

The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator by Elder Harold B. Lee

Brother William E. Berrett has asked me to talk about a particular subject. The subject he gave me is "The Place of the Living Prophet." The interesting thing, and I suppose that you as teachers have experienced it many times, is that as I began to study this, I found that I needed more than one period to discuss it. I would have to talk to you for six weeks to exhaust what I think would be a complete perusal of a subject such as the one he has assigned. So of necessity I must limit what I say to a few specifics, or generalities, as you may think of them.

In the first place, in order to limit it I shall qualify that subject somewhat, because the word *prophet*, as you well know, could be defined more broadly than I am sure Brother Berrett intended my discussion to be. I have suggested the title "The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator," and I shall explain in a few moments just what I mean by that.

As I thought about this matter of "living prophet" (why did Brother Berrett not say, "the place of the prophet, seer, and revelator," instead of saying "living prophet, seer, and revelator"?), I began to discover that Brother Berrett was but following what the scriptures had said. Peter, in his great testimony concerning the Master, said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." We are given admonitions to "believe in the living prophet"—you can find it in the Book of Mormon; and in the Doctrine and Covenants, "living oracles" are referred to. The plain inference is that when a living prophet is specified, we must assume that there is such a thing as a dead prophet that the people believe in, or a dead oracle, or a dead God.

At the world's fair, Brother McAllister, president of the New York Stake, told us of an experience he had that probably defines the distinction that I am trying to make in this particular subject. He was on a plane coming back from a business assignment in St. Louis, and his seatmate was a Catholic priest. As they flew toward New York and became acquainted with each other, each discovered the other's identity as to church relationships. As they talked about various things, the Catholic priest said, "Have you been out to the world's fair?"

"Yes," Brother McAllister said. "I am on the committee that helped to plan our pavilion out there."

"Well, have you visited our Catholic exhibit?"

And again Brother McAllister said yes.

And the priest said, "Well, I have been to the fair and I have visited your exhibit. At the Catholic exhibit we have the dead Christ—the *Pieta*. But the Mormon Pavilion has the live Christ, or the living Christ."

And in that I think there is a distinguishing difference.

I have a banker friend in New York. Years ago when I met him in company with President Jacobson, who was then presiding over the Eastern States Mission, we had quite a discussion. President Jacobson had given him a copy of the Book of Mormon, which he had read, and he spoke very glowingly of what he called its "tremendous philosophies." Near the close of the business hour he invited us to ride to the mission home in his limousine, and we accepted. On the way, as he talked about the Book of Mormon and his reverence for its teachings, I said, "Well, why don't you do something about it? If you accept the Book of Mormon, what is holding you back? Why don't you join the Church? Why don't you accept Joseph Smith, then, as a prophet?"

And he said, very thoughtfully and carefully, "Well, I suppose the whole reason is that Joseph Smith is too close to me. If he had lived two thousand years ago, I suppose I would believe. But because he is so close, I guess that is the reason I can't accept him as a prophet."

Here was a young man saying, "I believe in the dead prophets that lived a thousand-plus years ago, but I have great difficulty believing in a living prophet." That attitude is also taken toward God. To say that the heavens are sealed and there is no revelation today is saying that we do not believe in a living Christ today, or a living God today—we believe in one long-since dead and gone. So this term *living prophet* has real significance.

To lay a bit of foundation as to what the kingdom is, let me read something that appeared in the *Millennial Star* back in 1845. It was called the "Proclamation" by Parley P. Pratt. I shall read two excerpts from this rather lengthy piece, but first I will give you a point of view as to what this is. We sometimes hear people refer to the Church as a democracy. It isn't any such thing. A democracy is a government where the sole authority is vested in the people—the right to nominate, to release, to change. The Church is not a democracy. It is more like a kingdom than a democracy—and yet it is not wholly like a kingdom, except that we accept the Lord as the king, who has under his direction an earthly head who becomes and operates as his mouthpiece. It is an organization that is defined more accurately as a theocracy, which means that it is something like a kingdom as the world would define it, and yet something like a democracy. The nature of this theocracy is spoken of in the "Proclamation" in one or two places.

Before I read to you from Parley P. Pratt, I should like to read a statement from the Prophet Joseph Smith. I will read only two sentences:

"[The Melchizedek] Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam. . . . The Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in all those priesthoods." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 322-23.)

There you have him saying the same thing—the priesthood is the perfect law of theocracy. Now listen to this "Proclamation":

"The legislative, judicial, and executive power is vested in Him [the Lord]. He reveals the laws, and he elects, chooses, or appoints the officers; and holds the right to reprove, to correct, or even to remove them at pleasure. Hence the necessity of a constant intercourse by direct revelation between him and his church. As a precedent for the foregoing facts, we refer to the examples of all ages as recorded in the Scriptures.

"This order of government began in Eden.—God appointed Adam to govern the earth, and gave him laws.

"It was perpetuated in a regular succession from Adam to Noah; from Noah to Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, the prophets, John, Jesus, and his apostles. All, and each of which were chosen by the Lord, and not by the people." (Parley P. Pratt, "Proclamation," *Millennial Star*, Mar. 1845, p. 150.)

Even today we have some startling things that indicate how little we understand that. We had a case of a very popular bishop. (This is so far away and so long ago that none of you will know of whom I am speaking.) Here was a man who after ten years liked to be bishop. His was a brand-new meeting house and he liked it, and the people liked him. When word was noised around that he was going to be released and made a member of the high council, word was passed down the line. Now, I would not assume that the bishop started it all—I assume it was these well-wishers who did it. But at any rate, there were petitions being circulated to forbid the release of their beloved bishop. When the stake presidency heard about it, they came and asked for an audience with members of the Twelve and I was one who sat in. We said, "It is very simple. All you have to do when the people are convened in the sacrament meeting is to announce to the congregation that Bishop so-and-so has been extended an honorable release as the bishop of this ward, and with the approval of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve his successor has been chosen and is about to be announced. All of you who would like to give this man a vote of thanks for his labors may indicate it by raising the right hand."

And that is the way the sacrament meeting was conducted when the time came. Immediately a young lawyer objected. He had gone to the Sunday School classes that morning and said, "How do you like your

bishop? You don't want him released, do you? You be there tonight and vote against his release." And now they were not being given a chance to vote against the release of the bishop. Then the stake president made a mistake; he said, "Well, I talked with the General Authorities, and they said this was the way to do it." And of course that lessened his own prestige in the eyes of his people. But then, to try to get even, nearly half of them voted against sustaining the man chosen as the successor.

Parley P. Pratt then says a thing that is fundamental. The leaders are chosen by the Lord and not by the people. The Church is not a democracy. We must not speak of the Church as a democracy. It is true that the people have a voice in the kingdom of God. No officer is to preside over a branch or a stake until he is sustained by a vote of that body over which he is to preside. They may reject, but they do not nominate and they do not release. That is done by a higher authority.

"But they do not confer the authority in the first place, nor can they take it away; for instance, the people did not elect the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, nor could they by popular vote deprive them of their apostleship.

"As the government of the kingdom anciently existed; so is it now restored.

"The people did not choose that great modern apostle and prophet, Joseph Smith, but God chose him in the usual way that he has chosen others before him, viz., by open vision, and by his own voice from the heavens." (Pratt, "Proclamation," p. 150.)

The same "Proclamation" states:

"The government of the Church and kingdom of God, in this and in all other ages, is purely a THEOCRACY; that is, a government under the direct control and superintendence of the Almighty" (p. 150).

"This last key of the priesthood is the most sacred of all, and pertains exclusively to the first presidency of the church, without whose sanction and approval or authority, no sealing blessing shall be administered pertaining to things of the resurrection and the life to come" (p. 151).

It is sometimes very interesting to get the reaction of people. I recall when President McKay announced to the Church that the First Council of the Seventy were being ordained high priests in order to extend their usefulness and to give them authority to act when no other General Authority could be present. I went to Phoenix, Arizona, and I found a seventy who was very much disturbed. He said to me, "Didn't the Prophet Joseph Smith say that this was contrary to the order of heaven to name high priests as presidents of the First Council of the Seventy when they were named in the beginning?"

And I said, "Well, I had understood that he did, but had you ever thought that what was contrary to the order of heaven in 1840 might not be contrary to the

order of heaven in 1960?" You see, he had not thought of that. He was following a dead prophet, and he was forgetting that there is a living prophet today. Hence the importance of our stressing that word *living*.

I had an experience here at BYU long enough ago that no one will affix any responsibility. I had said something about a very touchy, explosive subject that was very much discussed; it was the Negro question. I had dragged in something "by the ears" and had quoted from a statement of a president of the Church, and I was the authority for saying that this had been said. When I got back home one of the teachers of Brigham Young University wrote me and asked if I would give him chapter and verse as to where and when this had been said. He is one of our most loyal teachers, but he was not conscious of the fact that I was speaking as one having authority. He had to have the chapter and verse of somebody who had been dead long enough for his statements to take on epical authority. He was following a prophet who was dead. He was not listening to one who was talking to him today. That was not enough—to be told by one who was living today. We do it unconsciously. "Will you give me chapter and verse, where and when this was said?" For most people it would have been enough to say that is was said—that was the authority. And I was almost inclined to say, "I refer you to my talk of such-and-such day at Brigham Young University." But he would have thought, of course, that that was a display of egotism, which I was not quite willing to have tagged upon me.

Years ago as a young missionary, I was visiting Nauvoo and Carthage with my mission president, and we were holding a missionary meeting in the jail room where Joseph and Hyrum met their deaths. The mission president had related the historical events that led up to the Martyrdom, and then he closed with this very significant statement. He said, "When the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, there were many Saints who died spiritually with Joseph." So it was with Brigham Young; so it was with John Taylor. And you have people today who are still quoting from what is alleged to have been a revelation of John Taylor. Suppose he did have revelations. Did they have any more authority than something that comes from President McKay today? Do you see? Some Church members died spiritually with Wilford Woodruff, with Lorenzo Snow, with Joseph F. Smith, with Heber J. Grant, with George Albert Smith. We have the same affliction today—some are willing to believe someone who is dead and gone and accept his as more authoritative than the words of a living authority today. I think that probably Brother Berrett, in putting that word *living* in, had more purpose than I at first thought when I started to think about this subject.

As I thought about this matter of prophecy, I added the words *seer and revelator*—that narrows the field,

you see, to one man. The prophet, seer, and revelator means the President of the Church. There are sixteen men who are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators; but that does not mean all of them have equal authority. It means that in that body are those who may become seers as well as prophets and revelators. In a broad sense, a prophet is one who speaks, who is inspired of God to speak in his name.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said in answer to a query as to how this Church is different from all other churches: "We are different because we have the Holy Ghost" (*History of the Church*, 4:42). Every one of you has had hands laid upon your head and you were blessed to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. That was, in a sense, a command for you to so live that you could enjoy the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "No person can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations, for the Holy Ghost is a revelator" (*Teachings*, p. 328). Now, in a broad sense, then, that word *prophet* might apply to all faithful Church members. I do not mean that we have the right to receive revelations as to how this Church might be run, or that members of a stake may have revelations as to how or who should be named in a stake organization or in a ward as a bishop. But I do say that the bishop in his place, the mission president in his place, the stake president in his place, the quorum president, the auxiliary president, the seminary teacher, the institute teacher, a father and mother in the home, and a young person in his or her quest for a proper companion in marriage—each of us has the right. No body of people has a gift so widely diffused as the gift of prophecy. You recall the definition as contained in the book of Revelation. John quoted the angelic messenger who came to him as saying, "I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus . . . for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). Paul spoke of it to the Corinthians, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say [and the Prophet Joseph Smith said that should have been translated no man can know] that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3). In other words, anyone who enjoys the gift by which he may have God revealed has the spirit of prophecy, the power of revelation, and in a sense is a prophet within the sphere of responsibility and authority given to him.

It was not in that broad sense that Brother Berrett apparently wanted me to speak. That is why I added the words *seer and revelator*. And in order for you to get the distinction between a prophet and a seer and a revelator, I read to you again what was said of Mosiah about the distinguishing characteristics of one who holds the exalted title of seer and revelator to Christ's church:

"And the king said that a seer is greater than a

prophet.

"And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

"But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.

"Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings." (Mosiah 8:15-18.)

Now, if you go back to that oft-quoted passage that all missionaries quote regarding authority, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4), you get this classic statement as you read the story of how Aaron was called. God said, defining the relationship that he, Moses, would have to God, and that Aaron would have to Moses: "And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his [Aaron's] mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, . . . and will teach you what ye shall do. . . . and he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." (Exodus 4:15-16.)

I think that is as clear a relationship as you can find anywhere—the relationship of the prophet of the Lord and the President of the Church, the prophet, seer, and revelator, to others of us to whom he may delegate authority. Sometimes we get Brethren, even among General Authorities, who become a little irritated because they are not consulted and are not asked their opinions on certain high-level matters. And I have said to them—rather gently, having had a few years' more experience and perhaps lessons that they may have if they live as long as I have—"I choose not to be excited over things that are none of my business."

And usually they say, "Well, it is our business. We are members of the Twelve; we are General Authorities."

And I have said, "You just think it is your business. It becomes our business when the President of the Church delegates to us some of the keys which he holds in fulness. Until he gives us the authority, it is not our business and we do not have the right to take his place."

The need for revelation has not been a matter recognized only by the people of the Church; it has been seen by some of our great thinkers over the years. I quote the following from Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"Miracles, prophecy, poetry, the ideal life, the holy life, exist as ancient history merely; they are not in

the belief, nor in the aspiration of society; but, when suggested, seem ridiculous. . . .

"... It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity,—a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man,—is lost. . . .

"I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the East also. [I suppose he had not heard of the Book of Mormon when he wrote this.] The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain immortal sentences, that have been bread of life to millions. But they have no epical integrity; are fragmentary; are not shown in their order to the intellect. I look for the new Teacher that shall follow so far those shining laws that he shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding complete grace; shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul. . . .

"Men have come to speak of revelation as somewhat long ago given and done, as if God were dead. [Do you get that point? As though God were dead, not speaking as one today.] The injury to faith throttles the preacher; and the goodliest of institutions becomes an uncertain and inarticulate voice. . . .

"... the need was never greater of new revelation than now." (Ralph Waldo Emerson, "An Address delivered before the senior class in Divinity College, Cambridge, 15 July 1838," *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* [New York: Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1929], pp. 39-47; paragraphing changed.)

That quotation came from one of our greatest minds, and I have two or three others along the same line. Speaking as the prophets understood the need, President John Taylor said:

"A good many people, and those professing Christians, will sneer a good deal at the idea of present revelation. Whoever heard of true religion without communication with God? To me the thing is the most absurd that the human mind could conceive. I do not wonder, when the people generally reject the principle of present revelation, that skepticism and infidelity prevail to such an alarming extent. I do not wonder that so many men treat religion with contempt, and regard it as something not worth the attention of intelligent beings, for without revelation religion is a mockery and a farce. If I can not have a religion that will lead me to God, and place me *en rapport* with him, and unfold to my mind the principles of immortality and eternal life, I want nothing to do with it.

"The principle of present revelation, then, is the very foundation of our religion." (*The Gospel Kingdom* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1943], p. 35.)

Now, that means today. Sometimes we get the notion that being written in a book makes it more true than if it is spoken in the last general conference.

Just because it is written in a book does not give it more authority to guide us. President John Taylor goes on with this same idea and explains why the scriptures of the past are not sufficient for us today:

"The Bible is good; and Paul told Timothy to study it, that he might be a workman that need not be ashamed, and that he might be able to conduct himself aright before the living church [there is that word *living* again], the pillar and ground of truth. The church-mark, with Paul, was the foundation, the pillar, the ground of truth, the living church, not the dead letter. The Book of Mormon is good, and the Doctrine and Covenants, as landmarks. But a mariner who launches into the ocean requires a more certain criterion. He must be acquainted with heavenly bodies, and take his observations from them, in order to steer his barque aright. Those books are good for example, precedent, and investigation, and for developing certain laws and principles. But they do not, they cannot, touch every case required to be adjudicated and set in order.

"We require a living tree—a living fountain—living intelligence, proceeding from the living priesthood in heaven, through the living priesthood on earth. . . . And from the time that Adam first received a communication from God, to the time that John, on the Isle of Patmos, received his communication, or Joseph Smith had the heavens opened to him, it always required new revelations, adapted to the peculiar circumstances in which the churches or individuals were placed. Adam's revelations did not instruct Noah to build his ark; nor did Noah's revelation tell Lot to forsake Sodom; nor did either of these speak of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. These all had revelations for themselves, and so had Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, and Joseph. And so must we, or we shall make a shipwreck." (Taylor, *Gospel Kingdom*, p. 34.)

I do not know a stronger statement. I might have said the same thing myself in the same language; and you, because you have more faith and are better grounded in believing in a living oracle today, perhaps, would have believed. But I have gone back enough generations (to President Taylor) so that probably the statement has more "epical" authority than if I had said it in my own language today. But you see the point that he makes. Amos gives us that oft-quoted passage: "Behold, the days come, . . . that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." (Amos 8:11-12.)

Well, that time has come. To quote President Taylor again:

"We are living in a world in which the spirits who have dwelt in the bosom of God are coming into it and

leaving this state of existence at the rate of about a thousand millions in every thirty-three years; and here are thousands of so-called ministers of religion with an inefficient gospel, that God never ordained, trying to ameliorate the condition of mankind, and sending what they call the gospel to the heathen, and they are continually calling for the pecuniary aid of their fellow Christians to assist them in this enterprise." (Taylor, *Gospel Kingdom*, p. 33.)

We have found even seminary people who are saying to their students, as students in turn have reported to us, "The Church ought to change its policy with respect to the Negro." And I have said, "If you will change just one word so that the question will ask, 'How long is it going to be before the Lord [not the Church] changes his policy?' you will see how utterly silly your question is." When there is to be anything different from that which the Lord has told us already, he will give it to his prophet, not to some Tom, Dick, or Harry that is thumbing his way across the country, as we have had people tell the story, and not through someone, as another story relates, who swooned and came up and gave a revelation. I have said, "Do you suppose that while the Lord has his prophet on the earth he is going to take some round-about means of revealing things to his children? That is what he has a prophet for, and when he has something to give to this Church, he will give it to the President, and the President will see that the presidents of stakes and missions get it, along with the General Authorities; and they in turn will see that the people are advised of any change."

A man came in to see me and said that he had heard that some man appeared mysteriously to a group of temple workers and told them, "You had better hurry up and store for a year, or two, or three, because there will come a season when there won't be any production." He asked me what I thought about it, and I said, "Well, were you in the April conference of 1936?"

He replied, "No, I couldn't be there."

And I said, "Well, you surely read the report of what was said by the Brethren in that conference?"

No, he hadn't.

"Well," I said, "at that conference the Lord did give a revelation about the storage of food. How in the world is the Lord going to get over to you what he wants you to do if you're not there when he says it, and you do not take the time to read it after it has been said?"

We live in a changing world. The Lord is going to keep his people informed, if they will listen. As President Clark said in a classic talk that he gave, "We do not need a prophet; we need a listening ear" (see Conference Report, Oct. 1948, p. 82). That is the great need of our generation.

Going back to what President Taylor was saying: "The Christian world by their unbelief have made the heavens as brass, and wherever they go to declare

what they call the gospel they make confusion worse confounded. But who shall debar God from taking care of his own creation, and saving his creatures? Yet this is the position that many men have taken." (Taylor, *Gospel Kingdom*, p. 33.)

I quote what the prophet Amos said: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Way back in the time of President Woodruff they were asking him when the world was coming to an end. Someone was prophesying it. I do not know whether they were talking about bomb shelters then, but something about the same. Someone asked him when he thought the world was coming to an end, and he said, "Well, I don't know, but I am still planting cherry trees." He was just that concerned, and he thought if the Lord wanted to tell anybody, he would be the first one to know. We must understand this.

Now listen to a statement from Napoleon, another great thinker, which gives light to this same thought. While he was in exile he wrote this: "I would believe in a religion if it existed from the beginning of time, but when I consider Socrates and Plato and Mohammed, I no longer believe." You see what he is saying? I am afraid sometimes that our sixth Article of Faith has been wrongly interpreted and wrongly taught. "We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth. This has too often been construed and fixed in the minds of our students to mean that there was no church on the face of the earth until it was established by Jesus in the meridian of time. If that was the first time the church was upon the earth, what are we going to do about all those who lived before that time? Why, of course the church was upon the earth. The kingdom of God was established in the days of Adam, and Abraham, and Moses, the judges, the kings, and the prophets, as well as in the meridian of time. And in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, we have all essentials of every other dispensation plus things that have been revealed which have never been revealed in other dispensations.

Then we come to the question, What is the kingdom of God? Regarding the kingdom of God, the Prophet Joseph Smith said this:

"Whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed His word and gave power and authority to administer in His name, and where there is a priest of God—a minister who has power and authority from God to administer in the ordinances of the gospel and officiate in the priesthood of God, there is the kingdom of God. . . .

". . . Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives his oracles, there is the kingdom of God; and where the oracles of God are not, there the kingdom of God is not." (*Teachings*, pp. 271-72.)

I heard President David O. McKay talk about a

picture of President John Taylor; it was at the front of the chapel when he was growing up as a boy in Huntsville, and underneath it was a quotation. I am uncertain of the identity of the writer—it was either Brigham Young or President Taylor. It said, "The Kingdom of God or Nothing." You see, that has meaning in light of what I have just been reading to you.

President Clark said something that startled folks years ago. He said, "It is my faith that the gospel plan has always been here, that his priesthood has always been on the earth, and that it will continue to be so until the end comes." When that conference session was over there were many who said, "My goodness, doesn't President Clark realize that there has been a period of apostasy following each dispensation of the gospel?" I walked over to the Church office building with President Joseph Fielding Smith and he said, "I believe there has never been a moment of time since the Creation but what there has been someone holding the priesthood on the earth to hold Satan in check." And then I thought of Enoch's city with perhaps thousands who were taken into heaven and were translated. You remember the account. They must have been translated for a purpose and may have had sojourn with those living on the earth ever since that time. I have thought of Elijah, perhaps Moses, for all we know—they were translated beings, also John the Revelator. I have thought of the Three Nephites. Why were they translated and permitted to tarry? For what purpose? An answer was suggested when I heard this man, who we have considered one of our well-informed theologians, say, "There has never been a moment of time when there hasn't been someone holding the priesthood on the earth with power to check Satan and to hold him within bounds." That doesn't mean that the kingdom of God was present, because these men did not have the authority to administer the saving ordinances of the gospel to the world. But these individuals were translated for a purpose known to the Lord. There is no question but that they were here.

When does a person speak as a prophet? Do you recall the revelation in which the Lord said:

"And, behold, . . . this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood [he is talking to General Authorities], whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth . . .

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

This is so when that Authority is speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost. As someone has rightly said, it is not to be thought that every word spoken by our leaders is inspired. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote in his personal diary, "This morning, I . . .

visited with a brother and sister from Michigan, who thought that "a prophet is always a prophet;" but I told them that a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such" (*Teachings*, p. 278). 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—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. We can know that they are speaking under inspiration if we so live that we can have a witness that what they are speaking is the word of the Lord. There is only one safety, and that is that we shall live to have the witness to know. President Brigham Young said something to the effect that "the greatest fear I have is that the people of this Church will accept what we say as the will of the Lord without first praying about it and getting the witness within their own hearts that what we say is the word of the Lord."

Brigham Young said something further on this. He said, "It pleases me a little to think how anxious this people are for new revelation." I remember Brother John A. Widtsoe used to tell us about being asked at a conference, "How long has it been since the Church received a revelation?" Brother Widtsoe stroked his chin thoughtfully and said, "Oh, probably since last Thursday." That startled his interrogator. However, there are many written revelations that are not in the Doctrine and Covenants. To return to what Brigham Young said on revelation:

"It pleases me a little to think how anxious this people are for new revelation. I wish to ask you a question: Do this people know whether they have received any revelation since the death of Joseph, as a people? I can tell you that you receive them continually. . . .

"It has been observed that the people want revelation. This is a revelation; and were it written, it would then be written revelation, as truly as the revelations which are contained in the book of Doctrine and Covenants. I could give you a revelation upon the subject of paying your tithing and building a temple to the name of the Lord; for the light is in me. I could put these revelations as straight to the line of truth in writing as any revelation you ever read. I could write the mind of the Lord, and you could put it in your pockets. But before we desire more written revelation, let us fulfill the revelations that are already written, and which we have scarcely begun to fulfil."

(*Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe, 1946 ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1946], pp. 38-39.)

In other words, what he is saying is that when we are able to live to all the revelations the Lord has given, then we may ask why we are not given more.

The gospel reveals many things to us. President John Taylor said a similar thing. He said that he knew, before they occurred, of the terrible things that were coming upon this nation in the Civil War, and he then knew of many more afflictions that awaited this nation (see *Gospel Kingdom*, p. 40). Well, we ask about revelation today, and you would know, if you would sit with President McKay and if you had heard him just as he was about to depart to choose the two sites for our temples in Europe. It had been discussed in council and the decision was made to build some temples there. After it had been decided that we should build in England and in Switzerland, we were all enjoined, of course, to secrecy, lest our enemies, knowing about it, would put roadblocks in the way. And President McKay said in farewell, "Brethren, pray for me—pray for me. And I will try to so live that the Lord can answer your prayers through me." If he were to tell you the story of the finding of the sites, it would be in itself a great testimony.

President George Albert Smith was about to close one of our general conferences at the time of the furor caused by the book *No Man Knows My History*, one of the scurrilous things published against the Church; and there had been several speakers who had said something about these apostate writings with which the Church was being flooded. President Smith said: "There have been some who have belittled him, but I would like to say that those who have done so will be forgotten and their remains will go back to mother earth, . . . and the odor of their infamy will never die, while the glory and honor and majesty and courage and fidelity manifested by the Prophet Joseph Smith will attach to his name forever" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1946, pp. 181-82). I never heard a more profound statement from any prophet. And he hadn't thought this out. It just came as a flash. And that is what has happened to every one of these who have written trying to tear down, but all honor and majesty to the name of the Prophet Joseph shall never die. Brigham Young and others have said the same things, and I sum it up now with what George Q. Cannon said:

"Therefore, in times of danger, whatever my own feelings may be—and as those who are acquainted with me know, I have pronounced opinions generally upon every subject that is brought up—notwithstanding this characteristic, I look always, and always have looked to the man whom God has placed to preside over His people. I watch his demeanor. I know it is for him to give the signal. It is for him to direct the movements of the crew of the Ship Zion. It is for him to direct how she shall be steered, so far as

human power is necessary for this purpose, and when there are no tremors in him, when there are no indications of fear on his part, when he feels serene and confident, I know that I can do so with the utmost safety, and that this entire people can trust in that God who has placed a prophet, a seer, and a revelator to preside over His people upon the earth." (*Journal of Discourses*, 24:367.)

Keep your eyes on the captain of this ship, if you will.

Yes, we believe in a living prophet, seer, and revelator, and I bear you my solemn witness that we have a living prophet, seer, and revelator. We are not dependent only upon the revelations given in the past

as contained in our standard works—as wonderful as they are—but here in 1964 we have a mouthpiece to whom God is revealing his mind and will. God will never permit him to lead us astray. As has been said, God would remove us out of our place if we should attempt to do it. You have not concern. Let the management and government of God, then, be with the Lord. Do not try to find fault with the management and affairs that pertain to him alone and by revelation through his prophet—his living prophet, his seer, and his revelator, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. (Address to religious educators, 8 July 1964.)