery visited the Church headquarters in Iowa and humbly petitioned to be received again into the Church through baptism. Describing this memorable event, George A. Smith wrote of Oliver: "He bore testimony in the most positive terms . . . and told the people if they wanted to follow the right path, to keep [in] the main channel of the stream—where the body of the Church goes, there is the authority."⁸

In his final testimony he affirmed the coming of John the Baptist, holding the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood; and the coming of Peter, James, and John, holding the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. He further stated: "These Priesthoods, with their authority, are now, and must continue to be, in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints. Blessed is the Elder who has received the same, and thrice blessed and holy is he who shall [continue] to the end."⁹

"By their fruits ye shall know them"

Over the years many offshoots and splinter groups have not stayed with the Brethren. This is not a new phenomenon. After the Crucifixion of the Savior, Peter and the Apostles were preaching to a hostile audience. Gamaliel, a man learned in the law, defended their right to preach. After recalling the ill fate of two different groups that had risen up and drawn people away, he presented this sure test of truth. Said he, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."¹⁰

In the great Sermon on the Mount, the Savior posed a poignant question: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" He went on to say: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."¹¹ The sweet fruits of this work are now known over much of the earth.

Respect domains of authority

To validate those who have authority, the Lord also said, "All things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith."¹² Yet He also said that "every man might speak in the name of God."¹³ How can this be? Every man and young man in the Church who lives in accordance with the Savior's teachings is ordained to the priesthood. The use of this power, however, is limited. Every father is to his family a patriarch and every mother a matriarch as coequals in their distinctive parental roles. Members, men and women, may receive inspiration by the gift of the Holy

Ghost for their personal lives and for their areas of responsibility.

Only the prophet and President, and no one else, can use *all* of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. In our time that man is President Gordon B. Hinckley. He and his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have delegated specific authority and responsibility to other General Authorities and to local authorities and auxiliary leaders to direct the work in their own areas of responsibility.

Early in the Church the Lord warned members, "Thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church."¹⁴

Some have said, "My integrity will not permit me to yield my conscience to anyone." A clear conscience is a very precious spiritual endowment when it is guided by the Holy Ghost. Ultimately everyone has the responsibility of making his or her own moral decisions. However, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated that "it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church . . . to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves."¹⁵

In addition, some have claimed higher spiritual gifts or authority outside the established priesthood authority of the Church. They say that they believe in the principles and ordinances of the gospel and accept the President of the Church as the legal administrator thereof, but claim they have a higher order which the President does not have. This is often done to justify an activity which is not in accordance with the doctrines of the Church. There can be no higher order, however, because the President of the Church both holds and exercises all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. The Lord has said of the President of the Church that "none else shall be appointed [to receive commandments and revelations] except it be through him."¹⁶

Apostasy and return of Thomas B. Marsh

Thomas B. Marsh was another favored associate of the Prophet Joseph. Over this pulpit in the April 1984 general conference, President Hinckley reminded us that Brother Marsh was serving as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve when he chose to disregard the decisions of the First Presidency and other Church leaders in a dispute between his wife and another woman over some milk strippings.¹⁷

When, as did the prodigal son, he finally "came to himself,"¹⁸ he wrote to Heber C. Kimball, who had been his associate in the Quorum of the Twelve, stating:

"Having lost my wife three years since, I began to awake to a sense of my situation; . . . I know that I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight and have rendered myself unworthy of your confidence; or of a place in the family of Heaven. . . . I deserve no place among you in the church even as the lowest member; but I cannot live long so without a reconciliation with the 12 and the Church whom I have injured." He then recited the typical lesson his years of rebellion had taught him: "The Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches, greater riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford." He pleaded with his brethren for comfort and peace and their smiles upon him.¹⁹

After being rebaptized, Thomas came to Salt Lake City, where he asked Brigham Young, the President of the Church, for forgiveness. He was invited by President Young to speak at a Sunday service where Thomas offered this advice to his listeners: "If there are any among this people who should ever apostatize and do as I have done, prepare your backs for a good whipping, if you are such as

the Lord loves. But if you will take my advice, you will stand by the authorities."²⁰

Five fundamental truths of authority

The Prophet Joseph explained in the winter of 1832–33 that "no true angel from God will ever come to ordain any man, because they have once been sent to establish the priesthood by ordaining me thereunto; and the priesthood being once established on earth, with [the] power to ordain others, no heavenly messenger will ever come to interfere with that power by ordaining any more. . . . You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar or has been imposed upon in consequence of transgression by an angel of the devil, for this priesthood shall never be taken away from this church."²¹

May I now review five of the fundamental prophetic truths of the Church:

First, the keys and the authority of God have been given by Him to Joseph Smith and each of his successors who have been called as Presidents of the Church.

Second, those keys and authority are never to be given to another people, and those who have such authority are "known to the Church."²²

Third, continuing revelation and leadership for the Church come through the President of the Church, and he will never mislead the Saints.

Fourth, individual members of the Church may receive revelation for their own callings and areas of responsibility and for their own families. They may not receive spiritual instruction for those higher in authority.

Fifth, those who claim direct revelation from God for the Church outside the established order and channel of the priesthood are misguided. This also applies to any who follow them.

If any find themselves in this position, please know that there is always an open door in the Church for those who wish to return to full fellowship with the sisters and with the brethren of the priesthood. The welcome will be with open arms.

My testimony of the divinity of the callings of the presiding Brethren as the representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ flows from the deepest wellspring of my soul. For many years I have watched the process of continuous revelation which emanates from God through the keys, authority, and direction of the President of the Church. I testify that this revelatory power has directed this work since April 6, 1830. That confirmation is the source of the greatest knowledge I have. I counsel and pray that all will heed the ongoing prophetic voice of this Church, which reveals the word of God in our day. Of this I witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 5:14.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
3. Daniel 2:44; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:44.
4. In *Journal of Discourses*, 25:348; see also 14:367.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 23:1.
7. In *Journal of Discourses*, 11:252.
8. George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, 20 Oct. 1848, in *Millennial Star*, 1 Jan. 1849, 14.
9. Oliver Cowdery to Samuel W. Richards, 13 Jan. 1849, in *Deseret News*, 26 Mar. 1884, 153.
10. Acts 5:38–39.
11. Matthew 7:16–20.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 26:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:20.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 28:6.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 28:12.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 43:4.
17. See Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 110–11; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 83.
18. Luke 15:17.
19. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, 5 May 1857, Brigham Young Collection, Church Historical Department; spelling and punctuation modernized.
20. In *Journal of Discourses*, 5:206.
21. Reported in “Although Dead, Yet He Speaketh,” *Millennial Star*, 20 Nov. 1846, 139.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

The law of witnesses

Humbly, gratefully I stand before you to testify of God's words and works. I come in the spirit of one going before to prepare the way. The commission to do so comes from the Lord. My desire is to help us prepare for His Second Coming and to dwell in His presence, to en-

joy the gifts and graces He alone can bestow.

During the course of this general conference, much will be said concerning the Lord's work and what Heavenly Father desires of His children. These are sacred things. May it be known that the speakers do not stand alone in their declarations. Accompanying their testimonies, I