

First Presidency Message

“The Debate Is Over”

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Editors' note (updated 2023): Articles in the magazines archive may reflect practices and language of an earlier time. More current messages on the roles of fathers and mothers include “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” and “Marriage” in Topics and Questions.

Recently, at the Churchwide fireside meeting held for the women of the Church, Young Women President Elaine Cannon made the following statement:

“When the Prophet speaks, ... the debate is over” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1978, p. 108).

I was impressed by that simple statement, which carries such deep spiritual meaning for all of us. Wherever I go, my message to the people is: Follow the prophet. Why else has the Lord placed prophets on the earth throughout the dispensations of time? In his infinite wisdom, and as part of the plan of life and salvation for his children, God has given us the blueprint to follow, the leadership to direct us and keep us on course, and the Church organization to help us lay the foundation and develop the skills, or make the preparation necessary, to lead us back to our eternal home.

It is foolish to suppose that men can be left to their own devices and accomplish what God intended for them. That is just as unreasonable as it would be to leave a newborn babe on its own and expect it to learn to walk and talk and feed and clothe itself without assistance from those responsible for its care and training. A child so neglected and left alone would soon perish.

So it is with us. Without a knowledge and understanding of the gospel, or God’s plan for his children, we cannot live according to the law which is necessary for our salvation; and therefore, those who neglect their spiritual training or fail to heed the warning voice of the prophets will suffer a spiritual death.

It is difficult to understand why there are so many people who fight *against* the counsel of the prophet and *for* the preservation of the very things that will bring them misery and even death. As one example, let us consider the Word of Wisdom. Soon after the restoration of the gospel and organization of the Church, the Lord gave a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith which we call the Word of Wisdom. It warned that tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco, among other things, were not good for man, and should not be used by the Saints.

Now this was quite revolutionary at that time, for the use of these things was not considered detrimental to health. For many years after the revelation was given, people thought the Mormons peculiar because they abstained from these seemingly harmless substances. Then

scientists began to discover many harmful effects of tobacco, and today we are made increasingly aware of the health hazards caused by the use of tobacco, tea, coffee, and alcohol, with additional warnings about the risks involved for the unborn children of pregnant women.

Latter-day Saints should be able to accept the words of the prophets without having to wait for science to prove the validity of their words. We are most fortunate to have a living prophet at the head of the Church to guide us, and all who heed his counsel will be partakers of the promised blessings which will not be enjoyed by those who fail to accept his messages.

Today there are many issues under debate as controversies rage all around us. It should be evident to all that we need divine direction, as men and women who argue their causes seem to be unable to come to workable or peaceable solutions. It is sad indeed that the world does not know or accept the fact that in our midst is a prophet through whom God can direct the solution of world problems.

True Latter-day Saints have no such dilemma. They know that the messages of the prophet have come from the Lord and have the concurrence of all the General Authorities, who are men of vision and integrity, and who themselves try to keep in tune with deity. They are not, as some would suggest, following blindly and acting without their own agency to speak and think for themselves. Through prayer to our Heavenly Father each of us can have the assurance that the course we choose has his divine approval.

Why should there be any debate over the moral issues which are confounding the world today? From the beginning God has made his position very clear in regard to marriage, divorce, family life and love of children, immorality, chastity, virtue, and the high and holy role of women. Through his prophet today he reiterates the Old and New Testament teachings which are clear on these matters.

History and experience have proven that whenever and wherever there is departure from following the word of the Lord, calamity occurs. Civilizations have fallen; there has been general and individual destruction; there have been weeping and wailing and great sorrow; there have been famine and pestilence. Only Satan and his cohorts have been left to rejoice. He is the author of the debates on moral issues. He has sworn to thwart the purposes of God. He it is who deceives and lays in wait to promote his cunning schemes, promising the riches of this world as a reward to those who follow him.

To gain these riches many engage in the debates on moral issues. The alcohol and tobacco industries and dealers in pornography are accumulating great wealth at the expense of the people and to the detriment of their health. With all the evidence of child pornography, it is deplorable that any parent would allow any child to be so exploited. Some children are being neglected and abused because their mothers are seeking worldly pleasures and careers outside the home. Many fathers are more concerned with their financial success than with the welfare of their wives and children.

We must turn all this about. We cannot serve God and mammon. Whose side are we on? When the prophet speaks the debate is over.