Critical Analysis of Certain Apocryphal Reports in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints As Related By Members of the Church

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CERTAIN APOCRYPHAL REPORTS IN THE
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS AS
RELATED BY MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Church History and Doctrine
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Don L. Penrod
August 1971
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints\(^1\) there exists a seemingly endless stream of sensational stories about Church leaders, historical events, visions, prophecies, and happenings which are supposed to have taken place yet which come from unofficial sources. Such stories are perpetuated in auxiliary classes of the Church, priesthood quorums, addresses from the pulpit, visits of home teachers, study groups, and in casual conversation. They are circulated by word of mouth, through duplicated (Ditto spirit process), mimeographed, handwritten, or typewritten sheets, and in published books and pamphlets.

The claimed source of information by the person relating the story is usually a relative, a good or close friend, a neighbor, or even a co-worker of some Church authority to whom the event supposedly happened. Other times it is a phantom stake or ward officer who was supposed to have made the announcement. Yet, upon inquiry, the person relating the story often cannot single out and identify specifically the individual who would be the

\(^1\)Hereafter referred to as the Church.
authentic source of information for the story.

This type of story is sometimes used as supplementary material to an approved course outline without being investigated first and not until later is it found to be inaccurate or completely untrue. ² The incorporation of such stories into the lesson is usually all the authority needed for future use by class members. Such stories, whether presented by the teacher or a class member, often go unchallenged by those present at the time it is voiced, apparently for fear that the questioning of it might be misconstrued as backbiting or displaying a lack of faith.

Some authors who are members of the Church have gathered and published a number of accounts and stories which have little and questionable documentation; yet they present these stories in a positive manner and attempt to substantiate them while omitting and apparently ignoring statements and evidence indicating that these same stories are unreliable, garbled, or false. It seems that both sides need to be presented in order that one might weigh the story accurately.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to attempt to do the following: (1) Sort fact from fiction in currently circulated reports and stories from unofficial sources.

(2) Investigate the basis of authority for some accounts circulated by word of mouth and in printed form. (3) Ascerta
in the official position of the Church on a given story.
(4) Establish the order of the Church used to publicize information and accounts of events.

Method of Procedure

Inasmuch as the material in this study deals with religious experience and doctrine within the organized structure of the Church, the authoritative approach will be used. Members of the Church, in an expression of their free agency within the bounds of the law of common consent, raise their right hand to the square in a significant demonstration of their willingness to accept the leadership of those presented for their sustaining vote. After such an expression the member is obligated to support and follow the sustained leader within the scope and authority of his office.

Inextricably connected with that vote of common consent are the beliefs that "a man must be called of God" in order to serve in the offices of the Church, a very definite order exists within those offices, and a very select group of men are, in truth, prophets, seers, and revelators for the Church as a whole. One of these men stands at the head of the Church as the "living oracle" or "mouthpiece of God." Such being the case, the exhortation

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3 Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, fifth article.
to "follow the brethren" will be observed in this study.

**Delimitation of the Study**

This thesis is limited to a selected number of stories in order that it be completed. An abundance of stories seem to be available and an investigation and treatment of all of them might fill years of time and volumes of pages. Stories of the supposed appearance of the Three Nephites or John the Beloved have been purposely avoided as that area would constitute a thesis in itself.

Originally an attempt was made to trace some stories back to their inception, but that approach was abandoned largely because of three problems: First, many people could not remember where they heard the story or who told it. Second, some people did not want their name connected with an investigation and study that would be written and would refrain from giving their source of information. Third, various people referred to as the relator of a story would disavow any relationship to the story. Under any of these circumstances that particular chain of reference would be broken.

An exhaustive study is not intended nor presented on each of the stories treated herein. Only a brief background is presented in most cases with the most attention given to statements that would help establish how acceptable the story might be.
Sources of Stories

Stories were gathered from oral and written sources. The oral sources most generally were speakers at the various meetings of the Church, sundry individuals during small-group friendly conversations, and personal informants who have sought out the author. The written ones have come from published books and pamphlets, personal letters, and xeroxed, mimeographed, or typewritten pages gathered by the author.
Chapter 2

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

Appointed Leaders and Personal Revelations

It is said that the true Church of Christ has always had as one of its distinguishing marks the presence of spiritual gifts and manifestations. Jesus promised that signs would follow them that believed\(^1\) and they would do the works that He had done and greater things still.\(^2\) So that there would be order in the Church and that Lucifer would not run rampant with his deceptions of pseudo-spiritual manifestations the Lord set up his governmental systems within the kingdom. Simply stated, it is that there are, first, apostles and prophets and, second, spiritual gifts. The apostle Paul explained it this way:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.\(^3\)

Paul later told the saints at Ephesus that one of the reasons Jesus put such officers in the Church was:

\(^1\)Mark 16:17, 18.
\(^2\)John 14:12.
\(^3\)I Corinthians 12:28. Italics added.
That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.\textsuperscript{4}

There is no mistaking the warning and need to follow the appointed leadership of the Church. Therein lies one of the greatest challenges to the saints: To receive a very real experience, have it declared by one of the Church authorities as contrary to the principles and practices of the Kingdom, and to then let go of it and turn away from it. It seems hard to let go. Sometimes it is heard said: "I sustain President so-and-so (or the General Authorities) with all of my heart, but I know what I know!"

A man claimed he was visited by one of the Three Nephites and sought out President Joseph Fielding Smith, then Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, to tell him the story. President Smith, speaking in general conference on October 3, 1943, said:

After listening to it patiently until he had finished, I said to him, 'If you have had a vision or manifestation, it is your duty to keep it to yourself; it is not for the church, and I advise you not to repeat it.' I hardly think that was the counsel he was seeking.\textsuperscript{5}

On another occasion when such experiences were being discussed it was mentioned that "... President Smith and those that have followed him have indicated that such

\textsuperscript{4}Ephesians 4:11-14.

\textsuperscript{5}Joseph Fielding Smith, "Of Dreams and Visions," Improvement Era, November 1943, p. 666.
manifestations are private matters and are to be spoken of only in the limited circle of believers unless otherwise directed.⁶

Some people travel around the Church prevailing on some of the bishops to let them hold meetings to relate remarkable experiences they claim to have had. Some have held meetings on their own and invited people in so as to have an audience for their storytelling. About such activities Joseph Fielding Smith has said:

Now I think it is wrong for any bishop or anyone else to invite these people who profess to have had a dream or a vision, or some kind of manifestation, into a meetinghouse, or even into the homes and gather the people in to listen to these presentations. In my judgment it is contrary to the teachings of the church.⁷

One needs not only to learn how to put himself in tune to receive spiritual manifestations but also how to handle such an experience. Some seem to use their experience in the way the Lord intended while others become puffed up and proud of their achievement and seek more for personal satisfaction and aggrandizement than spiritual development and service to the Lord. The concern is to use righteously and correctly any manifestation as well as to make sure that it comes from the right source. Brigham Young counselled the saints on this subject with these words:

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⁶Gerald R. Hall, A Study of the Appearances of the Three Nephites and Other Related Spiritual Manifestations as External Evidences to the Book of Mormon. Mimeographed copy in Special Collections, BYU Library.

Instead of pleading with the Lord to bestow more upon you, plead with yourselves to have confidence in yourselves, to have integrity in yourselves, and know when to speak and what to speak, what to reveal and how to carry yourselves andwalk before the Lord. And as fast as you prove to Him that you will preserve everything secret that ought to be—that you will deal out to your neighbors all which you ought, and no more, and learn how to dispense your knowledge to your families, friends, neighbors, and brethren, the Lord will bestow upon you, and give to you . . .

The principle of holding confidential a sacred trust has long been a part of the gospel plan. Doctor Hugh Nibley has observed that, "It was a rule among those possessing the gospel in ancient times that the greater teachings be not publicly divulged." At sundry times Jesus asked those who had received a personal favor of healing or blessing or witnessed a manifestation to "See thou tell no man . . ." The apostle Paul relates very little of his experience of visiting paradise, but does mention that he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."


10Matthew 8:4; 9:30; 16:20; 17:9; Mark 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30. See also Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Publishers, n.d.), Vol. I, pp. 174, 373, 390, 404. The purpose of the exhortation to "tell no man" is not the same in all the cases cited and indicates there may be various good reasons for special or miraculous experiences to be very limited in publicity. On another occasion the Lord directed the man out of whom he cast a legion of devils to tell of it freely (Mark 5:19). It should be noted that the decision to publicize the news or not was made by the one in authority and not the recipient.

11II Corinthians 12:4.
Peter, James, and John witnessed marvelous things on the Mount of Transfiguration and "they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen."12 Joseph Smith received information which he held in confidence. In his account of the First Vision he states: "... and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time."13 Joseph afterwards met once a year for four years with Moroni "and received instruction and Intelligence from him at each of our interviews."14 After such an exceptional experience, particularly for a young man not quite eighteen years old, he remained relatively silent on the matter. Even years later when he recorded the event all he said was that he was told "what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days."15

The principle of being sacredly silent about such matters should not seem strange or unreasonable. About such


13 The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), Joseph Smith 2:20, hereafter cited as Joseph Smith.

14 Joseph Smith 2:54.

15 Joseph Smith 2:54. Joseph states in the Wentworth Letter that he had received "many visits from the angels [plural] of God unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days." See Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), IV, 537, hereafter cited as DHC.
silence Doctor Nibley wrote:

The injunction to secrecy is more than a desire to mystify; it is fundamental to all eschatological thinking: 'To you it is given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven,' Christ told a few elect disciples behind locked doors, 'but to them it is not given.'

The great-grandfather of Doctor Nibley inquired of Joseph Smith about certain particulars of the first vision. He was told some remarkable things, recorded them in his journal that very day, and apparently never mentioned them to anyone during the final forty years of his life. In reference to this, Doctor Nibley concludes,

Why was the talkative old man so closed-lipped on the one thing that could have made him famous? Because it was a sacred and privileged communication; it was never published to the world and never should be.

Some of the clearest and most revealing counsel on the subject was given by Brigham Young in the following words:

The man who cannot know millions of things that he would not tell his wife, will never be crowned in the celestial kingdom, never, NEVER, NEVER. It cannot be; it is impossible. And that man who cannot know things without telling any other living being upon the earth, who cannot keep his secrets and those that God reveals to him, never can receive the voice of his Lord to dictate to him and the people on this earth. . . .

If a person understands God and godliness, the principles of heaven, the principle of integrity, and the Lord reveals anything to that individual, no matter what, unless He gives permission to disclose it, it is locked up in eternal silence. . . .

If we are His friends, we will keep the secrets of the Almighty. We will lock them up, when He reveals them to us, so that no man on earth can have them, and no being from heaven, unless he brings the keys where-

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16Nibley, p. 666. 17Ibid. 18Ibid.
with to get them legally. No person can get the things the Lord has given to me, unless by legal authority; then I have a right to reveal them, but not without.19

One other area of concern is that of people who receive a manifestation and attempt to give guidance or counsel to the Church. That they have had an experience is usually unquestionable. However, the source becomes suspect. One of the best known examples of this type of deception in Church History is when Hiram Page professed to be receiving revelations from a certain stone he had. Various members including Oliver Cowdery were deceived by Hiram. The Lord saw fit to give Joseph Smith a revelation on the matter which set forth the order of the Church. The Lord said:

But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses. And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church;
For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.20

Having explained Joseph's position in regard to the structure of leadership of the Church, the Lord then turned his attention to Hiram's claims and declared:

For, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall anything be appointed unto any of this church contrary to the church covenants, For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith.21

20Doctrine and Covenants 28:2, 6, 7.
21Doctrine and Covenants 28:12, 13. Italics added.
Approximately four years later a similar case challenged Joseph again. The Hulet Branch believed the Lord was guiding them through the gift of tongues and did nothing in connection with their temporal business but that they first received the word of the Lord. Sylvester Hulet spoke and Sally Crandall interpreted. The superior attitude assumed by the members of that branch is demonstrated in these words of testimony from Charles English in the Prophet's record:

Said they would not receive the teachings of ordained members, even Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., himself, unless it agreed with their gifts. . . . Also said that the heads of the Church would have to come down and receive the gifts as they did. Said that they, the Hulet Branch, had come up to their privileges more than the rest of the Church. They thought that they were right; but if they could be convinced that they were wrong, they would retract. Sister Crandall professed to know and see men's hearts. 22

The Prophet addressed the High Council of Zion, which had met to consider this and other business, and told them that the gift of tongues in this case was the devil's deception and the gift of "seeing" in this case "is of the devil, saith the Lord God." 23 Joseph makes this interesting entry in his diary: "I have been thus particular in giving the history of this council, as the gift of tongues is so often made use of by Satan to deceive the Saints." 24

Even Shakespeare gave recognition of Lucifer's power to deceive through use of the scriptures when he penned:

22DH C, II, 139, 140.
23Ibid., p. 141. 24Ibid.
Mark you this Bassanio?
The devil can cite scripture for his purpose. 25
An evil soul producing holy witness,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
O what a goodly outside falsehood hath! 26

It has been necessary for the leaders of the Church
to counsel and warn the saints from time to time about this
problem, because some stories and claims of individuals have
the appearance or sound of truth on the surface so they seem
plausible or accurate at first glance. However, investiga-
tion often discloses that they are partially or totally
untrue. The "outside" of the story seemed "goodly" enough,
though.

In an official release to the officers and membership
of the Church, the First Presidency declared,

The Lord's Church is a 'house of order.' It is not
governed by individual gifts or manifestations, but by
the order and power of the Holy Priesthood as sustained
by the voice and vote of the Church in its appointed
conferences. 27

Church doctrine states that the Church will always
be guided from the top, and that principle is as reliable as
any in the gospel. The spirit of usurping authority and
guiding the Church or calling the Church to repentance should

25 Lucifer quoted Psalms 91:11-12 to Jesus in an
attempt to convince him to cast himself off the pinnacle of
the temple. See Matthew 4:6.

26 William Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, ed. John
Russell Brown (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University
Press, 1959), Act 1, Scene 3.

27 Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose,
Smith, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay in "A Renewed
Warning to Members of the Church," Deseret News, December 29,
1945.
be rebuked and priesthood holders especially should be active in defending the established order of the Church. The relationship of inspiration to individuals in the Church and the constituted organizations of the priesthood were discussed by President Joseph F. Smith in this way:

It is the right of individuals to be inspired and to receive manifestations of the Holy Spirit for their personal guidance, to strengthen their faith, and to encourage them in works of righteousness, in being faithful and observing and keeping the commandments which God has given unto them; it is the privilege of every man and woman to receive revelation to this end, but not further. The moment an individual rises up assuming the right to control and to dictate or to sit in judgment on his brethren, especially upon those who preside, he should be promptly checked, or discord, division and confusion would be the result. Every man and woman in this Church should know better than to yield to such a spirit; the moment that such a feeling presents itself to them they should rebuke it, as it is in direct antagonism to the order of the Priesthood, and to the spirit and genius of this work. We can accept nothing as authoritative but that which comes directly through the appointed channel, the constituted organizations of the Priesthood, which is the channel that God has appointed through which to make known His mind and will to the world. 28

Circulation of Sensationalism

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not depend upon sensational stories to authenticate it as the true Church. Its leaders do not need such to assure the body of the Church or anyone else, of their worthiness or spirituality. Sensational items are not the vehicle of the Lord for the upbuilding of his kingdom or enlightenment and

28 Joseph F. Smith,
instruction of the saints. Such material has no place in the classroom of any of the departments of the Church. One of the bishops in the Church wrote:

Sensationalism may gain the temporary interest of a class, but it is a poor substitute for a realistic and rational approach to religion and life. To become absorbed in the speculative, to teach the future as if it has been blueprinted in detail by the prophets of the past, is not the true image that should represent religion in the lives of young people. To seek contact with student minds through passing on unfounded, hearsay stories of a sensational nature, involving supposed experiences by this or that person who is never present for verification, is poor teaching. 29

Members should not persist in living a vicarious spiritual life but should seek spiritual power through righteous living, involvement in the principles and ordinances of the gospel, and magnifying the priesthood. A long time priesthood holder who's spiritual conviction consists of little more than that of the truthfulness of the First Vision is only a short step beyond the level of a recent convert.

A number of the General Authorities have spoken clearly on the matter of sensationalism. Bruce R. McConkie writes:

It is a sad commentary on the spiritual insight of professing saints that they will generate intense interest in these supposed prophetic utterances and yet know little of and pay less attention to the volumes of true and sound prophetic writings which delineate authoritatively the course of latter-day world events. It is known by all informed gospel students that whenever revealed truth, new or old, is to be sent forth for the

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enlightenment of the saints and of the world, it will be announced officially and publicly by the First Presidency.\textsuperscript{30}

Speaking to the priesthood holders at a general conference, President Harold B. Lee said:

It never ceases to amaze me how gullible some of our Church members are in broadcasting sensational stories, or dreams, or visions, or purported patriarchal blessings, or quotations, or supposedly from some person's diary... we would wish that you would plead with our Saints to cease promoting the works of the devil. Spend your time promoting the works of the Lord, and don't allow these things to be found among those under your charge, for they are the works of Satan, and we are playing his game whenever we permit such things to be heralded about and repeated and passed about on every side.\textsuperscript{31}

With as much guidance on the subject as has been given it would seem that sensationalism would die out from among the active interests of the saints. However, such has not been the case in the past. The converts to the Church in Ohio continued in some of their old beliefs and practices concerning spiritual gifts. "The Mormon leaders naturally felt that the operations of false or evil spirits were reprehensible; for they further made of Mormonism the object of mockery."\textsuperscript{32} The door to such mockery seems not to have closed.

Austin Fife raises some interesting questions about


\textsuperscript{32}Max H. Parkin, \textit{Conflict at Kirtland} (Provo, Utah: Department of Seminaries and Institutes, 1967), p. 61.
the continued circulation of myth over the efforts to stem the flow. He writes:

What is transmitted from one generation to the next outside of—if you will, in spite of—what is taught in church or school? What laws and customs are imposed by the mass, even in defiance of civic authority or reason or religious authority? What . . . churchly admonitions are ignored or defied . . . what fictions, miracles, absurdities if you will, continue to be recounted, believed, conceived, or scorned despite the laws of physics and the dictates of reason?33

Among the answers to those queries would have to be found myth, sensationalism, and spurious revelation. The circulation of such matter brings ignorance and defiance and serves no useful purpose in the kingdom of God. It does not build up or contribute to the kingdom.

President William E. Berrett, Administrator of the Department of Seminaries and Institutes, spoke to the teachers under his supervision about sensationalism in this way:

. . . Your safeguard is to so stand fast in the commandments of the Lord, that you may enjoy His Spirit and have in you the spirit of discernment whereby you can guide those whom you teach to that which giveth light and understanding and peace, harmony, and beauty, and away from that which is only sensational, and in the last analysis worthless.34

Sensationalism stands out vividly in contrast to the beauty and light of God's ways as given in this description:

In God's government there is perfect order, harmony, beauty, magnificence, and grandeur . . . the most


34William E. Berrett, "False Revelation," address to seminary and institute faculty, June 28, 1956, copy in BYU Library, Special Collections.
consummate wisdom and power are manifested . . . [it] displays the comprehension, light, glory, beneficence, and intelligence of God. . . . The contemplation of [it] elevates the mind, expands the capacity, produces grateful reflections, and fills the mind with wonder, admiration, and enlivening hopes. 35

There is little question as to the attitude of the General Authorities on the role of sensationalism in the Church. Sensationalism has no rightful place in the Church.

Criteria and Guidelines

People professing revelation fall into three categories. There are those who receive bona fide communications from God. There are others, many of whom are very sincere, who have contact with powers not of the mortal sphere, but "whose messages bear little relationship to those which come from God." 36 And finally, there exists a "class of pure 'crooks' . . . who are individuals taking advantage of the credulity of man to profess powers they do not have." 37 Some who do receive valid personal revelation abuse the privilege and release the information which becomes twisted, garbled, and misused as it is circulated. To keep the doctrine of the Church pure, the Lord set up safeguards and checks and balances in the form of priesthood offices and a consistent, reliable modus operandi. In God's government there is perfect order and harmony 38 so it is a dependable

36 Berrett, p. 1. 37 Ibid.
38 Taylor, p. 2.
system or yardstick for measuring the truth of claims and discovering error.

On the basis of the foregoing, certain guidelines are herein suggested as an aid in attempting to sort fact from fiction. They are not a miraculous panacea that will guarantee to keep the user from all error and deception. Presently, our only guide to all truth is the Holy Ghost.

1. There are in the Church, first, apostles and prophets and, second, spiritual gifts. We should always follow the priesthood leadership of the Church.

2. Only the head of the Church will receive revelation from the Lord in any form for the guidance of the Church. "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 imposter." 39

3. Any personal revelation that is out of harmony with previous revelation, established principles and practices of the Church, or decisions of General Authorities should be abandoned:

When visions, dreams, tongues, prophecy, impressions, or an extraordinary gift of inspiration conveys something out of harmony with the accepted revelations of the Church or contrary to the decisions of its constituted authorities, Latter-day Saints may know that it is not of God, no matter how plausible it may appear. . . . All faithful members are entitled to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for themselves, their families and for those over whom they are appointed and ordained to

preside. But, anything at discord with that which comes from God through the head of the Church is not to be received as authoritative or reliable. 40

4. No man will receive guiding revelation beyond the bounds of his stewardship. The Lord may make known his plans or intentions to whomever he chooses but the power and keys to act in the kingdom come only through established priesthood channels. Authority is not inherent in knowledge; . . . so long as the Lord has any communication to make to the children of men, or any instructions to impart to His Church, He will make such communication through the legally appointed channel of the Priesthood; He will never go outside of it, as long, at least, as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exists in its present form on the earth. 41

5. No woman will ever receive a dream or vision or any other manifestation from the Lord for the Church. 42

6. When a gift of inspiration is experienced, the purpose and meaning should be sought through prayer. If it is not obtained the experience should be left alone:

We may look for angels and receive their ministrations, but we are to try the spirits and prove them, for it is often the case that men make a mistake in regard to these things. . . . When you see a vision, pray for the interpretation; if you get not this shut it up; there must be certainty in this matter. 43


41 Joseph F. Smith, Journal of Discourses, XXIV, 188.

42 Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 55.

43 Joseph Smith, Jr., DHC, III, 391. See also Doctrine and Covenants 50:31-33.
7. Every member of the Church, especially priesthood holders, should take an active part in putting down rumor, sensationalism, and false revelation when they are exposed to it.

And you brethren who are to safeguard the Church, I would wish that you would rise up in the power and dignity of your callings and put to flight some of these spurious things that are threatening to destroy the unity among our people.44

8. Visions, dreams and the like that are printed up and circulated by individuals or passed on orally should be handled with extreme care. Sometimes such material is not written by the one having the experience but is put together by a person or persons acquainted with him. One example is that of a document that was put together, reproduced, and circulated that purported to be from notes taken on a stake conference talk given by a General Authority the day President McKay passed away, January 18, 1970. Various sensational or scare statements are made therein. The son (a mature adult) of the woman who was supposed to have taken the notes issued the following statement:

The above statements were purported to have been given by Lida C. Prince at a food tasting party and later a fireside. The above was written without consent or knowledge of Mrs. Prince. Investigation seems to show that a group pooled their ideas on several topics and printed the above document, signing Mrs. Prince’s name to the same. After a thorough review with Mrs. Prince and Harold B. Lee on separate occasions, it would be felt best to completely discount the above document in its entirety. Reason being, the document

44Lee, p. 65.
as circulated is so garbled and inaccurate that it is felt wise not to use any part of it. Signed, W. Wayne Prince.45

In some cases a true account will suffer great change, deletion or addition of parts, and rewording as it is copied and recopied or told and retold. It has been suggested that, "we ought to consider a need for caution and a healthy skepticism about the accounts we hear, for many are so far removed from the actual account that they are not entirely true."46

9. Much discretion should be exercised in the selection of books for gospel study. The mere printing of material does not validate it. Books published by a particular publisher do not indicate that they are Church approved. Some books seem to do little more than continue to perpetuate myth and sensationalism and, although they deal with gospel names and subjects, are not reliable for doctrine.47

45 The signed statement is in the possession of the author and is reproduced here in full by permission of Mr. Prince.

46 Hall, p. 60.

47 One such example is in relation to a class discussion on Church literature led by the author. One of the students mentioned a book that was currently receiving much attention in the Church. When the book was not well received in the discussion the student took it upon herself to inquire of Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as to the position of the Church on it. The letter in answer from President Smith stated simply, "I can tell you nothing whatever in regard to the book 'Prophecy--Key to the Future.' It is not authentic nor accepted in the Church." Xerox copy of the letter in the possession of the author.
Wisdom should be exercised in choosing gospel texts for personal study. All books except the four Standard Works, contain only such wisdom as their authors have, and generally are not approved by the First Presidency unless they are to be used as gospel texts. There are many sound gospel texts, however, which should be studied by Church members.\(^48\)

10. An established Church system will be used to inform the membership of any new revelation from the Lord:

... when a revelation comes for the guidance of this people, you may be sure that it will not be presented in some mysterious manner contrary to the order of the Church. It will go forth in such form that the people will understand that it comes from those who are in authority, for it will be sent either to the presidents of stakes and the bishops of the wards over the signatures of the presiding authorities, or it will be published in some of the regular papers or magazines under the control and direction of the Church or it will be presented before such a gathering as this, at a general conference. It will not spring up in some distant part of the Church and be in the hands of some obscure individual without authority, and thus be circulated among the Latter-day Saints. Now, you may remember this.\(^49\)

11. All things that the Lord reveals to the leaders of His Church are not to be immediately released to the membership and broadcast among them. It would follow that if the inspired leaders do not feel it to be the time to release certain information to the Church that any efforts on the part of individuals to precede the General Authorities would be out of harmony and not in the best interest of the kingdom of God. President Joseph F. Smith declared in a

\(^48\)General Handbook of Instructions (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, No. 20, 1968), pp. 165-166.

\(^49\)Joseph Fielding Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 55. Italics added.
general conference, "When the Lord reveals something to me, I will consider the matter with my brethren, and when it becomes proper, I will let it be known to the people, and not otherwise."50

It would appear that sufficient information has been released for the guidance of the saints so that, in company with the promptings of the Holy Spirit, members could recognize and avoid spurious revelation on their own. In this way much of the sensational materials would die out and very little would find its way into the lessons and messages of classroom, home, or visiting teachers.

An excellent rule of thumb for guidance in such matters was given by the First Presidency in an official release to the Church when they said:

Be not led by any spirit of influence that discredits established authority, contradicts true scientific principles and discoveries, or leads away from the direct revelations of God for the government of the Church. The Holy Ghost does not contradict its own revealings. Truth is always harmonious with itself. Piety is often the cloak of error. The counsels of the Lord through the channel he has appointed will be followed with safety, therefore, O'ye Latter-day Saints, profit by these words of warning.51

50 Joseph Fielding Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 57.

51 Smith, Lund, Penrose, "A Warning Voice."
Chapter 3

VARIOUS STORIES AND ACCOUNTS

Food Storage

There is an abundance of accounts where people going to the temple or coming from the temple allegedly pick up a hitch-hiker who gives a warning to gather in a year's supply of food. Sometimes the mysterious traveller just suddenly appears in the back seat of the moving automobile. The message most always deals with the need to get the food supply laid in as soon as possible. At times there is included a hint that the moment is near at hand when such a supply would be needed to feed the multitudes that will suddenly congregate in some designated area or that a disastrous event is about to befall the world and bring about the need for a food supply. The informant then disappears and leaves the host wondering who he was.

In none of the stories that were investigated did anyone claim that the messenger took a place next to someone in the car who could be identified or contacted. It only took place with someone who had a vacant back seat. A voice suddenly comes from the back seat or the driver nonchalantly looks into the rear view mirror and discovers the presence of someone who delivers his message and disappears before
the driver can stop the car and turn around and face the back seat.

It is not intended to attempt to credit or discredit all such stories in this work. The truth of the majority of such accounts does seem questionable, however, as no one seems to be acquainted with the person of the first instance. Many have heard of such visits and warnings but only on a hearsay level. This does not preclude the possibility of such an event nor is it sufficient evidence to relegate all such stories to the realms of fiction. However, wisdom seems to suggest extreme caution in accepting or ever retelling such stories without first investigating closely their validity. An example of the efforts to trace down one such story is given here to show how some of these things are passed around and to demonstrate how unreliable some stories are that have not been researched, even though they come from apparently reliable sources and honest well-meaning people.

Bill\(^1\) learned from Dave of a couple who picked up a man while they were on their way to the temple. The man warned of the need to get in a year's supply of food right away, then vanished. Dave got the story from a girl he knew. The girl heard it from a man in good standing in her ward. The man received it from a very close associate in his ward. This close associate heard it from a friend who owns a wholesale gas business and delivers gas to the farmers. A

\(^1\)Names used in this example are fictitious although the example is a true case.
housewife on a farm where the gasman delivered gas related it to the gasman during the course of a delivery. The housewife said her son and his wife had told her about it. That couple got the account from their small daughter who heard it from one of her classmates in kindergarten.\(^2\) Here the tracing ended as it was felt unnecessary to go any further to establish an indication of the accuracy or validity of the story. At this point the question of validity is complicated by the question of accuracy: both are considered pertinent. Some originally true stories become distorted and garbled as they are passed around.

A question arises as to the need for "supernatural" men to hitch-hike around the country or mysteriously appear in moving cars to leave a message concerning the storing of food. It seems that the food storage program has been well covered in the announcements that have come from the leaders of the Church. One wonders how lasting an effect a mystery traveller would have on someone who had not seen fit to implement the program initiated by a person he believed to be a prophet of the Lord.

There is another type of story related to the mysterious traveller genre. It tells of many supposed visions attributed to the late President McKay warning of impending disaster, the end of the world, or some other

\(^2\)Duane Jeffery, assistant professor of zoology at Brigham Young University, did the research on the story. It is used here by permission.
reason to store food. These stories have a common framework or outline. Someone knows someone who talked to someone who saw President McKay in the Church Office Building, Temple Square, or the Hotel Utah and noticed his sad countenance or tear filled eyes and cheeks and was therefore prompted to inquire as to the reason for this sadness. President McKay would then allegedly inform the inquirer of a vision just received revealing the terrible consequences to shortly be suffered by the saints who had not laid in their supply of food as they had been counselled to do. The inquirer in these stories is usually supposed to be a stake president or a worker in the Church Office Building to give the account more credence. One such story will serve as an example for the many that have circulated:

During the summer of 1966 an elderly gentleman occupied the final fifteen minutes of a fast and testimony meeting on the BYU campus to tell of a recent vision supposedly received by President McKay. He claimed his stake president as his source of information. The stake president was said to have seen President McKay in the Church Office Building in a state of tears and to have asked him what was wrong. The answer was, "I have just had a vision and many in Salt Lake will die this very winter. It will come upon them so fast that they will not have time to prepare and many will starve to death." In a discussion after the

3The author was present at the meeting.
meeting the man said that it was his daughter's stake president who had seen President McKay instead of his own. The winter of 1966-67 is now history so the question of validity has been answered, but that particular Sunday there was a great stir among those present and after the meeting many gathered in small groups and discussed the man's tale. Further investigation disclosed that the man had a history of story telling throughout that part of the valley and that he continually ignored the counsel of priesthood leaders to cease such activities. His eventual excommunication for these activities is indicative of the seriousness with which the Church looks upon people going around to wards and branches telling spurious stories.

From the point of view of LDS theology, these messages of doom coming in this fashion are foreign to the way the Lord operates in this era where the Church is established with organized priesthood leadership. Also, messengers who come in answer to the supplication of the faithful bring tidings and notices for personal use within one's own stewardship. The gospel of Jesus Christ inspires hope and faith, not fear. President Harold B. Lee said in general conference, "The greatest danger among us today is fear. Fear doesn't come of the Lord. Faith and peace are the fruits of the Spirit." President William E. Berrett spoke of God's purposes in communicating with His children in these terms:

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4Lee, p. 65.
... When he speaks to man it is for a purpose, and man is blessed thereby. He does not waste words. He does not come nor send his angels to come to scare people or to occupy their time without giving a message. He gives light and understanding and new truth for the guidance of His people.5

Patriarchal Blessings

Patriarchal blessings are the source of valuable information to the recipient and are given as a help and guide.6 In many cases they are prophetic in nature. This being the case, some have been claimed as the basis of authority of sensational statements in an attempt to make them plausible. A couple of examples will suffice.

A fellow went to his patriarch to get his patriarchal blessing. The patriarch placed his hands on him, started the blessing, and then stopped at a certain place and said, 'I can't give you anymore, you'll have to go to the Patriarch of the Church.' When Patriarch Smith attempted to give the blessing he stopped at the same point the local patriarch had. He told the boy to fast and pray for a week to make sure that he really wanted the blessing. Patriarch Smith said that he would fast too. The fellow did as instructed and returned for the blessing. When he received the rest of it he was told that he would be one of the two prophets to be killed in Jerusalem just before the coming of the Lord.7 The fellow was supposed to be approximately twenty-five years old.8

Patriarch Smith declared the story false and indicated that he could not remember giving any blessing that would even

5Berrett, p. 10. Italics added. 6McConkie, p. 504.

7Revelation 11:1-12.

8Personal interview with Laurine Black at Ephraim, Utah. Laurine retold the story from memory as it had been related to her. She expressed doubt as to its validity. A number of variations of this story exist but the basic idea is the same.
give rise to such a claim. 9 He stated that he would be unable to give a blessing if the stake patriarch couldn't. 10 Although many people have heard the story no one knows the name of the person who was supposed to have received the blessing; so the blessing, if one exists, cannot be checked to see if there is anything that could even be misinterpreted to say such a thing.

The idea expressed above of someone being singled out to be one of the two prophets to Jerusalem is not new to the Restored Church. In 1835, Gladden Bishop was tried for his membership "on a charge preferred by the Twelve Apostles, 'for advancing heretical doctrines, which were derogatory to the character of the Church.'" 11 One such doctrine was that he, Bishop, might be one of the two witnesses mentioned in revelation and another member he had been talking to might be the other. 12 Bishop confessed his transgression, asked forgiveness, and was retained in full fellowship.

It has been said that one of the General Authorities is supposed to have been told in his patriarchal blessing that he would be the president of the Church when the Savior came. The General Authority referred to stated that this was not true. 13

9Personal interview with Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, at Ephraim, Utah.
10Ibid. 11DHC, II, 284. 12Ibid.
13Lee, p. 64. See also Harold B. Lee, "Objectives of Church Education," The Growing Edge (Provo: Department of Seminaries and Institutes), III, No. 6 (February 1971), 3, President Lee states, "I am supposed to have said that I
At an early morning meeting for bishoprics and high councillors preceding the general meeting of stake conference, the visiting General Authority expressed a concern of the presiding brethren about a rash of stories being circulated. This General Authority had been assigned to investigate the stories and ascertain their validity. He had not been able to do so up to that time because the people supposedly involved were unidentified. 14

In one case the principal person was named, but upon being approached about it he "was quite amused because he knew nothing about it." The message then left by this Church Authority, as paraphrased by Mr. Van Alfen, was that these things should be strongly discouraged and that "Teachers who are responsible for directing the minds of others must also avoid such speculative and unfounded stories." 15

Various Stories

There is a spurious claim that "one of our General Authorities is allegedly being urged to present himself to lead the Church contrary to the Lord's revelation and to make people think there is some division among the authorities of the Church." 16 The letters being circulated about

would be presiding over the Church when the millennium is ushered in. Well, if that is true, nobody has told us yet. But the Lord has said the time of his coming would be as a thief in the night." 14

14Van Alfen, p. 13. 15Ibid. 16Lee, p. 64.
this were forged and the name and address signed to them were fictitious.\textsuperscript{17}

It was rumored many years ago that President Joseph F. Smith had received a wonderful, mysterious revelation in French.\textsuperscript{18} This he denied and explained that, "... it was gotten up by some mysterious person who undertook to create a sensation and lay the responsibility upon me. I am not guilty."\textsuperscript{19}

From these two accounts it seems that there have been and still are people who intentionally develop and circulate error. The existence of such demeaning efforts on the part of some once again indicates the need of great care in verifying all stories before accepting them or passing them on. Such activities provide more evidence of a need to restrict oneself to the proper channels of the Church for information in order to avoid being misled.

There were various ridiculous stories going about in the time of Joseph Smith concerning the leaders of the Church and its members. One such story Joseph included in his diary and labeled it, "A Sample of Folly." He writes:

Mr. Sollars stated that James Mullone, of Springfield, told him as follows:--'I have been to Nauvoo, and seen Joe Smith, the Prophet: he had a gray horse, and I asked him where he got it; and Joe said, 'You see that white

\textsuperscript{17}Lee, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{18}Joseph F. Smith, \textit{Conference Report}, October, 1918, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
cloud.' 'Yes.' 'Well, as it came along, I got the horse from that cloud.' This is a fair specimen of the ten thousand foolish lies circulated by this generation to bring the truth and its advocates into disrepute.20

Another area of sensational stories is that of underwater cities which purportedly serve as evidence of the Book of Mormon. A city was supposed to have been found off the coast of Florida which contained the word "Moroni" inscribed in Hebrew.21 Kenneth J. Brown reported, after looking into the assertion:

The writer [Mr. Brown] also found several people who claimed to have heard of such cities and were sure that documentation could be found which would show that submerged cities had been located near Book of Mormon lands. A limited search, however, has failed to find any positive reference to such cities in either non-Mormon or Mormon writings. Recent publications by reputable scientists working in the field make no mention of sunken cities of pre-Columbia times found near eastern America. At least two books written within the past five years attempt to give the location of every significant underwater find known to exist; but no mention of 'Moroni' or anything akin to it.22

In the great cleansing destruction that preceded Jesus' visit to the American continent many cities were lost, but apparently only one sank into the sea.23 The specific geographical location of the city is not recorded so its

20DHC, V, 218.


22Ibid., p. 4.

23The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955), 3 Nephi 8:5-23; 9:3-10. See also Brown, p. 1.
present-day discovery would seem near impossible, if it is still relatively intact.

It was reported to the author that Brown, in his research, found that the U.S. Navy had to reroute their submarines operating in the Gulf of Mexico during the Second World War because of the sunken cities. A discussion with Kenneth Brown and a perusal of his paper proved the story to be completely false and unfounded.

White Indians

A fictional story dealing with some white Indians was written up and distributed widely in the Church some fifteen years ago. Despite the efforts of the leaders of the Church to destroy it, it continues to appear from time to time.24 Anyone unfamiliar with the world of the Indians would find the story quite feasible. The source of information was purportedly a full-blooded Navajo who held a Doctor's degree and had graduated from Carlyle and Haskell Indian Universities.25 Norman C. Pierce wrote it up and entitled it, "The Coming of the Great White Chief." Elder Spencer W. Kimball states, "It is untrue and is total fiction, and is very deceptive because it presumes to be a fact."26

26Letter from Spencer W. Kimball to Elder Richard Krikava.
An official statement about the story came out in the Church News over the signature of Spencer W. Kimball, and reads as follows:

In spite of the fact that the people have been repeatedly warned by letter, through their local Church authorities and from pulpit and press, there are still some who persist in spreading the fictional story of 'The Coming of the Great White Chief.'

Some well-meaning people have copied and distributed far and wide this fanciful story, and many sincere people are being deceived thereby.

The author, Norman C. Pierce, advises that in the summer of 1945 he wrote this story from information and statements which he received from one Natoni Nes Bah.

The representation in this fictional story, relating to great assemblages and movements of Indian peoples, the storing of quantities of food in cashes, the walled city of white Indians, the stone quarries and the shipment of quarried stone for the building of a temple—these and many other claims have been thoroughly investigated and have been found to be misleading, and most statements totally untrue. The writer makes no claims to the truthfulness of the story; and we have also a formal statement from Natoni Nes Bah, signed before witnesses, from which we quote:

'I have read the story written by Norman C. Pierce entitled "The Coming of the Great White Chief" ... There is no truth in this story.'

If members of the Church would always check the authenticity of such stories, through the Church authorities before spreading them abroad, it would save much embarrassment and deception. It is earnestly hoped that further duplication and circulation of this fictional story will cease.\(^{27}\)

The hoped for results of the release were not realized. The Church leaders a few years later felt it had become necessary to issue another statement warning about this same story. The statement announces:


Nearly two decades ago a fictional story entitled "The Coming of the Great White Chief" was printed and circulated widely throughout the Church. This story

\(^{27}\)Church News, May 16, 1953, p. 4.
purports to come from a Navajo Indian highly trained in archeology and scientific research in the Smithsonian and Carnegie Institutes. It tells of white Indians in southern Mexico who lived in seclusion in a type of united order. It tells of Indian legends, of ancient records, of great conferences and massive movements of Indians, of great welfare programs, of the organizing of the Indians toward building the temple in Jackson County.

Although this story has been repudiated numerous times and found to be untrue in practically all of its major allegations, uninformed persons continue to duplicate and distribute copies of this mythical composition.

It is requested, therefore, that members be instructed to refrain from duplicating and distributing copies of this fictional story.28

There are some versions of this story in circulation that have neither the author nor title included. Another account is but a summary of less than a page in length.

Chapter 4

ERROR IN PRINT

Publications within the Scope of the Church

It appears that there are some accounts that have found their way into print within the realms of the Church which the Church itself deems to be untrue. These may have crept in through a possible lack of caution, hurry to meet a publishing deadline, or whatever. Considering the number of publications in missions and local areas of the Church with others of this nature, there is published a great quantity of material. The intent to keep all materials and doctrine "pure" within these publications is unquestioned. However, from time to time that which is later considered to be error does creep in and although a correction is printed in the future issue, even the following issue, there are those people who read the erroneous material and do not immediately become aware of the printed correction. A consistent reading program would seem advisable in order to stay up to date.

For example, there appeared in the Church News a description attributed to David Whitmer of the technique employed to translate the golden plates.¹ The following

issue contained a "Translation Statement Corrected" informing readers that: "the source of the material is not reliable and the account is not accurate."²

My Conversion: The Sarver Story

There appeared in circulation among the members of the Church, a story of a James R. Sarver and how he came to be converted to the Church. It presents Sarver as a world lecturer on the foremost religions of the world, professor of theology and languages at the University of Nanking, China, for twenty-five years, and personal friend of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and Cardinal Spellman now deceased. It was printed in a mission publication³ and has been duplicated from other sources and passed around.⁴

A comparison of four copies of the story shows great discrepancies. There is a difference in all four copies in paragraph and sentence structure. Some statements appear in all four copies but are not identical in wording. Other statements included in one of the versions are missing in its counterparts. One version contains an extensive paragraph not present in the three others. The copies will be referred to as 1, 2, 3, and 4 for comparison.

²Church News, September 27, 1969, p. 16.
³Te Karere [New Zealand Mission], August, 1959, pp. 342, 343, 346, 347.
⁴The author is in possession of four different copies.
Copies 1 and 2 have an introductory sentence not appearing in copies 3 and 4, while 2 and 3 have a final paragraph not found in 1 and 4. There is a final sentence unique to copy 1 explaining why a copy of the story was sent in a letter by an unnamed person to his children in Washington, D.C.

Copies 1, 2, and 3 report Sarver meeting two missionaries at a restaurant in Shanghai and copy 4 claims it was a "den of vice" where the missionaries were drinking milk and eating sandwiches. The two missionaries are presented by Sarver as returning home from a two year LDS mission to Palestine. There is no LDS mission in Palestine. He also claims to "have been the means of converting fifteen Catholic priests and 3,500 others to the Mormon Church."5 There is no evidence provided in the documents themselves or located by the author to substantiate this assertion.

Besides Sarver and his wife, no one else is identified clearly. Reference made to other people is by race, position of employment, or as a "friend." Almost nothing is mentioned specifically enough to be verified or traced.

A caution was sent to the seminary teachers of the Church about the Sarver story in a memorandum which directed that, "this account of his conversion should not be used

in our school system. It is manifestly false on the face of it." Later a similar caution was sent to the wards and stakes stating:

From time to time there is circulated in stakes and missions a story by one 'Dr. James R. Sarver,' telling of his alleged conversion to the Church in 1951 as a result of first meeting some missionaries in Shanghai, China, who were enroute home from missions in another part of the world. Mr. Sarver claims to have been a 'lecturer on the world's foremost religions and for 25 years professor of theology and languages at the University of Nanking, China.'

Mr. Sarver's so-called testimony is alleged to be complete fabrication and must not be used by missionaries or others representing the Church. He is alleged to be apostate from the Church and has allegedly allied himself with apostate polygamist cults. Members should be warned against the obvious hoax which Mr. Sarver has attempted to perpetrate upon the Church and its members.7

The Sarvers were housekeepers in the mission home in Chicago for awhile but were terminated by President I. A. Smoot for preaching for hire on Mormonism and leaving the mission area.8 His present whereabouts are unknown.

Hope of Zion

A so-called prophecy that has been printed in at least five publications9 is supposed to be found in a book entitled, Die Hoffnung Zions, or, The Hope of Zion, by

6William E. Berrett, Memorandum No. 7 to all seminary teachers, February 21, 1961. Italics added.


8Personal interview with Larry Porter who was in the mission (1953-55) and knew Sarver personally.

9Jacob Spori, "True and False Theosophy," The Juvenile Instructor, XXVIII, No. 21 (November 1, 1893), pp.
Lutius Gratiano, printed in 1793 and located in the University Library in Basel City, Switzerland. A comparison of the five documents revealed some differences in wording and punctuation but overall the accounts were similar. One of them reads this way:

The old true gospel and the powers thereof are lost. False doctrines prevail throughout every church and all the lands. All we can do is to exhort the people to fear God, to be just, to shun evil, to pray, pray, pray. Prayer and purity may bring an angel to visit a deeply distressed soul. But I tell you, that in 100 years God will have spoken again, I see a little people led by a Prophet and faithful Elders. They are persecuted, burnt out and murdered; but in a valley that lies toward a great lake they will grow up, make a beautiful (herrlich) land, have a temple of magnificent splendor, have all the old Priesthood, with Apostles, Prophets, Teachers and Deacons. From every nation the believers will be gathered by swift messengers, and then God, the Omnipotent, will speak to the disobedient nations with thunder, lightnings and destructions never heard of in history.

Rulon S. Wells, of the First Council of Seventy, read the prophecy and expressed his opinion, after careful investigation, in these words:

. . . I would be very much interested in learning who is really responsible for the foregoing statement, for, if it be true, it should be verified, and the name of Gratiano should become a household word, as one of the prophets to whom the future was unfolded with such clearness and detail as almost to rival the wonderful vision of Daniel. . . . But if, on the other hand, it be untrue, the perpetrator of this fraud deserves severe reprimand.


10Ibid. 11Spori, pp. 673-674.
For my part, I am free to admit, that I regard it as a 'fake' and a fraud.12

Around the year 1898, Wells and Peter Loutensock, Swiss Mission president, read the book, Die Hoffnung Zions, from start to finish and found neither the prophecy or anything that resembled it.13 Dr. David L. McDonald, Swiss Mission president in 1901, also read the book and did not find the alleged prediction.14

"The prophecy was introduced to the Saints by Elder Jacob Spori . . ."15 Jacob was born in Oberwyl, Switzerland, in 1847 and baptized into the Church in 1877.16 He was ordained an elder in December of 1887 and sent to Switzerland on a mission during the winter and spring of 1879 and again in 1884 until 1889.17 Four years later, in 1893, Jacob wrote an article that was printed in The Juvenile Instructor in which he included the above prophecy.18 In his article he speaks highly of Gratiano19 and states that

12Wells, p. 162.

13Ibid. A microfilm copy of Die Hoffnung Zions is located in BYU library.

14Ibid. See also The Growing Edge (Provo: Department of Seminaries and Institutes), March 1969, pp. 1-2.


16Andrew Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1936), IV, 391.

17Ibid. 18Spori, pp. 673, 674.

19Gratiano is a pseudonym. The real name is Samuel Lutz (1674-1750). He used other pseudonyms including Christophilus Gratianus and Samuel Lucius.
he was well known in Switzerland. The fact remains that the prophecy is not in the book as claimed.

Elder Wells expresses these sentiments about the prophecy:

... let us hope that it will not be used, either at home or abroad in the mission field, in support of the great work of the Master. There is enough of real prophecy without using any that is bogus, to convince the honest in heart of the truth.20

The Church Historian's Office lends no belief to the prophecy and asks that its circulation be discontinued.21

20Wells, p. 164.

Chapter 5

HORSES AND PROPHECY

Horseshoe Prophecy

An account of a purported vision of President John Taylor, written by Edward Lunt, has been reproduced and widely circulated among the saints for some years.¹ The setting for the “prophecy” is described in these words:

The following incident occurred at my father’s home in Cedar City, Utah, at the time a conference was being held in that city at which were present President John Taylor and George A. Smith. Apostle Smith was asked to conduct the conference as President Taylor wished to rest after his having held meetings in the different wards and stakes between Salt Lake City and Cedar City. President Taylor, with some of the authorities, was staying at the home of my parents during the conference.²

Soon after retiring to rest, President Taylor is reported to have returned to the kitchen where he immediately started telling Mrs. Lunt of a very remarkable vision just shown to him in his room.³ Edward Lunt was not yet born at this time but had it all related to him some twenty-

¹Norman C. Pierce, The 3½ Years (n.p., Registered October, 1963), pp. 18-19. Copies of the prophecy are also located in Special Collections, BYU Library; and the Church Historian’s Office. The author has eleven different copies in his personal file.

²Horseshoe Prophecy. Copy in Church Historian’s Office.

³Ibid.
five years later. He apparently wrote it down for the first time in 1951 when he was in his sixties from "his recollection of what his mother had told him."

Two of the 1951 copies contain a sentence that speaks of heavy taxation which is not included in the other 1951 version nor any of the others. Two other copies have the name Burton Ritenburgh typed on them under his certification that Lunt told him the story, he wrote it down, and Lunt read it and stated it was correct. The two copies have various differences, one of which is very important. A footnote mark (+) appears at the end of a sentence in the prophecy that tells of blood running down the streets of Salt Lake City. Said footnote consists of four paragraphs added after the name of Ritenburgh at the bottom of the page. It starts with these words: "At this point in the vision, Pres. Taylor was shown what exactly would make the blood

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5Ibid. Three copies in possession of the author have Edward Lunt's name at the end. Two have the name typewritten and are dated January 9, 1951, at Mesa, and June 28, 1951. The other copy is not too clear or readable. The month is November or December, the first three digits of the year are 195, and it was the ninth day of the month. This document is signed in long hand with Lunt's name.

6Burton Ritenburgh, Mormon Lake, Arizona, is the information given at the bottom of the second copy. An LDS man of that name passed away in Phoenix, Arizona, on February 11, 1970, according to the Church Historian's Office. His wife was excommunicated in Mesa, Arizona, in 1953 for apostasy. The two copies will be referred to as Ritenburgh 1 and Ritenburgh 2.
flow so freely. I am told he said . . "7 Here follows an alarming statement about a supposed attack by the Negroes on Salt Lake City and an ensuing battle. 8 The footnote ends with this sentence: "May it be noted that I have heard 2nd hand that there is a more complete rendering of this vision in the Church Archives which explains some of these points more clearly."9 In a letter to Roy Doxey of the Brigham Young University, Earl Olson, Assistant Church Historian, says,

It is interesting to note that someone has also inserted another paragraph in the account to state that there is a more complete recording of this vision in the Historian's Office. Such a statement is entirely false. We have no further information on this event.10

None of the material in the footnote appears in the other Ritenburgh version. The footnote material is unquestionably a later addition but the person responsible for it is unknown. Raymond Taylor, grandson of President Taylor, labels it a scare tactic.11 Later versions have the paragraph

7Ritenburgh 2.

8One of the paragraphs in the footnote says, "It is thought that if these things be true, that they be not published or broadcast about, simply because God has not required us to hate the Negro, or to stir up the hornets nest. This information could do both." Contrary to this thought, the prophecy being spurious too, the prophecy has been widely circulated.

9Ritenburgh 2.

10Personal letter from Earl Olson, Assistant Church Historian, to Roy W. Doxey, assistant Dean, College of Religious Instruction, BYU, dated January 20, 1970. Copy in possession of the author is used by permission.

about the Negroes incorporated in the body of the text itself. One such copy has the names of the first three presidents of the Church typed in at the bottom.\textsuperscript{12} Since the demise of both Joseph and Brigham took place previous to the time of the vision, their signatures could not be authentic.

The official stand of the Church on this story is found in a letter from the First Presidency\textsuperscript{13} to various regions of the Church. It was printed in the \textit{Church News} and is quoted as follows:

The so-called 'Horse Shoe Prophecy' of President John Taylor has a questionable background and history.

1. The 'prophecy' was first written down in 1951 by Edward Lunt which is between 64 and 74 years after it was supposed to have been given.

2. His mother ran the hotel from 1877 to 1888 during which time the 'prophecy' was supposed to have been given. President Taylor died July 25, 1887.

3. George A. Smith was supposed to have been there with President Taylor but he died in 1875, which was two years prior to the time Brother Lunt's mother was in the hotel.

4. He states that his mother did not tell him until 1903 or 1904, which was about 25 years after it was supposed to have been given.

5. We have five different copies and no two of them are identical in wording.

6. One contains a statement about the Negro that purportedly is not in any of the others and particularly the one 'version' which was signed by Edward Lunt.

7. In checking the \textit{Deseret News} we can find no record of President Taylor being in Cedar City after 1883. Nor is anything in the Parowan Stake Conference minutes [to indicate his presence in the area].

\textsuperscript{12}Copy in possession of the author.

\textsuperscript{13}Letter from the First Presidency to ward bishops and stake and mission presidents in the United States and Canada, dated March 30, 1970.
8. There is no record by any of the General Authorities about it nor is there anything in the diaries of which we have copies. This is just another evidence of the cleverly designed motives of individuals who seize upon the emotionalism of our present day to get publicity, and to further agitate the feelings of Church members on matters which must be left to the wisdom of the Lord and His guidance, which are under His divine control.¹⁴

Edward Lunt is now deceased. His wife informed Church officials that "before her husband died, he had expressed regret over writing of the incident. He reasoned that if President Taylor had wanted this recorded as prophecy he would have done it himself."¹⁵

The White Horse Prophecy

Possibly the most published of all reports is the one attributed to the Prophet Joseph Smith and supposedly uttered in Nauvoo on May 7, 1843.¹⁶ Because of the symbolic use of horses of various colors, this "prophecy" is entitled "The White Horse Prophecy."

It has been suggested that,

... the White Horse represents the members of the Mormon Church, the Pale Horse, residents of the United States who are non-Mormons, the Red Horse symbolizes American Indians, the Black Horse the colored people of the United States.¹⁷

¹⁴Church News, April 4, 1970, p. 3.
¹⁵The Salt Lake Tribune, op. cit., p. 21.
¹⁶Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 58.
There is an abundance of versions and copies of the prophecy in books and in separate documents covering a few pages.

The date of the recording of the prophecy is undetermined. President Joseph F. Smith, in a general conference address, referred to the printing and circulating of what was supposed to be a great revelation of the Prophet Joseph as "a matter that was gotten up, [I understand, some ten years after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by two of our brethren. . . ."

President Smith did not indicate the source of his information nor the identity of the two brethren. He indicated that he understood the matter to have been gotten up some ten years after Joseph's death in 1844 but he did not say when it was put into written form or state that it was written at that time. The circulated material he alluded to apparently were copies of the prophecy that had been circulated by the date of that conference (1918). Something may possibly have been circulated orally which caused some people to later seek to get

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19 There are twenty different copies in the Church Historian's Office. These copies and those in print (footnote 18 above) are the ones used and referred to in this study.

20 Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 58. Italics added.
the material written down but evidence is lacking to show that the prophecy was in written form that early.

On the contrary, many of the copies of the prophecy have an introductory paragraph that says:

The following is a copied form from the Journal of Elder John J. Roberts of Paradise, Utah. Elder Roberts makes this explanation as a preface: 'On the next page will be found a prophecy by the Prophet Joseph Smith, related to Edwin Rushton and Theodore Turley. This prophecy has never been given to the public. I received it from Robert Pace [Pearce] on Friday, Feb. 28, 1902.'

John J. Roberts was born in Paradise, Utah, on June 22, 1877. He returned home from a mission to Samoa on February 4, 1902, and received a copy of the recorded prophecy from Robert Pearce which he entered into his journal. Robert's statement, "This prophecy has never been given to the public" seems to indicate that it had been written down fairly recent to the time that he received it. This is compatible to the explanation given by Norman Pierce of the recording of the prophecy. Pierce states:

Several years before the death of Edwin Rushton in Salt Lake City, in 1904, he was subjected to rigid cross examination and requested to make many repetitions by

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21 Extracts from Pioneer G. O.'s Journal (n.p., n.d.). Pamphlets in Church Historian's Office, hereafter cited as Extracts. Italics added. The G. O. stands for George Osborne. The quote as given is from Extracts and appears on eight copies of the prophecy in the Historian's Office in a little different wording. The name Pace is an error and should read Pearce. There was a Robert Pearce who went on a mission from Paradise, Utah, to the Southern States in 1883 when thirty-one years old. See Missionary Card Index in Church Historian's Office.

22 Missionary Record, Book C, 1898.

23 Missionary Card Index in Church Historian's Office.
James H. Anderson and Arnold G. Giaque; all of which proved the complete absence of any contradictions in his story. Edwin Rushton was then requested to have the White Horse Vision recorded and notarized before these gentlemen. This was done with James H. Anderson acting as recorder and Arnold G. Giaque as notary.  

Known copies in Rushton's handwriting indicate he was in his last years of life when he wrote them, some forty or fifty years after the vision was supposed to have occurred.

There is no recognition given to Rushton or Theodore Turley in Church annals for their part in recording the prophecy. A number of column inches were given to report the death of Edwin Rushton in the Deseret Evening News which included a brief review of his life and accomplishments, but there was no mention of or reference to any involvement in recording the prophecy. Apparently no dependable or authoritative source of that time was willing to lend an air


25Personal interview with Thomas G. Truitt of the Church Historian's Office.

26Rushton was born June 1, 1824, and would have been almost nineteen years old when the vision was supposedly given. Theodore Turley was born April 10, 1800, and would have been forty-three years old at the time.

27Andrew Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1936). No mention is made of Rushton or Turley although both have sons written about (Vol. IV, pp. 311, 501). Neither the DHC or B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), hereafter cited as CHC, make any mention of the prophecy or the relationship of the two men to any such activity.

of authenticity to the prophecy by giving recognition to its author and recorder, Edwin Rushton.

There seems to be very little evidence available to link Turley with the prophecy. Rushton claims that Turley was present when the prophecy was supposedly given but there is sparse evidence that would corroborate this claim or establish Turley as a co-recorder. Crowther attempts to validate the prophecy by suggesting that Turley would have exposed it as false were it not a true prophecy. However, the prophecy appears to have been written after his death at Beaver, Utah, in 1872, which is what Pierce indicates. Crowther says Rushton recorded the prophecy and delivered a copy into the hands of Patriarch John Smith, Hyrum's son. This could all have been done after Turley's death. Smith lived in Salt Lake City as did Rushton and died seven years after Rushton, in 1911. If Rushton did indeed record the prophecy after Turley's death, as it so appears, then the attempt to link Turley's good name with the prophecy is vain.

The White Horse Prophecy was purportedly given on May 7, 1843, and repeated in a meeting about two weeks after

32 Crowther, Prophecy, p. 301.
34 Crowther, Prophecy, pp. 301-302.
later.\textsuperscript{35} There is no record of either the prophecy having been given or its later use to be found in Church annals or the newspapers and journals of that time. Joseph Smith has nothing recorded in his diary about the prophecy. Other respected journals of that era are equally silent on the matter.

The opening paragraph of the prophecy reads:

On or about the sixth day of May, 1843, a grand review of the Nauvoo Legion was held in Nauvoo. The Prophet Joseph complimented them for their good discipline and evolutions performed. The weather being hot, he called for a glass of water. With the glass of water in his hand he said, 'I drink to you a toast to the overthrow of the mobocrats.'\textsuperscript{36}

Joseph's diary records his review of the Nauvoo Legion on the sixth day of May and some of the remarks made:

In the course of my remarks on the prairie, I told the Legion that when we have petitioned those in power for assistance, they have always told us they had no power to help us. Damn such traitors! When they give me the power to protect the innocent, I will never say I can do nothing for their good; I will exercise that power, so help me God. At the close of the address, the Legion marched to the city and disbanded in Main Street about two p.m., the day being windy and very cold.\textsuperscript{37}

The weather conditions as recorded by the Prophet are diametrically opposite to the claims of the prophecy and present a great weakness in its claims of validity. It has been suggested that the Prophet's remarks, as given above, might explain or give support to the idea of the toast

\textsuperscript{35}The White Horse Prophecy (Salt Lake City: R. W. LeBaron, 1952), p. 2. Pamphlet located in BYU Library, Special Collections. Many copies of the prophecy, though not all, refer to the meeting of two weeks later.

\textsuperscript{36}Crowther, Prophecy, p. 303. Italics added.

\textsuperscript{37}DHC, V, 384. Italics added.
mentioned in the prophecy.\textsuperscript{38} However, if the Prophet ever
gave the toast accredited to him in the prophecy it probably
would have been recorded by someone in attendance, if not
the Prophet himself, by reason of its uniqueness. The words
of the toast to the mobocrats were:

Here's wishing they were in the middle of the sea,
in a stone canoe with iron paddles, and a shark swallow
the canoe, and the Devil swallow the shark, and the
Devil locked up in the northwest corner of Hell, the key
lost, and a blind man looking for it.\textsuperscript{39}

It would seem reasonable that if such a colorfully
stated toast had been given in the presence of a great
number of people, of whom some were wont to keep daily
journals or diaries, that it would have attracted the pen of
one if not a few. But such a statement has not been found.

The prophecy next claims:

The next morning a man who had heard the Prophet
give the toast returned to visit the mansion of the
Prophet, and so abused him with bad language, that the
man was ordered out by the Prophet. It was while the
two were out that my attention was attracted to them and
hearing the man speaking in a loud tone of voice, I went
toward them; the man finally leaving.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{38}Crowther, \textit{Prophecy}, p. 303. Crowther states,
"While his record does not indicate that he was giving a
toast the Prophet did record comments which could have been
given in such a manner and which were of a similar nature." However, the above comparison of the toast and the journal
tenry prove the two to be extremely dissimilar.

\textsuperscript{39}Pierce, \textit{The 3^{12} Years}, p. 154. This part of the
prophecy was omitted or overlooked in Crowther's detailed
analysis but is found in many of the copies in the Church
Historian's Office and elsewhere, including the one pub-
lished by Pierce which he obtained from the son-in-law of
Edwin Rushton.

\textsuperscript{40}Crowther, \textit{Prophecy}, p. 304. Italics added. Two
other versions state that the Prophet chased the man down
the street.
Joseph's diary records no such visit that day. The entry for Sunday, May 7, reads:

In the forenoon I was visited by several gentlemen, concerning the plates that were dug out near Kinderhook. The council of the First Presidency met. Elder Brigham Young preached at La Harpe. 41

The "gentlemen" mentioned are not identified by the Prophet but seem to have been of a different character than the abusive man spoken of in the prophecy and had come for a different purpose. The Prophet had previous dealings with the men owning the Kinderhook plates and had translated a portion of them, so the possibility of it being the same men seems feasible. 42 He wrote about the plates and included considerable information in his diary from the Times and Seasons and the Quincy Whig just six days prior to the visit of the gentlemen. 43 It seems highly unlikely that one of the "gentlemen" referred to could be made out to be the coarse individual related to the prophecy. Also, the prophecy states that only one man left; therefore, the others of the several gentlemen must have remained. Yet, in all of the versions reviewed only Rushton, Turley, and the Prophet were listed as being present.

Another consideration deals with the vile language of the visitor and the Prophet ordering the man out of the house. Again, there is nothing in Joseph's record of that date to substantiate such a statement, which makes it all

41 DHC, V, 384. Italics added.
42 Ibid., p. 372. 43 Ibid., pp. 372-378.
appear to be a fabrication. Joseph commonly recorded such abuse in his diary.\(^44\) On one occasion he wrote of some differences with a tax collector named Bagby that ended in a physical encounter. Joseph charged him with continually abusing the citizens in Nauvoo. "Bagby called me a liar," Joseph noted, "and picked up a stone to throw at me, which so enraged me that I followed him a few steps, and struck him two or three times."\(^45\)

The one instance chronicled in Joseph's diary that is possibly most directly related to the White Horse Prophecy involves an altercation with a man named Butterfield. It fits the description of the previously mentioned event in the prophecy where Joseph was so verbally abused by a visitor in his home that he ordered the man out. Joseph reports, "Josiah Butterfield came to my house and insulted me so outrageously that I kicked him out of the house, across the yard, and into the street."\(^46\) This entry in Joseph's diary is dated Tuesday, March 28, 1843, which was just six weeks earlier than the date of the prophecy. The close similarity between Joseph's journal entry and the statement in the prophecy raises the question of them possibly being the very same event. But there is no evidence as to what the Butterfield incident was about. If

\(^{44}\textit{DHC, I, 91; II, 323, 334-335; V, 14, 316, 524; VI, 344-345.}\)

\(^{45}\textit{DHC, V, 524.}\)

\(^{46}\textit{DHC, V, 316.}\)
the "prophecy" were nothing more than an attempt to compile some events and statements as remembered by Rushton after a period of some forty or fifty years, the six week gap might have been bridged in Rushton's memory. This might also be true concerning the Prophet's declaration about going to the Rocky Mountains. Rushton could have been present when Joseph uttered a prophetic statement regarding the saints' removal to the mountains or he might possibly have heard it from someone who heard the Prophet's remarks. Nine months previous to the dates given for the White Horse Prophecy, also a Saturday and a Sunday; a sixth and a seventh day of the month (the incidents of the prophecy are recorded as happening on Saturday, May 6, and Sunday, May 7), Joseph was speaking with a few men under a bowery and enjoying a drink of cold water. Part of the journal entry for that day, Saturday, August 6, 1842, reads:

I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.47

In writing of this same occurrence, Edward Tullidge observed that "Joseph, as he was tasting the cold water, warned the brethren not to be too free with it. With the tumbler still in his hand he prophesied that the Saints would yet go to the Rocky Mountains. . . ."48

47DHC, V, 85. 48Ibid., p. 86.
Are these consistent close similarities between the Prophet's record and items listed in the supposed prophecy just circumstantial or are they evidences of the "prophecy" being nothing more than a compilation, of questionable accuracy, of various utterances made by the Prophet at divers times?

Attempts were made by some authors to establish a foundation of proof of validity for the prophecy by trying to show that General Authorities quoted from it during addresses to the saints. There are ample examples of statements made by General Authorities that are of a similar nature to sayings that were written into the prophecy by its author, but as to the Prophet Joseph giving all together the things listed in the prophecy, President Joseph F. Smith declared at a general conference, "... it was never spoken by the prophet in the manner in which they [those responsible for writing and circulating it] have put it forth."

Statements have been given at sundry times by General Authorities reflecting the attitude of the Church in regard to the prophecy. Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

From time to time, accounts of various supposed visions, revelations, and prophecies are spread forth by and among the Latter-day Saints, who should know better than to believe or spread such false information.

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49 Crowther, Prophecy, pp. 302-303; LeBaron, White Horse Prophecy, p. 1; Pierce, The 3½ Years, pp. 159-160.

50 Crowther, Prophecy, pp. 303-321.

51 Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 58.
One of these false and deceptive documents that has cropped up again and again for over a century is the so-called White Horse Prophecy.  

On another occasion McConkie spoke of the prophecy as "... that spurious bit of prophetic imagery that refuses to die out among sensation seekers which is called, 'The White Horse Prophecy.'"  

Joseph Fielding Smith made some remarks about the prophecy and gave some guidance in determining true revelation during the general conference of October, 1918. He said:

... I have discovered that people have copies of a purported vision by the Prophet Joseph Smith given in Nauvoo, and some people are circulating this supposed vision, or revelation, or conversation which the prophet is reported to have held with a number of individuals in the city of Nauvoo. I want to say to you, my brethren and sisters, that if you understand the Church articles and covenants, if you will read the scriptures and become familiar with those things which are recorded in the revelations from the Lord, it will not be necessary for you to ask any questions in regard to the authenticity or otherwise of any purported revelation, vision, or manifestation that proceeds out of darkness, concocted in some corner, surreptitiously presented, and not coming through the proper channels of the Church.  

President Joseph F. Smith followed his son to the stand in that conference and declared the official position of the Church on the White Horse Prophecy in these clear terms:


53Bruce R. McConkie, "How to Start a Cult," p. 4. Unpublished manuscript located in BYU library, Special Collections.

The ridiculous story about the 'red horse,' and 'the black horse,' and 'the white horse,' and a lot of trash that has been circulated about and printed and sent around as a great revelation given by the Prophet Joseph Smith, is a matter that was gotten up, I understand, some ten years after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by two of our brethren who put together some broken sentences from the Prophet that they may have heard him utter from time to time and formulated this so-called revelation out of it and it was never spoken by the prophet in the manner in which they have put it forth. It is simply false; that is all there is to it.  

As in all things, the final decision rests in the mind of the individual. The alternatives for a Latter-day Saint seem, however, not to lie in weighing out the wisdom of the world in an attempt to decide if the prophecy is true or false, but in whether or not to follow the sustained authorities of his Church.

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Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

It is natural that spiritual gifts and revelations should be experienced within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through the exercise of faith and priesthood, according to the doctrine of the Church. Spiritual manifestations have been vouchsafed to mortals since the time of Adam, not all recipients being prophets or even righteous at that.\(^1\) It is necessary, however, to use care and discretion in order to determine accurately the source of one's revelation because Lucifer is actively involved in counterfeiting the work of the Lord and has been since the beginning.\(^2\) One system set up by the Lord to keep the saints from being misled by false revelation is that of priesthood leadership and stewardship. At the head of the Church stands a prophet whose calling and responsibility it is to receive revelation for the Church. That is the man the Lord has appointed. If anyone else receives revelation or directives that are for the Church they may know for a surety that their source of revelation is not the Lord. This same basic principle is true for all of the offices throughout the Church. The Lord never intended for one man or woman

\(^2\)Moses 5:13; Alma 30:52-53.

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to receive the revelations and directives that pertain to the stewardship of another. This is a helpful guideline for avoiding the dissemination of error whether it comes in the form of spoken rumor or mimeographed sheets. The order of the Church will always stand and will always be recognized and utilized by the Lord and His messengers in giving guidance to the membership of the Church and in building up and extending the kingdom.

There are people who have undoubtedly had some kind of very real experience but who choose to ignore the previously mentioned principle of revelation and stewardship and claim that this time it is "special" or "different" and their calling is valid even though it is outside the system that the Lord organized within His Church. They cling tenaciously to their "calling by revelation" with complete disregard for the counsel of those whom they once sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, rally together a few disciples, and eventually leave the kingdom of God.

There are others who have a real experience but turn away from it because they can see and are willing to admit that it is not consistent with the Lord's established way. Such people avoid being misled by depending upon and trusting in revealed gospel principles like that of an established order in the Church.

In 1959 a branch president\(^3\) listened to the president

\(^3\)The author was the branch president spoken of in the story.
of the Relief Society relate a vision she had the night before wherein she claimed that the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared and told her that the Church was true and to never leave it. He also directed her to tell the branch president that the Lord was not pleased with plans to hold the upcoming Relief Society Bazaar in the building where the branch met (a large home that had been purchased by the Church for that purpose). This Relief Society president was told in this vision to take this message to the whole Church and see that no more such bazaars were held in any stake, ward, or branch building. After discussing the vision with the branch president, the Relief Society president felt convinced that the vision was not from the Lord and that it was not really Joseph that had appeared. The experience was kept private and a sensational eruption averted by the woman's willingness to follow the priesthood leadership.

In some cases people who have a revelation or vision write it down but keep it to themselves as they should do. Later, however, relatives or descendants find the record, often posthumously, and publish it about. At times the published version is enlarged or distorted and becomes garbled as it is passed around.

In other cases people have fabricated sensational stories and accounts, for reasons known only to themselves, and have published them about in mimeographed or typed pages and unsuspecting gullible members have gathered them in and, without checking them out, have stored them as evidence of
gospel workings. Such materials often later appear in classrooms as supplementary lesson material, contrary to the counsel and urgings of the General Authorities.

It would seem that if the membership of the Church spent more time studying the Standard Works, Conference Reports, Church releases and periodicals and took time to check on the validity of stories and items that are passed around that the lightning-fast wheels of sensationalism would grind to a halt. It has been said that rumor can go around the world while truth is putting its boots on. It seems to be the responsibility of every member of the Church to see that such is not the case within the kingdom of God.
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