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Mary Jane Woodger

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Revelation Attitudes: The Coming Forth of Official Declaration 2

Mary Jane Woodger

Mary Jane Woodger is an assistant professor of Church history and doctrine

“There are some events in life so significant that we retain an indelible memory of where we were when they happened.”¹ For my parents’ generation, one indelible memory may be where they were when President John F. Kennedy was shot. For my grandparents, a fixed memory was associated with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. For my generation, a question to be asked, remembered, and contemplated is, “Where were you and what were you doing when you heard that President Spencer W. Kimball had received the revelation that gave all worthy males the priesthood?” Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve remembers the joyful news: “I sat down on a pile of dirt and beckoned to my boys. . . . This is the scene etched in my memory of this unforgettable event—sitting on a pile of dirt as I told my boys that all worthy male members of the Church could now be ordained to the priesthood, and weeping as I spoke.”²

I also remember well 9 June 1978. I was at home on summer vacation with a plastic bag of hair dye on my head when a news alert came on the television that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was about to make an important announcement. When the announcement broke, I was so excited I got on the phone and called everyone I knew. By the time I remembered the dye on my hair, my summer blonde had turned bright orange. I do not remember that day simply because of my radical hair color; rather, the day changed the Church, my life, and the lives of Latter-day Saints forever.

Studying President Kimball’s descriptions of what happened has also changed my attitudes about revelation. This article is not intended as a historical reconstruction of the priesthood policy

prior to June 1978 or a detailed discussion of why there have been restrictions based on age, gender, and ethnicity. Instead, the focus is on how we can obtain personal revelation using President Kimball's experience as a model.

Though many Latter-day Saints were surprised at the 1978 announcement, prophets had prayed and hoped for years that the priesthood would be extended to all worthy men. By examining the events and efforts leading to this revelation, we can identify attitudes necessary to prepare ourselves and our students to "supplicat[e] the Lord for divine guidance."³

Background

As the First Presidency declared in Official Declaration 2, "Promises [have been] made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood."⁴ For example, in 1852, Brigham Young prophesied that the "time will come when they [blacks] will have the privilege of all we have the privilege of and more."⁵ In his journal, President Wilford Woodruff recorded, "The day will come when all that race (the blacks) will be redeemed and possess all the blessings."⁶

In a letter dated 28 January 1928, President Heber J. Grant, in referring to African-Americans, related that they cannot hold the priesthood "until such time as he [the Lord] shall see fit to withdraw the decree."⁷ Two decades later, President David O. McKay, then a member of the First Presidency, wrote: "Sometime in God's eternal plan, the [blacks] will be given the right to hold the priesthood."⁸

"In an interview with United Press International in October 1972, President Harold B. Lee said, 'The [blacks] will achieve full status. We're just waiting for that time.'⁹ In another press conference on 31 December 1973, President Kimball added: "I'm not sure that there will be a change, though there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father and this is not my policy or the Church's policy—it's the policy of the Lord who has established it and I know of no change though we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case He should ever wish to make a change."¹⁰

Although these prophets yearned for the day the Lord would extend the priesthood to all worthy males, it was through President Kimball that the Lord brought that desire to fruition.

Preparation for the Revelation

Before President Kimball declared that the Lord would be the one who changed this policy, he was being prepared, along with Church members of African descent and others, for the revelation in 1978. Many native Africans became acquainted with the Church and wrote Church headquarters for more information. Dale LeBaron, who has done extensive oral history work with African Latter-day Saints, was presiding over the only African mission in 1978. LeBaron tells us, "It became evident that the Lord had blessed the people of Africa with his Spirit similar to when he had poured out his Spirit upon people about the time of Joseph Smith's First Vision. Many were prepared to receive the message of the gospel."¹¹

President Kimball's assignments in the Quorum of the Twelve before he was prophet imbued him with a desire to bless the lives of all Church members. For instance, after working with the Church Native American Program, he decided that some Latter-day Saints needed to be educated and have "their hearts opened, cleansed and purged . . . [because] racial prejudice is of the devil and of ignorance." He was called on seven separate occasions to serve as the Apostle presiding over South America. On one occasion in Uruguay when a black member remarked he would not be able to "even be a doorkeeper" of a temple, President Kimball felt that his "heart wanted to burst for him." In Curitiba, Brazil, he met two full-time black Church builders. One of these men declared to President Kimball: "[I] would give [my] life for the Lord's program and [I am] willing to wait until the millennium if necessary" to receive all the blessings of the gospel. President Kimball embraced the young man and "felt impressed to promise him blessings beyond his fondest imagination if he remained totally true to the Cause."¹²

During President Kimball's apostolic ministry, "his heart had gone out to faithful priesthood-denied people wherever they resided in the world." He was well known among the Genesis Group—a group of black members of the Church in the Salt Lake Valley. After attending the Genesis Christmas social in the 1970s, Acting President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve remembers President Kimball's words, "They need our help, they need our prayers and our blessings and they need our attention. They really need our attention."¹³

Taking his own advice, President Kimball began to earnestly give members of the Genesis Group and black Latter-day Saints across the world his attention. The Holy Ghost motivated him to seek revelation on this matter. He prepared himself in the same way all who seek revelation and blessings should prepare. He "began an exhaustive personal study of the scriptures as well as

statements of Church leaders since Joseph Smith, and asked other General Authorities to share their personal feelings relative to the longstanding Church policy.”¹⁴ Church leaders discussed the subject “at length on numerous occasions in the preceding weeks and months.”¹⁵ Those seeking inspiration can also increase scripture study and gospel discussion with others as a way of preparing themselves for further enlightenment.

President Packer remembers one Saturday afternoon session where President Kimball invited him to discuss the subject with him. President Kimball asked President Packer to come to the Church Office Building.

Elder Packer recalls his [President Kimball] saying that he had “this thing” on his mind and wanted to talk about it. “There was no need to explain what this thing was,” Elder Packer recalled. We both knew how it was weighing upon him.

He handed me his scriptures and said he’d like me to read to him from the revelations. So we started with the one from Doctrine and Covenants 124:49 that I had read in the temple. For a couple of hours we just moved back and forth through the Doctrine and Covenants, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price, and then talked about what we read.

The spirit of revelation seemed to be brooding upon the prophet that day. He asked me, assuming that the revelation was to come, how it might best be announced to the Church, and asked that I put something in writing. This I did and handed it to him a day or two later. He had asked one or two of the others to do the same.¹⁶

On 4 May 1978, more enlightenment came as the Lord was readying the Quorum of the Twelve for the revelation. At a regular meeting of General Authorities, members of the Twelve were bearing their testimonies. After each had borne his testimony, Elder LeGrand Richards related:

“A little while ago, I saw a man seated above the organ there and he looked just like that.” (He gestured toward President Wilford Woodruff’s portrait which hangs in the room.) He then added, “I saw him just as clearly as I see any of you Brethren. . . . He was dressed in a white suit and was seated in an armchair. I thought at the time that the reason I was privileged to see him was probably that I was the only one there who had ever seen President Woodruff while he was upon the earth. I had heard him dedicate the Salt Lake Temple and I had heard him give his last sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle before he died. I thought it wonderful

that the Lord could project, without mechanical means, the likeness of a man long since dead.”¹⁷

Appearing to Elder Richards that day was the prophet who almost a hundred years before had wrestled with another critical problem in the Church, plural marriage. The problem in 1890 was resolved by revelation in the same way the problem in 1978 would be solved.

During this time, President Kimball had begun to importune the Lord for a revelation. As we look at President Kimball’s descriptions of his actions, we can distinguish ten distinctive attitudes he expressed to the Lord.

On 23 October 1978, he told missionaries in Johannesburg, South Africa, “I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God.” In addition, President Kimball described to the Church News on 5 December 1978 his going to the “temple alone, and especially on Sundays and Saturdays when . . . [he] could have it alone.” He explains, “It went on for some time as I was searching for this, because I wanted to be sure.”¹⁸ President Kimball’s son Edward also records another of his father’s descriptions:

I remember very vividly that day after day I walked to the temple and ascended to the fourth floor where we have our solemn assemblies and where we have our meetings of the Twelve and the First Presidency. . . . I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and put them into place. Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what he wanted. I talked about it to him and said, Lord, I want only what is right. We are not making any plans to be spectacularly moving. We want only the thing that thou dost want, and we want it when you want it and not until.¹⁹

Those wanting a personal revelation from their Heavenly Father should duplicate these same attitudes expressed by President Kimball. I call them “Revelation Attitudes.”

Attitude One: Praying with Fervency

We have to express to our Heavenly Father the desires of our hearts. Sometimes in not asking we may forfeit divine blessings. If President Kimball and the other Brethren had not asked, this great blessing may not have come into the Church. Elder McConkie

explains: “The Brethren have had great anxiety and concern about this problem for a long period of time, [but it was] President Spencer Kimball [who had] been exercised and [had] sought the Lord in faith. When we seek the Lord on a matter, with sufficient faith and devotion, he gives us an answer. You will recall that the Book of Mormon teaches that if the apostles in Jerusalem had asked the Lord, he would have told them about the Nephites [see 3 Nephi 15:16–18]. But they didn’t ask, and they didn’t manifest the faith and they didn’t get an answer.”²⁰

Unlike the Brethren on that day in June 1978, sometimes we have not because we ask not (see James 4:2). We are given an instructive concept in the New Testament. The Lord says that He “knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask” (Matthew 6:8). If He already knows what I need, why does He require that I still ask? The entry for prayer in the Bible Dictionary answers that question: “Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other.” Virginia Pearce recently suggested that prayer protects our agency: “Prayer becomes the simple everyday work we do which allows God to grant the blessings that he is already willing to grant us but are conditional on our willingness to ask. . . . He respects my will so profoundly that He wants me to exercise it whenever possible. No one requires me to pour out my soul; no one requires me to ask for certain blessings; no one insists that I kneel in reverence.”²¹ Therefore, prayer becomes an expression of agency.

However, in our using of prayer as an expression of agency, there is a difference between being obsessed about something and praying fervently about a righteous desire. Though President Kimball fervently, intensely, and passionately prayed for this blessing to come to the Church, he still carried on the work of the Lord. His ardent prayers were private and did not distract from his other activities. Most Church members were unaware of his prayerful efforts, though he went to the upper rooms of the temple by himself “on some days several times.”²²

The Lord does expect fervency and intensity in our prayers. Many of our students do not understand that asking for a revelation is work. The Lord knows when we deeply desire something and are willing to put forth the necessary spiritual energy to receive His blessings and have His will revealed. Many are so caught up with other good things they do not spend the time and energy that receiving revelation requires. Other priorities clutter time, prayers, and efforts. Elder Richard G. Scott has observed: “Satan and his hosts will do all

in their power to distract people. . . . When things of the world crowd in, all too often the wrong things take highest priorities. Then it is easy to forget the fundamental purposes of life. Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction. He would have good people fill life with good things so there is no room for the essential ones.”²³ Careers, callings, and social activities can interfere with essential experiences. What we must really ask for is a miracle. “A change of heart, including new attitudes, priorities, and desires, is a greater miracle.”²⁴

Attitude Two: Know You Can Receive a Revelation or Blessing

Praying to receive blessings of any magnitude must include knowledge. To receive inspiration, we must first know it is possible for the Lord to reveal His will to each one of us. As Elder Henry B. Eyring explains, “Faith is not simply to know God could do something. Faith is to know He will.”²⁵ An absolutely necessary component in receiving revelation is the knowledge that personal revelation is possible. The stripling warriors of the Book of Mormon were able to receive the wonderful blessing of divine protection because they did not doubt (see Alma 56:48). If we doubt the Lord will reveal His will to us, we are probably right. The Lord has promised us in modern revelation that He does hear and will answer prayer. Notice the powerful words the Lord uses that give us that assurance: “Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks; waiting patiently on the Lord, for your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded with this seal and testament—the Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted. Therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall all be fulfilled” (D&C 98:1–3).

The Lord seals and testifies, decrees, and gives immutable covenants that He will answer our fervent requests.

Attitude Three: Know That You Are Worthy

Knowledge that we can receive revelation requires certain standards of behavior. Joseph Smith gave three conditions necessary for faith to be a powerful force in our lives. One of those conditions is “an actual knowledge that the course of life which [we are] pursuing is according to his will.”²⁶ In President Kimball’s language, he said he knew he was worthy to receive revelation.²⁷ Some might confuse being worthy with being perfect. Worthiness can be easily dis-

tinguished; if a Latter-day Saint can answer the temple recommend questions affirmatively, he or she is worthy of the Lord's blessings. Still, if we are anxious to have specific revelation and new blessings come into our lives, we can prove our worthiness to the Lord by keeping His commandments with exactness. The stripling warriors "did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them" (Alma 57:21). If we obey and observe with exactness every commandment, including those given to us by local leaders, the Lord will do unto us according to our faith also. As we importune the Lord for special blessings, we can establish our worthiness in two ways: we can remind the Lord of our obedience or righteousness, and we can increase our efforts to repent or to be more exacting in keeping commandments.

These two elements of righteousness and repentance are fundamental in the brother of Jared's plea with the Lord to light stones for the barges. I have adapted this scriptural passage in my own prayers as I importune with righteousness and repentance:

Behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires.

Behold, O Lord, . . . for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock.

And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with the finger, and prepare them that . . . they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.

Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men. (Ether 3:2-6)

Attitude Four: You Are Ready for Revelation and Ready to Accept the Revelation

As we importune with righteousness and repentance, we must also be ready to accept the Spirit's guidance. However, one emotion often stands in the way of our being ready to receive and accept revelation from the Lord: fear. Fear is the cement wall that dams the stream of communication from the Spirit. Fear seems to paralyze us, making us resistant to receiving the Lord's direction. Especially in the area of courtship, fear seems to immobilize. Ironically, some mistake the fear they might feel for a signal from our Father in Heaven that the path or person they are pursuing is not right. One time when I came close to marriage, fear was a constant, gnawing companion. My intended mistakenly told me if we were both so scared, things must not be right.

In making important decisions, fear does not play a helpful role, except as a warning when we are in a physically threatening situation. If we are feeling fear, it is a great sign that we are on the right track because "Old Scratch" is trying to overturn our progress (see 2 Timothy 1:7). So many of us would never let Satan influence us through serious sin, but we more easily let the adversary immobilize us by letting him place fear in our hearts. Elder Scott concurs, "Satan can have no influence over a righteous individual unless that person yields to temptation or allows fear to overcome faith."²⁸ President Howard W. Hunter also tells us that the adversary is the author of fear: "Fear, which can come upon people in difficult days, is a principal weapon in the arsenal which Satan uses to make mankind unhappy. He who fears loses strength for the combat of life in the fight against evil. Therefore, the power of the evil one always tries to generate fear in human hearts. In every age and in every era fear has faced mankind."²⁹

Fear is the opposite of faith. Joseph Smith tells us that doubt and fear cannot reside in a person's mind at the same time as faith. One or the other will leave.³⁰ We must plead to have the Lord give us the spiritual gift of faith so our confidence can wax strong and become a sure foundation.

Another way we can be ready to accept revelation is to make sure we are humble. Humility comes as we admit our weaknesses before the Lord, and a unifying spirit must be present when individuals or families are seeking the same blessings and answers. Elder McConkie tells us that as disciples of the Lord, we must be perfectly united, every heart must beat as one, and the same Spirit must burn in every bosom for the revelation to be received by all involved.³¹

Attitude Five: You Are Willing to Put the Revelation in Place

The Lord does not believe in imposing where His help is not welcomed. He is not willing to give revelation when He knows someone will be unwilling to act on that inspiration. If we go to the Lord and tell Him we are willing to be directed, we are also saying we are willing to act on our faith. On the day the revelation was received, President Kimball asked the Lord that “he might receive a clear answer one way or the other so the matter might be laid to rest.”³²

Preconceived ideas were then set aside. Elder McConkie had earlier written that blacks would have to wait until the eternities to receive priesthood blessings.³³ After accepting the revelation, he rescinded: “It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the . . . matter before the first day of June 1978. It is a new day and a new arrangement, and the Lord has now given the revelation that sheds light out onto the world on this subject. As to any slivers of light or any particles of darkness of the past, we forget all the statements.”³⁴ We too must make new arrangements and act on that which the Lord gives through the Holy Ghost after we receive new inspiration.

Attitude Six: You Are Persistent

President Kimball often went to the temple several times a day to plead with our Heavenly Father. President Gordon B. Hinckley relates that President Kimball was “bold in petitioning. . . . He wrestled over it. He worked at it. He went to the Lord again and again.”³⁵ As President Kimball knew, the Lord honors persistence. A scriptural example of persistence is found in the parable of the unjust judge. This parable, which is repeated twice in the standard works, demonstrates that persistence is expected and rewarded by the Lord:

There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying Avenge me of mine adversary.

And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. (Luke 18:2–8; see also D&C 101:82–84)

The Lord will not only avenge speedily His own elect who cry to Him day and night but also will grant them their hearts' desires. The Lord wants us to come to Him continually, but unlike the unjust judge, He is never weary of our petitions or of us. Unfortunately, most of us grow tired of our own petitions long before they are granted. Persistence is necessary to gain the Lord's blessings from personal revelation.

Attitude Seven: You Want Only What the Lord Wants

Though President Kimball desired that the priesthood blessing come to the entire Church, he was willing to bend to the Father's will. President Hunter recalled that he could "feel [President Kimball's] deep concern and his desire to follow strictly the will of the Lord." We must also be willing to submit to His will in all things. The offering He requires is always a broken heart and a contrite spirit. When that offering is in place, the Spirit will temper our desires, and we will not ask amiss.

Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants contains the definition for the new and everlasting covenant. You may not have noticed three less-conspicuous words found in that definition:

The conditions of this law [the new and everlasting covenant] are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead. (D&C 132:7; emphasis added)

The three words we seldom notice are connections, associations, and expectations. Most Latter-day Saints agree that all covenants, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, and performances can be sealed, but this verse also talks about our connections, our associations with each other, and our expectations for the future. If we are in tune, we will ask for only those things that are in line with the Father's will.

Attitude Eight: You Want It Only When the Lord Wants It and Not

Until

In addition to pledging to the Lord that we want only what is right, we must also bend to the Father's timing. We should not try to force the Lord's hand. In juxtaposition, during the 1960s, some individuals were trying to force a change of Church policy. In 1963, President Kimball addressed such actions: "I believe in the living prophets as much or almost more than the dead ones. They are here to clarify and reaffirm. I have served with and under three of them. The doctrine or policy has not varied in my memory. . . . I know the Lord could change his policy and release the ban and forgive the possible error which brought about the deprivation. If the time comes, that he will do, I am sure."³⁷

Instead of trying to demand that the Lord do something, we should importune for a blessing and then say, in effect, "Thy timing be done."³⁸

Attitude Nine: If It Isn't Right, You'll Still Be True

In bending to the Lord's will, President Kimball made a covenant with the Lord that he did not have to make. He promised that if it was not the Lord's will that all worthy males receive the priesthood, he would be true to that policy all the rest of his life. In an even more dramatic commitment, he said that "he was prepared to defend the decision to the death."³⁹ We too must be able to go to our Heavenly Father and covenant with Him that if for some reason what we desire is not His will, we will still be true. Being true includes not becoming angry, bitter, inactive, or disobedient. In essence, we go to the Lord as did Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego, saying this is what I want, but if not, I will be true (see Daniel 3:18).

Attitude Ten: You Have a Good, Warm Feeling about It

Nine days before the unifying revelation in the temple, President Kimball had already received a feeling about lifting the restriction. First Presidency secretary Francis M. Gibbons reported: "On Tuesday, May 30, 1978, President Kimball read to his counselors a tentative statement he had written in longhand removing all priesthood restrictions from blacks except those restrictions as to worthiness that rest upon all alike. He said that he had 'a good, warm feeling' about it. There was a lengthy review of the statements of past leaders about the restrictions on Blacks. It was decided that this aspect of the matter should be researched in detail. Elder G. Homer Durham, who was serving as the Church historian, was

asked to do this.”⁴⁰

Before President Kimball, his counselors, and the Quorum of the Twelve had the incredible Pentecostal experience, President Kimball had already received his personal answer. That first witness from the Spirit was a simple, warm feeling. The witnesses to the other General Authorities are also explained in terms of feelings. The following Thursday, the normal luncheon in the temple was canceled. President Kimball had asked the Brethren to come to the temple in the attitude of fasting and prayer. That Thursday, 1 June 1978, after the regular meeting, President Kimball asked the First Presidency and the Twelve to stay for a special prayer circle. Together, the Brethren counseled for two hours about the subject. Each member of the council expressed himself freely, and President Kimball offered a prayer. At 2:45 S P, as thirteen men gathered around the temple altar dressed in temple robes in a prayer circle, “the Lord confirmed the wishes of the Brethren to rescind the policy that prohibited African blacks from receiving the priesthood.”⁴¹

The feelings among the thirteen men present (Elder Delbert L. Stapley was in the hospital and Elder Mark E. Petersen was in South America) were pentecostal in magnitude and feeling but not pentecostal in manifestation. President Hinckley explains, “There was not the sound ‘as of a rushing mighty wind,’ there were not ‘cloven tongues like as fire’ as there had been on the Day of Pentecost. But there was a Pentecostal spirit, for the Holy Ghost was there. No voice audible to our physical ears was heard. But the voice of the Spirit whispered with certainty into our minds and our very souls. . . . Not one of us who was present on that occasion was ever quite the same after that.”⁴² President Hunter wrote about “the feeling shared by all” and the “greater unanimity in the council.”⁴³ President Benson explained the experience as “the sweetest spirit of unity and conviction that I have ever experienced. . . . We took each other in our arms, we were so impressed with the sweet spirit that was in evidence. Our bosoms burned with the righteousness of the decision we had made.”⁴⁴

Though these thirteen men talked of feelings rather than of visions, dreams, or angels, the experience was of unparalleled poignancy as “every man in that circle, by the power of the Holy Ghost, knew the same thing.”⁴⁵ President Kimball and Ezra Taft Benson both expressed that the feelings they had were of “a spiritual magnitude and power” they had never experienced before.⁴⁶ Elder Maxwell “wept with joy that day” and asked his wife never to wash the handkerchief he had used that bore the marks of tears of

joy.⁴⁷ Elder Haight expressed that there was such an “outpouring of the Spirit in that room to such a degree that none of us could speak afterwards . . . because of the powerful outpouring of the heavenly spiritual experiences. It is difficult to explain.”⁴⁸

Likewise, we can have dramatic revelation without visions, dreams, or voices from heaven. God seldom sends an angel when a still, small voice will do. Elder McConkie warns Church educators of not sticking to the factual background in regard to this event:

The Lord could have sent messengers from the other side to deliver it, but he did not. He gave the revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saints have a complex: many of them desire to magnify and build upon what has occurred, and they delight to think of miraculous things. And maybe some of them would like to believe that the Lord himself was there, or that the Prophet Joseph Smith came to deliver the revelation, which was one of the possibilities. Well, these things did not happen. The stories that go around to the contrary are not factual or realistic or true, and you as teachers in the Church Educational System will be in a position to explain and to tell your students that this thing came by the power of the Holy Ghost, and that all the Brethren involved, the thirteen who were present, are independent personal witnesses of the truth and divinity of what occurred.⁴⁹

By teaching about this revelation as suggested above, Church educators can also teach students about the pattern and process involved in receiving the revelation that came in June 1978.

Conclusion

In 1978, there were fewer than one thousand African-Americans among the world’s four million Latter-day Saints.⁵⁰ “Since the priesthood revelation of 1978, which was voted as the top story of the century in a Church News poll, those of black African ancestry in nations throughout the world have willingly taken their places as an integral part of the Church. Pioneers in every sense of the word, these faithful members have accomplished in about twenty years the number of members that took the entire restored Church multiple generations to reach.”⁵¹ Elder Oaks adds: “Whether we look on the revelation as the end of the beginning of the restoration or as the beginning of the end of what it portends, . . . it is difficult to overstate its importance in the fulfillment of divine command that the gospel must go to every nation, kindred and people.”⁵²

It is also difficult to overstate the importance of having an appropriate attitude when we seek the Lord. The information pre-

sented in this article brings us a knowledge of how revelation came to President Kimball and suggests that it is possible for us and our students to repeat that pattern in our supplications. If we place the ten attitudes of fervency, knowledge that we can receive revelation, worthiness, readiness to accept revelation, willingness to put revelation in place, persistence, acceptance of the Lord's will and timing, willingness to stay true, and expectance of feelings rather than dramatic manifestations in our prayers, we too will receive life-changing revelation. We will be able to declare that "we have pleaded long and earnestly . . . supplicating the Lord for divine guidance, [and] He has heard our prayers." We will be able to stand with those thirteen men and "declare with soberness that the Lord has . . . made known His will for the blessing of . . . His children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of His authorized servants and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel."⁵³

Notes

1. Dallin H. Oaks, as paraphrased in "LDS Afro-American Symposium," *Ensign*, August 1988, 77.

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4. "Every Faithful, Worthy Man in the Church May Now Receive the Priesthood," *Ensign*, July 1978, 75.

5. Brigham Young, *Brigham Young Papers*, 5 February 1852, in Cherry and Embry, "Blacks," 126.

6. History of Wilford Woodruff, 351, in "Prophets Tell of Promise to All Races," *Church News*, 17 June 1978, 6.

7. Heber J. Grant letter, 28 January 1928, in *Church News*, 17 June 1978, 6.

8. David O. McKay letter, 3 November 1947, in *Church News*, 17 June 1978, 6.

9. Harold B. Lee, in "Blessings to All Races Foretold," *Church News*, 17 June 1978, 6.

10. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 449.

11. E. Dale LeBaron, "Gospel Pioneers in Africa," *Ensign*, August 1990, 40.

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18. Lee Warnick, “I Knew That the Time Had Come,” *Church News*, 4 June 1988, 7.
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20. McConkie, “The New Revelation on Priesthood,” 132.
21. Virginia H. Pearce, unpublished email notes on “Prayer,” Tri-Ward Fireside, 20 January 2002, in author’s possession.
22. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 452.
23. Richard B. Scott, “First Things First,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 7.
24. Dallin H. Oaks, “Miracles,” *Ensign*, June 2001, 17.
25. Henry B. Eyring, “We Must Raise Our Sights,” *Religious Educator* 2, no. 2 (2001): 10.
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28. Richard G. Scott, “Have No Regrets,” in *Brigham Young Speeches of the Year*, 12 September 1999.
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30. See *Lectures on Faith*, 4:13.
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