

The Standard Works

Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.1, p.322

The Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price including the Articles of Faith, have been received by the vote of the Church in general conference assembled as the standard works of the Church. On this platform we stand.

The Church is not responsible for the remarks made by any elder or for the numerous books that have been written. The authors of the words or books must be responsible for their own utterances.

Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.3, p.203

STANDARD WORKS JUDGE TEACHINGS OF ALL MEN. It makes no difference what is written or what anyone has said, if what has been said is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside. My words, and the teaching of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them. Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man's doctrine.

Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.3, p.203

You cannot accept the books written by the authorities of the Church as standards in doctrine, only in so far as they accord with the revealed word in the standard works.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol.1, p.xviii

The reason for these answers to **questions** is to endeavor to settle once and for all time the problems discussed, which occur and re-occur so frequently, **yet are answered in the revelations in the Standard Works; moreover with the thought in mind to stimulate members of the Church to spend a little more of their spare time in personal search. Of far more profit is a fact discovered by research than by information received. The impression on the mind lasts longer.**

Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol.2, p.69

Question: "I have been impressed for a long time with the thought that the commandments of the Lord require of the members of the Church a thorough understanding of the fundamental principles of the gospel that we may better obey them. It appears to me that there is a spirit of indifference, or lack of desire, on the part of a great many members in relation to gaining a knowledge of these commandments. The

result is a lack of harmony and obedience. This attitude also presents the risk of our being deceived and led astray by the abundance of false doctrine and philosophy which today are taught in the world. If I am right, what can be done about it? Or am I too critical?"

Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol.2, p.69

Answer: You are not too critical. Most emphatically the revelations in the Standard Works require of the members an intelligent study of them. Why does the Lord give revelation and commandment if it is not that we may comprehend and obey them? To the unbelieving Jews who opposed him, Jesus said: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."1 The Lord revealed the plan of salvation to Adam after he was driven out of the Garden of Eden and said to him:

STANDARD WORKS ARE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH

Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol.2, p.113

The Lord has given us the four Standards which lie at the foundation of our faith. Each member of the Church should be so well versed that he, or she, would be able to discern whether or not any doctrine taught conforms to the revealed word of the Lord. Moreover, the members of the Church are entitled, if they are fully keeping the commandments and covenants the Lord has given us, to have the spirit of discernment. The fact remains, however, that too many of the members have not taken advantage of their blessings and obligations, and therefore they are unable to distinguish between truth and error. The "lay" members of the Church are under obligation to accept the teachings of the authorities, unless they can discover in them some conflict with the revelations and commandments the Lord has given. There are times when the leading brethren have expressed their own opinions on various subjects. This they have a perfect right to do. They have divided on political questions; some belong to one political party and others to another. This they have a perfect right to do, but when the Lord has spoken through his servant who holds the keys, there should be unity among the members of the Church.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol.2, p.114

There is nothing more important in the lives of members of the Church than to have the gift of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing of greater importance to the individual member of the Church than the gift of knowledge, and this does not come by observation but by constant study and faith. Each member holding the priesthood should be so well versed that the light of truth would be constantly in his heart. No authority of the Church when guided by the Holy Ghost will ever teach a doctrine that will be contrary to the revealed word of the Lord. He may express an opinion, a personal view, but in doing so he should so declare it. The writings of Paul were not sent forth to the saints in various parts of the world in their completeness as doctrine. There were times when Paul expressed his own opinion. The authorities of the Church have the same privilege, but when they do, they should make it perfectly clear that it is their personal view. When they have the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord the members of the Church should

likewise, by their faith and obedience, have the same Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord will bear witness to our spirits, under such conditions that what has been said is true.

Joseph Fielding Smith, The Signs of the Times, p.21

I said in the beginning of the first talk that I base everything I say upon these Scriptures, that the Standard Works of the Church are the measuring rods the Lord has given us by which we are to measure every doctrine, every theory and teaching, [p.22] and if there is anything that does not conform to that which is given to us in the revelations, we do not have to accept it. Whether I say it or anyone else says it, whether it comes through the philosophy of men, or whenever a statement is made, that is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, you should know what course to take. So far as I am concerned, I will just put it aside. And I don't care how many men may believe it. I don't care how much backing it has in the world of so-called science or philosophy. If it does not harmonize with what the Lord has revealed, to me it is not worth anything.

Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p.764 STANDARD WORKS

The books, writings, explanations, expositions, views, and theories of even the wisest and greatest men, either in or out of the Church, do not rank with the standard works. Even the writings, teachings, and opinions of the prophets of God are acceptable only to the extent they are in harmony with what God has revealed and what is recorded in the standard works. When the living oracles speak in the name of the Lord or as moved upon by the Holy Ghost, however, their utterances are then binding upon all who hear, and whatever is said will without any exception be found to be in harmony with the standard works. The Lord's house is a house of order, and one truth never contradicts another. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 3, pp. 203-204.)

Harold B. Lee, Stand Ye In Holy Places, p.109-110

We have the standard Church works. Why do we call them standard? If there is any teacher who teaches a doctrine that can't be substantiated from the standard church works—and I make one qualification, and that is unless that one be the President of the Church, who alone has the right to declare new doctrine—then you may know by that same token that such a teacher is but expressing his own opinion. If, on the other hand, you have someone teaching a doctrine that cannot be substantiated by the scriptures, and more than that, if it contradicts what is in the standard Church works, you may know that that person is teaching false doctrine, no matter what his position in this church may be. The President of the Church alone may declare the mind and will of God to His people. No officer nor any other church in the world has this high and lofty prerogative. When the President proclaims any such new doctrine, he will declare it to be a revelation from the Lord.

Harold B. Lee, Stand Ye In Holy Places, p.162-163

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 write. 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 church works, you may know by that same token that it is false, regardless of the position of the man who says it. We can know or have the assurance 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."**

Harold B. Lee, Stand Ye In Holy Places, p.164

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 we have a mouthpiece to whom God does reveal and is revealing His mind and will. God will never permit him to lead us astray. As has been said, God would remove him out of his place if he should attempt to do it. You have no 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.

Harold B. Lee, Stand Ye In Holy Places, p.202

Summarized, this means that there are **four essentials for service in the kingdom of God: (1) We must be ordained, (2) we must teach from the standard church works, (3) we must live as we preach, and, (4) we must teach by the Spirit.** "... when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men." (2 Nephi 33:1.)

Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.43

More than at any time in our history we have need for greater spirituality. The way to develop greater spirituality is to feast on the words of Christ as revealed in the scriptures. One of the most significant happenings in recent Church history is the publication of the new editions of the standard works with the new footnotes and other helps. I think we can say without exaggeration that never before in any dispensation have the Saints been so abundantly blessed with the words of the Lord and His prophets. Now our challenge is to do as the Lord commanded: "Study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men" (D&C 11:22). (CR April 1984, Ensign 14 [May 1984]: 7.)

Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.1, p.322 - p.323

ALL TEACHINGS MUST CONFORM TO REVELATIONS. It is not to be supposed from this that all that has been written outside of the standard works of the Church is discarded and rejected, for these things are profitable as helps in the government of the Church, and to promote faith in the members. The point is this, if in these books mistakes

are found, "they are the mistakes of men," and the Church as an organization is not to be held accountable for them, but for that which is received from time to time by vote of the Church, as it comes through the President of the High Priesthood. When the Lord reveals his mind and will, it is to be received, "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same," but we are not to be judged by unauthorized sayings or deeds.

Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.137-138

We are admonished to "seek out of the best books words of wisdom" (D&C 88:118). Surely these books must include the scriptures. Alongside them must be the words of the Presidents of the Church. The Lord said of the President of the Church, "His word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth" (D&C 21:5). These books make up what has been referred to as "the Lord's library"—namely the standard works and the various volumes that contain the words of the different Presidents of the Church. Of the latter volumes, that which would be of greatest importance to you would be the words of the current President of the Church, for his words are directed to our day and our needs. ("In His Steps," in 1979 Devotional Speeches of the Year [Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1980], p. 61.)

Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.333

For the next six months your conference edition of the Ensign should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently. As my dear friend and brother Harold B. Lee said, we should let these conference addresses "be the guide to [our] walk and talk during the next six months. These are the important matters the Lord sees fit to reveal to this people in this day." (CR April 1946, p. 68.) (CR April 1988, Ensign 18 [May 1988]: 84.)

Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.404-405

We know that Satan has great power to deceive, and because of this, we must be aware. The safeguard against his sophistry and deception has been specified by revelation. We are to give heed to the words of eternal life. In other words, we must understand and live by the revelations the Lord has granted to His prophets. These are contained in the four standard works and the written and public declarations of our current prophet. ("Three Imperative Responsibilities," London England Area Conference, 19-20 June 1976.)

James R. Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, Vol:6, p.209

"These four constitute the 'Standard Works of the Church' and are the ultimate authority on all matters of doctrine, save where the Lord shall have given or shall give further revelation through the prescribed source for such, the President of the Church.

Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p.405

We speak of the Bible as being a canon of scripture, meaning it consists of books that are recognized as authoritative guides in matters of faith, doctrine, and conduct. A canon is a standard, or principle, or rule of doctrine and faith by which all else is measured. It is common among Latter-day Saints to speak of their four volumes of scripture as the standard works. Thus the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, as well as the Bible, are canonical books.

Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.3, SCRIPTURE

The more restrictive view of what constitutes scripture would include only what is called "the scriptures"—that is, the four standard works: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. These constitute the canonized, authoritative corpus of revealed writings against which all else is measured. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, "My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them.... We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man's doctrine" (DS 3:203).

Prophet Cannot Lead The Church Astray

A seer then is one who may see God, who may talk with God, who may receive persona, instruction from God. Our prophet is a seer and a revelator. I do not know who originally taught the doctrine. I was told once that it was taught by President Heber J. Grant, but I was taught this doctrine by Elder Marion G. Romney, who told me that the Lord will never let his prophet the seer, lead his people astray. Men in all ranks on this earth and in the Church have fallen from grace, but the Lord will never permit the great prophet, our seer, and revelator, to fall or to lead the people astray. Before this could happen God must of necessity remove that man from the earth.

(10124elder Theodore Moyle Burton, *Conference Report, October 1961*, Afternoon Meeting 122.)

All men are entitled to inspiration, especially men who bear the priesthood, but only one man is the Lord's mouthpiece. Some lesser men have used in the past, and will use in the future, their offices unrighteously. Some will, ignorantly or otherwise, use their office to promote false counsel; some will use it to lead the unwary astray; some will use it to persuade us that all is well in Zion: some will use it to cover and excuse their ignorance. Keep your eye on the Prophet, for the Lord will never permit his Prophet to lead this Church astray. Let us live close to the Spirit, so we can test all counsel.

(11100elder Ezra Taft Benson, *Conference Report, October 1966*, Afternoon Meeting 123.)

The members of this church are blessed to have a prophet, the Lord's mouthpiece, at its head. We can trust the prophet never to lead the members of the Church astray. We should listen, consider, and follow his counsel to us. As President J. Reuben Clark observed, "We do not lack a prophet; what we lack is a listening ear by the people and a determination to live as God has commanded." fn I pray that all the members of the Church will recognize that there is safety when we follow the prophet and strictly heed his voice.

(L. Tom Perry, *Living with Enthusiasm* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1996], 124.)

The prophet will not lead us astray. President [Heber J.] Grant used to say to us time and again: "Brethren, keep your eye on the President of this church. If he tells you to do anything and it is wrong and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it. But you don't need to worry; the Lord will never let His mouthpiece lead this people astray." (61-04, p. 36) (Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, edited by Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 530.)

The prophet is the Lord's mouthpiece. 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 we have a mouthpiece to whom

God does reveal and is revealing His mind and will. God will never permit him to lead us astray. As has been said, God would remove him out of his place if he should attempt to do it. You have no 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. (64-04, p. 164)

(Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, edited by Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 531.)

We must sustain the prophet. There were one or two lessons of loyalty which I should like to put into the record that those of us close to [President J. Reuben Clark Jr.] have seen him demonstrate throughout this long twenty-eight years of service in the leadership of the Church. I heard him say this publicly. When he was called by President [Heber J.] Grant to become the second counselor in the First Presidency, he said:

"I was worried because I wondered just how much counsel one should give a man whom we sustained as the mouthpiece of the Lord, the prophet. But in our council meetings I soon found my place. When we were discussing some subject the President would turn to each of us and say, 'What do you think about this?' or 'What is your opinion?' When he asked me I gave it to him straight from the shoulder, as forthrightly as I knew how, even though my opinion was sometimes contrary to his. Then there was the business of resolving our different points of view. But when the President of the Church finally declared, 'Brethren, I feel that this should be our decision,' " President Clark said, "that was the prophet speaking, and I stopped counseling and accepted without question the decision that he thus announced." (61-11, pp. 7-8)

(Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, edited by Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 532.)

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

by J. Reuben Clark

Address given to seminary and institute teachers, at BYU, on July 7, 1954, published in *Church News* (July 31, 1954): 9-10; reprinted in *Dialogue* 12 (Summer 1979), 68- 80.

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'Lellin, 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

geocities.com/Athena/oracle/1307/entitled.html

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 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; 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, cloth 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, cloth 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

quote
from
lesson

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 sum," 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 15:36-95.)

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 15:1-95.)

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 "fumed 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.).