

When Are the Writings and Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?

By President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., of the First Presidency

Address to Seminary and Institute Personnel, BYU, 7 July 1954.

Elder [Harold B.] Lee suggested that I speak about the following: The King James Version of the Bible; the Value of the Book of Mormon; and When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture.

Since the subjects are broad and we have only an hour, I have, with his permission, planned to speak only upon two of them: The King James Version of the Bible, and When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture.

Regarding the King James Version of the Bible, I shall not say very much. So far as the King James Version against the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament is concerned, I think it best to let that matter rest with my talk at the last conference [April 1954]. To go into greater detail than was then given would require far more time than one full hour. The talk was published in the *Deseret News*, April 10, 1954, and in *The Improvement Era*, June, 1954. Furthermore, Bookcraft Co. obtained approval to issue it in pamphlet form, and anyone interested can secure a copy from them. (I may add parenthetically that I have not a penny of financial interest of any sort in that printing project; they did kindly present me with a hundred copies gratis.) But I might today add a few paragraphs about the language in which Jesus spoke and in which the earliest records might have been made.

There seems no doubt but that, at the time of Jesus, the language of Palestine (and the countries adjacent thereto, particularly to the immediate north, east, and

south) was Aramaic. It seems clear on the evidence that in his teachings to the people, the Lord spoke in Aramaic. There is some suggestion that he may have used Greek, but as one scholar (a Christian Jew) says, "A Jewish Messiah who would urge his claim upon Israel in Greek, seems almost a contradiction in terms." (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 3rd ed. 28th imp. [NY: Longmans, Green and Company, 1927], vol. 1, pp. 129, 130.)

I cannot question that the Christ could have spoken Greek, or any other language, if he had wished.

Another critic says: "Most scholars would admit that the vernacular of Palestine in the time of our Lord was Semitic, and not Greek," but note that the practice of these scholars does not agree with their theory, "for in all kinds of theological writings, critical as well as devotional, the references to the text of the Gospels constantly assume that the Greek words are those actually uttered by our Lord. But if Greek was not commonly spoken in the Holy Land, it is improbable that He who ministered to the common people would have employed an uncommon tongue. It follows that the Greek words recorded by the Evangelists are not the actual words Christ spoke.... But all the evidence tends to the conviction that Christ habitually employed some form of the vernacular in his discourses, and not the alien language of Greece." (G. H. Gwilliam, "Language of Christ," James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible, Complete in One Volume* [NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920], pp. 530, 531.)

As to the language in which the first record of Christ's works and

teachings was made, we may briefly note the following facts:

As already intimated, it seems clear, and quite naturally so, that the teachings of Christ spread first into the country surrounding Palestine. Christ himself journeyed northward out of Palestine proper into Phoenicia. Indeed, it was here that the Syro-phoenician woman came to him, asking that he heal her daughter afflicted with an evil spirit. In the conversation which passed between them, the woman, replying to a question put by Jesus—his favorite method of disconcerting those who pressured him—gave the only answer that, so far as I have observed, left Jesus obliged to speak further. For, after a rebuff from the Savior, who told her that it was not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs, she replied: "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Whereupon Jesus said unto her: "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." (Mark 7:28, 29.)

Just before the end of his ministry, Jesus left Palestine proper and journeyed eastward into Perea, just beyond the Jordan.

Saul was on his way to take vengeance on the group of the disciples of Christ in Damascus in Syria when he had the great vision of his conversion. This was within two years of the crucifixion. The gospel was spreading through Aramaic areas.

It is difficult to conceive that all this spread of the gospel from Palestine to adjacent areas was not in the common language of the entire region, the language in which Jesus spoke and taught.

Luke, beginning his Gospel (written somewhere between A.D. 63-68—*The Scofield Reference Bible*, rev. ed. [NY: Oxford University Press, 1917], p. 1070), writes

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of things which are most surely believed among us,

Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word;

It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. (Luke 1:1-4.)

Kenyon, a modern critical authority, affirms, on the point of the written record of Christ's work and teachings:

We see first of all a period of some forty years when the narrative of our Lord's life and teaching circulated orally, in the preaching of his disciples, or in written records which have not come down to us; and when St. Paul was writing his letters to various Christian churches which he and his companions had founded. (Sir Frederic Kenyon, *The Story of the Bible* [London: John Murray, 1949], pp. 35, 36.)

Regarding the times at which the various New Testament books were written, Kenyon (apparently principally relied upon by the revisers of the Revised Standard Version) comments:

Since the publication of Harnack's *Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur* in 1897 it has been generally admitted that, with very few

exceptions, the traditional dates of the New Testament books may be accepted as approximately correct. The doctrines of the school of Baur, which regarded the earliest Christian books as a tissue of falsifications of the second century, have been exploded. "That time," says Harnack, "is over. It was an episode, during which science learnt (sic) much, and after which it must forget much." Recent discoveries have only confirmed this conclusion. (Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 4th edition, revised [London: Eyre and Apottiswoode, 1948], p. 98, no. 1.)

Under this thesis, the Synoptic Gospels were written about the years 65 to 75. Mark was the earliest; Acts belongs to the same period; Revelation, about 95; and John, late in the 4th century. (See *The Story*, p. 36.)

Luke was written at the end of Kenyon's "forty years," when (as Kenyon says), the "Lord's life and teaching circulated orally, in the preaching of his disciples, or in written records which have not come down to us." (*The Story*, p. 36.)

Luke expressly says: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us...."

Critics say, as already noted, that these records have totally disappeared. We do not know the language in which they were written. But since Jesus and his disciples are conceded to have spoken in Aramaic, since in large part this would be the language of the common people of the whole Palestinian-Syrian-Mesopotamian region; since the works and teachings of the Savior would first pass out among the common people of the region (inevitably, it would seem, from geographical propinquity [proximity]); since,

as also seems inevitable in the situation, not alone would the word pass by word of mouth out from Palestine to the surrounding areas, but by a written record as well; since all admit, seemingly, that the Greek text we now have contains many passages that are recognized as translations of Aramaic expressions—from these facts may we not, indeed must we not, conclude that the earliest records of the works and teachings of Jesus, probably the ones to which Luke refers, were made in Aramaic, and this being true, the Greek texts of the Gospels are really (in all likelihood, indeed, in major part) founded upon and are translations of Aramaic records?

Some scholars point out that Papias (who was martyred about 163), "(as usually understood) shows they were first written down" in Aramaic. (*Putnam's Handbook of Universal History* [NY: the Knickerbocker Press, 1914]; James Hope Moulton, "Language of the NT," *HDB*, single vol., p. 530a.)

The revisers who produced the recently issued Revised Standard Version state they were divided on this point of the language of the original records, though they refrain from discussing it. They say:

Since the gospel was first proclaimed in Aramaic, it is not surprising that the recorded words of Jesus and the apostles retain even in translation much that is characteristic of the original Semitic sentence structure and idiom. Whether there was any direct translation of written Aramaic sources, in addition to the preservation of Semitic ways of speaking through tradition and oral translation, is a question on which the members of our Committee do not agree. It is also, however, a question which was never debated in the Committee, because the basic assumption that our responsibility was to

translate the Greek text made such considerations irrelevant. (Millar Burrows, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament," *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version*, [The International Council of Religious Education, 1946], pp. 27, 28.)

One authority calls attention to the possibility that John the Apostle used an Aramaic text in his work. (Edward Miller, *A Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* [London: George Bell and Sons, 1886], p. 75.)

The Extreme Textualists vigorously protest against an original Aramaic text, and contend that those originals—the *Sacred Autographs*, as they call them—were in Greek. They declare their prime purpose to be the discovery and establishment of this original Greek text. The great scholars Westcott and Hort (whose influence controlled the British and American Revisions of the 1880s and 1901, an influence that still is dominant in Extreme Textualist circles) built up a theory to destroy the value of the early Aramaic versions, a theory that the modern critic Kenyon (following the appraisals of earlier critics hostile to the theory) characterizes as *myth*. (See Clarence T. Craig, "The King James and the American Standard Versions," *An Introduction*, p. 16; Kenyon, *Our Bible*, p. 115.)

Whether an Aramaic text, if one existed, will ever be discovered is a matter of considerable doubt, because those early records were all written on papyrus which perishes with time, save in very dry climates such as Egypt where such records have been found dating back as far as the second and third centuries (the Chester Beatty papyri and others). Recently, as I recall, a very old papyrus record was found in southern Palestine.

I have gone through all this to show, first, that so far as the New

Testament goes, we do not have any (barring a few words) of the actual words of the Savior. If the original record was in Aramaic, of which our Greek text is in all or part a translation, then all we have in our English Bible is a translation of a translation. If the original record was in Greek, then we have a simple translation, for it seems clear Jesus did not teach in Greek.

As I have already stated, the prime purpose of the *higher critics* is to establish the original Greek text. They are not too concerned with what the Savior actually taught. Perhaps this is best. Dr. Hort made some attempt to determine what the Savior actually said by what he called "conjectural emendation." In fact, he was guessing as to what the Savior said or meant, sometimes irrespective of any known text or other evidence, by processes which his critic laughed out of court by derisively calling them "revelation." (See John William Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, [London: John Murray, 1883], p. 95, No. 1.)

These "emendations" have been almost wholly abandoned by the revisors of the recently issued Revised Standard Version. (See Frederic C. Grant, "The Greek Texts of the New Testament," *An Introduction*, p. 41.)

If it should be shown that the Greek text is in reality only a translation of an Aramaic text, so in fact only a translation of the Aramaic words used by the Savior, it would seem that the whole critical structure built by the Extreme Textualists would crumble to the ground, because the words, the Greek words, upon which they comment and surmise, sometimes by devices that in some professions would be called pettifoggery, are not the words of Jesus at all.

It must never be overlooked that we have had ample warning that the Bible is not without error. Our eighth Article of Faith declares: "We believe the Bible

to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly...." (See "Wentworth Letter," March 1, 1842, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 4, p. 541.)

A little over a year later, in a sermon he preached at the Nauvoo Temple, the Prophet said: "I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors." (*HC* 6:57.)

Modern critics have abundantly shown the soundness of the Prophet's declaration by specifying the various classes of errors which have crept into the Bible text by the roads the Prophet pointed out. (See Author's *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life* [SLC: Deseret Book Company, 1949], pp. 201 ff.)

That the original records—the *Sacred Autographs*—whether in Aramaic or in Greek will be accurate, we have the assurance of the Lord himself, for to his disciples in the upper chamber where he told them of his approaching death, he declared: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26.)

The Prophet Joseph began a revelatory revision of the Bible; but it was not finished, for which reason the Church has never adopted it as a whole. The parts we accept will be found in the Pearl of Great Price in the Book of Moses and in the revision of the twenty-third (last verse) and the twenty-fourth chapters of Matthew.

So far as some of the teachings of the Savior are concerned, we have another record which may be but a translation of his words into English. I refer particularly to the record of his visit to this continent. But if he did not speak

to the people in “reformed Egyptian,” but in another language—the Nephites own, whatever it was—then here also in our English text, we have a translation of a translation. But what we have may be fully relied upon because it is the product of an actual revelation. (1 Nephi 1:2; Moses 1:2 ff.; Mormon 9:32 ff.)

We have also the Book of Abraham, which is a direct translation of the writings of Abraham. Here again we have a revelatory translation upon which we may rely.

But we have one scripture that is in the words of the Lord as he spoke them—that scripture that is known as the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord spoke to Joseph in Joseph’s own language. We may rest there in confidence that we know what the Lord actually said.

We may leave here our discussion of the first subject assigned to us and pass to the last: When Are the Writings and Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Being Scripture?

I assume the scripture behind this question is the declaration of the Lord in a revelation given through Joseph primarily to Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, and William E. M’Lellan, who were to engage in missionary work. After addressing a word first to Orson Hyde, the Lord continued:

And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth—

And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the

word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. (D&C 68:2-4.)

The very words of the revelation recognize that the Brethren may speak when they are not “moved upon by the Holy Ghost”; yet only when they do speak as “moved upon” is what they say considered scripture. No exceptions are given to this rule or principle. It is universal in its application.

The question is, how shall we know when the things they have spoken were said as they were “moved upon by the Holy Ghost”? I have given some thought to this question, and the answer thereto, so far as I can determine, is: We can tell when the speakers are “moved upon by the Holy Ghost” only when we, ourselves, are “moved upon by the Holy Ghost.” In a way, this completely shifts the responsibility from them to us to determine when they so speak.

We might here profitably repeat what Brother Brigham preached. He said:

Were your faith concentrated upon the proper object, your confidence unshaken, your lives pure and holy, every one fulfilling the duties of his or her calling according to the Priesthood and capacity bestowed upon you, you would be filled with the Holy Ghost, and it would be as impossible for any man to deceive and lead you to destruction as for a feather to remain unconsumed in the midst of intense heat. (JD 7:277.)

On another occasion he said:

I am more afraid that this 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. (JD 9:150.)

So we might leave this whole discussion here except that there are some collateral matters involved in the problem that it may not be entirely amiss to consider.

From the earliest days of the Church the Lord has given commandments and bestowed blessings that involved the operation of the principle behind our main question—the determination of whether our Brethren, when they speak, are “moved upon by the Holy Ghost.”

Guidance by the Written Word

Speaking to the Prophet, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer (at Fayette) as early as June, 1829, the Lord said to Oliver Cowdery regarding the written word:

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.

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

For in them are all things written concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my rock. (D&C 18:2-4.)

Thus, early did the Lord seem to make clear to Oliver Cowdery

that he must be guided by the written word; he was not to rely upon his own ideas and concepts.

Two years later (June 7, 1831) the Lord stressed again the importance of following the written word. Speaking to the Prophet, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, John Corrill, John Murdock, Hyrum Smith, and several others, the Lord said:

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. (D&C 52:9; see D&C 18:32, 33.)

Time and again the Lord told these early Brethren of their duty to spread the gospel, and in spreading the gospel, they were to speak with the voice of a trump. (See D&C 19:27; 24:12; 27:16; 28:8, 16; 29:4; 30:5, 9; 32:1; 33:2; 34:5; 35:17, 23; 36:1, 5, 6; 37:2; 39:11; 42:6, 11, 12; 49:1-4; 52:9, 10; 58:46, 47, 63, 64; 66:5-13; 68:4, 5; 71:1-11; 88:77 passim [throughout]; 93:51; 101:39; 106:2; 107:25-35.)

Not to Teach Sectarianism

In a commandment given to Leman Copley (March, 1831) as he went into missionary work among the Shakers, the Lord gave this significant commandment, which has in it a message for all amongst us who teach sectarianism:

And my servant Leman shall be ordained unto this work, that he may reason with them, not according to that which he has received of them, but according to that which shall be taught him by you my servants; and by so doing I will bless him, otherwise he shall not prosper. (D&C 49:4.)

Evil Spirits Not To Be Listened To

To a group of elders (in May, 1831) who had been confused by the manifestations of different spirits, the Lord, answering a special request made of him by the Prophet, gave these instructions and commandments:

Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained?

To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth.

And then received ye spirits which ye could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this are ye justified?

Behold, ye shall answer this question yourselves; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto you; he that is weak among you hereafter shall be made strong.

Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

And if it be by some other way it is not of God.

And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

If it be some other way it is not of God.

Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.

And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day. (D&C 50:12-24.)

This whole revelation (D&C 50) should be read with great care. There is much instruction given in it. But I wish particularly to call you attention to verses 21 and 22, just quoted:

Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.

Both are “moved upon by the Holy Ghost.”

Scope of the Lord’s Instructions

I recur to the declaration of the Lord made (November, 1831) through the Prophet Joseph to Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, and William E. M’Lellan, as concerned their duties to preach the gospel as missionaries. I will reread the passages pertinent to our discussion:

And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth—

And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of

the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants. (D&C 68:2-5.)

Perhaps we should note that these promises relate, in their terms, to missionary work.

What Missionaries Should Teach

As to missionary work, we will wish to remember that in April of 1829, the Lord, speaking to Joseph and Oliver, said: "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed." (D&C 6:9.)

The same instruction was given to Joseph and Hyrum a little later (May, 1829) in the same words. (See D&C 11:9.)

The instruction was repeated a third time about a year later (March, 1830) to Martin Harris (through a revelation given to him through the Prophet Joseph). In this revelation, after instructing Martin as to his missionary work which was to be prosecuted diligently and "with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers," the Lord added: "And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost." (D&C 19:30, 31.)

This is repeating some essentials of what the Lord had commanded twice before. Then the Lord said: "Behold, this is a great and the last commandment which I shall give unto you concerning this matter; for this shall suffice for thy daily walk, even unto the end of thy life." (D&C 19:32.)

The Lord seems just a little impatient here. It may be the

Brethren had been talking about *tenets*, about which at that time they were scantily informed. The Church had not yet been organized.

Assuming that the revelation regarding the scriptural character and status of the words of the Brethren when "moved upon by the Holy Ghost" referred, at the time, to missionary work, and reminding ourselves of our question—how shall we know when the Brethren so speak?—we should recall the quotation we have made from an earlier revelation, when the Lord said: "Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together"—that is, both are led and inspired by the Comforter, the Spirit of truth. (D&C 50:22.) Both are "moved upon by the Holy Ghost."

Again considering missionary work, this mutual understanding between preacher and investigator is surely that which brings conversion, one of the prime purposes of missionary work. It would not be easy to preach false doctrines, undetected, on the first principles of the gospel. So we need say no more about that.

Principle Goes Beyond Missionary Work

However, over the years, a broader interpretation has been given to this passage:

And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. (D&C 68:4.)

In considering the problem involved here, it should be in mind that some of the General Authorities have had assigned to them a special calling; they possess a special gift; they are sustained as prophets, seers, and

revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of the people. They have the right, the power, and authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the overall power and authority of the President of the Church. Others of the General Authorities are not given this special spiritual endowment and authority covering their teaching; they have a resulting limitation, and the resulting limitation upon their power and authority in teaching applies to every other officer and member of the Church, for none of them is spiritually endowed as a prophet, seer, and revelator. Furthermore, as just indicated, the President of the Church has a further and special spiritual endowment in this respect, for he is the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the whole Church.

Position of the President of the Church

Here we must have in mind—must know—that only the President of the Church, the Presiding High Priest, is sustained as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the Church, and he alone has the right to receive revelations for the Church, either new or amendatory, or to give authoritative interpretations of scriptures that shall be binding on the Church, or change in any way the existing doctrines of the Church. He is God's sole mouthpiece on earth for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the only true Church. He alone may declare the mind and will of God to his people. No officer or any other church in the world has this high right and lofty prerogative.

So when any other person, irrespective of who he is, undertakes to do any of these things, you may know he is not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," in so speaking unless he has special authorization from the President of the Church. (D&C 20:9-11; 90:1-4, 9, 12-16;

107:8, 65, 66, 91, 92; 115:19; 124:125; *HC2:477*; 6:363.)

Thus far it is clear.

Interpretations of Scriptures

But there are many places where the scriptures are not too clear, and where different interpretations may be given to them; there are many doctrines, *tenets* as the Lord called them, that have not been officially defined and declared. It is in the consideration and discussion of these scriptures and doctrines that opportunities arise for differences of views as to meanings and extent. In view of the fundamental principle just announced as to the position of the President of the Church, other bearers of the priesthood, those with the special spiritual endowment and those without it, should be cautious in their expressions about and interpretations of scriptures and doctrines. They must act and teach subject to the overall power and authority of the President of the Church. It would be most unfortunate were this not always strictly observed by the bearers of this special spiritual endowment, other than the President. Sometimes in the past they have spoken "out of turn," so to speak. Furthermore, at times even those not members of the General Authorities are said to have been heard to declare their own views on various matters concerning which no official view or declaration has been made by the mouthpiece of the Lord, sometimes with an assured certainty that might deceive the uninformed and unwary. The experience of Pelatiah brown in the days of the Prophet is an illustration of this general principle. (*HC 5:339-345*.)

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. [See *Teachings*, pg. 278.]

To this point runs a simply story my father told me as a boy, I do not know on what authority, but it illustrates the point. His story was that during the excitement incident to the coming of Johnson'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 that 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."

How shall the Church know when these adventurous expeditions of the Brethren into these highly speculative principles and doctrines meet the requirements of the statutes that the announcers thereof have been "moved upon by the Holy Ghost"? The Church will know by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the body of the members, whether the Brethren in voicing their views are "moved upon by the Holy Ghost"; and in due time that knowledge will be made manifest. I refer again to the observations of Brigham Young on this general question.

Differences of View Have Always Been in the Church

But the matter of disagreements over doctrine and the

announcement by high authority of incorrect doctrines is not new.

It will be recalled that disagreements among brethren in high places about doctrines which the scriptures had not made clear appeared in the early days of the Apostolic Church. Indeed, at the Last Supper, "there was also a *strife* among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest"; this was in the presence of the Savior himself. (Luke 22:24.)

The disciples had earlier had the same dispute when they were at Capernaum. (Mark 9:33; Luke 9:46.) And not long after that, James and John, of their own volition or at the instance of their mother, apparently the latter, asked Jesus that one of them might sit on his right hand and the other on his left. (Matt 20:20 ff.; Mark 10:35 ff.)

This matter of precedence seems to have troubled the disciples.

There were disputes over doctrine. You will recall that Paul and Barnabas had differences (not over doctrine however); and, says the record, "the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other." (Acts 15:36 ff.)

Paul had an apparently unseemly dispute with Peter about circumcision. Paul boasted to the Galatians, "I said unto Peter before them all...." (Gal 2:14.)

Peter, replying more or less in kind, wrote:

... even as our beloved brother Paul also to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (2 Pet 3:15, 16.)

The same question regarding circumcision became so disturbing to the Church that the apostles and elders came together in Jerusalem for consideration of this matter. Paul, Barnabas, and Peter were there and participated in the discussion. The Pharisee disciples stood for circumcision of Gentiles. James delivered the decision against the necessity of circumcising the Gentile converts. (See Acts 15:1 ff.)

Conditions After the Passing of the Apostles

So it was with the Apostolic Church. After the passing of the apostles, bickerings, contentions, strife, rebellion grew and ripened in a few generations into the great apostasy. I should like to quote three paragraphs from a work by Dr. Islay Burns (at one time a Professor of Church History, Free Church College, Glasgow). He writes:

It is the year 101 of the Christian era. The last of the apostles is just dead. The rich evening radiance which in his solitary ministry had for thirty years lingered on the earth when all his companions were gone, has at last passed away, and the dark night settles down again. The age of inspiration is over,—that peerless century which began with the birth of Christ, and closed with the death of John—and the course of the ages descends once more to the ordinary level of common time.

It was with the Church now as with the disciples at Bethany, when the last gleam of the Savior's ascending train has passed from their sight, and they turned their faces, reluctant and sad, to the dark world again. The termination of the age of inspiration was in truth the very complement and consummation of the ascension of the Lord. The sun can then only be said to

have fairly set, when his departing glory has died away from the horizon, and the chill stars shine out sharp and clear on the dun and naked sky.

That time has now fully come. The last gleam of inspired wisdom and truth vanished from the earth with the beloved apostle's gentle farewell, and we pass at once across the mysterious line which separates the sacred from the secular annals of the world,—the history of the apostolic age from the history of the Christian Church. (Islay Burns, *The First Three Christian Centuries* [London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1884], p. 49.)

This tragic sunset deepened into twilight of not too long life, and then came the spiritual darkness of an apostate night. For the better part of two millenniums men groped about, spiritually stumbling one over the other, vainly seeking even a spark of spiritual light, until, on that beautiful spring morning a century and a third ago, a pillar of light above the brightness of the noonday sun gradually fell from the heavens till it enveloped a young boy in the woods praying mightily for spiritual light. As he looked up he saw two personages standing in the light above him, the Father and the Son. The morning of the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time had come, breaking the darkness of the long generations of spiritual night. As in the creation light was to replace darkness, day was to follow night.

The Church in the Last Dispensation

The Church was organized, and it was named by direct command of the Lord "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

You know its history—the trials, tribulations, hardships, persecutions, mobbings,

murders, and final expulsion of its members into the western wilderness. You know the loyalty to death itself of some; the disloyalty almost to the point of murder of others. You know the dissensions, the bickerings, the false witnessing, the disputes, the jealousies, the ambitions, the treachery that tore at the very vitals of the young Church. You know the apostasies, the excommunications of men in the very highest places, because they did not recognize when men in high places were not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost" in their teachings. These malcontents followed those who had not the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Finally, the machinations of evil men, inside and outside the Church, brought Joseph and Hyrum to a martyr's death. But God's work moved on.

How Revelation and Inspiration Are Given

Preliminary to a little further consideration of the principle involved in being "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," we might call attention to the difficulties some have in conceiving how revelation comes, particularly its physiological and psychological characteristics. Some have very fixed and definite ideas on these matters and have set up standards by which they test the genuineness or nongenuineness of revelations which Church members generally and the Church itself accept as revelations.

On that point I would like to call your attention to the experiences of Naaman the leper, captain of the host of the king of Syria. A captive Jewish maiden, servant in the house of Naaman, told Naaman's wife there was a prophet in Samaria who could cure Naaman's leprosy. Hearing of this report, the Syrian king ordered Naaman to go to Samaria, and gave him a letter to be delivered to the king of Israel. Naaman went to Samaria with presents, to the great distress and fear of Jehoram, who feared a trick.

Elisha, learning of the situation and of the king's distress, had Naaman sent to him. When Naaman reached Elisha's home, Elisha did not go to see Naaman, but sent a servant to tell him to wash seven times in the waters of the Jordan and he would be healed.

"Naaman was wroth," says the record, and went away, saying he thought Elisha "will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Humiliated, for he carried a royal commission, Naaman "turned and went away in a rage." But his servants pointed out that if Elisha had asked him to do some great thing, he would have done it, then why not do the simple thing of washing in the Jordan. Mollified at least, perhaps half believing, he went and bathed seven times in the waters of the Jordan, "and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (See 2 Kings 5:1 ff.)

Read the whole story again; it is interesting and has valuable lessons.

One lesson is: We do not tell the Lord how to do things. He frames his own plans, draws his own blueprints, shapes his own course, conceives his own strategy, moves and acts as in his infinite knowledge and wisdom he determines. When lack-faiths and doubters and skeptics begin to map out the plans, methods, and procedures they would demand that God follow, they would do well to remember God's power, wisdom, knowledge, and authority.

The First Vision

Before noting a few ways in which the inspiration of the Lord and the revelations of his mind and will have come to men, I want to refer to one aspect of the First Vision, that part (on which is hung a charge of epilepsy to discredit and destroy Joseph's inspiration and mission) which relates that as he came out of the

vision, he found himself lying on his back, looking up into heaven, without strength, though he soon recovered. You might find it interesting to compare this with the account of the condition of Moses after his great theophany (Moses 1:9, 10), and of Daniel (Dan 8:27), and of Saul (Acts 9 and 22), also the incidents connected with the transfiguration on the mount. (Matt 17:1 ff.; Mark 9:1 ff.; Luke 9:28 ff.)

I wish to make here one observation about the First Vision.

No man or woman is a true member of the Church who does not fully accept the First Vision, just as no man is a Christian who does not accept, first, the fall of Adam, and second, the atonement of Jesus Christ. Any titular Church member who does not accept the First Vision but who continues to pose as a Church member, lacks not only moral courage but intellectual integrity and honor if he does not avow himself an apostate and discontinue going about the Church, and among the youth particularly, as a Churchman, teaching not only lack-faith, but faith-destroying doctrines. He is a true wolf in sheep's clothing.

Language of a Revelation

There are those who insist that unless the Prophet of the Lord declares, "Thus saith the Lord," the message may not be taken as a revelation. This is a false testing standard. For while many of our modern revelations as contained in the Doctrine and Covenants do contain these words, there are many that do not. Nor is it necessary that an actual voice be heard in order that a message from our Heavenly Father shall be a true revelation, as shown by revelations given in former dispensations, as well as in our own.

For example: Enos records that while struggling in prayer for forgiveness of his sins "there came a voice unto me, saying ..."

Then, as he continued his struggling in the spirit, he declares, "the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying ..." It is not clear whether the voice was the same on both occasions, or a real voice first and then a voice in the mind. But it does not matter, the message came from the Lord each time. (Enos 1:5, 10.)

In that great revelation designated by the Prophet as the Olive Leaf, the opening sentence is, "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you who have assembled together to receive his will concerning you..." But farther in the revelation, the Lord says:

Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is Spirit; my Spirit is truth; truth abideth and hath no end; and if it be in you it shall abound. (D&C 88:1, 66.)

In that glorious vision and revelation recorded as section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Prophet Joseph records:

By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God....

And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about....

And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fullness. (D&C 76:12, 19, 20.)

And later, telling of the works of Lucifer and the sufferings of those upon whom he made war and overcame, the record says:

... thus came the voice of the Lord unto us:

Thus said the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devils to be overcome.... (D&C 76:30, 31.)

In another revelation, the record reads: "Verily I say unto you my friends, I speak unto you with my voice, even the voice of my Spirit." (D&C 97:1.)

Very early in Church history (April, 1829), giving assurance to Oliver Cowdery, the Lord said:

Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground. (D&C 8:2, 3.)

A little later, the Lord gave to Oliver the sign of the burning in his bosom when his translations were right, and a stupor of thought when the translations were wrong. (D&C 9:8, 9.)

On other occasions, in ancient times and in modern days, the records leave no question but that a real voice was heard, as when the Lord spoke, time and again, to the boy Samuel, a servant to the High Priest Eli, from whose family the Lord took the high office belonging to it, because of the wickedness of his sons, Hopini and Phinehas. (1 Sam 3 ff.)

And in modern days (April 3, 1836), in the great vision of Joseph and Oliver in the Temple at Kirtland, the record reads:

The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the

pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father. (D&C 110:1-4.)

Joseph's Work in Revelation and Vision

To close this phase of our talk, I would like to read to you descriptions of how the Prophet received revelations, and how he looked on such occasions. You are probably all familiar with the record.

Elder Parley P. Pratt (speaking of the revelation now printed as section 51 of the Doctrine and Covenants, given in May, 1831) describes how the Prophet worked when receiving revelations. He says:

After we had joined in prayer in his translating room, he dictated in our presence the following revelation:—(Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each, sufficiently long for it to be recorded, by an ordinary writer, in long hand.

This was the manner in which all his written revelations were dictated and written. There was never any hesitation, reviewing, or reading back, in order to keep the run of the subject; neither did any of these communications undergo revisions, interlinings, or corrections. As he dictated them so they stood, so far as I have witnessed; and I was

present to witness the dictation of several communications of several pages each....) (*Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938, p. 62.)

It seems clear that on this occasion there was no audible voice, though the opening sentence of the revelation reads: "Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God...."

However, President B. H. Roberts points out that when some of the early revelations were published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, they "were revised by the Prophet himself in the way of correcting errors made by the scribes and publishers; and some additional clauses were inserted to throw increased light upon the subjects treated in the revelations, and paragraphs added, to make the principles or instructions apply to officers not in the Church at the time some of the earlier revelations were given. The addition of verses, 65, 66 and 67 in sec. xx of the Doctrine and Covenants is an example." (*HC* 1:173.)

At Montrose, Iowa, in August, 1842 (there is some uncertainty as to the exact date), the Prophet, attending a Masonic ceremony, prophesied that the Saints would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, and declared events incident to the move. Brother Anson Call describes this scene as quoted in his biography by Tullidge, as follows:

... Joseph, as he was tasting the cold water, warned the brethren not to be too free with it. With the tumbler still in his hand he prophesied that the Saints would yet go to the Rocky Mountains; and, said he, this water tastes much like that of the crystal streams that are running from the snowcapped mountains. We will let Mr. Call describe this

prophetic scene: "I had before seen him in a vision, and now saw while he was talking his countenance change to white; not the deadly white of a bloodless face, but a living brilliant white. He seemed absorbed in gazing at something at a great distance, and said: 'I am gazing upon the valleys of those mountains.' This was followed by a vivid description of the scenery of these mountains, as I have since become acquainted with it. Pointing to Shadrach Roundy and others, he said: 'There are some men here who shall do a great work in that land.' Pointing to me, he said, 'There is Anson, he shall go and shall assist in building up cities from one end of the country to the other, and you, rather extending the idea to all those he had spoken of, shall perform as great a work as has been done by man, so that the nations of the earth shall be astonished, and many of them will be gathered in that land and assist in building cities and temples, and Israel shall be made to rejoice.'

"It is impossible to represent in words this scene which is still vivid in my mind, of the grandeur of Joseph's appearance, his beautiful descriptions of this land, and his wonderful prophetic utterances as they emanated from the glorious inspirations that overshadowed him. There was a force and power in his exclamations of which the following is but a faint echo: 'Oh the beauty of these snow-capped mountains! The cool refreshing streams that are running down through those mountain gorges!' Then gazing in another direction, as if there was a change of locality: 'Oh the scenes that this people will pass through! The dead

that will lay between here and there.' Then turning in another direction as if the scene had been changed: 'Oh the apostasy that will take place before my brethren reach that land!' 'But,' he continued, 'the priesthood shall prevail over its enemies, triumph over the devil and be established upon the earth, never more to be thrown down!' He then charged us with great force and power, to be faithful to those things that had been and should be committed to our charge, with the promise of all the blessings that the priesthood could bestow. 'Remember these things and treasure them up. Amen.'" (*Tullidge's Histories*, vol. 2, History of Northern Utah, and Southern Idaho—Biographical Supplement, p. 271 *et seq.*) (*HC* 5:85.)

Brother Pratt affirms that he had frequently witnessed the Prophet receiving revelations always in the way he described, and Brother Call says he had before seen the Prophet in a vision.

Stirring records of glorious events!

One can partly understand how the early saints clung to Joseph and why the early Brethren followed and protected him even to death itself. Faith and knowledge and love rose to loftiest heights in those early days of tribulation and martyrdom, and jealousy and hate and the spirit of murder, inspired by Satan, sank to the depths of lowest degree, working for the defeat of God's work.

Supremely great is the calling of a Prophet of God to declare the mind and the will of God touching the trials, the vicissitudes, the grievous persecutions that follow the righteous of the children of man, and then to proclaim the glories of the infinite goodness of God, his mercy and love, his

forgiveness, his unbounded helpfulness, his divine purposes, his final destiny of man.

Yet we must not forget that prophets are mortal men, with men's infirmities.

Asked if a prophet was always a prophet, Brother Joseph quickly affirmed that "a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such." (*HC* 5:265.)

He pointed out that James declared "that Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, yet he had such power with God, that He, in answer to his prayer shut the heavens that they gave no rain for the space of three years, and six months; and again, in answer to his prayer, the heavens gave forth rain, and the earth gave forth fruit." (*James* 5:17, 18; *HC* 2:302.)

On another occasion Joseph quoted the saying of John that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (*Rev* 19:10) and declared:

... if I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy, and that constitutes a prophet. (*HC* 5:215, 216.)

There is not time to say more on this occasion.

I have tried to suggest the meaning of the scripture which says that what the priesthood says when "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," is itself scripture. I have tried to indicate my own thought as to some of the limitations which attend the exercise of this principle, both as to those who are entitled to have their words taken as scripture, and also as to the doctrines that might fall from the lips of those not possessing the special gift and endowment. I have shown that even the president of the Church has not always spoken under the direction of the Holy Ghost, for a prophet is not

always a prophet. I noted that the apostles of the Primitive Church had their differences, that in our own Church, leaders have differed in view from the first.

I have observed that the Lord has his own ways of communicating his mind and will to his prophets, uninfluenced by the thoughts or views of men as to his proper procedure; that sometimes he evidently speaks with an audible voice, but that at other times he speaks inaudibly to the ear but clearly to the mind of the prophet. I quoted how the Prophet Joseph worked as he received revelations and how his countenance changed in appearance at such times. I have tried to explain briefly how, as Joseph said, a prophet is not always a prophet, but is a prophet only when acting as such; and this means that not always may the words of a prophet be taken as prophecy or revelation, but only when he, too, is speaking as "moved upon by the Holy Ghost."

I repeat here some of the elemental rules that, as to certain matters, will enable us always to know when others than the Presiding High Priest, the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, the President of the Church, will not be speaking as "moved upon by the Holy Ghost."

When any one except the President of the Church undertakes to proclaim that any scripture of the Church has been modified, changed, or abrogated, we may know he is not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost."

When any one except the President of the Church undertakes to proclaim a revelation from God for the guidance of the Church, we may know he is not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost."

When any man, except the President of the Church, undertakes to proclaim one unsettled doctrine, as

among two or more doctrines in dispute, as the settled doctrine of the Church, we may know that he is not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," unless he is acting under the direction and by the authority of the President.

Of these things we may have a confident assurance without chance for doubt or quibbling.

God grant us the power so to live that always we may be "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," to the end that we may always detect false teachings and so be preserved in the faith that shall lead us into immortality and eternal life, I humbly pray, in the name of him through whom, only, we approach the Father. Even so. Amen.