



(Millennial Star 54:191).

President Harold B. Lee indicated that not every word spoken or written by a general authority need be considered as inspired ("Stand Ye in Holy Places," Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974, 62). Elder J. Reuben Clark (First Presidency counselor to Presidents Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith and David O. McKay) said that "even the president of the church has not always spoken under the direction of the Holy Ghost" ("When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?" July 7, 1954).

If prophets are not infallible, then what does it mean that they won't "lead the people of the church astray?" There are two important points to consider: (1) What does it mean to "lead astray?" and (2) Do members have the power themselves to keep from being led astray?

The purpose and mission of the church is to "invite all to come unto Christ" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:59). Prophets stand as leaders in this invitation and the things they do and say (as prophets) are intended to accomplish this goal.

How do we come unto Christ? The Book of Mormon gives us the six-point pattern: belief in Christ, repentance, baptism, gift of the Holy Spirit, enduring to the end and being found guiltless at the final judgment.

This list entails personal commitments, attitudes, and relationships with Heavenly Father and Christ. Prophets help guide us to the waters of truth, but they cannot drink for us. We must make personal commitments and interactions with the Lord. So in principle, the prophet will not lead us away (or "astray") from those six gospel principles that allow us to create our own relationships with the divine. Does this mean that they cannot make mistakes about the specifics of doctrinal issues or historical events? Certainly not.

It's also important to point out that members who are in tune with the Spirit have the power to protect themselves from being led away. Brigham Young once said, "...if He (God) should suffer him (Joseph Smith) to lead the people astray, it would be because they ought to be led astray. ... It would be because they deserved it ... " (Journal of Discourses, 4:297-298).

How could someone "deserve" to be led away? Brigham provided an answer in another sermon.

"The First Presidency have of right a great influence over this people; and if we should get out of the way and lead this people to destruction, what a pity it would be! How can you know whether we lead you correctly or not? Can you know by any other power than that of the Holy Ghost? I have uniformly exhorted the people to obtain this living witness each for themselves; then no man on earth can lead them astray" (Journal of Discourses 6:100).

If we obtain our own personal testimonies, and live so that we can receive personal communication from the Father and the confirming testimony from the Holy Spirit, we will not be led astray. Stay tuned for more on this important topic.

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