TRUE DOCTRINE

THE IMPORTANCE OF CORRECT TERMINOLOGY

Ezra Taft Benson, General Conference address, Ensign, May 1987, 83-85.

(p. 84) It is important that in our teaching we make use of the language of holy writ. Alma said, “I ... do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me” (Alma 5:61).

The words and the way they are used in the Book of Mormon by the Lord should become our source of understanding and should be used by us in teaching gospel principles.

God uses the power of the word of the Book of Mormon as an instrument to change people's lives.... [See Alma 31:5.]

I am deeply concerned about what we are doing to teach the Saints at all levels the gospel of Jesus Christ as completely and authoritatively as do the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. By this I mean teaching the “great plan of the Eternal God,” to use the words of Amulek (Alma 34:9).

Are we using the messages and the method of teaching found in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures of the Restoration to teach this great plan of the Eternal God?

(p. 85) Are we accepting and teaching what the revelations tell us about the Creation, Adam and the fall of man, and redemption from that fall through the atonement of Christ?...

Now, what should be the source for teaching the great plan of the Eternal God? The scriptures, of course — particularly the Book of Mormon. This should also include the other modern-day revelations. These should be coupled with the words of the Apostles and prophets and the promptings of the Spirit.


Always remember, there is no satisfactory substitute for the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. These should be your original sources. Read and ponder more what the Lord has said, and less about what others have written concerning what the Lord has said....

In 1938 President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., speaking for the First Presidency, pronounced a charge to you in an address entitled “The Charted Course of the Church in Education” All of you should have a copy of this address and read it at least at the beginning of each teaching year. I quote this statement from his address:

“... You are to teach this Gospel using as your sources and authorities the Standard Works of the Church, and the words of those whom God has called to lead His people in these last days. You are not ... to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing and rational it seems to you ...

“You are not ... to change the doctrines of the Church or to modify them, as they are declared by and in the Standard Works of the Church and by those whose authority it is to declare the mind and will of the Lord to the Church....

“You are not to teach the philosophies of the world.... Your sole field is the Gospel....” (Clark, “Charted Course,” 9, italics added by Elder Benson.)...

A problem occurs on occasion when, in the pursuit of higher degrees, one becomes so imbued with the terminology and methodology of a secular discipline that, almost without realizing it, he compromises the gospel message. The simple principles of the gospel, not the disciplines of men, should always be our basis for truth.

When a teacher feels he must blend worldly sophistication and erudition to the simple principles of the gospel or to our Church history so that his message will have more appeal and respectability to the academically learned, he has compromised his message.... let us not forget that disaffection from the gospel and the Lord’s church was brought about in the past by the attempts to reconcile the pure gospel with the secular philosophies of men....

Sometimes gospel principles are written with such erudition that the gospel is hardly recognizable in them. Worldly phraseology and authorities replace the scriptures and the prophets.... Be careful of blending your worldly training with the gospel courses you teach lest you be guilty of diluting the pure gospel of Jesus Christ and end up teaching the philosophy of men mingled with a few scriptures.

President Clark’s counsel to you on this matter is plain, “You do not need to disguise religious truths with a cloak of worldly things....” (“The Charted Course,” 9.) We ought to adopt the attitude of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “It mattereth not whether the principle [of the gospel] is popular or unpopular, I will always maintain a true principle, even if I stand alone in it.” (History of the Church 6:223.) On another occasion he said, “It is our duty to concentrate all our influence to make popular that which is sound and good, and unpopular that which is unsound.” (HC 5:286.) ...

May I further restate something I said earlier this year at the Brigham Young University devotional assembly as it pertains to teaching Church history. I said then, “There have been and continue to be attempts to bring [a humanistic] philosophy into our own Church history.... the emphasis is to underplay revelation and God's intervention in significant events, and to inordinately humanize the prophets of God so that their human frailties become more evident than their spiritual qualities.” (Twelve-Stake Fireside, BYU, 28 March 1976.)

We would warn you teachers of this trend, which seems to be an effort to reinterpret the history of the Church so that it is more rationally appealing to the world....
I would again remind you that your sole duty is to teach the gospel. You are not “to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you....” (Clark, “Charted Course,” 9.) Your teaching should not be the “enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith [and the faith of your students] should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5. Italics added by Elder Benson.)

Earnest L. Wilkinson, editor, BYU: First 100 Years 2:380-383, Including a letter to Franklin L. West, 17 Feb 1940, First Presidency Papers, Church Historical Department.

As in 1937 and 1938, the First Presidency was concerned about the religious doctrines being taught in the Church schools, institutes, and seminaries in 1940. They also showed continuous concern that employees of the Church, including Brigham Young University faculty members, should be living examples of the principles they were expected to teach, including the payment of tithing.

In February 1940, writing for the First Presidency, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., sent Commissioner West “another letter of the kind we have sent to you heretofore,” reporting on the problem of the teaching of false doctrines in the Church Educational System. President Clark commented:

Quite obviously one affirmative statement that false doctrine has been taught is worth a ream of statements that they never have heard false doctrine false doctrines taught. It is like the story that they tell about the Dutch judge who acquitted a man because, while six men saw the accused commit murder, he produced ten who did not see him do it.

The First Presidency was deeply concerned about the orthodoxy of doctrine being taught in Church schools. President Clark accordingly prepared a memorandum to Commissioner West establishing guidelines for religious instruction in Church schools, seminaries, and institutes. Speaking for the First Presidency, the memorandum said,

As forecast by President Clark, speaking for the First Presidency at Aspen Grove on August 8, 1938 [“The Charted Course”], the First Presidency has, after careful and mature deliberations, reached the following conclusion:

Institutes and Seminaries will hereafter confine themselves exclusively to the follow work:

a. Fostering and promoting the work of the auxiliary organizations of the Church ...

b. Teaching the principles of the Gospel, as set out in the doctrines of the Church. In this work the teachers will use —

The Old and New Testaments
The Book of Mormon
The Doctrine and Covenants
The Pearl of Great Price

These four constitute the “Standard Works of the Church,” and are the ultimate authority on all matters of doctrine, save where the Lord shall have given or shall give further revelation through the prescribed source for such — the President of the Church ...

Teachers will do well to give up indoctrinating themselves in the sectarianism of the modern “Divinity School Theology.” If they do not, they will probably bring themselves to a frame of mind where they will be no longer useful in our system. The most brilliant of them will find enough in the Gospels to tax all their brilliancy, even genius. The heights and depths of the Gospel have yet to be sounded.

The teachers will not teach ethics or philosophy, ancient or modern, pagan or so-called Christian; they will as already stated teach the Gospel and that only, and the Gospel as revealed in these last days.

In their teaching, the teachers will use the verbiage and terminology which have become classic in the Church. They will not use terms and concepts which, though in one sense, are susceptible of being applied to the Church and Church doctrines, yet which, in another sense, are completely misleading. For example, no teacher should speak of either the Church ideology or Christian ideology, which if the teacher intends to say what he is in fact saying and if the student understands what the teachers is saying and intends to say, places the Gospel in the same category with any and every pagan religion or theology, and characterizes them all as “a science that treats of the history and evolution of human ideas.” This concept, reduced to its lowest terms, may be expressed as conceiving that religion is man-made, that man makes his God, not God his man — a concept which is coming to be basic to the whole “Divinity School Theology,” but which is contrary to all the teachings of the Church and to God's revealed word.

The Gospel should be spoken of as the Gospel, God's revealed truth; it is not and must never be spoken of or treated as a “history and evolution of human ideas.” No student must ever be permitted to get this point of view from the teachers’ work; and if the student does get it, it is the teachers’ place to bring the student to a proper view....

PROTECTION BY THE STANDARD WORKS

D&C 18:2-4.

2 Behold, I have manifested unto you, by my Spirit in many instances, that the things which you have written are true; wherefore you know that they are true.

3 And if you know that they are true, behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon the things which are written;

4 For in them are all things written concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my rock.

D&C 52:9.

9 And let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith.

Only by searching the scriptures, not using them occasionally as quote books, can we begin to understand the implications as well as the declarations of the gospel... do not be surprised when non-doers scoff. Do not be surprised, either, if these doctrines unsettle some... The only cure for doctrinal illiteracy of those who murmur will be to learn doctrine.

THE STANDARD WORKS VIS A VIS THE GENERAL AUTHORITIES

J Reuben Clark, Jr., “When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?”

[Quoting Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses* 9:150.]

“I am more afraid that his people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by Him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not.”

There have been rare occasions when even the President of the Church in his teaching and preaching has not been “moved upon by the Holy Ghost.” You will recall the Prophet Joseph declared that a prophet is not always a prophet. [Teachings, 278.]

To this point runs a simple story my father told me as a boy, I do know on what authority, but it illustrates the point. His story was that during the excitement incident to the coming of Johnston's Army, Brother Brigham preached to the people in a morning meeting a sermon vibrant with defiance to the approaching army, and declaring an intention to oppose and drive them back. In the afternoon meeting he arose and said the Brigham Young had been talking in the morning, but the Lord was going to talk now. He then delivered an address, the tempo of which was the opposite from the morning talk.

I do not know if this ever happened, but I say it illustrates a principle — that even the President of the Church, himself, may not always be “moved upon by the Holy Ghost,” when he addresses the people. This has happened about matters of doctrine (usually of highly speculative character) where subsequent Presidents of the Church and the people themselves have felt that in declaring the doctrine, the announcer was not “moved upon by the Holy Ghost.”

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:203-204. (Italics in original.)

It makes no difference what is written or what anyone has said, if what has been said is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside. My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them. Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man's doctrine.

*You cannot accept the books written by the authorities of the Church as standards in doctrine, only in so far as they accord with the revealed word in the standard works.*

Every man who writes is responsible, not the Church, for what he writes. If Joseph Fielding Smith writes something which is out of harmony with the revelations, then every member of the Church is duty bound to reject it. If he writes that which is in perfect harmony with the revealed word of the Lord, then it should be accepted.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 765. (Quoted in the *Teachings of the Living Prophets* manual, 18.)

The books, writings, explanations, expositions, views, and theories of even the wisest and greatest men, either in or out of the Church, do not rank with the standard works. Even the writings, teachings, and opinions of the prophets of God are acceptable only to the extent they are in harmony with what God has revealed and what is recorded in the standard works. When the living oracles speak in the name of the Lord or as moved upon by the Holy Ghost, however, their utterances are then binding upon all who hear, and whatever is said will without any exception be found to be in harmony with the standard works. The Lord’s house is a house of order, and one truth never contradicts another.


All that we teach in this Church ought to be couched in the scriptures. It ought to be found in the scriptures. We ought to choose our texts from the scriptures. If we want to measure truth, we should measure it by the four standard works, regardless of who writes it. If it is not in the standard works, we may well assume that it is speculative, man's own personal opinion; and if it contradicts what is in the scriptures, it is not true. This is the standard by which we measure all truth.


How do we measure whether or not one’s teachings are true or false? If anyone teaches beyond what the scriptures teach, we may put it down as speculation except one man who has the right to bring forth any new doctrine — that is the one man who holds the keys — the prophet, seer, and revelator who presides in that high place. And no one else. If anyone presumes to bring forth what he claims to be new doctrine you may know that it is purely his own opinion and you label it as such regardless of his position in the Church. If it contradicts something that is in the scriptures, you may label it immediately that it is false. That is why we call the scriptures, our four Standard Church Works. They are the standards by which we measure all doctrine and if anything is
taught which is contrary to that which is in the scriptures, it is false. It is just that simple.


It is not to be thought that every word spoken by the General Authorities is inspired, or that they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost in everything they speak and write. Now you keep that in mind. I don’t care what his position is, if he writes something or speaks something that goes beyond anything that you can find in the standard church works, unless that one be the prophet, seer and revelator — please note that one exception [when he is speaking as the prophet, from earlier in the paragraph] — you may immediately say, “Well, that is his own idea.” And if he says something that contradicts what is found in the standard works (I think that is why we call them “standard” — it is the standard measure of all that men teach), you may know by that same token that it is false, regardless of the position of the man who says it.


... Some time ago the secretary of a well-known philosophical society, deploiring the lack of inspiration in our day, described the present age as “an age of the government of the uninspired.” There is on all sides much evidence to support his contention. In the realm of art, generally speaking, as he explained, the bizarre tendencies in modern painting, the grotesque figures of modern sculpture, the cacophonies of modern music, and the eccentricities of modern poetry witness the fact that this is an age lacking inspiration. One might add that modern religion, with its readiness either “to be carried about with every wind of doctrine” or to content itself with ritualism in place of spirituality, is another symptom of the same fact.

The man, as nearly as I recall, went on to explain that the trouble undoubtedly lies in the fact that today the source of the needed inspiration, the Bible, is no longer considered by much of the world as reliable, with the result that the Christ of the Bible has become to many a vague, shadowy personality who may or may not have spoken the words attributed to him.

It is only as we forsake the traditions of men and recover faith in the Bible, the truth of which has been fully established by recent discovery and fulfillment of prophecy, that we shall once again receive that inspiration which is needed by rulers and people alike.

The Lord has said to us, “But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils.” (D&C 46:7.)

I say that we need to teach our people to find their answers in the scriptures. If only each of us would be wise enough to say that we aren’t able to answer any question unless we can find a doctrinal answer in the scriptures! And if we hear someone teaching something that is contrary to what is in the scriptures, each of us may know whether the things spoken are false—it is as simple as that. But the unfortunate thing is that so many of us are not reading the scriptures. We do not know what is in them, and therefore we speculate about the things that we ought to have found in the scriptures themselves. I think that therein is one of our biggest dangers today....

The Lord has given us in the standard works the means by which we should measure truth and untruth. May we all heed his word: “Thou shalt take the things which thou hast received, which have been given unto thee in my scriptures for a law, to be my law to govern my church.” (D&C 42:59.)

Theodore M. Burton, Ensign, November 1974, 55.

In citing this verse, I am reminded of a concept President Lee taught the General Authorities. He warned us not to place our trust nor build our sermon on one single verse of scripture. He said that God is the greatest of all teachers and understands the value of repetition. If an idea is true, we will find that concept repeated again and again throughout the scriptures. Instructions are not confined to any one generation but are given repeatedly, often in other words so we will not miss their true meaning. However, we must not take ideas out of context. The truth that persons were chosen for certain work before this earth was formed is found in many places in the scriptures.

Church News Editorial, 17 April 1983, “We Need To Be Orthodox.”

It seems that there always has been a tendency on the part of some to speculate concerning our doctrines and to “enlarge on them” with their own private notions, thus leading others astray.

Teachers have no right to mislead anyone by introducing unorthodox notions. And how do we define that which is orthodox? It is doctrine approved by the First Presidency of the Church. The prophet, seer, and revelator determines what is true doctrine. Those who advocate teaching contrary to those approved by the First Presidency place themselves and others in an untenable position.

How shall we know what is truth? The scriptures are the foundation of our teachings, and they do not change. President Joseph Fielding Smith once said, “If I say anything that is contrary to the scriptures, the scriptures prevail.” That is the way it must be with all of us. The scriptures prevail!

Bruce R. McConkie, The Promised Messiah, 515-516 (also quoted in Robert L. Millet, “Looking Beyond the Mark,” in The Joseph Smith Translation, Monte S. Nyman & Robert L. Millet, eds, 208.)

Many great doctrinal revelations come to those who preach from the scriptures. When they are in tune with the Infinite, the Lord lets them know, first, the full and complete meaning...
of the scriptures they are expounding, and then he oftentimes expands their views so that new truths flood in upon them, and they learn added things that those who do not follow such a course can never know.

FALSE DOCTRINE IN THE CHURCH

Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, 373.

WHERE TO EXPECT FALSE DOCTRINE. Among the Latter-day Saints, the preaching of false doctrines disguised as truths of the gospel, may be expected from people of two classes, and practically from these only; they are:

First — The hopelessly ignorant, whose lack of intelligence is due to their indolence and sloth, who make but feeble effort, if indeed any at all, to better themselves by reading and study; those who are afflicted with a dread disease that may develop into an incurable malady — laziness.

Second — The proud and self-vaunting ones, who read by the lamp of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving; who have become a law unto themselves, and so pose as the sole judges of their own doings. More dangerously ignorant than the first.

Beware of the lazy and the proud; their infection in each case is contagious; better for them and for all when they are compelled to display the yellow flag of warning, that the clean and uninfected may be protected.


Our young people are diligent students. They reach out for truth and knowledge with commendable zeal, and in so doing they must necessarily adopt for temporary use, the theories of men. As long, however, as they recognize them as scaffolding useful for research purposes, there can be no special harm in them. It is when these theories are settled upon as basic truth that trouble appears, and the searcher then stands in grave danger of being led hopelessly from the right way. [Italics added.]


A part of the propaganda is that there is no warrant for official interpretation of the doctrines and standards of the Church, that everyone may read and interpret for himself, and adopt only so much of the doctrine as he chooses, and that he may classify the revelations as essential or non-essential. These propagandists are either ignorant of or ignore the Lord's declaration that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” (2 Peter 1:20.) They disparage orthodoxy as such and pride themselves on liberal thinking. Many of them maintain their loyalty to the Church, and some may honestly believe they are doing the Church a favor and a service in advocating their so-called broad-minded concepts.

Unfortunately, some people within the Church subscribing to these views do not realize that they are falling into a trap themselves. They are giving aid and comfort to the foe; they are undermining their own testimonies and those of others. I warn the Church against them, and I warn them against themselves; and I plead with them to desist, to abandon their agnostic discussion ...

Stephen L. Richards, BYU, 26 Feb 1957.

A moment’s reflection will convince you of the rather serious regard in which we hold counsel. While it is true that we characterize infraction of the law as sin and we do not apply quite that drastic a terminology to failure to follow counsel, yet in the Church, under the priesthood, counsel always is given for the primary purpose of having the law observed, so that it does occupy a place of standing and importance, almost comparable to that law of the gospel.

Boyd K. Packer, “A Dedication to Faith,” Speeches of the Year, BYU, 1969, 6; Living Prophets for a Living Church, 112; Teachings of the Living Prophets, 41.

There is almost a universal tendency for men and women who are specialists in an academic discipline to judge the Church against the principles of their profession. There is a great need in my mind for us, as students and as teachers, to consciously and continually subjugate this tendency and relegate our professional training to a position secondary to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In other words, rather than to judge the Church and its programs against the principles of our profession, we would do well to set the Church and its accepted program as the rule, then judge our academic training against this rule. This posture is remarkably difficult to achieve and sometimes more difficult to maintain.


A member, at any given time, may not understand one point of doctrine or another, may have a misconception, or even believe something is true that in fact is false.

There is not much danger in that. That is an inevitable part of learning the gospel. No member of the Church should be embarrassed at the need to repent of a false notion he might have believed. Such ideas are corrected as one grows in light and knowledge.

It is not the belief in a false notion that is the problem, it is the teaching of it to others. In the Church we have the agency to believe whatever we want to believe about whatever we want to believe. But we are not authorized to teach it to others as truth....

There is another area where caution means safety. There are some who, motivated by one influence or another, seek through writing and publishing criticisms and interpretations of doctrine to make the gospel more acceptable to the so-called thinking people of the world.

They would do well to read very thoughtfully the parable of
the tree of life in the eighth chapter of 1 Nephi, and to
ponder very soberly verse twenty-eight:

And after [meaning after they were members of the Church] after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. (Italics added by Elder Packer.)

If their spirits are pure and their motives worthy, they will do no harm either to themselves or to others. If they are not, we would all do well to follow Paul's admonition and "from such turn away."

**Boyd K. Packer, CR, Ensign, November 1991, 21.**

Recently the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles issued a statement alerting members of the Church to the dangers of participating in circles which concentrate on doctrine and ordinances and measure them by the intellect alone.

If doctrines and behavior are measured by the intellect alone, the essential spiritual ingredient is missing, and we will be misled.

There is safety in learning doctrine in gatherings which are sponsored by proper authority. Some members, even some who have made covenants in the temple, are associating with groups of one kind or another which have an element of secrecy about them and which pretend to have some higher source of inspiration concerning the fulfillment of prophecies than do ward or stake leaders or the General Authorities of the Church. Know this: There are counterfeit revelations which, we are warned, "if possible ... shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant." (JS-M 1:22.)

**Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, March 1985, 8-10.**

There are principles of the gospel underlying every phase of Church administration. These are not explained in the handbooks. They are found in the scriptures. They are the substance of and the purpose for the revelations.

Procedures, programs, the administrative policies, even some patterns of organization are subject to change. We are quite free, indeed, quite obliged to alter them from time to time. But the principles, the doctrines, never change.

If you over-emphasize programs and procedures that can change, and will change, and must change, and do not understand the fundamental principles of the gospel, which never change, you can be misled.

Now, listen carefully. I do not imply that you should ignore the handbooks or manuals, not for one minute would I say that. What I do say is this: there is a spiritual ingredient not found in handbooks that you must include in your ministry if you are to please the Lord.

When you know the gospel, you will have a loyalty toward the instruction in the handbooks that you cannot have otherwise. By so doing, you will save yourself the innovations that cannot work.

Because the Church is growing so fast, there is a temptation to try to solve problems by changing boundaries, altering programs, reorganizing the leadership, or providing more comfortable buildings. What we really need is a revival of the basic gospel principles in the lives of all the Latter-day Saints. The true essence of priesthood administration is not in procedure — it is in principle, in doctrine!

The prophet Joseph Smith gave us the key. He said, with reference to administration, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves." ... But the principles are overlooked — the gospel is overlooked, the doctrine is overlooked. When that happens, we are in great danger! We see the evidence of it in the Church today.

I wish to raise a voice of solemn and sober warning! We live in a day of great opposition, not just in the United States, but worldwide. It grows by day and by night all across the world. Enemies from without, reinforced by apostates from within, challenge the faith of the rank and file members of the Church. It is not the programs of the Church they challenge. They are, in fact, quite complimentary of them. It is the doctrines they focus on. It's the doctrines they attack, and we notice that many leaders seem to be at a loss to how to answer doctrinal questions.... If our members are ignorant of the doctrines, we are in danger, notwithstanding efficient programs and buildings....

It is so important that every member, particularly every leader, understand and know the gospel.

It is not easy to find time to study the gospel. It is harder for the stake president to do it and infinitely harder for the bishop to do it, but it is necessary and it is possible. Brethren must attend the classes as often as they can; bishops and stake presidents should find some way to attend at least a good share of the Gospel Doctrine classes and the appropriate priesthood quorum lessons.

We must see that the generations that follow us learn the gospel. It is our duty to deliver to them, the generations that follow us, intact, the principles and the ordinances of the gospel and the authority of the priesthood.

Foster those programs which are designed to teach the gospel. Primary, Sunday School (incidentally, I have heard of local leaders who have recommended that Sunday School be discontinued; that would be very, very foolish of us indeed), the priesthood lessons, the auxiliary lessons, Relief Society Spiritual Living lessons, the Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women programs, and sacrament meetings can be powerful, if we will use them to preach the gospel. Sacrament meetings should be gospel oriented. And I do not see how a bishop or stake president could rest until seminary was operating for his young people and the teacher training program that makes these programs of the finest quality receives some attention.
All of these deserve watch care and endorsement....

The Lord is our example. It would be hard to describe the Lord as an executive. Let me repeat that. It would be hard to describe the Lord as an executive. He was a teacher! That is the ideal, the pattern.

**Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, May 1974, 95.**

There are those who have made a casual, even an insincere effort to test the scriptures and have come away having received nothing, which is precisely what they have earned and what they deserve. If you think it will yield to a casual inquiry, to idle curiosity, or even to well-intentioned but temporary searching, you are mistaken. It likewise will not yield to the overzealous or to the fanatic.

**Marion G. Romney, Conference Report, April 1942, 17f.; Living Prophets for a Living Church, 79.**

I desire to call your attention to the principle of loyalty, loyalty to the truth and loyalty to these men whom God has chosen to lead the cause of truth. I speak of “the truth” and these “men” jointly, because it is impossible fully to accept the one and partly reject the other.

I raise my voice on this matter to warn and counsel you to be on your guard against criticism.... It comes, in part, from those who hold, or have held, prominent positions. Ostensibly, they are in good standing in the Church. In expressing their feelings, they frequently say, “We are members of the Church, too, you know, and our feelings should be considered.”

They assume that one can be in full harmony with the spirit of the gospel, enjoy full fellowship in the Church and at the same time be out of harmony with the leaders of the Church and the counsel and directions they give. Such a position is wholly inconsistent, because the guidance of this Church comes, not alone from the written word, but also from continuous revelation, and the Lord gives that revelation to the Church through His chosen leaders and none else. It follows, therefore, that those who profess to accept the gospel and who at the same time criticize and refuse to follow the counsel of the leaders, are assuming an indefensible position.

**Marion G. Romney, Conference Report, April 1942, 19-20. [Italics added.]**

I assure you, however, that the Spirit of the Lord will never direct a person to take a position in opposition to the counsel of the Presidency of His Church.

... all who are out of harmony *in any degree* with the Presidency need to repent and seek the Lord for forgiveness and to put themselves in full harmony.

**Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, Apr. 1955, 94f.; Living Prophets for a Living Church, 79f.**

There is the man who, to satisfy his own egotism, took a stand against the Authorities of the Church. He followed the usual pattern, not apostasy at first, only superiority of knowledge and mild criticism. He loved the brethren, he said, but they failed to see and interpret as he would like. He would still love the Church, he maintained, but his criticism grew and developed into everwidening circles. He was right, he assured himself; he could not yield in good conscience; he had his pride. His children did not accept his philosophy wholly, but their confidence was shaken. In their frustration, they married out of the Church, and he lost them. He later realized his folly and returned to humbleness, but so very late. He had lost his children.

**Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, April 1948, 109; in Life & Teachings of Jesus & His Apostles, 424.**

Apparently there were in the early church those who taught for doctrines the sophistries of men. There are those today who seem to take pride in disagreeing with the orthodox teachings of the Church and who present their own opinions which are at variance with the revealed truth. Some may be partially innocent in the matter; others are feeding their own egotism; and some seem to be deliberate. Men may think as they please, but they have no right to impose upon others their unorthodox views. Such persons should realize that their own souls are in jeopardy.

**Bruce R. McConkie, BYU, June 1, 1980.**

I have sought and do now seek that guidance and enlightenment which comes from the Holy Spirit of God. I desire to speak by the power of the Holy Ghost so that my words will be true and wise and proper. When any of us speaks by the power of the Spirit, we say what the Lord wants said, or, better, what he would say if he were here in person.

... I want to state temperately and accurately the doctrinal principles involved and to say them in a way that will not leave room for doubt or for question. I shall speak on some matters that some may consider to be controversial, though they ought not to be. They are things on which we ought to be united, and to the extent we are all guided and enlightened from on high we will be. If we are so united — and there will be no disagreement among those who believe and understand the revealed word — we will progress and advance and grow in the things of the Spirit...

Now let me list some axioms (I guess in academic circles we call these caveats [explanations to prevent misinterpretations]):

- There is no salvation in believing a false doctrine.
- Truth, diamond truth, truth unmixed with error, truth alone leads to salvation.
- What we believe determines what we do. [And are.]
- No man can be saved in ignorance of God and his laws.
- Man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge of Jesus Christ and the saving truths of his everlasting gospel.
- Gospel doctrines belong to the Lord, not to men. They are his. He ordained them, he reveals them, and he expects us to believe them.
- The doctrines of salvation are not discovered in a laboratory or on a geological field trip or by accompanying Darwin...
around the world. They come by revelation and in no other way.

- Our sole concern in seeking truth should be to learn and believe what the Lord knows and believes. Providentially he has set forth some of his views in the holy scriptures.
- Our goal as mortals is to gain the mind of Christ, to believe what he believes, to think what he thinks, to say what he says, to do what he does, and to be as he is.
- We are called upon to reject all heresies and cleave unto all truth. Only then can we progress according to the divine plan. As the Lord has said

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. (D&C 130:18-19.)

Please note that knowledge is gained by obedience. It comes by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. In the ultimate and full sense it comes only by revelation from the Holy Ghost. There are some things a sinful man does not and cannot know. The Lord's people are promised: “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” (Moro 10:5.) But if they do not seek the Spirit, if they do not accept the revelations God has given, if they cannot distinguish between the revealed word and the theories of men, they have no promise of gaining a fulness of truth by the power of the Holy Ghost.


Teachers in the Church represent the Lord in their teaching. The Church is the Lord's; the doctrine is the Lord's. Teachers speak at the invitation of the Lord and are appointed to say what he wants said, nothing more and nothing less. There is no freedom to teach or speculate contrary to the revealed will. Those who desire to express views contrary to gospel truth are at liberty to find other forums or to organize churches of their own. But in God's Church, the only approved doctrine is God's doctrine.

The Church is not a debating society; it is not searching for a system of salvation; it is not a forum for social or political philosophies. It is, rather, the Lord's kingdom with a commission to teach his truths for the salvation of men. Anything contrary to or short of this standard is not of God. “I give unto you a commandment,” he says, “that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand.” (D&C 88:77-78.)

Since the things of God are and can be known only by the power of the Spirit, they remain forever hidden, unknown, and mysterious to the carnal mind, to the mind enlightened by reason but not by revelation... [1 Tim 1:3-4.]

19-20. Apostates exhibit varying degrees of indifference and of rebellion, and their punishment, in time and in eternity, is based on the type and degree of apostasy which is involved. Those who become indifferent to the Church, who simply drift from the course of righteousness to the way of the world, are not in the same category with traitors who fight the truth, and with those whose open rebellion destines them to eternal damnation as sons of perdition. All apostates are turned over to the buffetings of Satan in one degree or another, with the full wrath of Satan reserved for those who are cast into outer darkness with him in that kingdom devoid of glory.

In this dispensation, those saints who broke the covenant of consecration by which they were bound in the united order were turned over to the buffetings of Satan. (D. & C. 78:3-12; 82:15-24; 104:1-10.) Those whose callings and elections have been made sure, and who then rebel against the truth, are so assigned, “that they might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” They are “sealed by the spirit of Elijah unto the damnation of hell until the day of the Lord, or revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Teachings, 338-339; 301; D. & C. 132:26.) Those whose traitorous conduct causes them to become sons of perdition are so cursed eternally. (Teachings, 128.)

With reference to the nature and course of apostates and the need to exclude them from the fellowship of the saints, the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “The Messiah's kingdom on earth is of that kind of government, that there has always been numerous apostates, for the reason that it admits of no sins unrepented of without excluding the individual from its fellowship. Our Lord said, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' And again, many are called, but few are chosen. Paul said to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, after he had labored three years with them, that he knew that some of their own number would turn away from the faith, and seek to lead away disciples after them. None, we presume, in this generation will pretend that he has the experience of Paul in building up the Church of Christ and yet, after his departure from the Church at Ephesus, many, even of the elders turned away from the truth; and what is almost always the case, sought to lead away disciples after them.

“Strange as it may appear at first thought, yet it is no less strange than true, that notwithstanding all the professed determination to live godly, apostates after turning from the faith of Christ, unless they have speedily repented, have sooner or later fallen into the snares of the wicked one, and have been left destitute of the Spirit of God, to manifest their wickedness in the eyes of multitudes.

“From apostates the faithful have received the severest persecutions. Judas, was rebuked and immediately betrayed his Lord into the hands of his enemies, because Satan entered into him. There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the gospel with full purpose of heart, which, if sinned against, the apostate is left naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing, and his end is to be burned. When once that light which was in them is taken...
from them, they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors.

“What nearer friend on earth, or in heaven, had Judas than the Savior? And his first object was to destroy him. Who, among all the saints in these last days, can consider himself as good as our Lord? Who is as perfect? Who is as pure? Who is as holy as he was? Are they to be found? He never transgressed or broke a commandment or law of heaven -- no deceit was in his mouth, neither was guile found in his heart. And yet one that ate with him, who had often drunk of the same cup, was the first to lift up his heel against him. Where is one like Christ? He cannot be found on earth. Then why should his followers complain, if from those whom they once called brethren, and considered as standing in the nearest relation in the everlasting covenant they should receive persecution?

“From what source emanated the principle which has ever been manifested by apostates from the true Church to persecute with double diligence, and seek with double perseverance, to destroy those whom they once professed to love, with whom they once communed, and with whom they once covenanted to strive with every power in righteousness to obtain the rest of God? Perhaps our brethren will say the same that caused Satan to seek to overthrow the kingdom of God, because he himself was evil, and God’s kingdom is holy.” (Teachings, 66-68.) [1 Tim 1:18-20.]

Why is it that many men do not believe and accept the gospel? Why are there so few, among the many, who actually know and understand the doctrines of salvation? How is it that only a handful out of the billions of earth’s inhabitants know the truth about God and his laws? Why is religion a hidden mystery to mankind generally?

One of the main reasons is that religion is not a matter of reason alone; it is not based on or comprehended by the power of intellectuality. Because a man has a bright mind, because he is a profound scholar, because he knows or has discovered great truths in any of a hundred fields, does not mean he knows or understands religious truths.

True religion comes from God by revelation. It is manifest to and understood by those with a talent for spirituality. It is hidden, unknown, and mysterious to all others. To comprehend the things of the world, one must be intellectually enlightened; to know and understand the things of God, one must be spiritually enlightened. One of the great fallacies of modern Christendom is turning for religious guidance to those who are highly endowed intellectually, rather than to those who comprehend the things of the Spirit, to those who receive personal revelation from the Holy Ghost…. [1 Tim 3:14-16.]

“In the Church there are people of all kinds: good and evil, clean and unclean, righteous and wicked. So live that you shall be numbered with the sanctified who shall thereby gain salvation.” [2 Tim 2:20-21.]


No man by his own intellect and reason can understand the things of the spirit; the wisdom of the world standing alone, profiteth nothing in comprehending the things of God. And there are some among you who rely on your own wisdom rather than the whisperings of the spirit.


17. Wells without water] Delinquent church members, from whom the waters of life should flow freely, but who instead have dried up spiritually, so their teachings can no longer quench the throats of those who “thirst after righteousness.” (Mt 5:6.)

Clouds that are carried with a tempest] Faithless church members, whose duty it is to reain righteousness upon mankind, but who instead are themselves driven about by the tempests of false doctrine.

To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever] Having forsaken the effluent gospel light, they are now overshadowed by the mists of spiritual darkness, in which state they shall remain forever unless they repent. In his dream of the tree of life, Lehi saw “that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.” Others, however, as he beheld, “did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.” (1 Ne 8:23-24.) And then, by way of interpretation, Nephi said: “The mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.” (1 Ne 12:17.)

18-19. ‘They teach false doctrines that have their roots in the lusts of the flesh, doctrines which promise freedom from church restrictions, but which in fact bring those who accept them into the bondage of sin.’ In similar vein, many modern ministers teach, openly and officially and with seeming sincerity, that illicit sexual relations are not always evil; that there are situations in which adultery is not a breach of the divine law; that homosexual perversions between consulting adults carry no divine condemnation; that church members may choose to worship on a week day so as to keep the Sabbath free for hunting, fishing, or other recreational activities; that there will be no Second Coming of the Son of Man at which the wicked shall be destroyed, for he has already come in the hearts of those who believe; and so on and so on through the ten thousand times ten thousand vagaries of the current brand of false religion.

Bruce R. McConkie, Church News, 24 January 1976, 4. (Emphasis added.)

I think that people who study the scriptures get a dimension
to their life that nobody else gets and that can't be gained in any way except by studying the scriptures. There's an increase in faith [revelation] and a desire to do what's right and a feeling of inspiration and understanding that comes to people who study the gospel — meaning particularly the Standard Works — and who ponder the principles, that can't come in any other way.


We are facing a tremendous challenge in maintaining the doctrinal purity within the Church....

Our best hope of maintaining doctrinal purity rests with a membership that knows and understands doctrinal implications because they have “witnessed for themselves” ...

One of our brethren who was asked to speak in a Sacrament meeting made a statement I would wish could be trumpeted throughout this entire Church. This brother said: “No person has a right to occupy the pulpits of this Church in our Sacrament meetings unless he is there to preach the Gospel.” I wish that could be understood — that the very purpose of the invitation is to preach the Gospel.


One of the greatest threats to the work of the Lord today comes from false educational ideas. There is a growing tendency of teachers within and without the Church to make academic interpretations of gospel teachings — to read, as a prophet-leader has said, “by the lamp of their own conceit.” Unfortunately, much in the sciences, the arts, politics, and the entertainment field, as has been well said by an eminent scholar, is “all dominated by this humanistic approach which ignores God and his words as revealed through the prophets.” This kind of worldly system apparently hopes to draw men away from God by making man the “measure of all things,” as some worldly philosophers have said.

That this danger would be among us today was foreshadowed by the ancient prophets, who gave us a sure measure by which we might know that which is of God and that which emanates from evil sources.

[Quotes from Moro 7:16-17.] ... You will note that this statement makes no distinction as to whether it be labeled as religion, philosophy, science, or politics, or ugly dress patterns of today, or the world of so-called entertainment.

True Christians who know the word of God understand that there are invisible forces which are waging war against God and his people who are striving to do his will.

Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, 3 October 1968

“We need to spend more time teaching our members the awfulness of sin rather than to spend all our time merely teaching the doctrine of repentance.” (Quoting Elder Charles A. Callis)

We are facing a tremendous challenge in maintaining doctrinal purity within the Church. Our best hope of maintaining doctrinal purity rests with a membership that knows and understands doctrinal implications because they have “witnessed for themselves.”

No person has a right to occupy the pulpits of this Church in our Sacrament meetings unless he is there to preach the Gospel. I wish we could remember, that this day, the flattery of the world sometimes we listen to will be our undoing.


Now it is about the enemies that come in the night I want just to make one reference.

The term “elder,” which is applied to all holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, means a defender of the faith. That is our prime responsibility and calling. Every holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to be a defender of the faith.

There are insidious forces among us that are constantly trying to knock at our doors and trying to lay traps for our young men and women, particularly those who are unwary and unsophisticated in the ways of the world. I speak of the battle against liquor by the drink, gambling, prostitution, pornography, and our efforts to aid Christian people who desire to have one day dedicated to keeping the Sabbath day holy. All we have to do is to remember what the Lord said in order to impress the importance of keeping the Sabbath day holy: “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day.” (D&C 59:9.) Defenders of the faith should he alert, then, to see to it with all their influence that there is an opportunity given to the working man, the boy and the girl, the husband and the wife to have one day in the week when they can be with their families and have one day consecrated as a day of rest. Watchmen, be alert to the “dangers of the night”!

It never ceases to amaze me how gullible some of our Church members are in broadcasting sensational stories, or dreams, or visions, or purported patriarchal blessings, or quotations, or supposedly from some person’s private diary.

For instance, there is one vicious story to the effect that one of our General Authorities is allegedly being urged to present himself to lead the Church contrary to the Lord’s revelation and to make people think there is some division among the authorities of the Church. Investigations have indicated that the named writer of these forged letters is fictitious and does not exist—can’t be found in the records of the Church or anywhere. Addresses given are spurious, and yet the amazing thing is that we find that these spurious writings and some of these purported revelations, which we found upon investigation are absolutely false, are finding their way into our Relief Society meetings, into priesthood quorums, firesides, institutes, and seminaries.
Brethren of the priesthood, you defenders of the faith, we would wish that you would plead with our Saints to cease promoting the works of the devil. Spend your time promoting the works of the Lord, and don’t allow these things to be found among those under your charge, for they are the works of Satan, and we are playing his game whenever we permit such things to be heralded about and repeated and passed about on every side.

One of our brethren is supposed to have had a patriarchal blessing saying that he would preside over the Church when the Savior came. This is, of course, false. Another one among us has been said to have declared that there are some living today who will see the Savior when he comes. This again is fictitious. Well, the Master said that the time of his coming would be as a thief in the night, that of the time of his coming not even the angels of heaven would know. If we would stop to think of it, nobody with any authority would ever say that such a declaration could be authentic.

So we could go on and on. One of our brethren was reported to have said that the people of California should move up to the tops of the Rocky Mountains, that only there would be safety. Contrary to that, we are constantly saying to our people that safety is where the pure in heart are, and that there is just as much safety wherever you are, if you are living and keeping the commandments of God.

Brethren, I repeat, don’t allow the works of the devil to be paraded in our midst and become the subject of discourses or lesson materials. Speak of the works of righteousness, and the power of the devil will begin to cease among you.


We have some tight places to go before the Lord is through with this church and the world in this dispensation, which is the last dispensation, which shall usher in the coming of the Lord. The gospel was restored to prepare a people ready to receive him. The power of Satan will increase; we see it in evidence on every hand. There will be inroads within the Church. There will be, as President Tanner has said, “Hypocrites, those professing, but secretly are full of dead men’s bones.” We will see those who profess membership but secretly are plotting and trying to lead people not to follow the leadership that the Lord has set up to preside in this church.

Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet “as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“. . . as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.” (D&C 21:4-5.) There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory.” (D&C 21:6.)

**Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 89-94.**

As an answer to those who may be wandering aimlessly, searching for something to satisfy their need and to end their state of confusion and emptiness, I would like to introduce a few thoughts by relating a remarkable vision which came to an ancient prophet by the name of Lehi — 600 years before Christ. . . .

The rod of iron as seen in the vision interpreted was the word of God, or the gospel of Jesus Christ, which led to the tree of life that the Master explained to the woman at the well in Samaria was as “a well of [living] water springing up into everlasting life.” [sic] (John 3:16-17.)

Those, as seen in the vision, who were across the river pointing fingers of scorn represented the multitudes of the earth which are gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb of God. The scorers, so the Lord revealed, represented the so-called wisdom of the world, and the building itself in which they were gathered was the “pride of the world.” (See 1 Ne 11:12.)

If there is any one thing most needed in this time of tumult and frustration, when men and women and youth and young adults are desperately seeking for answers to the problems which afflict mankind, it is an “iron rod” as a safe guide along the straight path on the way to eternal life, amidst the strange and devious roadways that would eventually lead to destruction and to the ruin of all that is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report.”

These conditions as they would be found in the earth when these scriptures, now called the Book of Mormon, were to be brought forth were foreseen by the prophets. As I read some of these predictions, I would have you think of conditions with which we are surrounded today:

“And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts; unto . . . envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities . . . because of the pride of your hearts.

“. . . behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.” (Morm 8:36-37.) . . .

There are many who profess to be religious and speak of themselves as Christians, and, according to one such, “as accepting the scriptures only as sources of inspiration and moral truth,” and then ask in their smugness: “Do the revelations of God give us a handrail to the kingdom of God, as the Lord’s messenger told Lehi, or merely a compass?”

Unfortunately, some are among us who claim to be Church
members but are somewhat like the scoffers in Lehi's vision — standing aloof and seemingly inclined to hold in derision the faithful who choose to accept Church authorities as God's special witnesses of the gospel and his agents in directing the affairs of the Church. There are those in the Church who speak of themselves as liberals who, as one of our former presidents has said, “read by the lamp of their own conceit.” (Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, p. 373.) One time I asked one of our Church educational leaders how he would define a liberal in the Church. He answered in one sentence: “A liberal in the Church is merely one who does not have a testimony.”

Dr. John A. Widtsoe, former member of the Quorum of the Twelve and an eminent educator, made a statement relative to this word liberal as it applied to those in the Church. This is what he said:

“The self-called liberal [in the Church] is usually one who has broken with the fundamental principles or guiding philosophy of the group to which he belongs.... He claims membership in an organization but does not believe in its basic concepts; and sets out to reform it by changing its foundations ....

“It is folly to speak of a liberal religion, if that religion claims that it rests upon unchanging truth.” And then Dr. Widtsoe concludes his statement with this: “It is well to beware of people who go about proclaiming that they are or their churches are liberal. The probabilities are that the structure of their faith is built on sand and will not withstand the storms of truth.” (“Evidences & Reconciliations,” Improvement Era, vol. 44 [1941], 609.)

Here again, to use the figure of speech in Lehi's vision, they are those who are blinded by the mists of darkness and as yet have not a firm grasp on the “iron rod.” Wouldn't it be wonderful if, when there are questions which are unanswered because the Lord hasn't seen fit to reveal the answers as yet, all such could say, as Abraham Lincoln is alleged to have said, “I accept all I read in the Bible that I can understand, and accept the rest on faith.” How comforting it would be to those who are the restless in the intellectual world, when such questions arise as to how the earth was formed and how of God, which could lead them, through faith, to an understanding, rather than to have them stray away into strange paths of man-made theories and be plunged into the murky waters of disbelief and apostasy? I heard one of our own eminent scientists say something to the effect that he believed some professors have taken themselves out of the Church by their trying to philosophize or intellectualize the fall of Adam and the subsequent atonement of the Savior.

This was because they would rather accept the philosophies of men than what the Lord has revealed until they, and we, are able to understand the “mysteries of godliness” as explained to the prophets of the Lord and more fully revealed in sacred places. There were evidently similar questions and controversies in the Master's time. In one terse answer, he gave the essential ingredients to safety amidst the maze of uncertainty: To settle an apparent controversy among his disciples as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God, he said: “… except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom…” (Matt. 18:3.) . . .

Conversion must mean more than just being a “card carrying” member of the Church with a tithing receipt, a membership card, a temple recommend, etc....

The Lord issued a warning to those who would seek to destroy the faith of an individual or lead him away from the word of God or cause him to lose his grasp on the “iron rod,” wherein was safety by faith in a Divine Redeemer and his purposes concerning this earth and its peoples. The Master warned: “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better . . . that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matt 18:6.) The Master was impressed the fact that rather than ruin the soul of a true believer, it were better for a person to suffer an earthly death than to incur the penalty of jeopardizing his own eternal destiny....

Speaking to the learned and highly sophisticated generation in his time, the prophet Jacob said something which seems to be so often needed to be repeated today: “… When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not.

“… But to be learned is good if they hearken to the counsels of God.” (2 Ne 9:28-29.)

… the Lord addressed his revelation to all others who may not have faith: “… seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” (D&C 88:118.) One might well ask: How does one get “learning by faith”? One prophet explains the process: First, one must arouse his faculties and experiment on the words of the Lord and desire to believe [the words having come by revelation from God directly, through prophets, or from scriptures, etc.]. Let this desire work in you until ye believe in a manner that you can give place even to a portion of the word of the Lord; then, like a planted seed, it must be cultivated and not resist the Spirit of the Lord, which is that which lightethen everyone born into the world; you can then begin to feel within yourselves that it must be good, for it enlarges your soul and enlightens your understanding and, like the fruit of the tree in Lehi’s vision, it becomes delicious to the taste. (See Alma 32.) …

Let no one think that “learning by faith” contemplates an easy or lazy way to gain knowledge and ripen it into wisdom. From heavenly instructions and added to which are the
experiences of almost anyone who has sought diligently for heavenly guidance, one may readily understand that learning by faith requires the bending of the whole soul through worthy living to become attuned to the Holy Spirit of the Lord, the calling up from the depths of one's own mental searching, and the linking of our own efforts to receive the true witness of the Spirit.


Never has there been a greater need in the Church for training in leadership and in effective teaching to offset the clever and diabolical methods of evil powers that “pacify, and lull them away into carnal security,” stirring them up to anger, saying that all is well and with flattery telling them there is no hell nor is there a devil, for this is the way, as the ancient prophets have warned, that “the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.” (See 2 Ne 28:20-22.)

It was frightening to observe that in places where there was the greater prosperity, there was the unmistakable evidence that, like the peoples of other dispensations, when they prospered they forgot God. They were seemingly rich in things that money could buy, but they were devoid of most of the precious things money could not buy. The prophets have issued a clear signal of warning to those who are lifted up in the pride of their hearts because of their ease and their exceeding great prosperity: “Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people . . . yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One — yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceeding great prosperity.” (Hela 12:2.) And so do we, as we witness these things, lament with those who have gone before us: “Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom’s paths!” (Hela 12:5.)

Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Apr. 1972, 118.

Now I want to impress this upon you. Someone has said it this way, and I believe it to be absolutely true: “That person is not truly converted until he sees the power of God resting upon the leaders of this church, and until it goes down into his heart like fire.” Until the members of this church have that conviction that they are being led in the right way, and they have a conviction that these men of God are men who are inspired and have been properly appointed by the hand of God, they are not truly converted.

So I bear you my witness that I know with all my soul . . . that those whom the Lord chooses are the ones he needs for a particular time. I heard Elder Orson F. Whitney, a member of the Twelve, say from this pulpit that he didn't believe that these men are necessarily the best living men in the Church, but that there may be many others who live just as righteous lives, or maybe more so, but one thing he did know: that when there is a vacancy and the Lord has need for a person, he looks around and finds the person who is best qualified to fill the position at a given time. I have lived long enough now in these 31 years as a member of the General Authorities to know that is true . . .


Now a final word about one of the great dangers of some of the widely disseminated doctrines of the enemies of freedom, which in essence have been characterized by our beloved prophet-statesman, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., as but “a clumsy attempt of Satan to counterfeit the Lord’s plan of the United Order, as defined in the Holy Scriptures.” Our present welfare plan could well be the “setting-up” exercises to see how prepared this church is to live this plan, so that, as was the joyous realization of a people on this continent, as recorded in an ancient scripture we call the Book of Mormon, after they were all converted to the Lord, “there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all . . . partakers of the heavenly gift” and “surely there could not be a happier people” on the face of the earth (4 Ne 1:3, 16), by living fully the law of sacrifice and consecration.

There are some well-intentioned persons within the Church who seem to have taken upon themselves to substitute for the great principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God what some have characterized as “cults”—the results of which, no matter how sincere, have caused confusion by using other organized bodies than those of the priesthood of God to combat these dangers. In doing so they have set brothers against brothers in the Church and thus weakened the unity of the greatest weapon the Lord has already provided against these evils, through the priesthood organizations of the Church and kingdom of God. Some such groups, by adopting counterfeit measures and procedures, have been led away and have apostatized and been excommunicated from the Church.

If we follow the leadership of the priesthood, the Lord will fulfill his promise contained in the preface to his revelations, when Satan would have power over his own dominion. This was his promise: “… the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon … the world.” (D&C 1:36.)

I earnestly urge all our people to unite under the true banner of the Master, to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ so powerfully that no truly converted person could ever be aligned with these controversial concepts and procedures contrary to the Lord's plan of salvation.

Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Oct 1972, 125-131. [Italics added.]

There are some as wolves among us. By that, I mean some who profess membership in this church who are not sparing the flock. [See Acts 20 :28-30.] And among our own membership, men are arising speaking perverse things. Now perverse means diverting from the right or correct, and being obstinate in the wrong, willfully, in order to draw the weak and unwary members of the Church away after them. And as the apostle Paul said, it is likewise a marvel to us today, as it
was in that day, that some members are so soon removed from those who taught them the gospel and are removed from the true teachings of the gospel of Christ to be led astray into something that corrupts the true doctrines of the gospel of Christ into vicious and wicked practices and performances. These, as have been evidenced by shocking events among some of these splinter groups, have been accused, as the prophets warned; and they are obviously in the power of that evil one who feeds the gullible with all the sophistries which Satan has employed since the beginning of time.

I should like now to make reference to some of these. The first is the spread of rumor and gossip (we have mentioned this before) which, when once started, gains momentum as each telling becomes more fanciful, until unwittingly those who wish to dwell on the sensational repeat them in firesides, in classes, in Relief Society gatherings and priesthood quorum classes without first verifying the source before becoming a party to causing speculation and discussions that steal time away from the things that would be profitable and beneficial and enlightening to their souls.

Just an example: I understand that there is a widely circulated story that I was alleged to have had a patriarchal blessing (I don't know whether any of you have heard about that) that had to do with the coming of the Savior and the ten tribes of Israel. In the first place, a patriarchal blessing is a sacred document to the person who has received it and is never given for publication and, as all patriarchal blessing, should be kept as a private possession to the one who has received it. And second, with reference to that which I was alleged to have had, suffice it to say that such a quotation is incorrect and without foundation in fact.

The First Presidency in August 1913 issued a warning to the members of the Church which could bear repeating today. Let me read you a few things that were said then: “To the officers and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

“From the days of Hiram Page (D&C 28), at different periods there have been manifestations from delusive spirits to members of the Church. Sometimes these have come to men and women who because of transgression became easy prey to the Arch-Deceiver. At other times people who pride themselves on their strict observance of the rules and ordinances [laws] and ceremonies [rites] of the Church are led astray by false spirits, who exercise an influence so imitative of that which proceeds from a Divine source that even these persons, who think they are ‘the very elect,’ find it difficult to discern the essential difference. Satan himself has transformed himself to be apparently ‘an angel of light.’ [2 Cor 11:14.]

“When visions, dreams, tongues, prophecy, impressions or an extraordinary gift or inspiration convey something out of harmony with the accepted revelations of the Church or contrary to the decisions of its constituted authorities, Latter-day Saints may know that it is not of God, no matter how plausible it may appear. Also, they should understand that directions for the guidance of the Church will come, by revelation, through the head. All faithful members are entitled to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for themselves, their families, and for those over whom they are appointed and ordained to preside. But anything at discord with that which comes from God through the head of the Church is not to be received as authoritative or reliable. In secular as well as spiritual affairs, Saints may receive Divine guidance and revelation affecting themselves, but this does not convey authority to direct others, and is not to be accepted when contrary to Church covenants, doctrine or discipline, or to known facts, demonstrated truths, or good common sense. No person has the right to induce his fellow members of the Church to engage in speculations or take stock in ventures of any kind on the specious claim of Divine revelation or vision or dream, especially when it is in opposition to the voice of recognized authority, local or general. The Lord’s Church ‘is a house of order.’ It is not governed by individual gifts or manifestations, but by the order and power of the Holy Priesthood as sustained by the voice and vote of the Church in its appointed conferences.

“The history of the Church records many pretended revelations claimed by impostors or zealots who believed in the manifestations they sought to lead other persons to accept, and in every instance, disappointment, sorrow and disaster have resulted therefrom. Financial loss and sometimes utter ruin have followed.”

This is something that is recurring time and time again, and we call upon you holders of the priesthood to stamp out any such and to set to flight all such things as are creeping in. people rising up here and there who have had some “marvelous” kind of a manifestation, as they claim, and who try to lead the people in a course that has not been dictated from the heads of the Church. As I say, it never ceases to amaze me how gullible some of our Church members are in broadcasting these sensational stories, or dreams, or visions, some alleged to have been given to Church leaders, past or present, supposedly from some person's private diary, without first verifying the report with proper Church authorities. If our people want to be safely guided during these troublous times of deceit and false rumors, they must follow their leaders and seek for the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord in order to avoid falling prey to clever manipulators who, with cunning sophistry, seek to draw attention and gain a following to serve their own notions and sometimes sinister motives. [See D&C 42:11.] . . .

Now, if one comes claiming that he has authority, ask him, “Where do you get your authority? Have you been ordained by someone who has authority, who is known to the Church, that you have authority and have been regularly ordained by the heads of the Church?” If the answer is no, you may know that he is an imposter. This is the test that our people should always apply when some imposter comes trying to lead them astray.

Now there is another danger that confronts us. There seem to be those among us who are as wolves among the flock, trying
to lead some who are weak and un wary among Church members, according to reports that have reached us, who are taking the law into their own hands by refusing to pay their income tax because they have some political disagreement with constituted authorities.

Others have tried to marshal civilians, without police authority, and to arm themselves to battle against possible dangers, little realizing that in so doing they themselves become the ones who, by obstructing the constituted authority, would become subject to arrest and imprisonment.

We have even heard of someone claiming Church membership in protest against pornographic pictures being displayed in theaters, having planted bombs, and therefore becoming subject to punishment by the law and subsequently standing judgment before the disciplinary bodies of the Church.

While we must stand solidly behind those who are trying to stamp out the filthy and provocative display of so-called pornographic materials, we have but one answer to all those who thus take such radical measures, and this is the word of the Lord: [D&C 58:20-22].

I want to warn this great body of priesthood against that great sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, which has been labeled as a sin second only in seriousness to the sin of murder. I speak of the sin of adultery, which, as you know, was the name used by the Master as he referred to unlicensed sexual sins of fornication as well as adultery; and besides this, the equally grievous sin of homosexuality, which seems to be gaining momentum with social acceptance in the Babylon of the world, of which Church members must not be a part.

While we are in the world, we must not be of the world. Any attempts being made by the schools or places of entertainment to flaunt sexual perversions, which can do nothing but excite to experimentation, must find among the priesthood in this church a vigorous and unrelenting defense through every lawful means that can be employed.

The common judges of Israel, our bishops and stake presidents, must not stand by and fail to apply disciplinary measures within their jurisdiction, as set forth plainly in the laws of the Lord and procedures as set forth in plain and simple instructions that cannot be misunderstood. Never must we allow supposed mercy to the unrepentant sinner to rob the justice upon which true repentance from sinful practices is predicated.

One more matter: There are among us many loose writings predicting the calamities which are about to overtake us. Some of these have been publicized as though they were necessary to wake up the world to the horrors about to overtake us. Many of these are from sources upon which there cannot be unquestioned reliance.

Are you priesthood bearers aware of the fact that we need no such publications to be forewarned, if we were only conversant with what the scriptures have already spoken to us in plainness?

Let me give you the sure word of prophecy on which you should rely for your guide instead of these strange sources which may have great political implications.

Read the 24th chapter of Matthew—particularly that inspired version as contained in the Pearl of Great Price. (Joseph Smith 1 [JS--M 1].)

Then read the 45th section of the Doctrine and Covenants where the Lord, not man, has documented the signs of the times.

Now turn to section 101 and section 133 of the Doctrine and Covenants and hear the step-by-step recounting of events leading up to the coming of the Savior.

Finally, turn to the promises the Lord makes to those who keep the commandments when these judgments descend upon the wicked, as set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 38.

Brethren, these are some of the writings with which you should concern yourselves, rather than commentaries that may come from those whose information may not be the most reliable and whose motives may be subject to question. And may I say, parenthetically, most of such writers are not handicapped by having any authentic information on their writings…

Now brethren, I have spoken plainly to you in this priesthood session. Let what has been said by all the brethren tonight, and in this conference, not fall on deaf ears. Let these admonitions be received as the Lord directed they should be received, in an early revelation to which President Tanner has already made reference, “as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.” (D&C 21:5.)

Only by so doing can we be truly one as a body of priesthood, by following the leadership that the Lord has established in our day in order that we may be one. And he warns us if we are not one, we are not his, as he has declared in the Doctrine and Covenants. [Sec. 38.]

There are one or two things I should like to say about myself and this present responsibility. Never had I thought of myself as one day becoming the President of the Church. As a boy in my rural community, I used to hear the brethren talk about a “pillar” in the Church. I wondered what in the world it meant. It must be something great to be a pillar in the Church. Well, now, maybe I am beginning to realize something about what that means, but I know this: those who try to guess ahead of time as to who is going to be the next President of the Church are just gambling as they might be on a horse race, because only the Lord has the time table.

I remember one time Elder Charles A. Callis in a Council of the Twelve meeting. There was a rather spirited discussion on some questions. One of the Brethren said, “You had better listen to Brother George Albert Smith, the President of the Twelve, because he may be the next President of the Church.”

Brother Callis smiled and said, “Oh, I wouldn’t be too sure.
Three times in my life I have chosen the next President of the Church, and all three of them died before they came to the presidency.” The Lord only knows, and for us to speculate or to presume is not pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

I have one other thought I should like to express. Brigham Young was a great defender of the Prophet Joseph Smith. There were Judases in the ranks in the Savior’s day, and just as we have today, some who are members of the Church who are undercutting us, who are betraying their trusts. We are shocked when we see the places from which some of these things come.

Brigham Young was invited by some of these men who were trying to depose the Prophet Joseph from his position as President of the Church; but they made a mistake by inviting President Brigham Young into their circle. And after he had listened to what their motives were, he said something to this effect: “I want to say something to you men. You cannot destroy the appointment of a prophet of God, but you can cut the thread that binds you to the prophet of God, and sink yourselves to hell.”

There was a pugilist [boxer, fighter] there by the name of Jacob Bump, so the story goes, who doubled up his fists and started toward President Young, who replied to this man’s threats: “I would like to lay hands on a man like you in defense of the Prophet Joseph Smith.”

Remember that, brethren. You cannot destroy the appointments of the prophets of God. The Lord knows whom he wants to preside in his church, and sometimes it takes a lot of practicing, guiding, testing, before he may know whether or not one of us is prepared for the present assignment.

Now I think it is folly for one to compare one President of the Church with another. No one takes the place of another President of the Church. Each President has his own place. I had a lesson taught me some years ago when, in company with one of the brethren, I had reorganized the presidency of the Ensign Stake. We had named the bishop of one of the wards as stake president. It was near the end of the year, and he elected to remain as bishop, along with his first counselor, who was a bishop, until they had closed the books at the end of the year.

Six weeks after they were sustained, the stake president suddenly passed away.

Then I began to receive a barrage of letters. Where in the world was the inspiration for you to call a man whom the Lord was going to let die in six weeks? They invited me to talk at his services, and some seemed to be expecting me to try to explain why I had appointed a man that the Lord was going to take home in six weeks.

President Joseph Fielding Smith sat on the stand and heard my attempt to satisfy these people, and he said to me, “Don't you let that bother you. If you have called a man to a position in this church and he dies the next day, that position would have a bearing on what he will be called to do when he leaves this earth.”

I believe that. I believe that every President of this church, every apostle of this church, every bishop, every stake president, every presiding position will have a bearing on what one is called to do when he leaves this earth.

And so, when you think of one President taking the place of another, he doesn’t. That President maintains his own place. We shouldn’t try to compare one as being greater than this one or greater than the other, because each one is, in the eyes of the Lord, in his own time the one most needed for that particular time. You may be sure of that.

Now, just one final thought. I sat in a class in Sunday School in my own ward one day, and the teacher was the son of a patriarch. He said he used to take down the blessings of his father, and he noticed that his father gave what he called “iffy” blessings. He would give a blessing, but it was predicated on “if you will not do this” or “if you will cease doing that.” And he said, “I watched these men to whom my father gave the ‘iffy’ blessings, and I saw that many of them did not heed the warning that my father as a patriarch had given, and the blessings were never received because they did not comply.”

You know, this started me thinking. I went back into the Doctrine and Covenants and began to read the “iffy” revelations that have been given in the Church. If you want to have an exercise in something that will startle you, read some of the warnings that were given through the Prophet Joseph Smith to Thomas B. Marsh, Martin Harris, some of the Whitmer brothers, William E. McLellin—warnings which, had they heeded, some would not have fallen by the wayside. But because they did not heed, and they didn’t clear up their lives, they fell by the wayside, and some had to be dropped from membership in the Church.

Now, there is one thing that I think we should all be mindful of. I was with a group of missionaries in the temple one day. A question was asked by one of the sisters about the Word of Wisdom, concerning the promise made that if one would keep the Word of Wisdom he should run and not be weary and should walk and not faint. And she said, “How could that promise be realized if a person were crippled? How could he receive the blessings that he could run and not be weary, and walk and not faint, if he were crippled?”

I answered her, “Did you ever doubt the Lord? The Lord said that.”

The trouble with us today, there are too many of us who put question marks instead of periods after what the Lord says. I want you to think about that. We shouldn’t be concerned about why he said something, or whether or not it can be made so. Just trust the Lord. We don’t try to find the answers or explanations. We shouldn’t try to spend time explaining what the Lord didn't see fit to explain. We spend useless time.

If you would teach our people to put periods and not question marks after what the Lord has declared, we would say, “It is
enough for me to know that is what the Lord said.”

**Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Oct. 1972, 176.**

We have announced time and again the great coverage of this conference. Millions have been listening. You know we are being judged by what emanates from this tabernacle. I held a meeting with some new missionaries recently. Their attention was called to something that I may have the temerity [cheek, gaul, recklessness] to mention to you today. The Lord said here in a great revelation, “Therefore, cease from all you light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and lightmindedness, and from all your wicked doings.” (D&C 88:121.)

I wonder sometimes if we forget that all we say in this sensitive building is going out over the air from a sacred assembly. It doesn’t mean that we should be long-faced, should not show our joy, but we ought to couch our expressions of joy not with the audible expression that swells up to a great crescendo that might be mistaken by those who are listening on the outside. I think it would be well for us to remember that, with a sense of our responsibility to the most high God. We should be an example of what the Lord in this revelation has counseled us to be when we are in his service.


I have a letter from some man who seemingly has found something in the hieroglyphics of some discovery that is the answer to a lot of the things that lay ahead for the world. And interestingly enough, as I looked at this, my mind reflected back to an address I heard delivered from this pulpit by President Anthony W. Ivins of October 4, 1931. Just why I thought of that—I suppose it was intended that I should—is because he gave an address at that conference and used as his text the recently published book called *Our Bible in Stone.*

Many of you remember this treated principally the erection, the symbolism, and the prophetic character of the pyramid of Gizeh, or in Greek, the Cheops. Students of the pyramid, after a study of the measurements, symbols, and the record of the pyramid, if it had a record, said that the year 1928 would witness the beginning of a period of great tribulation, which would culminate with intensity in 1936. That period, according to the reckoning of the students, would close with the advent of the Lord and the establishment of a period of peace, happiness, and goodwill among men.

Then President Ivins gave these wise words of counsel with reference to this book: “Now, my brethren … I have referred to this little book and its contents as I desire that you might understand. It will undoubtedly go into the mission field and our elders may make use of it. I simply want to warn you against sensationalism of any kind…. I do not say that his conclusions are wrong, but I do say that they do not come to us as the voice of the Church, nor are they to be accepted as such.”

Then he said something that seems very significant to me. He said: “Brother J. Golden Kimball told us yesterday that he was a great believer in dreams that came true.” I wish you would think of that. That accords with my feelings. I am a great believer in dreams that have come true. “I am reminded of the fact,” he said, “that immediately after the close of the World War I these students of the Pyramids announced and published it that according to their measurements and calculations there would begin in the year 1928 a period which would bring tribulation and sorrow to the people of the world; that they would be required to humble themselves before the Lord, and that that period of tribulation would continue until the year 1936…. We all know that a part of this dream at least has come true.”

After commenting on the financial condition throughout the nations at that time, in the 1930s, President Ivins then concluded his remarks with these profound words of wisdom: “Well, now, my brethren and sisters, what about it all? Just be calm and turn to the Lord…. I pleaded with the people to put their houses in order and get out of debt, for I knew this was coming, because God himself through his Only Begotten Son had declared it. Now, my brethren and sisters, if the Church has anything to say to you it will come from them direct and not from the writings of other men. It will come to you in a manner that you will understand it. It will not be speculative. It will come to you philosophically, truthfully, and governed by common sense…. (Conference Report, Oct. 1931, 87-94.)

Now this is something that needs repeating to this great body of priesthood, because we have a rash of writings by certain persons who claim to be of good standing in the Church, going into considerable detail as they recite their past and present Church affiliation and activities in the forward, interlude, and advertising. There are sensational predictions and observations, and to make their writings appear to have Church sanction, they use quotations and addresses from Church leaders, past and present, taken out of context in such a way as to make it appear as though these quotations were the endorsement of the book they wish to sell to Church members, who may thereby be induced to accept their writings as from unquestioned sources.

Now we have also had some who claim to be in good standing in order to take advantage of the gathering of the Saints at some of our general conferences, and who have gone so far as to program group meetings for their own interest, with the obvious hope that by doing so, many of our conference visitors may be urged to attend their meetings, even if it may have necessitated their absence from vitally important instructional sessions of the conference.

Furthermore, some designing individuals have solicited opportunities to speak at Church gatherings, firesides, priesthood quorums, sacrament meetings. Now, brethren, we feel it is of the utmost importance to lift a warning voice so that our people will be safeguarded against such tactics as an all too obvious self-seeking opportunity to spread their own propaganda for their own interests.

We must urge that priesthood leaders use careful discretion in screening out those whose motives may be subject to serious
question.

Now a word about magnifying the priesthood.…

The other night I had a group of young Cub Scouts, who are about the age to become ordained deacons, and I said to these young men, “When you get to be deacons, what will be the duties of a deacon?”

And they all said, “The duty of the deacon is to pass the sacrament.”

And I said, “Now I would like you to think of this a little differently. That isn’t the way to explain the duty of a deacon. What does it mean to pass the sacrament? When a deacon carries the emblems of the bread and water which have been blessed to the good of those to whom it shall be passed, it is then a renewal of a covenant that if they will keep the commandments of God and remember the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom those emblems stand, they will have the Spirit of the Lord to be with them.”

A deacon, then, has the responsibility of representing the Lord to carry these emblems and thus be the Lord’s agent in submitting these to the body of the Church.

When you ask a teacher what are his duties, he may answer, “Well, it’s to do home teaching.” But suppose you say to him, “When you do home teaching you are representing the Lord, to visit the home of each member, to see that they are doing their duty, and to see that they are all keeping the commandments of God.” The duties of a priest: “The priest is to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament; and to visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties.” (D&C 20:46-47.) They should have in mind when they are acting in those capacities it is as though they were acting for and responsible to the Lord.

When we officiate in the name of the Lord, as holders of the priesthood, we are doing it in the name and in behalf of our Heavenly Father. Priesthood is the power by which our Heavenly Father works through men, through deacons, through teachers, through priests, and I have a feeling that we are not impressing that upon our young men. They are often thought one of the reasons why we are not magnifying our priesthood is because we don’t understand that as holders of the priesthood, He is working through us by the power of the holy priesthood, and I would wish that we could all have that feeling, and so teach our young people what it means to hold the priesthood and to magnify it.


[God] follows a particular method of transmitting knowledge to man. It is an unchanging pattern, which is, that he always speaks to the people through living prophets.

Ezekiel 13:3. [Emphasis added.]

. . . Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!


Many suppose they must get direct revelation from God for themselves. Not so. He has a prophet, and he says the Church shall give heed to the words of the Prophet, as he is to hold the keys of the kingdom of God in this life and in the world to come.... You can put every confidence in the Book of Mormon and in Joseph Smith; and if you are not satisfied, go to God.

Joseph Smith, *HC* 1:339; *Teachings*, 22, see also 72-73.

And again we never inquire at the hand of God for special revelation only in case of there being no previous revelation to suit the case .. It is a great thing to inquire of the hands of God, or to come into his presence; and we feel fearful to approach Him on subjects that are of little or no consequence, to satisfy the queries of individuals, especially about things the knowledge of which men ought to obtain in all sincerity before God, for themselves, in humility by the prayer of faith; and more especially a teacher or a High Priest in the Church.

Joseph Smith, Jr., *HC* 3:395-396.

Be careful that you teach not for the word of God the commandments of men, nor the doctrines of men, nor the ordinances of men, inasmuch as you are God’s messengers. Study the word of God, and preach it and not your opinions, for no man’s opinion is worth a straw. Advance no principle but what you can prove, for one scriptural proof is worth ten thousand opinions.

Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 331.

But there has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger [piece of cake] for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle [hammer]. Even the Saints are slow to understand.

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the
Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen. [HC 6:183-185.]


There is creeping into our midst, and I warn you brethren about it, and I urge you to meet it, a great host of sectarian doctrines that have no place amongst us. The gospel in its simplicity, is to be found in the revelations, the teachings of the Prophet and the early leaders of the Church. We shall make no mistake if we follow them. We shall make mistakes ... if we try to harmonize our simple beliefs with the philosophy and the speculations of sectarian doctrines. When you can hear in our Sunday Schools in some of our most prominent wards, that we do not need to worry much about or think much about the first vision, we do not need to think very much about the atoning sacrifice of Christ — that is a mystery; ... we would better be careful.

We must not “liberalize,” and I put that term in quotes, our teachings; we must accept them as God gave them to us and there must be amongst us unity in faith.


For any Latter-day Saint psychologist, chemist, physicist, geologist, archaeologist, or any other scientist, to explain away or misinterpret or evade or elude, or most of all to repudiate or to deny, the great fundamental doctrines of the Church [e.g., “the nature of the Godhead, the origin of man, the reality of Satan, the purpose of mortality, the necessity of obedience, the need for repentance, the workings of the Holy Spirit, the ordinances and performances that pertain to salvation, the destiny of the earth, the future condition of man after the resurrection and the judgment, the eternity of the marriage relationship, and the eternal nature of the family.” — Taken from the “Explanatory Introduction” of the 1981 edition of the Doctrine & Covenants] in which he professes to believe, is to give the lie to his intellect, to lose his self-respect, to bring sorrow to his friends, to bring shame to his parents, to besmirch the Church and its members, and to forfeit the respect and honor of those whom he has sought, by his course, to win as friends and helpers.

Elder Dean L. Larsen, Sixth Annual Book of Mormon Symposium, Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center Newsletter, May 1991.

God allows us to bring afflictions upon ourselves so that we will not drift away from Him, Elder Larsen said.

We must guard against the drifting that occurs to the Saints in the book of Alma. The fact that the Lord has promised no universal apostasy in our day does not indicate that individual members will not fall, said Elder Larsen. As Harold B. Lee said, in the last days “there will be a great sieve, a sifting time.”

Apostasy in the book of Alma began with individuals wilfully sinning, then seeking to justify their behavior by associating with similar people. As we compare consequences of this behavior with our own day, said Elder Larsen, we must realize that spiritual drifters among us pose a threat to our spirituality. “Drifting is most dangerous when drifters associate with true believers,” he said.

We must also remember the command to “be ye separate,” he said, for the book of Alma teaches us the importance of avoiding worldly contamination.


The price of adherence to conscience is loneliness. The price of adherence to principle is loneliness.

Hugh Nibley, Old Testament & Related Studies, 7-8

. . . in their ways of disbelief the clergy have led the field. This can be seen in Marneck's final definition of a “religion without faith,” for in the end he recommends “to the non-believing person access to religious feelings through the substitution ... of religious feelings by like feelings of a non-religious nature.” These “non-religious” feelings which are accessible to the complete “non-believer” are found in

[1]social good works,
[2]aesthetic experience,
[3]brotherly love,
[4]the psychological search for the deeper self, and