Prophetic Authority in the Teachings of Modern Prophets

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PROPHETIC AUTHORITY IN THE TEACHINGS
OF MODERN PROPHETS

A Thesis
Presented to the 
Department of Church History and Doctrine
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In Partial Fulfillment
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To Mary, Carol, Kristen
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

THE PROBLEM

The members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are unique in the modern Christian world because they believe in the existence of present day Prophets of God. They also believe that in every age prophets of God have contributed to moral stability for those accepting their authority. Leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints speaks with an assurance that is unusual among contemporary churches. The statement of L.D.S. prophets on the reality and significance of their authority provides for an unusual opportunity to study prophetic authority as understood by Latter-day Saints in modern times. The general problem, therefore, is: What is prophetic authority and how does it function in Latter-day Saint theology?

DELIMITATIONS AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

An analysis of the statements on prophetic authority by those eighty or so men who have been sustained by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as prophets, seers, and revelators has been accomplished.

Primary sources have emphasized the Holy Scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the official History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a seven volume work
edited by B. H. Roberts, the Journal of Discourses, Conference
Reports, Messages of the First Presidency, and direct statements of the
denominated prophets of the Church found elsewhere in Latter-day Saint
literature.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

This study has attempted to answer ten specific questions about
prophets and prophetic authority from the standpoint of the doctrinal
beliefs of the L.D.S. Church. They are: (1) What is a prophet?
(2) Why have prophets been such an integral part of God's program
through the ages? (3) What is prophetic authority and to what extent
does it relate to the church member; to the world as a whole? (4) Was
Christ the consummation of the prophets in the sense that there has been
no need for prophets since Christ? (5) Is Christ Himself a prophet?
If so, how does he relate to the other prophets? (6) How does the
presiding Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
relate to other prophets? (7) Is a fullness of salvation obtainable
without the ministry of prophets? Is salvation merely an individual
affair? (8) Could the presiding Prophet or the President of the Church
lead the Church astray? How does human fallibility affect prophetic
authority? Under what circumstances, if any, could the individual Church
member feel free to reject prophetic authority? (9) On what basis does
one judge true prophets from false ones? (10) How does obedience to
prophetic authority relate to the agency of the individual?

JUSTIFICATION

A survey of current Church literature, theses, and dissertations
has revealed that a study of this nature has not yet been accomplished. 1

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President, Prophet, Seer, and
Revelator of the Church, has recently pled "for the spirit of obedience
and conformity" 2 to come upon the Church, especially the youth. Again
and again the men accepted by the Church as modern prophets are stating
that "... if we keep our eye on the President ... we will never be
led astray." 3 Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve,
said in a recent conference:

I give you my testimony that the happiness of the Latter-day
Saints, the peace of the Latter-day Saints, the progress of the
Latter-day Saints, the prosperity of the Latter-day Saints, and
the eternal salvation and exaltation of this people lie in
walking in obedience to the counselor of the priesthood of God. 4

In his conference address given during the most recent, April
1973 conference of the Church, Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of
the Twelve stated unequivocally that salvation for the human family is
in the Church and, of course, the President of the Church, by definition,
presides over the Church. 5 Assuming this position to be correct in

1 It should be noted that the author has found many sources
helpful. Prophetic authority is partially discussed in many places in
L.D.S. literature. Some of the more prominent of these include: The
Art of Governing Zion, by Harold Glen Clark; Priesthood and Church
Government, by John A. Widstoe; Teachings of the Living Prophets, a
student manual approved by the Adult Correlation Committee of the
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Mormon Doctrine, by Bruce
R. McConkie; and Living Prophets for a Living Church, a student
manual approved by the Youth and Young Adult Correlation Committee
of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

2 Joseph Fielding Smith, "Ogden Temple Dedicatory Prayer," The
Ensign, II (March, 1972), 11.


5 Mark E. Petersen, Deseret News, Church News, April 14, 1973,
Latter-day Saint theology, a thorough understanding of prophetic authority would be essential to a believer.

STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION

Inasmuch as this thesis deals exclusively with doctrines and interpretations of Latter-day Saint theology it is to be understood without calling further attention to it that the doctrines and interpretations expressed throughout the paper are given according to the official scriptures and writing of the LDS Church.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The Prophet, Presiding Prophet, President of the Church, President of the High Priesthood, Great High Priest, Seer, and Revelator: These terms will refer to that prophet who presides among the people—the High Priest who holds directing powers over all others under Christ.

Prophet: Unless otherwise indicated this term will refer to any person who has the spirit of prophecy which is the testimony of Jesus Christ, which comes through the Holy Ghost.  

Prophetic Authority: Will refer most specifically to that authority possessed by the presiding Prophet, the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, unless otherwise indicated.

The Church: That is the Church of Jesus Christ, the organized

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followers of Christ possessing priesthood and the oracles of God.

Specifically this term refers to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this dispensation.

Priesthood

It is the rule and government of God, whether on earth or in the heaven; and it is the only legitimate power, the only authority that is acknowledged by Him to rule and regulate the affairs of His kingdom. When every wrong thing shall be put right and all usurpers shall be put down, when he whose right it is to reign shall take the dominion, then nothing but the priesthood will bear rule; it alone will sway the sceptre of authority in heaven and on earth, for this is the legitimacy of God."
Chapter 2

AUTHORITY AND PROPHETS; DEFINITIONS AND SHORT HISTORY
OF PROPHETIC AUTHORITY IN PAST DISPENSATIONS

God has established all things in their order. The house of God is a house of order, and not a house of confusion. In this house, God himself is the supreme head, and he must be obeyed. Christ is in the image and likeness of His being, His begotten Son, and He stands as our Saviour and our God. We must walk in His paths, and observe His precepts to do them, or we will be cut off. Next unto God and Christ, in the earth is placed one unto whom the keys of power and authority of the Holy Priesthood are conferred, and unto whom the right of presidency is given. He is God's mouthpiece to His people, in all things pertaining to the building up of Zion and to the spiritual and temporal salvation of the people. He is as God's viceregent; I do not hesitate to announce this truth; for it is His word and therefore it is true.¹

ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

On January 16th that year he (Wilford Woodruff) attended a conference of young men in Ogden City, where he explained to them the importance of divine authority, and showed the meaning of those keys whichunlock the door of salvation to the human family. Those keys, he explained, had been in the keeping of God's trusted servants from the most ancient times...²

An explanation of the importance of ultimate authority is still necessary. The basic definition of authority as found in Webster's Third New International Dictionary includes the fundamentals of "...author or originator...source...power to influence..."³

¹Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report (April, 1898), p. 68.
To the theist, God Himself is the ultimate authority. "God is the Sovereign. He made the people and the earth, and He has the right to reign." The scriptures teach that "... in him we live, and move, and have our being; ..." and that also "all things were made by Him." A modern revelation, as accepted by Latter-day Saints, states:

He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever.

And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons.

Joseph Smith has said, "God has more power than all other beings, because he has greater knowledge; ... He has power over all."  

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4. Generally speaking the atheist recognizes no authority as absolute. All authority, to the atheist, is relevant to the fallibilities of the order of things as he perceives them. His non-recognition of divine authority changes nothing, however. Isaiah has well written of such "... for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?" (Isaiah 29:16) The testimony of scripture is that finally all will recognize the ultimate authority of God. "Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God; then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgment of an everlasting punishment is just upon them; ..." (Mosiah 27:31) Thus, all will acknowledge, as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was brought to acknowledge, that "... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." (Daniel 4:25)


7. John 1:3.

8. Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 88:41-42, hereafter cited as D&C.

Perhaps Christ best articulated the total place of God when He said, in His prayer to the Father, "... For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."\(^{10}\)

To the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, God remains the absolute authority but that authority is more particularized. In the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

... God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell; and that he is the Father of lights; in him the principle of faith dwells independently, and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable being center for life and salvation.\(^{11}\)

This supreme anthropomorphic Father has delegated His authority to two other beings: His first begotten son in the spirit, and only begotten Son in the Flesh, Jehovah or Jesus Christ, and to the individual spirit called the Holy Ghost. Speaking of this delegation of authority the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote:

Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham's record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the witness or Testator.\(^{12}\)

Concerning His position, relative to the Father, Christ has said:

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the

\(^{10}\)Matthew 6:13.

\(^{11}\)The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Published by George Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1891), "Lectures on Faith," p. 99, hereafter cited as "Lectures on Faith."

\(^{12}\)Teachings, p. 190.
Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

For the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;

That all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who honor eth not the Son, honor eth not the Father who hath sent him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He who heareth my word, and believeth on him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation; but is passed from death into life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they who hear shall live.

For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.

And ye will not come to me that ye might have life, lest ye should honor me.

I receive not honor from men.

But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you,

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive,

How can ye believe, who seek honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is Moses who accuseth you, in who ye trust.

For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me.

But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?\(^\text{13}\)

In the general conference of the Church held in October, 1911, President Charles W. Penrose of the First Presidency articulated the place of Christ in L.D.S. theology as follows:

We are indebted for that which we know, and may be indebted for that which we expect to know about our Eternal Father, to Jesus Christ His Son, 'whom He has made heir of all things, and by whom also He made the worlds.' He is the real witness for God in the

earth. He was 'God manifest in the flesh' when He dwelt among men. And it is by Him and through Him and of Him that all the truths which have been communicated to mortals, from the beginning of this world, have been made known. He is the chosen representative of the Father, and in Him dwelleth 'the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' He has had and now has under His direction men, mortal men, to represent Him, as far as He can be represented in mortality, and to carry on His work under His direction, and we are indebted, as an instrument in His hands, to the great Prophet of the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith, for bringing forth many grand and glorious truths concerning Deity and His work and His ways, His laws, His commandments, and His precepts.\textsuperscript{14}

The Holy Ghost, the testator, is the witness of and for the Father and the Son. These three, the Godhead, are the ultimate authority in Latter-day Saint theology. They \"... constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things.\ldots\" \textsuperscript{15}

**ULTIMATE AUTHORITY AND MAN**

Since Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, man has not had direct contact with the father except through the Son.\textsuperscript{16} This separation from the Father is denominated the spiritual death.\textsuperscript{17} Since this event Christ was appointed by the Father as the great mediator between God and man. Speaking of this event Paul has written:

Who is willing to have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth which is in Christ Jesus, who is the Only Begotten Son of God and ordained to be a Mediator between God and man; \ldots\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{14}Charles W. Penrose, Conference Report (October, 1911), p. 48.

\textsuperscript{15}Lectures on Faith," p. 54.


\textsuperscript{17}Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), p. 756, hereafter cited as Mormon Doctrine.

\textsuperscript{18}I.V., I Timothy 2:4-6.
Of course, Christ enunciated His position so as to leave no doubt when He declared, "... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."¹⁹ And so for man on this earth Christ becomes the ultimate authority; "... for there is none other name given among men, whereby we must be saved."²⁰

DELEGATION OF GOD'S AUTHORITY TO MAN

Even a cursory perusal of sacred writ reveals that God has, from time to time delegated at least part of His supreme authority to man. As a matter of fact we have not one word of sacred writ that has come to us first hand from God Himself.²¹ Rather "... holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."²² That these holy men were acting for God is made clear by their oft repeated phrase, "Thus saith the Lord."

Since the fall of Adam it has become necessary for God to con-
descend to man²³ or else there would be no hope for him in this world.

²⁰ Acts 4:12.
²¹ The scriptures do indicate that God has written. For example, God wrote on the tablets (Exodus 32:16) and of course, Christ wrote on the sand (John 8:6). Neither of these writings, though, are now extant and all public scripture, at least, has come through the hands of others. It is interesting to note, too, that man's first language came from God. "And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration; and by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled." (Moses 6:5-6).
²² II Peter 1:21.
²³ The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), I Nephi 11:26, hereafter cited as B. of M., followed by the reference within.
For in this world "... all are fallen and are lost." Christ is the ultimate condescension of God to man but, though He is the great minister of His Father to man He is not alone. It is the established pattern of deity to work through others, too. Witness these words of Mormon to his son Moroni:

For behold, they are subject unto him to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness.

And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him.

And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.

And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.

Thus, the scriptures attest that the Father condescended to send the Savior, Jesus Christ, because of His infinite love. Jesus Christ now has all power under the Father. The Savior, utilizing the Holy Ghost as the great Testator, calls others as ministers. These others are also the children of the Father. They are brothers or sisters in the spirit to Christ. Joseph Smith has written: "... there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have

26 B. of M., Moroni 7:30-33.
27 John 3:16.
28 Matthew 28:18.
belonged to it."\textsuperscript{29} An angel is fundamentally a servant of God. Whether the individual is pre-mortal, or post-mortal he may in the large sense be classified as a ministering angel or servant. The angels who taught the Gospel in the time of Adam were pre-mortal.\textsuperscript{30} The angels who served as Bishops in the seven churches of Asia were mortal.\textsuperscript{31}

The authority of God delegated to man is called priesthood. Priesthood, in essence, is the power to minister for God, to all men, in His name and by His power for the salvation of mankind.\textsuperscript{32} For example, it is written concerning the Priests of the Mosaic Dispensation, "For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord. . . ."\textsuperscript{33} Some reasons for the ministry of priesthood were given by Orson F. Whitney as follows:

There is but one Savior; there is only 'one name given under heaven whereby men can be saved;' but there may be innumerable assistants, innumerable subordinates, saviors in a lesser sense and degree. John the Revelator saw no less than one hundred and forty four thousand of such saviors standing on the Mount Zion, with the Father's name written in their foreheads; and it was said of them, 'These are they that follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth.'

The Gospel of Christ represents what God did for man, that man could not do for himself; and it also represents what He requires of man in return. There is nothing possible of achievement that God cannot do, but there may be things that He has not time to do, and which may be done for Him. There are some things, however, that even God cannot do. I speak it with all reverence.

\textsuperscript{29}D\&C 130:5.

\textsuperscript{30}The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), Moses 5:58, hereafter cited as P. of G. P., followed by the reference within.

\textsuperscript{31}I.V., Revelation 1:20 (Italics by the writer).

\textsuperscript{32}John Taylor, Journal of Discourses, G. D. Watt and others (reporters) (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1854-86), I, 224, hereafter cited as JD.

\textsuperscript{33}Deuteronomy 18:5.
For instance, He cannot make something out of nothing, though many pious Christians ascribe to Him that power—if such it can be called. There is another thing that God cannot do—He cannot be present in all places at the same time, in His own proper person. This is God’s work, and it can only be done by the power of God; but we cannot expect Him to be everywhere present, nor in two places at the same time, except by His authority, His spirit and His influence. This fact renders necessary a priesthood to represent Him. . . .

Adam was the first on this earth to receive the Priesthood or the authority of God. The Lord declared this when He said to Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." 35 After the fall the Priesthood was again conferred on Adam 36 and the decree was sent forth that this Priesthood would be in the world until the end thereof. 37 The sacred history reveals a genealogy of Priesthood extending from this first minister, Adam, down to those men thus authorized today. 38

OVERVIEW OF THE PROPHETIC OFFICE AND ITS AUTHORITY

Those especial priesthood ministers of God are most often denominated prophets. Actually they are so essential to the Lord’s program on earth that one of them said: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing until He revealeth the secret unto His servants the prophets." 39

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34 Orson F. Whitney, Conference Report (October, 1913), p. 98.
35 Genesis 2:28. See also Teachings, p. 157 for confirmation of Adam’s Priesthood before the fall (Italics by the writer).
39 I.V., Amos 3:7 (Italics by the writer).
To understand the authority of the prophetic office it is fundamental to understand what the prophetic office includes.

Prophet—Definitions

The word "prophet" comes from the Greek word "prophetes" and denotes "one who uttering or interpreting an oracle, was believed to speak not his own thoughts but a revelation from without." The Hebrew word "nabhi" which is translated prophet means "a giver of 'information' or a 'a recipient of information,' i.e., as to the Unseen World. . . ." They are sometimes called "men of God . . . angels, or messengers of the Lord." The prevailing definition of a prophet as one who "foretells" the future is inadequate. Anyone who is familiar with prophetic writings knows that a prophet does more forth-telling of the word of God than mere foretelling the future. "Histori-cally, this has always been the mission of the prophet . . . not so much to foretell as to forthtell." Since the Prophet is God's mouthpiece it is important to turn to the scriptures for further elucidation on what constitutes a prophet. Peter clarified an essential characteristic of a prophet in his famous statement about the scriptures when he said, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scriptures is of any private will of man. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God

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spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Thus, as Peter states, the thing which separates a prophet from other men is the fact that he is moved upon by the Holy Ghost. Anyone, therefore, who has received the Holy Ghost is, in general terms, a prophet. And so the scriptures refer to many as prophets without respect to position, sex, or age. We read about the young man Samuel who, with no official outward rank, was established as a prophet in Israel; Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, prophesied when filled with the Holy Ghost; and the little children of the Nephites spoke greater things than Christ.

The scriptures also explain that one who has individual revelation is a prophet. "Now it was the custom among ... the Nephites to appoint for their chief captains ... some one that had the spirit of revelation and also prophecy; therefore, this Gidgiddoni was a great prophet among them. ..." Further, one who has the testimony of Jesus is a prophet for as John the Revelator was told on the Isle of Patmos ". . . the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." To summarize, a person is a prophet when he or she has: (1) received the Holy Ghost, (2) received individual revelation, and (3) received the testimony of Jesus.

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44I.V., II Peter 1:20-21 (Italics by the writer).
47B. of M., III Nephi 26:14 and 16.
49Revelation 19:10.
Another significant dimension to this general definition of what constitutes a prophet is given by Joseph Smith. He reiterates all the points mentioned above emphasizing that they be used in the ministry of Jesus Christ. In other words, a prophet should be an active agent in proclaiming the salvation which is in Jesus Christ.

Prophets and Seers

To some prophets, God grants the further endowment of being a seer. A seer is one who sees in a total perspective—as God sees. He is often privileged with access to the Urim and Thummim which are identified as "seer stones." The Angel Moroni stated that the possession of these stones constituted seers anciently. A prophet may use these stones to help him in translating and revealing the word of God. It is this larger scope that distinguishes a seer from a prophet.

And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet. And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also. . . .

But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.

The Prophetic Office as Distinguished from Prophets in General

Moses stated that it was his desire that all the Lord's people be prophets. The very man who spoke this, however, was not just a

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50 HC, VI, 390.
51 P. of G. P., Joseph Smith 2:35.
52 B. of M., Mosiah 8:15-17.
53 Numbers 11:29.
prophet, he was the Prophet for his time. Since God's house is a house of order and has been from the beginning of the dispensations, He has called presiding Prophets. How do these presiding Prophets differ from prophets in general?

First, the presiding Prophets, as well as having God's spirit and the other characteristics of general prophets, hold the Priesthood. A perusal of the scriptures reveals that the presiding Prophets received their Priesthood and calling directly from God, by ordination of others, or through the lineage of the Fathers. There are instances where the individual has been called of God but ordained to the Priesthood by constituted authority. The Lord sought out Enoch as a young man and called him to be the Prophet and Seer to a people. He received the Priesthood at the age of twenty-five at the hands of the Patriarch Adam. Moses was called at the burning bush and ordained by his father-in-law Jethro, the Priest of Midian. Joseph Smith further clarified the importance of calling and ordination in the fifth Article of Faith which states:

We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

The presiding Prophets receive this honor, calling, and ordination not by their own will but by the will of God and no man can take the honor unto himself, but he must be called of God.

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55 D&C 84:16.
57 Hebrews 5:4.
Second, the presiding Prophets hold the keys or the directing powers of the Priesthood during their administrations. The Priesthood holders are ministers of salvation. To be effective in this ministration they must have direction. "The power of directing these labors (Priesthood labors) constitutes the keys of the Priesthood. In their fulness these keys are held by only one person at a time, the prophet. . . ."58 As the Priesthood serve as ministers of salvation, those whom they serve--the followers or disciples--are the Church. In the latter-days the Church could not be organized until the Priesthood with its keys had been restored to the Prophet by constituted authority, namely John the Baptist, and Peter, James and John.

At this point it would be important to understand that it is the fulness of the Apostolic office that contains all of the keys, powers, and authority of the Priesthood.

Could he (Joseph Smith) have built up the Kingdom of God, without first being an Apostle? No, he never could. The keys of the eternal Priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God, are comprehended by being an Apostle. All the Priesthood, all the keys, all the gifts, all the endowments, and everything preparatory to entering into the presence of the Father and of the Son, are in, composed of, circumscribed by, or I might say incorporated within the circumference of, the Apostleship. 59

Thus each member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles holds all the keys, powers, and authorities of the Priesthood. From the scriptures and from the Prophets we learn, however, that only one man at a time has the right to exercise these keys, powers, and authorities

59 Brigham Young, JD, 1, 134-5.
in total use for the Church and that man is the senior Apostle—the President of the Church. He becomes by the very nature of the authority which he holds, the presiding officer over the Priesthood and the Church.

Third, the presiding Prophet receives his calling to be a Prophet from God; he receives the authority and keys of the Priesthood by conferral and ordination; and he receives the right to preside by the sustaining vote of the people over whom he will preside. Without the sustaining vote of the people a man may be a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator but will not be able to act in this calling for the Church. He will not be the President of the Church until he is sustained by the people.

Does a man's being a Prophet in this Church prove that he shall be the President of it? I answer, no! A man may be a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and it may have nothing to do with his being the President of the Church. Suffice it to say, that Joseph was President of Church, as long as he lived; the people chose to have it so. He always filled that responsible station, by the voice of the people. Can you find any revelation appointing him the President of the Church? The keys of the Priesthood were committed to Joseph, to build up the Kingdom of God on the earth, and were not to be taken from him in time or in eternity; but when he was called to preside over the Church, it was by the voice of the people; though he held the keys of the Priesthood, independent of their voice.61

This act of sustaining constitutes the Law of Common Consent. No man can preside in any office in the Church without the consent of the people over whom he presides.62 This does not mean that the people choose the individual nor do they impower him but it is their right and their responsibility as God has directed through revelation to sustain their leaders in the offices to which they have been called.

61 Brigham Young, JD, I, 133.
62 D&C 26:2.
Harold B. Lee has said this concerning the source of Prophetic authority:

A Prophet does not become a spiritual leader by studying books about religion, nor does he become one by attending a theological seminary. One becomes a prophet, a divinely called religious leader, by actual spiritual contacts. He gets his diploma, as it were, directly from God.  

Thus as this study examines the authority of the Prophetic Office it will do so in this broadened definition as articulated above.

SURVEY HISTORY OF PROPHETIC AUTHORITY IN PAST DISPENSATIONS

There have been numerous prophets. This survey will identify mainly dispensation heads and/or presiding Prophets. It would be well to note that dispensation by definition is a giving out of the gospel, including the Priesthood, authorities, and keys associated therewith.

Adamic Dispensation

The book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price identifies Adam as a Patriarchal Prophet holding all the keys over his family. He received revelation, preached the Gospel, performed ordinances, and prophesied what would befall his posterity to the last generation of time. By virtue of his faithfulness and by Patriarchal Priest-

63 Harold B. Lee, "He Lighted the Lamps of Faith," The Improvement Era, LXXIII (February, 1970), 94.
64 D&C 128:21.
67 D&C 84:16.
68 D&C 107:56.
hood right he presides over all the earth and all the peoples thereof.

Under Christ, Adam holds the keys of authority over all dispensations.

Commencing with Adam . . . the great grand progenitor . . . because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ has been revealed . . . and will continue to be revealed from henceforth. Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him. . . .

Dispensation of Enoch

Enoch was ordained to the Priesthood at the age of twenty-five under the hands of Adam. He was given the privilege of seer-ship. His prophecies are among the greatest in scripture. He was able, as a minister of God, to establish a city and bring his city into the presence of God. He developed a Zion (pure in heart) society and finally his people were taken off the earth. Of him their is much mentioned because of the success of his dispensation. Even his enemies recognized his great authority.

Dispensation of Noah

Noah obtained all the same covenants, powers, and presiding authorities that were given to Adam. He was the second great pro-

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69 *Teachings*, p. 167.
70 *D&C* 107:48.
74 *P. of G. P.*, Moses 7:12–16.
75 *Teachings*, p. 171.
genitor of the race of men. His Patriarchal Priesthood authority over
his generation was so absolute that those who heard not his prophecies
perished in the great deluge.

Jaredite Dispensation

The Book of Mormon chronicles the rise of a civilization
referred to as Jaredites. Soon after the flood, at the time of the
building of the tower of Babel a certain Mahonri Moriancumer, who was
the brother of Jared, was importuned by Jared to request of the Lord
that their language not be confounded and that they be led to a
"promised land." The Lord answered this prayer and these people were
led to the Western Hemisphere and for over a millenium flourished as
a separate civilization.\(^{76}\) Mahonri Moriancumer received a personal
theophony and witnessed the pre-earth Christ as he would "appear in
the flesh."\(^{77}\) This man may be described as one of the greatest of all
prophets. The things which he wrote were so great that it would over-
power a man to read them.\(^{78}\) Thus we have only a small abridgment of
his writings in the Book of Mormon. He ministered to his people with
both secular and spiritual authority. Other prophet-leaders appeared
from time to time among these people. Ether, one of the greatest, gave
his name to the Jaredite record.\(^{79}\)

Melchizedek—King of Salem

\(^{76}\)B. of M., Ether 1.
\(^{77}\)B. of M., Ether 3:1-16.
\(^{78}\)B. of M., Ether 12:24.
\(^{79}\)B. of M., Ether 11:1 and 12:2.
One of the most significant of all the prophets was the man, Melchizedek. He was contemporary with Abraham. Abraham was ministered to by him and from him Abraham received the Priesthood. Melchizedek himself received the Priesthood through the lineage of his fathers and had such complete power and authority that he was able to "put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will . . . subdue principalities and powers. . . ." This prophet-king was so preeminently successful that he and his people obtained heaven. In honor of him the Church in ancient days called the high Priesthood the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek because he was such a great high priest and also to avoid the too frequent repetition of the name of Christ.

Abrahamic Dispensation

Of Abraham deity himself said he was among the great ones. He sought righteousness, obtained the Priesthood from Melchizedek, and wrought in such great faith that he has ever since been called "the friend of God." Few prophets have been greater. To this Prophet the Lord himself made a covenant which has ever since had a material impact.

80D&C 84:14.
81I.V., Genesis 14:31.
82I.V., Genesis 14:3-4.
83D&C 107:2 and 4.
85James 2:23.
on all subsequent dispensations, Priesthood and Prophets:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;
And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;
And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. 86

And so ever since the time of Abraham his lineage alone has had right to the Priesthood.

The House of Israel from Jacob on down were those who had 'power with God and with men, and . . . prevailed.' (Genesis 32:24-30) Jacob was a prince with God, or one who had contended or prevailed with God. The Israelites and all adopted into their house are those who hold the priesthood of God. They are a 'peculiar' people, a royal lineage, and the seed of Abraham. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, a gentile converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and complying with the commandments, is literally changed and purged to become a true member of the House of Israel with Christ as his king. The blessings promised to Abraham come upon the adopted gentile. 87

All subsequent Priesthood ministers have been Abrahamic, Israelitish, or Hebraic. Even Christ, the greatest of all, was through the loins of Abraham. All others, receiving the Gospel or the Priesthood, are adopted into the family of Abraham. His progenitors and those adopted into this covenant have been the ministers of salvation to this earth ever since. Most significantly of all, since Abraham's time, God often refers to himself as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (or Israel). 88

88 Exodus 3:6, Matthew 22:32, etc.
Mosaic Dispensation

Moses, one of the most renowned of prophets, sought diligently to bring the apostate Israelites into the presence of God. The people could not follow their prophet-leader into the heights of Sinai. They were so immature spiritually that a lesser law and a lesser Priesthood had to be ministered unto them at the hand of Moses. There can be no doubt of the authority and power of Moses the great law-giver. Of him it is written: "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy Prophet."90

The Millenium or so of Israelitish history after Moses is a sad story of apostasy and degradation. The bulk of the Old Testament is the story of how God raised up prophets to lead His people with their lesser law and Priesthood to the fullness of Gospel light. By and large the prophets of Israel from Moses to Christ officiated with the higher Priesthood but outside of the immediate religious structure, the people were usually in apostasy.91 By and large their voices were voices "in the wilderness." The culminating prophet of this dispensation, John the Baptist, came out of the wilderness to lead the people to Christ and the full Gospel law. There was no place for him in the contemporary religious structure of the Jews although he was the only legal administrator. Christ said of John's status among the prophets that "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. .

90Exodus 7:1.
The Ten Lost Tribes

Since these tribes have been lost to the knowledge of the world from about the Eighth Century, B.C. little is known of them. However, it is clear that they too are blessed with the ministry of Prophets as witnessed by these words of Wilford Woodruff:

The ten tribes will also come in remembrance before the Lord, and they will again return with out-stretched arms to their lands, and be led by leaders inspired by the Spirit and power of God, and they will come with visions, revelation, and Prophets, . . .

The Colony of Lehi

During the Mosaic Dispensation, just before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord raised up a great prophet by the name of Lehi. This man was a descendent of Joseph the Patriarch. After warning the people of Jerusalem of their imminent destruction if they did not repent, Lehi departed with his family into the wilderness. Eventually he and his family were led across the ocean to the western Hemisphere. Not long after their arrival the family divided into two groups. The righteous faction, the Nephites, flourished for approximately a thousand years. The Lamanites, generally the more wicked faction, have remnants remaining to this day among the aborigines of this hemisphere, now known as Indians. These people had prophets constantly among them. Their sacred record, The Book of Mormon was written by one of their greatest prophets. Enos, another writer in The Book of Mormon, said

93Wilford Woodruff, JD, II, 200-201. See also D&C 133:26.
94B. of M., I Nephi 1.
that "... there were exceeding many prophets among us."\textsuperscript{95} These people were ministered to by Christ just after His resurrection. Christ's Church, as established on the foundation of prophets and apostles, thrived until the second century after Christ when there was a great civil war, as the result of complete apostasy of both the Nephites and Lamanites, that liquidated the Nephites as a distinct nation.

The authority of the prophets among these people when they were striving to follow God might be summarized in this way:

Now it was the custom among all the Nephites to appoint for their chief captains, (save it were in their times of wickedness) some one that had the spirit of revelation and also prophecy; therefore, this Gidgiddoni was a great prophet among them, as also was the chief judge.\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{The Christian Dispensation}

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the culmination of all the prophets. He was appointed with "the oil of gladness" above all others.\textsuperscript{97} He was the greatest "... high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ..."\textsuperscript{98} He was, however, a Prophet, also. The greatest of all the Prophets! He thus identified himself when he said after he had been cast out of Nazareth "... A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country. ..."\textsuperscript{99} To the Nephites the Savior further enunciated:

\textsuperscript{95}B. of M., Enos vs. 22.
\textsuperscript{96}B. of M., III Nephi 3:19.
\textsuperscript{97}Hebrews 1:9.
\textsuperscript{98}Hebrews 6:20.
\textsuperscript{99}Matthew 13:57.
Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people. Verily I say unto you, yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have testified of me.  

The Savior gave the keys of binding authority to His chief Apostle-Prophet, Peter. His church was founded on "... Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." These Christian Apostles and Prophets ministered with such authority over the Church that while they were alive they were the only acknowledged general authorities of Christ's Church. Peter, James and John were the most preeminent.  

THE WORLD WITHOUT PROPHETIC AUTHORITY  

The so-called Great Apostasy chronicles the period in history when this world was left without recognized prophetic authority. This lack brought spiritual famine in the land that lasted until the dawning of the Last Dispensation. It was a period of "dark ages,"--a time when, as in a similar period in Israelitish history, "the sun ... had gone ... down over the prophets." No recognized man could rise and say, authoritatively, "Thus saith the Lord." No one could legally minister for God on the earth and so for over a millenium there was  

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101 Ephesians 2:20.  
102 Galatians 2:9.  
103 Amos 8:11-12.  
only a form of godliness but no power.\textsuperscript{105}

CONCLUSION

LeGrand Richards, a present day prophet, commenting on Amos 3:7\textsuperscript{106} concluded:

What does that mean? It means that no honest person believing in the scriptures could look to find God's eternal truth upon the earth without a prophet at its head because we have no record that he has ever had a church or a movement without a prophet.\textsuperscript{107}

The testimony of King Benjamin is true, "And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men . . . ."\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{105} P. of G. P., Joseph Smith 2:19.

\textsuperscript{106} I.V., Amos 3:7. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, until he revealeth the secret unto his servants the prophets."

\textsuperscript{107} LeGrand Richards, "Why a Prophet?" The Improvement Era, LXXIII (June, 1970), 108.

\textsuperscript{108} B. of M., Mosiah 3:13.
Chapter 3

THE BASIS OF PROPHETIC AUTHORITY IN THE DISPENSATION
OF THE FULLNESS OF TIMES

Joseph Smith remained with us about fourteen years. He remained until he had received all the keys of the kingdom of God which were necessary for the establishment of this church and kingdom and which were necessary for those men who followed him to have those keys upon their shoulders, that they might continue to build upon the foundation that had been laid; but as soon as Joseph received the keys of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood, as soon as he received the keys from Moses for the gathering together of the House of Israel in the latter-days, and from Elijah to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children and children to the fathers—when Joseph received all these keys, and had power to seal them upon the heads of other men, the Lord called him away.¹

THE LAST DISPENSATION IN PERSPECTIVE

Joseph Smith never claimed to be an innovator. He was a restorer. "I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things."² The last dispensation is an intrinsic part of all previous ones. To understand the authority of prophet-administrators of the past dispensations is to fundamentally comprehend the basis of prophetic authority in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times.

For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time, in which is the dispensation of the fullness of times.

²Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 132:40, hereafter cited as D&C.
Which power you hold, in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation:

For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and last of all being sent down from heaven unto you.

Verily I say unto you, behold how great is your calling.  

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY OF THE LAST DISPENSATION

God is the source of ultimate authority. The genesis of this dispensation was the theophany of Joseph Smith which occurred in a grove near Palmyra, New York in the early spring of 1820. In this grove the boy Joseph saw, in open vision, the Father and the Son. In a very real sense Joseph received his commission to be the Prophet of the last days directly from God Himself, for "God had a work for (him) to do." In a revelation the Lord said, "... Joseph Smith, whom I did call upon by mine angels, my ministering servants, and by mine own voice out of the heavens, to bring forth my work." It is significant to note that according to the Lord all of this occurred "... that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets...."

SPECIFIC AUTHORITIES RESTORED TO JOSEPH SMITH

3D&C 112:30-33.
4See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
5The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), Joseph Smith 2:14-20, hereafter cited as P. of G. P., followed by the reference within.
7D&C 136:37.
8D&C 1:18.
Authority on the Knowledge of God and the Apostasy

The day Joseph Smith walked out of the grove he possessed authoritative knowledge about the nature of God. Joseph Fielding Smith, speaking of the reality of this authority, has written:

In the spring of 1820, after the vision was given to Joseph Smith of the Father and the Son, he stood as the only witness among men who could testify with knowledge that God lives and Jesus Christ is verily his Son. In this knowledge he became a special witness for Christ and thus an apostle before the priesthood had been restored.9

Along with this fundamental knowledge about God, Joseph Smith knew of the apostasy of all the creeds of men. "... I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; ... they deny the power (of God) ... ."10

Authority, as Translator, over the Stick of Ephraim and the Word of God

The Book of Mormon, containing a "fullness of the Gospel,"11 was committed to Joseph Smith for translation. "I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim (to Joseph Smith)."12 To the Latter-day Prophet was also given the authority to bring forth the word of God to this generation.13

Restoration of Priesthood Authority

On May 15, 1829, under the hands of John the Baptist, Joseph

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11D&C 27:5.

12D&C 27:5.

13D&C 5:10.
Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood.\(^{14}\) Shortly thereafter they received the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John.

Which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron;

And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them;

Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;\(^{15}\)

**Restoration of Presiding Authority over Priesthood Ministrations or Priesthood Keys**

The authority to direct or the right of presidency, in the saving ministry of the Priesthood, constitutes keys of the Priesthood.\(^{16}\) To the Prophet Joseph there was committed a fullness of all Priesthood keys. He has so recorded:

... for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.\(^{17}\)

An overview of some of these restored keys of authority is in order.

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\(^{14}\)D&C 13.

\(^{15}\)D&C 27:8, 12-13.


\(^{17}\)D&C 128:18.
The Key of the Ministering of Angels. When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the fullness of Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist, the culminating Prophet of the Mosaic Dispensation, they received with that ordination the key to the ministering of angels. They had the right to entertain angels. It is clear that the Prophet entertained numerous angels during his ministry. It was from these angelic ministers that he received subsequent keys.

And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope.

Keys over God's Kingdom on earth. Peter, James, and John were the presiding ministers of the Christian or Meridian Dispensation. Peter held these keys in total and was called by Christ "a seer, or a stone." These three apostles of the Lord ministered to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in 1829. By them they were "... ordained ... and confirmed ... apostles ... and (given) the keys ... revealed unto them (viz. the keys given to Peter, James, and John)." More will be said of this later, therefore, it is sufficient to conclude that

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18 See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
23 D&C 27:12.
with this Melchizedek Priesthood authority Joseph and Oliver had the right to "... administer the gospel and hold the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God ... in the ordinances ... the power of godliness is manifest." 24

Keys to detect Satan. Satan was an early participant in the Restoration. He was present in the grove when the Prophet prayed, 25 he tempted Joseph to use the plates for monetary gain, 26 and a greater fullness of his kingdom was established with the establishment of God's kingdom on the earth. 27 Adam detected Satan on the banks of the Susquehanna River 28 and may have given the key of detection to the Prophet Joseph at this time. Let it be remembered that it was the pre-mortal Adam known as Michael who fought and defeated Satan in the pre-mortal "war in heaven." 29 He will so defeat him again. 30 Be this as it may, the record clearly discloses that Joseph had the keys enabling him to detect the devil. 31

29 Revelation 12:7-8.
Keys of the gathering of Israel. From the great leader of the first exodus of Israel, even Moses, Joseph and Oliver received, on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, "the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north." Among other things these keys allowed the Prophet to send Orson Hyde and John E. Page to the Holy Land in 1840. Orson Hyde dedicated the Holy Land for the return of the Jews in November, 1841.

The keys of Abraham—the Patriarchal Priesthood. At the same time and place where the keys of the gathering of Israel were restored, Joseph and Oliver entertained an Elias, even Noah. He committed the keys of the dispensation of the Gospel of Abraham which fundamentally "pertains to . . . the blessings that were conferred upon Abraham, the promises given to his posterity . . . ." This, in essence, is the Patriarchal Priesthood. " . . . the Gospel of Abraham was one of celestial marriage (including plurality of wives); it was a gospel or commission to provide a lineage for the elect portion of the pre-existent spirits. . . . This power and commission is what Elias

32D&C 110:11.
33Readings, I, 393-400.
34D&C 110:12.
37Joseph Fielding Smith, Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine (July, 1936), p. 100.
38Teachings, p. 151.
restored."\(^39\) Thus the Lord said, "Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham. . . ."\(^40\) Church history records that the Prophet fulfilled this commission.\(^41\)

The keys of Elijah—the power of sealing. Finally, again in the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the sealing powers of the Priesthood from Elijah, the Prophet.\(^42\) This was in fulfillment of the great prophecy given by Malachi in the Old Testament and also to fulfill the words of Moroni, an important angelic minister for the Last Dispensation.\(^44\) Joseph taught that Elijah was "the last prophet that held the keys in ancient Israel."\(^45\) This sealing power was restored "in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness."\(^45\) Also, we have the following from the Prophet:

The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, even those who are in heaven.

. . . this is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven, and seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection, and here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those

\(^39\)Mormon Doctrine, p. 220.

\(^40\)D&C 132:32.

\(^41\)D&C 132:19-20, 124:58.

\(^42\)D&C 110:13-16.

\(^43\)Malachi 4:5-6.

\(^44\)P. of G. P., Joseph Smith 2:36-39.

\(^45\)Teachings, p. 172.
who dwell in heaven. This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah. 46

This sealing power incorporates the sealing of families to each other, the living and the dead for all eternity. 47 Also, it includes the power of "sealing up unto eternal life." 48 These sealing keys of Elijah are an important part of what connects the Last Dispensation with all previous dispensations.

The Restoration of Temples

The Lord has said the fullness of Priesthood and keys is to be found in a temple of God. 49 The Lord commanded and authorized Joseph, the Prophet to build such holy places. 50 "... the Church is not fully organized, in its proper order, and cannot be until the temple is completed, where places will be provided for the administration of the ordinances of the Priesthood." 51

These words of Wilford Woodruff become very significant:

He (Joseph Smith) lived until he received every key, ordinance and law ever given to any man on the earth, from Father Adam down, touching this dispensation. He received powers and keys from under the hands of Moses for gathering the house of Israel in the last days; he received under the hands of Elijah the keys of sealing the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers; he received under the hands of Peter, James and John, the apostleship, and everything belonging thereto; he received under the hands of Moroni all the keys and powers required of the

46 Ibid., p. 337-338.
47 Ibid., p. 323.
48 Ibid., p. 323 and 338.
51 Teachings, p. 224.
stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim, he received under the hands of John the Baptist the Aaronic Priesthood, with all its keys and powers, and every other key and power belonging to this dispensation, and I am not ashamed to say that he was a prophet of God, and he laid the foundation of the greatest work and dispensation that has ever been established on the earth.\textsuperscript{52}

FULL RESTORATION OF THE PROPHETIC OFFICE IN THE LAST DISPENSATION

Joseph Smith as the presiding Prophet of the Last Dispensation restored, in its totality, the prophetic office. Fundamentally, Joseph Smith had the testimony of Jesus and thus was a general prophet.\textsuperscript{53} That Joseph was also a Seer is attested to by deity Himself.\textsuperscript{54} That the Prophet magnified this calling is shown by his own statement,

It is my meditation all the day, and more than my meat and drink to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind.\textsuperscript{55}

As a revelator Joseph Smith revealed more of the word of God to the people than any other prophet of whom we have record. Also, it is very clear from the Prophet's writings that he only revealed to the Church a very small portion of what he received.\textsuperscript{56} Of course, as a translator, Joseph Smith brought forth The Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham and other documents incorporated in the Doctrine and Covenants,\textsuperscript{57} the Inspired Revision of the Bible, and elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{52}Wilford Woodruff, \textit{Journal of Discourses}, G. D. Watt and others (reporters) (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1854-86), XVI, 267, hereafter cited as \textit{JD}.

\textsuperscript{53}Teachings, p. 269.

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{D&C} 23:1.

\textsuperscript{55}Teachings, p. 296.

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{P. of G. P.}, Joseph Smith 2:42; \textit{D&C} 76:112-119, etc.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{D&C} 7.
The Apostolic Authority

In the Apostleship, bestowed by Christ upon the twelve men He chose in Palestine, is incorporated the fullness of Priesthood, keys, authorities, and powers.

What ordination should a man receive to possess all the keys and powers of the Holy Priesthood...? He should be ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ. That office puts him in possession of every key, every power, every authority, communication, benefit, blessing, glory, and kingdom that was ever revealed to man. 58

At this point it should be clarified that there are two kinds of Apostles recognized in the Church. A general apostle is an ambassador for Christ, even a witness of Him. In this sense every member of the Church, especially Priesthood bearers, should be apostles. 59 The status of the ordained Apostle is vastly different, however. As an office in the Priesthood, the Apostleship incorporates all the powers, keys and authorities enumerated above. When the Lord, through Joseph Smith, called the first Quorum of Twelve Apostles in this dispensation, they were given all the authority and keys Joseph had. Thus, the Prophet was able to say after they had received this great endowment:

Now if they kill me, you have got all the keys, and all the ordinances, and you can confer them upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom as fast as you will be able to build it up. 60

Usually ordained Apostles are members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the second ranking presiding Priesthood Quorum in the Church under the Quorum of "First Presidency." 61 Since the death of

58 Brigham Young, JD, IX, 87 (Italics by the writer).
59 Doctrines of Salvation, III, 144-146.
60 Times and Seasons (Nauvoo, Illinois), V, 651, hereafter cited as Times and Seasons.
Joseph Smith the Presiding High Priest of the Kingdom of God, the Prophet
Seer, Revelator, and Church President is the senior ordained Apostle of
the Council of Twelve.\textsuperscript{62} No exception could be made to this procedure
unless it were revealed to the presiding Apostle.\textsuperscript{63}

The Extent of the Authority of
the Prophetic Office of the
President of the Church of
Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints

The Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints is an aggregate office as has been already explained. In actual
fact there is no more authoritative office on earth. "Upon the President
of the Church the Almighty bestows the highest office and the greatest
gifts that mortal man is capable of receiving."\textsuperscript{64} The Lord Himself has
said:

\dots the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood
is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses--
Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a trans-
lator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows
upon the head of the church.\textsuperscript{65}

Time after time in the revelations the Lord explains that the
voice of the Prophet is equivalent to His voice,\textsuperscript{66} the action of the
Prophet when acting in the Prophetic office is His work,\textsuperscript{67} the power

\textsuperscript{62}Doctrines of Salvation, III, 155-156.
\textsuperscript{63}Harold B. Lee, "Time to Prepare to Meet God," The Improvement
Era, LXXIII (June, 1970), 28.
\textsuperscript{64}Mormon Doctrine, p. 591.
\textsuperscript{65}\textit{D\&C} 107:91-92.
\textsuperscript{66}\textit{D\&C} 1:38; 50:36.
\textsuperscript{67}\textit{D\&C} 36:2.
of the Prophetic office is indeed the power of God unto salvation, and finally those who receive or recognize the Prophet for what he is or are, in effect receiving God. "... he that receiveth my servants receiveth me." 69

Spencer W. Kimball, speaking at the time when Joseph Fielding Smith was sustained as the tenth presiding Prophet of this dispensation, aptly summarized the authority of that office in our time:

I make no claim of infallibility for him, (the Prophet) but he does need to be recognized of God, an authoritative person. He is no pretender as numerous are who presumptuously assume position without appointment and authority that is not given. He must speak like his Lord: '. . . as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' (Matthew 7:29)

He must be bold enough to speak truth even against popular clamor for lessening restrictions. He must be certain of his divine appointment, of his Celestial ordination, and his authority to call to service, to ordain, to pass keys which fit eternal locks.

He must have commanding power like prophets of old: '. . . to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious . . . unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure.' (D&C 1:8-9), and rare powers: '. . . that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven.' (D&C 132: 46)

He . . . bridges the gap between man and his Maker. 70

TESTIMONIES OF THE ELEVEN PRESIDING PROPHETS OF THIS DISPENSATION REGARDING THEIR PROPHETIC AUTHORITY

Joseph Smith, Jr.

Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council. It is the testimony that I

69 D&C 34:36.
70 Spencer W. Kimball, "The Need for a Prophet," The Improvement Era, LXXIII (June, 1970), 93-94.
want that I am God's servant, and this people His people. The ancient prophets declared that in the last days the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, nor left to other people; and the very time that was calculated on, this people were struggling to bring it out; God will always protect me until my mission is fulfilled.

I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world. 71

Also, when defending his position as a Prophet to James Arlington Bennett who wanted him to use his position for political leverage, the Prophet Joseph said:

Shall I, who have witnessed the visions of eternity, and beheld the glorious mansions of bliss, and the regions and the misery of the damned,—shall I turn to be a Judas? Shall I, who have heard the voice of God, and communed with angels, and spake as moved by the Holy Ghost for the renewal of the everlasting covenant, and for the gathering of Israel in the last days,—shall I worm myself into a political hypocrite? Shall I, who hold the keys of the last kingdom, in which is the dispensation of the fullness of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy Prophets since the world began under the sealing power of the Melchisedec (sic) Priesthood,—shall I stoop from the sublime authority of Almighty God, to be handled as a monkey's cat-paw, and pity myself into a clown to act the farce of political demagoguery? No—verily no! The whole earth shall bear me witness that I, like the towering rock in the midst of the ocean, which has withstood the mighty surges of the warring waves for centuries, am impregnable, and am a faithful friend to virtue, and a fearless foe to vice,—no odds whether the former was sold as a pearl in Asia or hid as a gem in America, and the latter dazzles in palaces or glimmers among the tombs.

I combat the errors of ages; I meet the violence of mobs; I cope with illegal proceedings from executive authority; I cut the Gordian knot of powers, and I solve mathematical problems of universities, with truth—diamond truth; . . . 72

Brigham Young

Just after the death of Joseph Smith when there was a question in some peoples' minds as to who should succeed to the prophetic office,


Brigham Young said:

The Twelve are appointed by the finger of God. Here is Brigham, have his knees ever faltered? have his lips ever quivered? Here is Heber and the rest of the Twelve, an independent body, who have the keys of the kingdom of God to deliver to all the world: this is true so help me God. They stand next to Joseph, and are the First Presidency of the Church.\(^{73}\)

We also have this pertinent statement by Brigham Young:

I do not care who leads the Church, even though it were Ann Lee; but one thing I must know, and that is what God says about it. I have the keys and the means of obtaining the mind of God on the subject.

I know there are those in our midst who will seek the lives of the Twelve as they did the lives of Joseph and Hyrum. We shall ordain others and give the fulness of the priesthood, so that if we are killed the fulness of the priesthood may remain.

Joseph conferred upon our heads all the keys and powers belonging to the Apostleship which he himself held before he was taken away, and no man or set of men can get between Joseph and the Twelve in this world or in the world to come.

How often has Joseph said to the Twelve, 'I have laid the foundation and you must build thereon, for upon your shoulders the kingdom rests.'\(^{74}\)

Who gives me that power? Let the world inquire. It is the God of heaven; it is the Spirit of the Holy Ghost; it is not of myself; it is the Lord Jesus Christ trying to save the inhabitants of the earth.\(^{75}\)

John Taylor

President Taylor speaking of his position at the death of President Brigham Young in 1877 said:

I occupied the senior position in the quorum and occupying that position which was thoroughly understood by the quorum of the twelve, on the death of President Young, as the twelve assumed the presidency, and I was their president, it placed me in a position of president of the church. . . .

Thus I stood in the same position that President Young did. . .

\(^{73}\)Readings, II, 13.

\(^{74}\)HC, VII, 230.

\(^{75}\)Brigham Young, JD, I, 45.
at the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith. 76

Wilford Woodruff

Wilford Woodruff stated in the dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple:

Thou hast called thy servants Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith to hold the keys of the Presidency and priesthood this day, and for these shepherds of thy flock we feel to give thee thanksgiving and praise. Thy servant Wilford is bound to acknowledge thy hand, . . . Remember in love thy servant whom thou hast called to be a prophet, seer, and revelator to all mankind, whose days have been many upon the earth; yet lengthen out his span of mortal life, we pray thee, and grant unto him all the powers and gifts, in their completeness, of the office thou hast conferred upon him; and in like manner bless his associates in the Presidency of thy Church. 77

Lorenzo Snow

Lorenzo Snow testified that he had seen Christ and that He called him to Prophetic leadership. This experience is told by his granddaughter, Allie Young Pond.

After we left his room and while we were still in the large corridor, leading into the celestial room, I was walking several steps ahead of grandpa when he stopped me, saying: 'Wait a moment, Allie, I want to tell you something. It was right here that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to me at the time of the death of President Woodruff. He instructed me to go right ahead and organize the First Presidency of the Church at once and not wait as had been done after the death of the previous presidents, and that I was to succeed President Woodruff.' 78

Joseph F. Smith


In the Annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held in April, 1913, President Joseph F. Smith said:

I desire to make another remark or two before we close our conference. I will call your attention to the fact that the Lord in the beginning of this work revealed that there should be three high priests to preside over the High Priesthood of his Church and over the whole Church. (D&C 107:22, 64-67, 91-92) He conferred upon them all the authority necessary to preside over all the affairs of the Church. They hold the keys of the house of God and of the ordinances of the gospel, and of every blessing which has been restored to the earth in this dispensation. This authority is vested in a presidency of three high priests. They are three presidents, the Lord himself so calls them. (D&C 107:29) But there is one presiding president, and his counselors are presidents also. I propose that my counselors and fellow presidents in the First Presidency shall share with me in the responsibility of every act which I shall perform in this capacity. I do not propose to take the reins in my own hands to do as I please; but I propose to do as my brethren and I agree upon, and as the Spirit of the Lord manifests to us.

Heber J. Grant

Heber J. Grant knew that the mantle rested on him.

I can pledge to you the best that is in me to fulfill the high and holy calling that has come to me, to exercise in righteousness the power of the Priesthood of the living God, which centers in me.

George Albert Smith

In the dedicatory prayer of the Idaho Falls Temple, President George Albert Smith prayed:

We pray that thy servant, George Albert Smith, may be endowed of thee with a vigorous body and mind ... and with the spirit of prophecy, seership, revelation, and of presidency, and with the ability to magnify thy great and holy name.

79 Gospel Doctrine, p. 176.
81 George Albert Smith, "Dedication Prayer of Idaho Falls Temple," The Improvement Era, XLVIII (October, 1945), 562.
David O. McKay

In his 94th year, David O. McKay testified:

There are many instances about which I could tell you wherein the hand of the Lord has been manifest in guiding his servants. I know it is real. I know it as I know that you are assembled in this conference, I know one's spirit can be in tune, and hear that sweet still, small voice. I know he will warn us. I know he will never say anything that is impossible to understand, I know he is our Father in heaven. He is just as real as my earthly father and mother, whom I hope to meet over there. The Savior, the Son of God, is at the head of this Church. I am not the head of this Church—Jesus Christ is our head! I know that the former Presidents of the Church knew that, and declared it. Joseph Smith, the Prophet, knew it. This is Christ's Church, and we are his messengers, his representatives, and it is our duty to keep in touch with him and know what his wishes are.  

Joseph Fielding Smith

Less than three months before his death, Joseph Fielding Smith told the Priesthood of the Church:

Now I shall say a few words to you about the priesthood and those keys which the Lord has conferred upon us in this final gospel dispensation.

We hold the holy Melchizedek Priesthood, which is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of men.

We also hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth, which kingdom is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These keys are the right of presidency; they are the power and authority to govern and direct all of the Lord's affairs on earth. Those who hold them have power to govern and control the manner in which all others may serve in the priesthood. All of us may hold the priesthood, but we can only use it as authorized and directed so to do by those who hold the keys.

This priesthood and these keys were conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by Peter, James, and John, and by Moses and Elijah and others of the ancient prophets. They have been given to each man who has been set apart as a member of the Council of the Twelve. But since they are the right of presidency, they can only be exercised in full by the senior apostle of God on earth, who is the president of the Church.

May I now say—very plainly and very emphatically—that we have the holy priesthood and that the keys of the kingdom of God are

here. They are found only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Now, brethren, I think there is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord.

An individual may fall by the wayside, or have views, or give counsel which falls short of what the Lord intends. But the voice of the First Presidency and the united voice of those others who hold with them the keys of the kingdom shall always guide the Saints and the world in those paths where the Lord wants them to be.\textsuperscript{83}

\begin{flushright}
Harold B. Lee
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At the Solemn Assembly where he was sustained as the eleventh President of the Church, Harold B. Lee stated:

I know, with a testimony more powerful than sight, that as the Lord declared, 'The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth (from the Prophet Joseph Smith through his successors down to the present), and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.

'Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come. . . .' (D&C 65:2, 6)

I bear that testimony with all the conviction of my soul. . . .\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{SUMMATION}

At the beginning of this dispensation the Lord said He had given his servant Joseph Smith, Jr. an appointment to restore all things.\textsuperscript{85} Joseph fulfilled his work. All that Joseph received he delegated to the

\textsuperscript{83}Joseph Fielding Smith, "Eternal Keys and the Right to Preside," \textit{The Ensign}, II (July, 1972), 87-88.

\textsuperscript{84}Harold B. Lee, "May the Kingdom of God Go Forth," \textit{The Ensign}, III (January, 1973), 25.

\textsuperscript{85}D&C 132:40.
Quorum of the Twelve before he was martyred. The Church and Kingdom of God is now fully restored never to be taken from the earth or given to another people. At the head of that kingdom, on earth, under Christ is the Presiding Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Harold Bingham Lee. He has testified that he is fully empowered. And so the testimony of God's servants today is that:

Now, as in every age of the earth's history, when the Lord has had a message for people, he has sent his servants to testify and bear witness of it. They have spoken by the power of the Holy Ghost and have certified of the truth of the revelation. We do this today, most solemnly and soberly, ...  

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86 Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report (April, 1898), p. 89.
87 Daniel 2:44.
89 Bruce R. McConkie, "The Keystone of Our Religion," The Improvement Era, LXXII (December, 1969), 58.
Chapter 4

OBLIGATIONS OF CHURCH MEMBERS

TO THE PROPHETIC OFFICE

I would like to see all this people do right, and keep the commandments of God. I would like to see them fulfill their covenants and live up to their vows and promises, and fulfill their obligations for they have obligated themselves before God, and before angels, and before earthly witnesses, that they would do this.¹

INTRODUCTION

"I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the Church; and unto those who do not belong to the Church I speak by way of invitation."² Thus spoke the Prophet Alma to the people of his day. Covenant members of the Church in any age have always borne a special relationship to the Prophets. The Lord long ago covenanted with Abraham that all who receive the Gospel would be called after him.

... for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;³

In a very real sense the covenant members of the Church are the children


²The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), Alma 5:62, hereafter cited as B. of M., followed by the reference within.

³The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), Abraham 2:10, hereafter cited as P. of G. P., followed by the reference within.

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of the prophets:

Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.'

Although all things are done in the name of Christ and He is the great mediator between the Father and His children, the ministers of Christ, His "undershepherds" have always been sacred to the Lord and they should be to His people. "Touch not mine annointed and do my prophets no harm," has been the command of God to His covenant people. In this dispensation the Lord has pronounced a curse against those who lift up the heal against His annointed speaking most specifically of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Christ is the ultimate annointed one. The term "Christ" is taken from the Greek "Christos" meaning "the annointed one." Paul, in the book of Hebrews states that Christ was "Annointed . . . with the oil of gladness above . . . (his) fellows." The term "fellows" would

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5 The Inspired Version of the Holy Scriptures (Independence Missouri: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1964), Galatians 3:19-20. The Prophet Moses was called to be the mediator of the first covenant and of course Jesus Christ, the greatest of all the Prophets, is the mediator of the Gospel Covenant.

6 1 Peter 5:4.

7 1 Chronicles 16:22, and Psalms 105:15.

8 Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 121:16, hereafter cited as D&C.


10 Hebrews 1:9.
be better translated "associates," "companions," or "friends."\(^\text{11}\) Who are those "friends" of Christ; those lesser annointed ones? The scripture states that Christ's friends are those who keep his commandments.\(^\text{12}\) Abraham is often referred to as "the friend of God" in a most special sense.\(^\text{13}\) He it was who was chosen along with the other prophets before the foundation of the world.\(^\text{14}\) Christ, it will be remembered, said that he laid down his life "for his friends."\(^\text{15}\) The Book of Mormon makes it clear that those who would be the first resurrected would be the prophets and those who followed them to Christ.

And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ—for so shall he be called.

And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or all those that have kept the commandments of God, shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first resurrection.

They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death.\(^\text{16}\)

Among those annointed with Christ as His "fellows" must be included the prophets, those who were foreordained from before the foundation of the world.\(^\text{17}\) Joseph Fielding Smith stated that some of the great presiding

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\(^\text{13}\)II Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, and James 2:23.


\(^\text{15}\)John 15:13.

\(^\text{16}\)B. of M., Mosiah 15:21-23.

\(^\text{17}\)Joseph Smith the Prophet taught that anyone who is called to minister to God's children was foreordained to that calling before the
prophets of the dispensations even assisted Christ in the creation of the earth.

It is true that Adam helped to form this earth. He labored with our Savior Jesus Christ. I have a strong view or conviction that there were others also who assisted them. Perhaps Noah and Enoch; and why not Joseph Smith, and those who were appointed to be rulers before the earth was formed? 18

Again and again the scriptures affirm that those who bear the name of Christ and especially presiding prophets are to be honored as Christ is honored. There is no essential distinction made between those empowered to represent Christ or Christ himself. "Whether by my own voice or the voice of my servants it is the same." 19 To ancient Israel the Lord warned, concerning the angel who was sent before them,

Behold, I send and Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. 20

To his chosen Twelve, Christ said, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." 21 To Joseph Smith the Lord said, "This generation shall have my word through

world was. (Teachings, p. 365) It should be remembered, as before explained, that any with the spirit of prophecy, or the Holy Ghost, is in general a prophet. Thus, those of the presiding prophets would be included and since Christ indicated that the greater the call the more extensive the ministry (Matthew 23:11) the presiding Prophets would be among Christ's closest "friends".

18Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), I, 74-75, and Abraham 3:24, hereafter cited as Doctrines of Salvation. Significantly both state concerning Christ, "And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;" (Italics by the writer).

19D&C 1:38.


21Matthew 10:40.
The majority of God's children in the world have never followed the true prophets. From Father Adam down to the presiding Prophet of the present even the covenant people have not been as obedient as they should be. The lament of Christ over Jerusalem bears a tragic testimony:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.23

The reasons for non-acceptance of the prophets are varied and complex. The world as a whole, generally unaware of their position as it relates to the prophets, either ignore them or simple disbelieve. The nominal Christian generally cites that Christ is totally sufficient and that He fulfilled the prophets.24 The member of the Church or more generally those aware of the significance of the work of the restoration25 begun by Joseph Smith cite other reasons. A thorough examination

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22D&C 5:10.

23Matthew 23:37-39. Interestingly the Inspired Version extends this lament to the future for it states: "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Ye who will kill the prophets, and will stone them who are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (I.V., Matthew 23:37).

24Chapter 5 will attempt to articulate the position of the world in regard to the Prophets. These problems will be dealt with there.

25There are, in the world today, literally thousands who accept the prophetic call of Joseph Smith but reject his legal successors.
of these reasons reveals that they revolve around these issues: (1) Ignorance of the stewardship of the prophets, especially the presiding Prophet. (2) Misunderstanding regarding the principles of agency and free-agency. (3) Lack of understanding in regard to covenants. (4) Misunderstanding regarding the checks and balances of Church Government. (5) Outright deception by false prophets. (6) Disobedience and sin. These factors will be examined now.

The Stewardship of the Prophets over God's Covenant People

Joseph Smith said:

Whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed His word and gave power and authority to administer in His name, and where there is a priest of God—a minister who has power and authority from God to administer in the ordinances of the gospel and officiate in the priesthood of God, there is the kingdom of God; and, in consequence of rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Prophets whom God hath sent, the judgments of God have rested upon people, cities, and nations, in various ages of the world, which was the case with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, that were destroyed for rejecting the Prophets.26

The Kingdom of God is no ethereal, spiritual essence. In Latter-day Saint doctrine it is a tangible reality. When it is established its members are subject to its authorized ministers. Christ is the King of lesser priesthood kings27 the great High Priest over lesser High Priests.28 The truly converted covenant person honors Christ's ser-


27 Revelation 1:6, and D&C 76:56.

28 Hebrews 5:6. Bruce R. McConkie in his book Mormon Doctrine, p. 355 says concerning the presiding High Priest in any age that he is, "God's chief representative on earth, the one who holds the highest spiritual position in his kingdom in any age." Joseph Smith taught that "Christ is the Great High Priest; Adam next." (Teachings, p. 158).
vants as he would honor Christ. He is subject to the laws and officers of the kingdom. 29 The chief officer, if Christ is not present, is the presiding High Priest or presiding Prophet of the time. "The Church is a kingdom," wrote Bruce R. McConkie, "The Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal King, and the President of the Church, the mouthpiece of God on earth, is the earthly king." 30 Nathan E. Tanner summarized the stewardship of the Prophets when he said:

Our Heavenly Father, knowing our weaknesses and our need for constant direction, sends us prophets to continually teach us and keep us reminded of this plan of life and salvation. . . . Our salvation and that of our loved ones depends on our listening to and heeding the words of the prophets, realizing that we must believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God. 31

Agency

"Next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct that life is God's greatest gift to Man." 32 These are the words of the ninth President of the Church, David O. McKay. They identify the place of agency in the doctrine of the Church. The whole plan of salvation pivots on this fundamental principle. The war in heaven was fought that it might be preserved. 33 It was an endowment given to man in the Garden of

29 Some would cite the verse ",... the kingdom of God is within you," (Luke 17:21) to excuse their disobedience to Priesthood officers, but as the marginal reading to that verse states, it would be better rendered, ",... the kingdom of God is among you," (Italics by the writer. See marginal note King James version; also I.V., Luke 17:21).


33 P. of G. P., Moses 4:3.
Eden. Without it, saith God, there could be no existence. In summary, agency may be defined as: "The power of choice all intelligent beings inherit from the Gods of eternity; it is innate." Free-Agency

Free-agency, at least for the purpose of this study, will be considered as agency to do or to be. Our use of agency determines the degree of free-agency we possess. For example men were not free to go to the moon until they had learned and applied certain laws. In the first place there was agency to strive to attain a goal. In the second place there was free-agency to achieve it. In the words of Boyd K. Packer, "... obedience leads to freedom." Christ said, "... the truth will make you free," and he who "... committeth sin is the servant of sin."

The Agency and Free-Agency of the Covenant Person as it Relates to the Prophetic Office

Both the agency and free-agency of the covenant person should be more extensive than his brother outside of the covenant. The right

34P. of G. P., Moses 3:17, and Moses 7:32.
35D&C 93:30-31.
36Brigham Young, JD, IX, 105.
37There is no unanimity in L.D.S. Literature as to the definition of free-agency. The author, after thorough research, feels that there is free-agency to do or be only if agency is properly exercised.
39John 8:37.
40John 8:34.
to choose between alternatives is only significant when one comprehends
the significance of the alternatives. If there is no cognizance of
alternatives the agency is not real. In the words of Lehi "... man
could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the
one or the other." 41 The question might be asked, "What makes a thing
enticing?" Of course there are a legion of answers that may be given.
In the Gospel context, however, and in an eternal sense, only that
which is "good" should be enticing. Even the wicked would shake at the
appearance of sin if they fully comprehended it. The wages of sin,
disobedience to God's law, when accountable, brings misery, 42 despair, 43
and death. 44 In the words of Alma, "Wickedness never was happiness." 45
Logically, then, only those who know the truth have agency. The Holy
Ghost is the spirit of discernment and since no one but the covenant
person is entitled to this gift he is, with that gift, endowed with
more agency. It should be noted that the Spirit of Christ gives a
lesser ability of discernment to all but in the words of Bruce R.
McConkie, "There is no perfect operation of the power of discernment
without revelation." 46 The Holy Ghost is the great revelator. 47

Obviously, only correct use of agency lead to free-agency. No

41 B. of M., II Nephi 2:16.
42 B. of M., Alma 42:1.
43 B. of M., Moroni 10:22.
44 Roman 6:23.
45 B. of M., Alma 41:10.
46 Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft,
47 Teachings, p. 328.
man has the free-agency to inherit a fullness of Celestial exaltation unless he uses his agency to obey all the laws, ordinances, and performances leading to that glory. In the words of Jesus Christ:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.
For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.
But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.
This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law. 49

Jesus Christ, under the Father, is the source of all good things. He has endowed us with agency.
In him we live, move, and have a being. 49 He adds upon us free-agency as we obey His Gospel. As has already been stated He is the great minister, 50 the great Prophet to our Father's eternal family. 51 The Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead, is the most especial minister of Christ. 52 He is even referred to as Christ's spirit. 52 After the Holy Ghost, who is called by Joseph Smith, "... God the third, the witness or Testator," 53 the greatest ministers of Christ, are the Prophets. They too, are also testators. Many of them have sealed their testimonies with their own blood. In speaking to the Nephites the Savior said, "... all the prophets ... .

50 Matthew 20:28.
51 B. of M., II Nephi 20:23.
52 D&C 20:77.
53 Teachings, p. 190.
as many as have spoken, have testified of me. 54

The relationship of the covenant person is to Christ through the prophets. It is most significant that as Christ spoke to the Nephites and gave to them the beatitudes he placed the following one first:

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am. 55

The whole exaltation of the covenant person is tied up with prophetic ministers. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a compendium of ministries. One is foreordained before birth by someone, baptized on earth by someone, confirmed by someone, ordained by someone, etc. All the saving ordinances are by ministration. All of Christ's ministers are presided over by Christ ultimately or by one of His recognized servants imminently. Christ, as he said, is the trunk and His apostles are the branches. 56 The great reality of this concept is indelibly placed in the mind when considered in the context of this statement by Heber C. Kimball:

Brother Brigham was speaking this forenoon, showing what an influence he has over this people. I want to know if he has any over a man or woman that is not in this vine, he being the head


55B. of M., III Nephi 12:1. This additional beatitude is also included, in an attenuated form, in I.V., Matthew 5:3–4.

now? When Joseph was here, he was the head of the vine in the flesh; but since he stepped away, brother Brigham is head of the vine, and we are connected to it; all you men and women, and then all the saints throughout the world are connected to that vine to which he is connected and he has power and influence over them, because they partake of his nature and his element, and he partakes of the element that came through Joseph, and Joseph from Peter, and Peter from Jesus and Jesus from the Father, and then it extends through all the Quorums that pertain to the house of Israel.  

... to believe in Christ in the full and perfect and saving sense, we must heed the testimony and accept the teachings of the Lord's prophets, so that we too may enjoy the promptings of the Holy Spirit and feel the spirit of revelation in our own souls.  

The Individual, Covenants, and Prophetic Authority

The word of the Lord to His people is, "Keep the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound; ..." Delbert L. Stapley speaking in the Conference of the Church in April of 1959 articulated the place of covenants in the Gospel scheme.

... a covenant is a solemn, binding compact between God and man whereby man agrees to keep God's commandments and serve him in righteousness and in truth unto the end. The gospel covenants and obligations bind Church members to obedience to laws and principles given of God which lead to happiness, love, and eternal joy. A covenant then is an agreement which includes obligations and is given as a principle with promise of blessings for obedience. ... It is our duty to learn and understand the sacred and binding nature of the covenants we accept at baptism and the covenants and obligations associated with all other ordinances of the gospel found along that narrow path which leads to life eternal.

Significant to this study is the fact that the Church member is bound to his covenants.

Every member of the Church has made covenants with the Lord.

57Heber C. Kimball, JD, V, 87.
These commandments and covenants are not grievous; they are not burdensome. On the contrary, they are enlightening, uplifting assuring, and helpful. They are instruments of voluntary action on our part that help us to concentrate our efforts to accomplish the purpose of life and to reach our ultimate goal.61

This puts him in an entirely different relationship to Christ and His servants. Joseph Fielding Smith has said:

I have heard people say, and members of the Church, too, 'I have a right to do as I please.' My answer is: No, you do not. You haven't any right at all to do just as you please. There is only one right that you have, and that is to do just what I read to you: keep the commandments of Jesus Christ. He has a perfect right to tell us so. We have no right to refuse.62

The baptismal covenant. In the covenant of baptism the individual promises to take upon himself the name of Christ, that he will always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given him.63

In speaking of this covenant Brigham Young has said:

All Latter-day Saints enter the new and everlasting covenant when they enter this Church. . . . They . . . covenant to sustain the Kingdom of God and no other kingdom. They take a vow of the most solemn kind, before the heavens and the earth, and that too, upon the validity of their own salvation that they will sustain truth and righteousness instead of wickedness and falsehood, and build up the Kingdom of God, instead of the kingdoms of this world.64

The covenant of baptism among other things opens the door leading into the Celestial Kingdom. The baptized person is in a whole new relation-

61ElRay L. Christiansen, "We Have Made Covenants with the Lord," The Ensign, II (January, 1973), 51.

62Joseph Fielding Smith, "He That Loveth Me," The Improvement Era, LXX (June, 1967), 31. It should be understood that President Smith's remarks are applied to all men and not just covenant members of the Church. The Church teaches that all who have received bodies and come to earth accepted, at least to some degree, the plan of the Father as championed by Christ and thus they all have responsibilities to Him (Italics by the writer).

63B. of M., Mosiah 18:10.

64Brigham Young, JD, XII, 230.
ship to God's kingdom, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he is subject to its laws and officers.

Next unto God and Christ, in the earth is placed one unto whom the keys of power and the authority of the Holy Priesthood are conferred, and unto whom the right of presidency is given. He is God's mouthpiece to His people, in all things pertaining to the building up of Zion and to the spiritual and temporal salvation of the people. He is as God's viceregent; I do not hesitate to announce this truth; for it is His word, and therefore it is true. The people who have entered into covenant to keep the commandments of the Lord must hearken unto the voice of him who is placed to preside over them...  

The covenant of sustaining church leaders. Members of the Church are privileged to express, without any kind of coercion whatever, their common-consent of those called to preside over them in God's kingdom. This principle finds expression in the sacred act of raising the right arm to the square in the public act of sustaining. In relating this to the sustaining of Church officers, Nathan E. Tanner said, at the Solemn Assembly which sustained Harold B. Lee as the eleventh Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the Church and its eleventh President:

... 'those voting will, when called upon, arise to their feet. When the affirmative vote is called for, those so voting will bring their right arms to the square to witness to the Lord that they sustain the office for whom they are voting.'

It is noted that 'when you vote affirmatively, you make a solemn covenant with the Lord that you will sustain, that is, give your full loyalty and support, without equivocation or reservation, to the office for whom you vote.'

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66 Common consent is a basic law of the Church. (D&C 26:2) This law allows the individual to exercise his agency in becoming subject to the sovereignty of God through His servants. The individual has no right of nomination or veto in God's kingdom, only the right of acceptance or rejection. The sovereignty of God through the servants is a working reality in the Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints.

67 Nathan E. Tanner, "The Sustaining of President Harold B. Lee," The Ensign, III (January, 1973), 3. Speaking of common consent George A. Smith said, "When men are placed as rulers and governors to control
Oath and Covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood. All those who receive the higher Melchizedek Priesthood receive it with an oath and a covenant. It is not the purpose of this study to examine this oath and covenant thoroughly but to articulate how it pertains to the individual Priesthood bearers relationship to the prophets in general and the presiding Prophet in particular. The Savior said it very succinctly:

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;
For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;
And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;
And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom;
therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.
And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the Priesthood.
Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. 68

In his classic definition of Priesthood, John Taylor said:

What is his Priesthood? It is the rule, authority, administration, if you please, of the government of God on the earth or in the heavens; for the same Priesthood that exists upon the earth exists in the heavens, and that Priesthood holds the keys of the mysteries of the revelations of God; and the legitimate head of that Priesthood, who has communion with God, is the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator to his Church and people on the earth. 69

No man can hold or magnify Priesthood without being subject to the Priesthood leaders over him. In other words Priesthood cannot be held independently.

Brother Brigham is my head; therefore that power is all in him.
I act in oneness with him in all things, and sanction his purposes

the destinies of any people, they must do it by the consent of that people, or it is unlawful, unconstitutional, unjust, unholy. God himself does not rule the children of men upon any other principle. 'You can serve me, live under my dominion, observe my laws, if you choose,' says the Lord; 'if not, you may serve the Devil and reap the reward that follows.'" (JD, v, 365)

68 D&C 84:35-40 (Italics by the writer).
69 John Taylor, JD, 6:25.
in God, of angels, and all heavenly beings. But, let me turn away and be independent of him and where is my Priesthood, or where is my authority?  

**Temple covenants.** The sacred work that goes on in the temple is of such a nature that little can be said here about it. For the present purpose it is sufficient to note that in holy temples the covenant people are privileged to make further covenants. They are able to fully consecrate themselves to the up-building of God's kingdom and are made even more cognizant of their special relationship to the prophets—the Lord's appointed servants. It is the doctrine of the Church that there is no fullness of exaltation without these most especial endowments given in holy temples.  

The presiding Prophet sustains a special relationship in regards to these sacred things. Joseph Fielding Smith in speaking of this says:

... you cannot receive the fulness of the Priesthood unless you go into the temple of the Lord and receive these ordinances of which the Prophet speaks. No man can get a fulness of the Priesthood outside of the temple of the Lord... I want to make this emphatic... Only one man at a time on the earth holds the keys of the priesthood...  

John Taylor put it all together in relation to the prophetic office when he stated:

I will tell you how I feel about the principle of consecration,

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70Heber C. Kimball, JD, VI, 67.

71Brigham Young's classic definition of the endowment is as follows: "Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the keys words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell." (JD, II, 31).

72Doctrines of Salvation, III, 131-132.
... if I am a servant of God, I am under the direction of those servants of God, whom He has appointed to guide the counsel me by revelation from Him; it is their right to dictate and control me amid all the affairs of those associated with the kingdom of God; and I feel moreover that everything, whether spiritual or temporal, relating to time or to eternity, is associated with the kingdom of God.73

Thus, by many covenants, the people of God are bound to the Lord and His servants; all for their exaltation and glory. The inspired counsel of the Apostle Paul is still very relevant to the covenant people today.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power in the church but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves punishment.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same;

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil be afraid; for he beareth not the rod in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake,

For, for this cause pay ye your consecrations also unto them for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

But first, render to all their dues, according to custom, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, that your consecrations may be done in fear of him to whom fear belongs, and in honor of him to whom honor belongs.74

The Presiding Prophet as He Relates to the Checks and Balances of Church Government

It must always be remembered that to the Latter-day Saint, the Church and Kingdom of God in any age, is not established on the arm of

73 John Taylor, JD, I, 375.
74 I. V., Romans 13:1-7 (Italics by the writer).
If established on any other foundation than Christ, His Gospel and His power (the Priesthood) it is simply not the kingdom of God. If any church or organization is founded on a man it is merely a man's work. Those involved with it may have "joy in their work for a season," but by and by that church or organization will inevitably go the way of all flesh. The Kingdom of God is established without mortal hands, and it is so maintained. The great Head of the Church utilizes the services of mortals but He is able to do His own work. Every President of the Church has been quick to recognize the sovereignty of Christ. The words of Joseph Fielding Smith at his installation as the tenth President of the Church may be regarded as typical.

I desire to say that no man of himself can lead this church. It is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ; he is at the head. The Church bears his name, has his priesthood, administers his gospel, preaches his doctrine, and does his work.

He chooses men and calls them to be instruments in his hands to accomplish his purposes, and he guides and directs them in their labors. But men are only instruments in the Lord's hands, and the honor and glory for all that his servants accomplish is and should be ascribed unto him forever.

If this were the work of man, it would fail, but it is the work of the Lord, and he does not fail. And we have the assurance that if we keep the commandments and are valiant in the testimony of Jesus and are true to every trust, the Lord will guide and direct us and his church in the paths of righteousness, for the accomplishment of all his purposes.

Our faith is centered in the Lord Jesus Christ, and through him

75D&C 1:19. It would appear that a major reason for the establishment of God's Church and Kingdom on the earth is that man would no longer be subject to merely human counsel.


77B. of M., III Nephi 27:11.

78Daniel 2:45.

None-the-less God "does inspire men and call them to his holy work" in all dispensations. It is God himself, says Paul, who has set in His Church Apostles and Prophets who are second only to Christ who is the chief cornerstone. These offices, along with all lesser ones, are presently essential in the divine economy. The offices are essential to have the full kingdom of God for, repeating the words of Joseph Smith: "Whenever men can find out the will of God, and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God; . . . ." Since these offices are such an intrinsic part of God's kingdom on earth He has carefully set up a system of checks and balances to regulate them. Let us now examine these as they relate to the office of the presiding Prophet.

The exalted nature of the Priesthood Office of the Presiding Prophet contrasted to the fallible individual who occupies it. The

81 D&C 20:11.
82 I Corinthians 12:28.
83 *Teachings*, p. 274.
84 In this connection it is apparent from the words of those who hold the office of presiding Prophet that the office changes the man. An example in point are the words of the latest sustained presiding Prophet, Harold B. Lee, as he spoke at the closing session of the conference that had sustained him: "I come now to the closing moments of this session when I have time for some sobered reflections. Somehow I have had the feeling that during the expressions here, whenever my name has been mentioned, they were talking of somebody other than myself. And I really think that is so, because one cannot go through the experience that I have gone through these last three days and be the same as before. I am different than I was before Friday morning. I cannot go back to where I was. . . ." Harold B. Lee, "A Blessing for the Saints," *The Ensign*, III (January, 1973), 133.
exalted Priesthood Office of the President of the Church is all inclusive. These are the words of the Lord:

And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses—

Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.85

There are some schismatic groups86 and other apostates who claim that there are offices in the Priesthood on earth that are higher than that of the President of the Church. The office of President of the Church as established in this dispensation is composite. It includes the offices of President of the High Priesthood,87 Presiding High Priest,88 Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,89 Apostle,90 Patriarch,91 and Lawgiver.92 Also by virtue of the holy endowment the offices of priest and king are added.93 President Joseph Fielding Smith has written:

There is a difference between the office of President of the Church and President of the High Priesthood; however these two offices can-


86Some schismatic groups, usually denominated as "Fundamentalist", believe in Priesthood offices above that of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.


89D&C 107:92.


92D&C 107:91

93D&C 76:56-57.
not be separated and must be held by the same person duly appointed and sustained by proper vote. As President of the Church, the presiding officer presides over all the membership of the Church. As President of the High Priesthood, he presides over all the Priesthood of the Church and has authority to regulate it, for he holds the keys of that Priesthood.  

Although the Priesthood was restored before there was the organization of the Church as an institution among men, after the Church was fully organized all the Priesthood has been under the direction of the President of the Church who is also President of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Lord has even made a provision that a President of the Priesthood may be called to answer for his actions before the "common council" of the Church. As presently organized then there can be no Priesthood on earth that exists separate from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Fallibility of the individual who occupies the office of Presiding Prophet. Joseph Smith said, "... there was one good man and his name was Jesus." All others share in varying degrees mortal frailties. All the Prophets are "... subject to like passions as we are." People seem to take two extremes in regard to those who hold these high and holy callings in Christ's Church. One extreme is that

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94Joseph Fielding Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation (2nd ed. enl.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1947), I, 312.
95D&C 90:4, and 107:64-66.
96D&C 107:81-82, and 32.
98Teachings, p. 89.
99James 5:17.
they are super-humans. This puts an impossible burden on the one who holds the office. Again, we have these words from Joseph Smith:

I was this morning introduced to a man from the east. After hearing my name, he remarked that I was nothing but a man, indicating by this expression, that he had supposed that a person to whom the Lord should see fit to reveal His will, must be something more than a man.  

The other extreme is that prophets are merely men with nothing to distinguish them from other men. The prophets, though men, are endowed men, empowered men, yes, and even holy men to whom all would do well to give heed. "And the Lord God has sent his holy prophets among . . . men." It is probable in the economy of God that we have "earthen vessels" to carry the sacred treasures of the Gospel so that we might not put our trust in the arm of flesh, but in the living God. "Perhaps it is His own design that faults and weaknesses should appear in high places in order that His Saints may learn to trust in Him and not in any man or men." If the shepherd were too far ahead of the flock how could he lead?

. . . God has placed in His Church a Prophet, Priest, and President who is just as good and as wise a man as we are capable of keeping in our society; if he was any better than he is, God would have to take him, or we would have to improve with the rapidity of lightning to keep up with him. Joseph Smith was a true prophet, and that which he has conferred upon this people is a true Priesthood . . .

The Prophets themselves are cognizant of these facts or they could not assume the position. For Prophets are also Saints and as such are meek

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100. Teachings, p. 89.
101. B. of M., Mosiah 3:13 (Italics by the writer).
and submissive. Numerous examples could be cited of many prophets who were loathe to accept their calls because of their frailties. There is no place for ambition in regard to the prophetic call. George Q. Cannon has written:

Men do not obtain place in this Church because they seek for it. If it were known that a man was ambitious to hold a certain office in the Church, that fact itself would lead to his defeat because his desire would not be granted unto him. Enoch was but a lad and all the people despised him. Moses was slow of speech and is described as the meekest of men. Isaiah was a man of unclean lips. Peter, at times, understood not the things of God. Joseph Smith, before he learned better, feared men more than God. Joseph Fielding Smith was bowed down with the weight of ninety-three years and sought not the call that came to him. George Q. Cannon, a counselor in the First Presidency of the Church from 1873 to 1901 and who served with four of the presiding Prophets of this dispensation spoke with insight concerning the fallibilities of those called to preside when he said:

He supplements man's weakness, man's shortsightedness and man's inability by His strength, foreknowledge and almighty power. These men whom He has chosen to be His Apostles are weak, fallible men. As President Woodruff has told us, the Lord has chosen the

104 B. of M., Mosiah 3:19.
105 George Q. Cannon, Deseret Weekly, LVII (May 21, 1898), 708.
107 Exodus 4:10, and Numbers 12:3.
108 Isaiah 6:5.
109 Matthew 16:23.
111 Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow.
weak things of the world, that they might not glory in themselves nor in their own strength; and the man that does claim the glory takes steps to destroy his influence and to lose his power and gifts. The Lord will not bless men who seek to take the glory to themselves. These men are fallible, and subject to all the infirmities of human nature; but God has chosen them, and when they do the best they can, seeking to Him for His Spirit, He inspires them; and where they come short He makes it up by His blessing. That which would seem to the natural eye to be a mistaken course or policy He overrules and controls for His glory. That has been the course in this Church from the beginning. The men that have instructed the people from Joseph himself down through all the ranks of the Priesthood have been fallible men; their judgment has been imperfect; their conclusions have perhaps not always been as they should have been; but if they have acted according to the light they had and the Spirit that God has given them, and they have sought the Lord for his blessing and guidance, then He takes charge after that and He brings to pass according to His own good will and pleasure, and His power and wisdom are manifested in that which takes place, so that we are perfectly safe. If it were not for this, we would be appalled at the responsibility that rests upon us. Any man who feels the weight of responsibility and thinks of the dreadful consequences that might attend a misstep could not endure it if there were not something behind him to sustain and buoy him up. President Woodruff could not stand under the pressure of the responsibility upon him, neither could any other man who may be near him or connected with the Apostleship and the Priesthood.

But there is this reflection all the time: God can be trusted. God will see to it that His servants are not put to shame; that they do not become a spectacle in the midst of the people—before the Saints or before the world. He has never left His servants at any time. God be thanked this day for this! He has never allowed them to be covered with shame and confusion through failure. But He has sustained them, and He has borne them off victorious, under all circumstances, when they have served Him and appealed to His Holy Spirit to guide them. And He will do it from this time forth until the Lord Himself comes to reign on the earth.

Specific checks and balances relative to the individual who holds the office of Presiding Prophet. There are at least six specific checks and balances established in God's kingdom relating to the presiding Prophet.

A. The source of the call. The fifth Article of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints states:

We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof. \[113\]

No man can take such a great honor unto himself unless he is called of God as was Aaron. Aaron was called by God through the presiding Prophet of his dispensation, Moses. \[114\] It is so in the Kingdom of God today. "Each new apostle in turn is chosen by the Lord and revealed to the living prophet who ordains him." \[115\] This is an ultimate check and balance. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." \[116\]

B. The principle of common consent. This has already been explained \[117\] but specifically in this context is the following: "Every officer of the Priesthood or auxiliary organization though properly nominated, holds his position in the Church . . . only with the consent of the people." \[118\]

C. The principle of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. It is impossible, in the present order of Church Government, for a novice to come to the position of the presiding Prophet. The present order of succession in the Church is that the presiding Prophet be the ranking member of the Council of Twelve. \[119\] Thus Spencer W.  

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\[114\] Hebrews 5:14.

\[115\] Spencer W. Kimball, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," The Ensign, III (January, 1973), 34.

\[116\] John 15:16.

\[117\] See Chapter 3, this thesis.

\[118\] Priesthood and Church Govern., pp. 233-234.

\[119\] It is not within the scope of this study to pursue the order
Kimball stated in the October, 1972 General Conference of the Church:

There have been some eighty apostles so endowed since Joseph Smith, though only eleven have occupied the place of President of the Church, death having intervened; and since the death of his servants is in the power and control of the Lord, he permits to come to the first place only the one who is destined to take that leadership. Death and life become the controlling factors. Each new apostle in turn is chosen by the Lord and revealed to the then living prophet who ordains him.

The matter of seniority is basic in the first quorums of the Church. All the apostles understand this perfectly, and all well-trained members of the Church are conversant with this perfect succession program.120

D. Excommunication of the Presiding Prophet. No member of the Church is exempt ",... from the justice and the laws of God."121 In the workings of Church Government provision is made for the excommunication of the President of the Church.

of succession in great depth. Much has already been written on the subject, see for example: Durham, Reed C. and Steven N. Heath. Succession in the Church. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1970. Smith, Joseph Fielding. Origin of the Reorganized Church and the Question of Succession. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1909. Penrose, Charles W. Priesthood and Presidency. Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, Pub., 1898. Roberts, Brigham H. Succession in the Presidency of the Church. Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, Pub., 1900. It should be noted, however, that before his death the Prophet Joseph Smith conferred every key, right, privilege, sealing power, and priesthood he had upon the Twelve Apostles. (See Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report (April, 1898), p. 89). Joseph subsequently stated "Where I am not, there is no First Presidency over the Twelve." (HC, II, 337-338). Certainly Christ had already set the precedent. Where Christ was not no one presided over the Twelve in the Meridian Dispensation. (See Matthew 28:16-20). The total book of Acts, in the New Testament, is a testimony to this fact. Today this order is maintained in the Church and Kingdom of God. "The high priesthood, and the lesser priesthood, and all the priesthood there is, is combined, centered in, composed of, and is circumscribed by the apostleship." (Brigham Young, Millennial Star, XV (April 6, 1853), 489). And since this procedure has been revealed, the presiding Prophet has always been the senior Apostle.

120Spencer W. Kimball, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," The Ensign, III (January, 1973), 34.

121D&C 107:84.
And inasmuch as a President of the High Priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the common council of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counselors of the High Priesthood;

And their decision upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him. 122

Joseph Fielding Smith commented on these particular verses:

The Church is so organized that no member or officer, from the President to the last member received, is "exempted from justice and the laws of God." The special court, or council, presided over by the presiding bishopric has been called into existence several times. The Prophet Joseph Smith was tried before this council. . . . Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Frederick G. Williams were each tried by this tribunal. 123

E. The Sovereignty of God. Life and death are in the hands of God. Since the presiding Prophets come to their position generally past the allotted "three-score and ten" it is reasonable to assume that God could easily remove any Prophet by the process of death if He so chose. Perhaps this is what Wilford Woodruff had in mind when he said, "If I were to attempt that, (leading the Church astray) the Lord would move me out of my place." 124 Brigham Young said, " . . . if I am not doing right . . . the Lord will take me home." 125

F. True prophets and false prophets—enlightenment and deception. There have always been false prophets to contend with the true. The inspired prophecies of the Lord regarding the last days and the conditions that would exist before His second coming include these

122 D&C 107:82-3
125 Brigham Young, JD, IX, 142.
words:

For in those days, there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.

Also, the Lord said one could judge the true prophet from the false "by their fruits" or by their works. As far as this relates to the presiding Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there need be no confusion or deception. The Lord has made it abundantly clear that one is to be appointed to be the presiding prophetic head of His Church. These are the words of the Lord:

And this ye shall know assuredly—that there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me.

But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him; for it it be taken from him he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead.

And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments;

And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me.

For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed.

If members of the Church were to be cognizant of this one divine law of Church Government they would go far in avoiding deception. Commenting on this law Joseph F. Smith said in 1883:

It is not the business of any individual to rise up as a revelator, as a prophet, as a seer, as an inspired man, to give revelation for the guidance of the Church, or to assume to dictate to the presiding authorities of the Church in any part of the world, . . .

126 I.V., Matthew 24:23.
127 I.V., Matthew 7:29
128 D&C 43:3-7 (Italics by the writer).
And the moment that individuals look to any other source, that moment they throw themselves open to the seductive influences of Satan, and render themselves liable to become servants of the devil; they lose sight of the true order through which the blessings of the Priesthood are to be enjoyed; they step outside of the pale of the kingdom of God, and are on dangerous ground. Whenever you see a man rise up claiming to have received direct revelation from the Lord to the Church, independent of the order and channel of the Priesthood you may set him down as an impostor. 129

The Lord has made it clear that the presiding Prophet will always come in at "the gate." What is the gate, and what are the works of the man who is called as the presiding Prophet? The words of Harold B. Lee in the Solemn Assembly that sustained Joseph Fielding Smith as the tenth President of the Church are material:

To those who ask the question: How is the President of the Church chosen or elected? the correct and simple answer should be a quotation of the fifth Article of Faith: 'We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.'

The beginning of the call of one to be President of the Church actually begins when he is called, ordained, and set apart to become a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Such a call by prophecy, or in other words, by the inspiration of the Lord to the one holding the keys of presidency, and the subsequent ordination and setting apart by the laying on of hands by that same authority places each apostle in a priesthood quorum of twelve men holding the apostleship.

Each apostle so ordained under the hands of the President of the Church, who holds the keys of the kingdom of God in concert with all other ordained apostles, has given to him the priesthood authority necessary to hold every position in the Church, even to a position of presidency over the Church if he were called by the presiding authority and sustained by a vote of a constituent assembly of the membership of the Church.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that 'where the president is not, there is no First Presidency.' Immediately following the death of a President, the next ranking body, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, becomes the presiding authority, with the President of the Twelve automatically becoming the acting President of the Church until a President of the Church is officially ordained and sustained in his office.

All members of the First Presidency and the Twelve are regularly sustained as 'prophets, seers, and revelators,' as you have done

129 Joseph F. Smith, JD, XXIV, 188-190.
today. This means that any one of the apostles, so chosen and ordained, could preside over the Church if he were 'chosen by the body (which has been interpreted to mean, the entire Quorum of the Twelve) appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church,' to quote from a revelation on this subject, on one condition, and that being that he was the senior member, or the president, of that body. (See D&C 107:22.)

Occasionally the question is asked as to whether or not one other than the senior member of the Twelve could become President. Some thought on this matter would suggest that any other than the senior member could become President of the Church only if the Lord reveals to that President of the Twelve that some other than himself could be selected.130

Fundamentally, no person could be called to be the presiding Prophet of the Church unless he were living by the commandments and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The mere mechanics of the workings of Church Government could never replace simple obedience to God on behalf of the individual. These mechanics, however, could never fully function for the person who is unworthy. Of course there have been counselors in the First Presidency of the Church and members of the Council of the Twelve who have fallen away from the Church, and been excommunicated. However, the apostasy of an individual does not negate the divinity of his call. The agency of an individual is left intact even though he has been called by divine authority. As has been stated before in this work the Lord has made provision for the excommunication of even the Presiding Prophet. This principle was referred to by the Lord when he said:

And if thine eye which seeth for thee, him that is appointed to watch over thee to show thee light, become a transgressor and offend thee, pluck him out.131

The converted member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day


131 I.V., Mark 9:46.
Saints knows that only in the Church are to be found the true prophets. All other claimants, outside of the Church, cannot be prophets, in the full sense, because only in the Church is there the power of the Priesthood and the keys. Since, as Paul stated it, "... the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets."\textsuperscript{132} all true prophets would recognize and be subject to the presiding Prophet.\textsuperscript{133}

The teaching of the Church that the Presiding Prophet will never lead the Church astray. As an ultimate safeguard against deception is the teaching of the Church that the presiding Prophet will never lead the Church astray.

The authorities which the Lord has placed in his Church constitute for the people of the Church a harbor, a place of refuge a hitching post, as it were. No one in this Church will ever go far astray who ties himself securely to the Church Authorities whom the Lord has placed in his Church. The Church will never go astray; the Quorum of the Twelve will never lead you into bypaths; it never has and never will.

There could be individuals who would falter; there will never be a majority of the Council of the Twelve on the wrong side at any time. The Lord has chosen them; he has given them specific responsibilities. And those people who stand close to them will be safe. And, conversely, whenever one begins to go his own way in opposition to authority, he is in grave danger. I would not say that those leaders whom the Lord chooses are necessarily the most brilliant, nor the most highly trained, but they are the chosen, and when chosen of the Lord they are his recognized authority, and the people who stay close to them have safety.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{132}I Corinthians 14:32.

\textsuperscript{133}The schismatic groups that break off from the Church would do well to remember this principle. None can reject the presiding Prophet and prosper. Those who feel that they cannot sustain the presiding Prophet may so indicate in the manner the Lord has prescribed. To do otherwise is to cut themselves off from the tie that binds them to the living Church and Kingdom of God and they will never prosper. Thus, Brigham Young warned, concerning those who were leaving the Church in his day, "All that want to draw away a party from the Church after them, let them do it, if they can but they will not prosper." (Readings, II, 12).

\textsuperscript{134}Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report (April, 1941), p. 104.
This teaching was strongly articulated to the Priesthood of the Church in the Priesthood Session of the April, 1972 General Conference, by the tenth President of the Church, Joseph Fielding Smith, in the following words:

Now, brethren, I think there is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord.

An individual may fall by the wayside, or have views, or give counsel which falls short of what the Lord intends. But the voice of the First Presidency and the united voice of those others who hold with them the keys of the kingdom shall always guide the Saints and the world in those paths where the Lord wants them to be. 135

The genesis of this teaching for this dispensation may be traced all the way back to the first day of the organization of the Church, April 6, 1830. On that day the Lord gave an important revelation relating to the man who presides and how the Church could escape the gates of hell. President Harold B. Lee quotes and gives commentary of the revelation in the following:

So on the day the Church was organized, the Lord said this: 'Wherefore, meaning the church'--and that was addressed not just to the few on that day, but to all who have been or who will be members of this church--'thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

For his word (meaning the President of the Church) ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.'

Now note the promise if we will be thus obedient to seek counsel and to accept counsel from the proper channels: 'For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and in his name's glory.' (D&C 21:4-6.)

To you Latter-day Saints everywhere, that promise will be yours if you will follow the leadership the Lord has placed within the Church, giving heed to their counsel in patience and faith; this

promise to you and yours is that the gates of hell will not prevail against you, that the Lord will cause the heavens to shake for your good and his name's glory.\textsuperscript{136}

Brigham Young said:

I had the promise, years ago, that I never should apostatize and bring an evil upon this people. God revealed that through Joseph, long before he died; and if I am not doing right, you may calculate that the Lord is going to take me home.\textsuperscript{137}

Again this from Wilford Woodruff:

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as the President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the program. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would move me out of my place.\textsuperscript{138}

Joseph F. Smith bore this witness:

If any man in that position (speaking of the one who holds the keys of the high priesthood of the Church) should become unfaithful, God would remove him out of his place. I testify in the name of Israel's God that he will not suffer the head of the Church, whom he has chosen to stand at the head, to transgress his laws and apostatize; the moment he should take a course that would in time lead to it, God would take him away. Why? Because to suffer a wicked man to occupy that position would be to allow, as it were, the fountain to be corrupted, which is something he will never permit.\textsuperscript{139}

Delbert L. Stapley, during the administration of David O. McKay, added these powerful words:

I solemnly testify that every President of this Church has been called of God, and sustained by him and by the faithful Church members who, with uplifted hands before God, angels, and fellow disciples, agreed to accept and sustain their leader as prophet, seer, and revelator. We so sustain our beloved President David O. McKay today. According to the spirit of truth within me, I accept him in this high position of prophet, seer, and revelator with all my heart, and uphold him without question and without reservation. I say to my brothers and sisters, that if everyone would keep his eyes on the


\textsuperscript{137}Brigham Young, \textit{JD}, IX, 142.

\textsuperscript{138}Essentials, p. 496.

President of the Church and follow his example, he would never go wrong. I have that faith and confidence, and so testify to you with full knowledge that ultimately I must answer to God for my teachings and personal acts.  

Finally, on April 29, 1973, the writer was present when, in the Sports Arena of the City of Long Beach, President Harold B. Lee, speaking to the Young Adults of the Church in Southern California said that, "the Lord would never allow me to lead you astray." There is comfort and assurance to Church members in these teachings.

Disobedience and following the Presiding Prophet. The most stalwart followers of the prophets have always been the obedient disciples for they alone are entitled to the influence of the Holy Ghost which confirms that leadership of the presiding Prophet. It has been the desire of the Prophets from the beginning that those who follow them

140 Delbert L. Stapley, Conference Report (October, 1959), p. 44.


142 It is the considered opinion of the author that the basis for this teaching that the presiding Prophet will never lead the Church astray is at least in part founded on the possibility that each of the presiding Prophets has made his calling and election sure. Essentially, receiving one's calling and election is to have his exaltation sealed upon him while still in this life. (See Mormon Doctrine, p. 109). From ancient times (see II Peter 1:10.) to the present (see Marion G. Romney, Conference Report (October, 1965), pp. 20-23) the prophets have constantly encouraged the saints to pursue this exalted goal. Many, including Joseph Smith, the first presiding Prophet of this dispensation, (D&C 132:49) have succeeded in procuring this great blessing. (See B. of M., Mosiah 26:20, Helaman 10:4-5, and D&C 88:1-4). Brigham Young testified that he "should never apostatize. . . ." (JD, IX, 142). Joseph Fielding Smith said of David O. McKay that he was "... perfect-ed. . . ." (The Improvement Era (February, 1970), LXXIII, 88). And of Joseph Fielding Smith's death Nathan E. Tanner said, "... his passing was as near translation as possible." (Nathan E. Tanner, "The Priesthood and its Presidency," The Ensign, II (January, 1973), 100). The Presiding Prophet holds all of the sealing keys.
have their own spirit-born witness of their prophetic call.

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. This has been my exhortation continually.

Those who disobey lose the spirit of the Holy Ghost. They are always the ones who chafe most under prophetic leadership. Joseph Smith, the Prophet, said:

I will give you one of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as God lives.

Joseph F. Merrill of the Council of the Twelve bore his testimony to the Church in the April, 1941 Conference of the Church as follows:

Do the people of the Church want a safe guide to what is well for them to do? It is this: Keep in harmony with the Presidency of this Church. Accept and follow the teachings and advice of the President. At every Conference we raise our hands to sustain the President as prophet, seer, and revelator. Is it consistent to do this and then go contrary to his advice? Is anyone so simple as to believe he is serving the Lord when he opposes the President? Of course, the President is not infallible. He makes no claims to infallibility. But when in his official capacity he teaches and advises the members of the Church relative to their duties, let no man who wants to please the Lord say aught against the counsels of the President.

Finally, in the words of Nathan E. Tanner, we are "... false prophets...

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143 Brigham Young, JD, IX, 150.
144 Teachings, p. 156.
unto ourselves when we do not follow the Prophet of God."\textsuperscript{146}

CONCLUSION

Thus, the covenant people of God are "yoked" to God's Prophets. But, as the Savior stated it long ago, his yoke is easy and his burden is light.\textsuperscript{147} As the disciples of Christ discipline themselves to follow the prophets they follow the master for He has so stated, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them. . . ."\textsuperscript{148} "He that receiveth you receiveth me."\textsuperscript{149}

A great challenge of the Church today, as it was in the Church anciently, is to continue ". . . stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. . . ."\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{146}Nathan E. Tanner, \textit{Conference Report} (October, 1968), p. 98.

\textsuperscript{147}Matthew 11:30.

\textsuperscript{148}John 17:16.

\textsuperscript{149}Matthew 10:40.

\textsuperscript{150}Acts 2:42.
Chapter 5

PROPHETIC AUTHORITY AS IT RELATES
TO THE WORLD AS A WHOLE

'I have lived perhaps longer experience than almost anyone and
I have never brooded over a situation which demanded more patience,
composure, courage and perseverance than that which unfolds itself
before us today—the need of a prophet.'

THE PROPHETIC STEWARDSHIP OVER ALL THE WORLD

The first great presiding Prophet was Adam. To him God gave
dominion over all things. The fullness of the prophetic stewardship
has always included this all-comprehending authority over all things.

The Lord Almighty has organized a government upon the earth,
and has committed the keys and Priesthood of it to His Prophet,
that Prophet holds jurisdiction over the earth, the same as Adam
did in the beginning.

As has already been discussed the fullness of this authority was re-
tored to the Presiding Prophet of this dispensation and now reposes in
Harold B. Lee, the eleventh Presiding Prophet of this dispensation.
The Kingdom of God is a reality. Christ is the King and His Kingdom

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1 Thomas S. Monson, (quoting Sir Winston Churchill), Conference
2 See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
4 Jedediah M. Grant, Journal of Discourses, G. D. Watt and others
   (reporters) (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1854-86), II, 13,
   hereafter cited as JD.
5 See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
is His Church. There is no need to pray "thy kingdom come" when the Church is fully organized on the earth because it is here. In the present dispensation the Kingdom of God, or the Church, exists within the confines of worldly governments. The doctrine of the Church for the present is that, "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." The word of the Lord is, "... be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet." One day He will reign and then the fullness of the Kingdom of God will be set up politically as it now is ecclesiastically. When that event occurs, Christ will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Those who will be the lesser kings and lords include those who have received a fullness of priesthood blessings and endowments in the Lord's holy temples and who are fully faithful to their covenants.

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7Matthew 6:10. It is interesting to note that the phrase "thy kingdom come is deleted from the version of the prayer given to the people in the Book of Mormon. (See III Nephi 13:10.) The probable reason is that the Church of Jesus Christ was already organized among this people. (See Helaman 11:21).


9Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 58:22, hereafter cited as D&C.

10Much has already been written on the subject of the Kingdom of God, the Council of 50, etc. It is not the authors purpose to pursue this in any degree of thoroughness. It is sufficient for the present study to be aware of the concept.

11Revelation 17:14.

12*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 424; D&C 76:56; Revelation 1:6, and 15:3.
The Presiding Prophet would be a presiding king, under Christ, in such an order of things. Witness these words of Orson Hyde:

What the world calls 'Mormonism' will rule every nation. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young will be the head. God has decreed it and his own right hand will accomplish it . . . upon the inspired words of these men and eternal destiny of the generation in which they lived hangs.\(^{13}\)

John Taylor added:

. . . we honestly acknowledge that this (the restored Church) is that kingdom which the Lord has commenced to establish upon the earth, and that it will not only govern all people in a religious capacity but also in a political capacity.\(^{14}\)

It has always been a problem for the world and even for those in the Church to recognize the authority of Presiding Prophets especially in secular matters. That they have wielded such authority is, however, a fact of history. Adam is referred to by Joseph Smith as " . . . a Prince forever."\(^{15}\) In the book of Abraham, Adam's Patriarchal Priesthood ministry is called "the reign of Adam."\(^{16}\) Noah's ministry is also referred to as a "reign."\(^{16}\) Melchizedek, the Great High Priest was "King of Salem."\(^{17}\) Abraham is pictured as a King in the book of Abraham.\(^{18}\) Finally, Bruce R. McConkie has written:

The Church is a kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal King,

\(^{13}\)Orson Hyde, *JD*, VII, 53.


\(^{17}\)The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), Alma 13:17, hereafter cited as B. of M., followed by the reference within.

\(^{18}\)P. of G. P., Abraham facsimile #3.
and the President of the Church, the mouthpiece of God on earth, is the earthly king. All things come to the Church from the King of the kingdom in heaven, through the king of the kingdom on earth. 19

Further examples could be given. Let it suffice to say that all of the House of Israel from Jacob, who was a prince with God and prevailed, 20 down to modern Israel are of a royal lineage. They are a royal Priesthood. 21 The Lord chose from among these great noble ones his "rulers." 22 The Presiding Prophets have been among the greatest of these. 23

THE WORLD'S NEED FOR THE PROPHETS

When ancient Israel rejected the prophetic leadership of Samuel the Lord said to Samuel, "... they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should reign over them." 24 In large measure, since the time of Father Adam, the world has rejected the sovereignty of God and His authorized representatives. The result has been:

The world, at the present time, is all confused, and it seems to me, sometimes, that even we have made very little improvement indeed, according to the light and intelligence God has communicated to us. But what has the world done? Whether you look at it morally, religiously, philosophically, or politically, or in what way you please, you will find it is all a chaotic mass. Confusion,


20Genesis 32:28.

211 Peter 2:9.


23It should be noted that all these blessings are available to the Gentiles by the Gospel principle of adoption which is effectual through worthy compliance with the sacred ordinances of baptism and confirmation. (See Mormon Doctrine, p. 23.)

241 Samuel 8:9.
disorder, weakness, corruption, and vice of every kind are abounding, and the whole world seems to be confused and retrograding. The human family have departed from the principles which God has laid down for their guidance, direction, and support; they have forsaken Him, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. 25

In the quest for the atom the world has forgotten the Sermon on the Mount. Man has walked on the surface of the moon but on the earth he walks in constant fear of war, poverty, disease, depletion of the earth's resources and the population explosion. A knowledge explosion boggles the mind but in the words of the scripture, men are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 26 The technology of modern science has created affluence for some, envy for others, and for still others, disillusionment. There are many who have turned their backs on "the establishment." Some are seeking for spiritual solutions in many and varied ways. The words of Amos are appropriate for many in these days:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord:
And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.
In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. 27

Some in the world hope for prophetic leadership. Robert Gordon Sproul, an important educator, has said:

"The voice of the church today is the echo of our own voices. And the result of this experience already manifest is disillusionment. The way out is the sound of a voice, not our voice, but a voice coming from somewhere, not ourselves, in the existence of which we cannot disbelieve. It is the task of the pastors to hear

25 John Taylor, JD, I, 149.
26 II Timothy 3:7.
27 Amos 8:11-13.
this voice, cause us to hear it and tell us what it says. If they
cannot hear it or if they fail to tell us what it says, we as lay-
men are wholly lost. Without it we are no more capable of saving
the earth than we were capable of creating it in the first place.'

Many have lost their faith in man's ability to solve his immense
problems alone. Science is seldom thought of as the panacea it once was.
Elder Hugh B. Brown of the Council of the Twelve reported a visit he had
with a member of the House of Commons in England just before the second
World War. During the visit Elder Brown stated that, from the world's
point of view, perhaps the reason God doesn't speak through prophets
today is because, "... we have made such rapid studies in science,
we are so well-educated, that we don't need God any more." The learned
man replied, "Mr. Brown, there never was a time in the history of the
world when the voice of God was needed as it is needed now." After
Elder Brown bore his testimony to this man; this member of the British
Parliament concluded:

"Mr. Brown, I wonder if your people appreciate the import of your
message: do you?" He said, "If what you have told me is true, it
is the greatest message that has come to this earth since the
angels announced the birth of Christ."

"... I wish it were true, I hope it may be true. God knows it
ought to be true. I would to God," he said, and he wept as he
said it,"'that some man could appear on the earth and authorita-
atively say, Thus saith the Lord.'"

Finally, J. Reuben Clark, one of the prophet-statesmen of this
dispensation, has said:

It is a trite thing to say the world is in a mess. That we
know and out of a life of seventy-seven years I can say that so

28 Thomas S. Monson, (quoting Robert Gordon Sproul), Conference

29 Hugh B. Brown, Eternal Quest, ed. Charles Manley Brown
(Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1956), p. 130.

30 Ibid., p. 134.
far as I can see, it has never been in the mess that it is in today. There have never before, in my life, been the powers of evil in such strength. Satan seems to have taken us over very largely, and we are more or less his tools. This is not the first time in our national history that we have been in trouble, and when I say 'we,' I mean the people. I am not talking of administrations. I am talking of us, we the people of the United States.

Some time ago a pamphlet came across my desk. . . . On the outside page it was stated, 'We need a prophet,' and as I read it then, and as I think of it now, I think how blind the world is. We have had a prophet, an American prophet, one who spoke our language, one who was imbued with Christian ideals, and that prophet gave us the great righteous principles of which we know and of which the world partly knows; he gave them in our own language over a hundred years ago. These may all be read, we have been teaching them for a century. The trouble with the world is they do not want a prophet teaching righteousness. They want a prophet that will tell them that what they are doing is right, no matter how wrong it may be.

Now our Prophet, Joseph Smith, and the prophets since his time—and there has always been a prophet in this Church, and prophets, and you sustain the brethren here, conference after conference, as prophets, seers, and revealers— the Prophet himself, through the Lord by revelation, gave certain great principles that would save the world if the world would but listen. 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. That is all we need. The way has been made perfectly clear.

The American Prophet has spoken; American prophets are speaking. The great principles I have named, and almost countless others, have been proclaimed for a hundred years. No, America does not need a prophet; America needs a listening ear.31

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHETS IS THAT MAN, UNAIDED, CANNOT GOVERN OR SAVE HIMSELF

Man is no more capable of saving himself than he is of resurrecting himself. John Taylor declared:

But one thing I know, and one thing you know, you are not competent in and of yourselves, to regulate anything pertaining to your eternal welfare; I do not care how wise and intelligent you may be, there is not one among you independent of God, or of the teachings of His servants. That I know, and that you know.32

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31 J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Conference Report (October, 1948), pp. 78-82.
32 John Taylor, JD, I, 373.
And Brigham Young succinctly testified:

Thinking men, inquiring minds, ask whether it is really necessary for the Government of God to be on the earth at the present day; I answer, most assuredly; there never was a time when it was more needed than it is now. Why? Because men do not know how to govern themselves without it. 33

And this from Joseph Smith:

... the world itself presents one great theater of misery, woe, and 'distress of nations with perplexity.' All, all, speak with a voice of thunder, that man is not able to govern himself, to legislate for himself, to protect himself, to promote his own good, nor the good of the world.

... attempts to promote universal peace and happiness in the human family have proved abortive; every effort has failed; every plan and design has fallen to the ground; it needs the wisdom of God, the intelligence of God, and the power of God to accomplish this. The world has had a fair trial for six thousand years; the Lord will try the seventh thousand himself. 34

A man can do nothing for himself unless God directs him in the right way; and the Priesthood is for that purpose. 35

THE NEED OF THE WORLD TO ACCEPT THE GOSPEL, BECOME KNOWLEDGABLE ABOUT THE PROPHETS, AND ACCEPT THEM AS TRUE MINISTERS OF CHRIST

In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1841, the Lord directed that a proclamation be made to the world about the restoration of the Gospel and the establishment of Zion and that the time was coming for the leaders of the world to become subject to God, His Laws and ministers. 36 This proclamation was not made during the lifetime of Joseph Smith but on April 6, 1845 the Twelve Apostles sent a, "Proclamation

33 Brigham Young, JD, X, 320.
34 Teachings, p. 250 and 252.
35 Teachings, p. 364.
36 D&C 124:2-11.
... To all the Kings of the World..." Some of what was said in this proclamation is most relevant to this study. Note should be particularly taken of the following:

... the great and eternal high Priesthood, after the Order of his Son, even the Apostleship, has been restored; or, returned to the earth.

This High Priesthood, or Apostleship, holds the keys of the kingdom of God, and power to bind on earth that which shall be bound in heaven; and to loose on earth that which shall be loosed in heaven. And, in fine, to do, and to administer in all things pertaining to the ordinances, organization, government and direction of the kingdom of God.

Therefore we send unto you with authority from on high, and command you all to repent and humble yourselves as little children, before the majesty of the Holy One; and come unto Jesus with a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and be baptized in his name, for the remission of sins (that is, be buried in the water in the likeness of his burial and rise again to newness of life, in the likeness of his resurrection), and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of the hands of the Apostles and elders, of this great and last dispensation of mercy to man.

This Spirit shall bear witness to you, of the truth of our testimony; and shall enlighten your minds, ...

For be it known unto them that we now hold the keys of the priesthood and kingdom. ...

And now, O ye kings, rulers, and people of the Gentiles: hear ye the word of the Lord; for this commandment is for you. You are not only required to repent and obey the gospel in its fulness, and thus become members or citizens of the kingdom of God, but you are also hereby commanded, in the name of Jesus Christ, to put your silver and your gold, your ships and steam-vessels, your railroad trains and your horses, chariots, camels, mules, and litters, into active use, for the fulfilment of these purposes. For be it known unto you, that the only salvation which remains for the Gentiles, is for them to be identified in the same covenant, and to worship at the same altar with Israel. In short, they must come to the same standard. For, there shall be one Lord, and his name one, and He shall be king over all the earth. 38

The world never paid attention to this proclamation, but one day this document will be studied in a different light. The Gentiles

37James R. Clark, ed., Messages of the First Presidency, I (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, inc., 1965), 252-253. This proclamation was probably in fulfilment of the earlier revelation to Joseph Smith.

38Ibid., pp. 253-255.
face the challenge of accepting the Gospel and becoming one with the people of the covenant. 39

Much of the gentile civilization is built on a Judeo-Christian base and yet they do not know Christ, nor have they listened to the voices of the prophets recorded in their scripture. 40 The Prophets today, aware that the world has little or no knowledge of the true nature of prophets, have asked and pled with the world to pay "the investigator's price" 41 and find out. Parley P. Pratt articulated the world's dilemma:

"Who ever heard of a nation's rising up, and making its own ministry of angels, its own Prophets, Apostles, and Priesthood to speak the word of God, and to inquire of Him?" The Lord would turn round and say, 'I have not chosen this man, you have chosen him and ordained him.' Did the people elect and appoint Moses to receive all his powers, to hold communion with the burning bush, and divide the waters of the Red Sea? Did they elect Joshua to that faith by which he lived to lead Israel into Canaan, and divide Jordan by the word of God? Did they instruct him to lengthen out the day while Israel conquered their enemies? No. God Almighty chose Moses and ordained him, and Moses laid his hands upon Joshua and ordained him, and therefore the two were full of the Spirit of God to fill a similar calling. 42

Much of the world is frustrated because all they have known is apostate religion. All they have heard is false prophets. To a modern generation, often disillusioned with organized religion, a modern prophet challenged:

You may say you've been to church, that you've tried religion, and not been satisfied. That is little wonder. It isn't in them all, you know, only a flavoring of it. The substance of it, the fulness

42Parley P. Pratt, JD, I, 177.
of it can be found in only one place. 43

BLESSINGS FOR THE WORLD IN ACCEPTING
PROPHETIC AUTHORITY

Happiness is what the majority of people in the world want. Joseph Smith said that happiness is the whole object of man's existence. 44 However, to find true and complete happiness one must pursue the path that leads to it.

Mankind in all ages search for happiness; they desire social and domestic peace; and when they think of the vast future, they desire to participate in the blessings that are spoken of as pertaining to that state of existence; but they know not how to obtain them, except a servant of God comes along and points out the way of life. We have the way open before us, and the gift of eternal life, which is the greatest gift of God, . . . 45

True and complete happiness is a product of salvation. The Lord says there is no gift greater than salvation. 46 Joseph F. Smith said in the October Conference of the Church held in 1913 that, "There is nothing under the heavens of so much importance to me or to the children of men as the great plan of life and salvation." 47 Salvation is the full existence of man, of the angels, and the Gods; it is eternal life—the life which was, which is, and which is to come." 48 Of course, the important question is, "How does one obtain salvation?" The answer is

43 Boyd K. Packer, "The Other Side of the Ship," The Improvement Era, LXXII (December, 1969), 58.
44 Teachings, p. 255.
45 Brigham Young, JD, IX, 163.
48 Brigham Young, JD, XII, 111.
"Through Christ or his authorized ministers."

Blessed are they who shall believe on me; and again, more blessed are they who shall believe on your words, when ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that I am.

Yea, blessed are they who shall believe on your words, and come into the depth of humility, and be baptized in my name; for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.49

Joseph Smith elucidated:

Salvation cannot come without revelation; it is in vain for anyone to minister without it. No man is a minister of Jesus Christ without being a Prophet. No man can be a minister of Jesus Christ except he has the testimony of Jesus; and this is the spirit of prophecy. Whenever salvation has been administered, it has been by testimony.50

For those who rely for salvation on the words of dead prophets alone, "There is no salvation between the two lids of the Bible without a legal administrator, and ordained His Apostles."51 Of all men then, he is most blessed, who comes bearing the keys of salvation for all the human family. Such is the mission of all the prophets. The presiding Prophet, under Christ, now administers the Gospel to all the inhabitants of the earth. The happiness, the peace, the progress, the prosperity, the eternal salvation and exaltation of all depends on following the Lord through His Prophets.52

THE CURSING THAT FOLLOWS REJECTION OF PROPHETIC AUTHORITY

49 The Inspired Version of the Holy Scriptures (Independence Missouri: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1964), Matthew 5:3-4, hereafter cited as I.V.

50 Teachings, p. 160.

51 Ibid., p. 319.

Anciently Christ said of those who rejected His servants:

And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.
And when ye come into an house, salute it.
And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.
And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.
Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.\[53]\n
In His own "Appendix" to the \textit{Doctrine and Covenants}, Section 133, the Lord warned:

Behold, and lo, there are none to deliver you, for ye obeyed not my voice when I called to you out of the heavens; ye believed not my servants, and when they were sent unto you ye received them not.
Wherefore, they sealed up the testimony and bound up the law, and ye were delivered over unto darkness.
These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.
Behold the Lord your God hath spoken it. Amen.\[54]\n
This dispensation is, in large measure, a time of warning to all the world.\[55]\n
It was because of the calamity coming upon the world that the Lord called His servant Joseph Smith.\[56]\n
The calamity is that in these last days Satan will rule over his own dominion (this world).\[57]\n
and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people;\[58]\n
All need to give heed to these words:

\[53\]Matthew 10:11-15.
\[54\]D\&C 133:71-74.
\[55\]D\&C 1:14.
\[56\]D\&C 1:17.
\[57\]D\&C 1:35-36.
\[58\]D\&C 1:14.
And that I may visit them in the day of visitation, when I shall unveil the face of my covering, to appoint the portion of the oppressor among hypocrites, where there is gnashing of teeth, if they reject my servants and my testimony which I have revealed unto them. 59

The Prophet Nephi concludes: "... thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb." 60

CONCLUSION

God's especial ministers, the Prophets, relate to the world as a whole as especial messengers of salvation. They proclaim and administer the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have been going forth since the restoration of the Kingdom of God in this dispensation. None can stay them for they are on the Lord's errand. 61

The world needs prophets today as much as it ever did—prophets who are the Lord's agents, who stand as legal administrators with power like Peter's to bind on earth and have their acts sealed eternally in the heavens; prophets who speak for God, who reveal his mind and his will to the people; prophets who reveal and interpret the truth about Christ our Lord and his gospel.

And thanks be to God, for through his grace and goodness, prophets have again been called to reveal anew, with power and conviction, the truths about Christ and salvation. 62

And so, as legal administrators authorized so to speak, we invite all men everywhere to come unto Christ and be perfected in him, to deny themselves of all ungodliness, to accept him as the Son of God, and to gain for themselves peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come. 62

59 D&C 124:8.
60 B. of M., I Nephi 11:36.
61 D&C 1:5-6.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to answer ten specific questions about prophets and prophetic authority as viewed by the official doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Very briefly these are the answers that have been discovered through the course of this thesis:

**What is a Prophet?** (Question #1)

A prophet, in the general sense, is any person worthy of the testimony of Jesus. A person who has received revelation through the Holy Ghost is a prophet. All those endowed with the gift of the Holy Ghost as covenant members of the Church of Jesus Christ in any dispensation have the right to be prophets.

In a more specific sense, those individuals with the above qualifications, and who are added upon with sufficient priesthood and keys, are presiding Prophets over the lesser prophets. All true prophets are subject to the presiding Prophets because the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets.

Prophets, in varying degrees are on the Lord's errand and do the Lord's work which is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of all of God's children. In doing His work the prophets utilize God's power to any degree and in any dimension of the legion of life's activities the Lord directs. No one but the Lord may check them.

Since the days of Abraham all presiding Prophets have been and
must be of his lineage either by blood or by adoption.

Why Have Prophets Been Such an Integral Part of God's Program through the Ages? (Question #2)

God deals with Prophets because this is His methodology. He does nothing, He says, until He reveals it to them. Before the earth was created the Presiding Prophets, at least, were fore-ordained, set apart, and appointed to be God's rulers because they were the great and noble ones in the first place. They were called because of their faith and good works in the pre-earth life. Since God holds sacred the agency of His children, He may bless and empower only those who will choose to obey and honor Him.

What is Prophetic Authority and to What Extent Does It Relate to the Church Member; to the World as a Whole? (Question #3)

In its full sense, as discussed in this study, full prophetic authority is given only to those who have a fullness of Priesthood and Keys of the Priesthood which constitutes the directing power of the Priesthood. Since the days of Christ, at least, this fullness has been contained in the full apostolic office. At present, the fullness of the prophetic authority is held by only the Presiding Apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As delineated in this work the individual denominated the Prophet of the Church is also a Seer, Revelator, Church President, President of the High Priesthood, Patriarch, Priest, King and God's viceregent. Thus, by covenant, the Church member is bound to uphold with his hands, his heart, and his life the Lord's annointed, that he might be more fully blessed! There can be no arbitrary restrictions placed on God's presiding Prophets except those
imposed by God Himself. In all dimensions of the legions of life's activities they are on the Lord's errand and must thus be honored.

The prophetic authority and stewardship for the world is absolute under Christ. The peoples of the world, though in large measure unaware of the stewardship of the Prophets, are under their authority. For the present it is not expedient, in God's economy, for the presiding Prophet to exercise full authority both politically and secularly, but the power is there. Salvation for all is ministered by Christ through His prophets.

Was Christ the Consummation of the Prophets in the Sense That There Has Been No Need for Prophets Since Christ? (Question #4)

Christ, was, is, and always will be the consummate message of the prophets. His past ministry, during the Meridian of time, and His future ministry in the great millennial fulness of time are the pivotal happenings of the prophetic time-table. However, it was Christ Himself who set the Apostles and Prophets in His Church in the Meridian Dispensation and in His Church today the ministry of Prophets is an essential role.

Is Christ Himself a Prophet? If So How Does He Relate to the Other Prophets? (Question #5)

Christ is the great Prophet. He so denominated Himself. He is the ultimate minister of His Father. He is the greatest High Priest presiding, under the Father, over all. He is the "Christus", annointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, the lesser Apostles, the lesser High Priests, and the lesser Prophets. The Father has given Christ a name above every other name. He is the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father except through Him. In Christ dwells the
fullness of the Godhead bodily.

How Does the Presiding Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Relate to Other Prophets? (Question #6)

The Lord has deemed it expedient, in this dispensation, that His Church and Kingdom be presided over by one who is fully empowered with all the gifts of God. That one is the presiding Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All other prophets, if they are indeed true prophets, recognize and are subject to the Presiding Prophet of their particular time.

Is a Fullness of Salvation Obtainable without the Ministry of Prophets? Is Salvation Merely an Individual Affair? (Question #7)

Without the ministry of an authorized servant of prophet there is no fullness of salvation. The Gospel must be proclaimed by a living prophetic minister. Where there is no prophetic ministry there is no Kingdom of God on earth. In so far as the individual must, by proper use of agency, choose to serve the Lord, his salvation is an individual affair. He is dependent though on prophetic ministers to receive the word and power or ordinances of the Gospel which are essential to his salvation.

Could the Presiding Prophet or the President of the Church Lead the Church Astray? How Does Human Fallibility Affect Prophetic Authority? Under What Circumstances, if any, Could the Individual Feel Free to Reject Prophetic Authority? (Question #8)

The Presiding Prophet will never lead the Church astray; before so doing he would be moved out of his place. The Lord has required
that all accept the fallibilities of His Prophets that they might not
place their trust in the arm of flesh. All things work together for
good in the ministry of true prophets. The Lord honors his servants and
upholds them in spite of their weaknesses. The disciple should be an
enlightened follower of prophetic authority. It is his responsibility
to know when authorized prophets are acting as prophets and when they
are not. Whenever an individual rejects authorized prophetic authority
he does so at the peril of his own salvation.

On What Basis Does One Judge
True Prophets from False Ones?
(Question #9)

The Lord said that one tells true prophets from false ones by
their fruits. A chief criteria is the witness of the spirit to the spirit
of the individual. Lacking this, especially in regards to the prophetic
authority, only those who follow the proper order of succession as estab-
lished in the Church and Kingdom of God today are entitled to the honor,
respect and support due to a Prophet. Presiding Prophets come in at the
"gate" which has been interpreted to mean they are called by revelation,
ordained, and sustained to the fulness of the Apostleship. They remain
true and faithful in the Apostolic Office until they become the senior
living Apostle on earth and are set apart, ordained and sustained as the
Presiding Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Fundamentally, too, true prophets exemplify, through their walk, talk,
and conversation, all the Christian virtues, and are obedient to every
law and covenant.

How Does Obedience to Prophetic
Authority Relate to the Agency of
the Individual? (Question #10)
Agency is a gift of God to His children and as such is sacred to God and His servants. The whole plan of salvation pivots around this vital principle. The War in Heaven was fought to preserve it. The true prophets on earth champion it. The agency of the individual is inviolate. Willing obedience to prophetic authority leads to more and more agency and finally full free-agency. The opposite course leads to slavery.
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PROPHETIC AUTHORITY IN THE TEACHINGS
OF MODERN PROPHETS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the extent of prophetic authority as it is understood and taught by those denominated prophets in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The purpose was accomplished by examining four specific areas: (1) What are prophets and what was their authority in the past as articulated in the accepted scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? (2) What is the foundation of prophetic authority for the present dispensation? (3) How does prophetic authority relate to the member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? (4) How does prophetic authority relate to the world as a whole?

It was found that the Plan of Salvation, as understood in the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is implemented by authorized ministers of God the Father who is the source of all authority. Christ is the greatest of these ministers and is the great prophet. The lesser prophets under Christ and specifically, Presiding Prophets, are fully empowered to implement, while holding inviolate the agency of the individual, the total Plan to all of God's children in and out of the Church. The Presiding Prophets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lay claim to this total authority.

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