

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

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In response to a suggestion by then Apostle Harold B. Lee, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., of the First Presidency once addressed a summer session of Seminary and Institute Teachers at Brigham Young University on the subject, "When are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?" His remarks, delivered July 7, 1954, were published in the Church News, July 31, 1954. Because of their continued timeliness, Dialogue again presents these remarks, as originally reported by the Church News.

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. McLellin, 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 so speak, as so "moved upon," is what they say 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. (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, p. 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. (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 9, p. 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.”

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 work; 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 Corroll, 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; and 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*; 93:51; 101:39; 106:2; 107:25-35.)

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.)

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. 50:13-24.)

This whole revelation (D.C. Sec. 50) should be read with great care. There is

much instruction given in it. But I wish particularly to call your 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."

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'Lellin, as concerned their duties to preach the Gospel as missionaries. I will re-read 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.

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. (D.C. 11:9.)

The instruction was repeated a third time (about a year later, March, 1830), now to Martin Harris (through a revelation given to him through the Prophet Joseph). In this revelation, the Lord added, 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":

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 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 just 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.

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 over-all 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.

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 of any other Church in the world had 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 that 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. 90:1-4, 9, 12-16; 107:8, 65-66, 91-92; 115:19; 124:125; *DHC* 2:477; 6:363).

Thus far it is clear.

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 over-all 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. (*DHC*, Vol. V, pp. 339-345.)

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

To this point runs a simple 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 [sic] 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 a highly speculative character) where subsequent Presidents of the Church and the peoples 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 Brother Brigham on this general question.

But this 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 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 according 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." (II Peter 3:15-16.)

This same question regarding circumcision became so disturbing to the Church that "the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter," in Jerusalem. 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. (Acts 15:1 ff.)

So it was with the Apostolic Church. After the passing of the Apostles, bickerings, contentions, strife, rebellion grew apace and ripened in a few generations into the Great Apostacy. I should like to quote here 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 30 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 had 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 and Sons, 1884, p. 49.)

So spoke Burns.

This tragic sunset rapidly 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 persons 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 was organized, 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.

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 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 experience 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 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." (II 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 sceptics 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.

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 of the incidents connected with the transfiguration on the mount (Matt. 17 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 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.

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, first "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 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 yourselves together to receive his will concerning you . . ." Yet farther in the revelation, the Lord says:

Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—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 fulness.

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 saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have [been] made partakers thereof . . . and then are overcome by Satan. (D.C. 76: 12, 19–20, 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, 1929), 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, Hophni and Phinehas. (I. 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.)

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*, Parley P. Pratt (fils), ed., 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." (*DHC*, Vol. I, p. 173, note.)

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 snow-capped 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 those 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 in 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 again 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. I. History of Northern Utah, and Southern Idaho.—Biographical Supplement, p. 271 et seq [in] DHC, Vol. V., p. 86 note.*)

Brother Pratt affirms 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 men, 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." (*DHC*, Vol. V, p. 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 prayers, 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; *DHC*, Vol. II, p. 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." (*DHC*, Vol. 5, pp. 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 that this means that not always may the words of a prophet be taken as a 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 a revelation from God for the guidance of the Church, we may know he is not "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," unless he is acting under the direct authority and direction of the President.

When any one except the President of the Church undertakes to proclaim a new doctrine of the Church, we may know that he is not "moved upon by the Holy Ghost," unless he is acting under the direct authority and direction of the President.

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

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.