

The Prophet—Our North Star

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The other evening as I was anticipating this most humbling and challenging moment for me, I imagined I heard the exquisite music of this hour. These thoughts, perhaps inadequately expressed, came to my mind, and I penned them in tribute to your selfless sharing of your talents. So, a tribute to you who have shared your talent with us.

Tribute to the Arts

*The arts are like a rainbow's hue,
As heaven paints an exquisite view.
We are quickened and see in the air
A beauty that a moment before wasn't there.
The echo of distant yesterdays,
Moves us to express heartfelt praise.
The promise of the unborn tomorrow,
Restless stirs as we from your talents borrow.
Lifted to this higher plane,
Remembrance of you we will sustain.
We pray blessings will you attend,
As your talents—from life's cares—us defend.*

Thank you—thank you for your beautiful rendition of those uplifting presentations and representations of your talent.

Life is a journey. To get our bearings in the northern hemisphere, we look to the North

Star. (In the southern hemisphere, we look to the Southern Cross.) The North Star is always there. Sometimes it is dimmed by the light of day or the haze of clouds at night, but it is still there. It is but the vision to see that we lack.

There are few sights as beautiful as a starry, clear night. We look at the handiwork of the Creator of the universe and are lifted and thrilled by the view. It seems that our sight penetrates the forever—that is, our physical sight.

There is another sight that is vital. It is insight—spiritual insight. How do we utilize this to overcome the dimness of the day and the haze and clouds of the night—to see the insightful star, the handiwork of the Creator? It helps us to look in the right direction—to brush aside the dimness, the haze, the clouds—and see the spiritual directing handiwork of the Creator. A prophet of God is like the North Star. We get our collective bearings from him.

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Let us journey through time. What will we be doing November 7, 2078? What are we learning that we will use in 2078? 3078? 4078? What must we know a millennium from now—two millennia from now—three millennia from now—unnumbered millennia from now? We must know that the star is there. We must reckon our position by that star. Those directional rays of light will lead our journey to safety.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, chapter 1, verses 37 and 38, we learn this:

Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same. [emphasis added]

The apparent source of a prophecy is from a prophet, but when a prophet speaks, in one sense it is not he speaking. He is a carefully prepared channel for a communication that springs from the headwaters and flows down into the valley to feed thirsty souls. This is the Lord speaking, using and inspiring the mind of his servant, the prophet. So the prophet is the chosen enunciator of the inspiration that rises up within him from that omnipotent and omniscient being, our loving Heavenly Father.

It is like the crystalline water that courses down from the heights of the majestic mountain, flowing from the white, pure snow that has come down from the heavens. The snow does not originate from the mountain peak. It is placed there by a divine providence to flow into the valley and green the crops—to give us the succulent red apples of harvest time, the orange pumpkins, the sweetness of crisp, tender celery—to produce the bounties of nature, or a symmetrical tree, or a colorful, radiant flower. This is a visual and physical effect that we can observe.

From the prophet flows the living water to quench our spiritual thirst.

Let us listen to a heaven-sent truth as revealed in Old Testament times. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). There arise in our minds, then, these questions: What is a prophet? How certain are his admonitions? What is the penalty for not giving heed to them? What are the promises given for believing in his words? Let us look at latter-day scripture for guidance in our quest for answers. First, *what is a prophet?*

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

Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revealer, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church. [D&C 107:91–92; emphasis added]

What is a prophet? He has *all* the gifts of God.

1 Corinthians 12 begins, “Now concerning spiritual gifts . . .” —and there follows in this chapter an expression of many gifts. The same theme continues in the next two chapters. We are admonished to “desire spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 14:1). Many gifts are also spoken of in the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In verse 29 we read: “That unto some it may be given to have all those gifts, that there may be a head, in order that every member may be profited thereby.”

What a North Star to guide us!

Question number two: *How certain are his admonitions?* “And . . . the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail.” We find this in sacred scripture (D&C 58:8).

Now, number three: *What is the penalty for not giving heed to them?* “And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and

apostles, shall be cut off from among the people” (D&C 1:14).

And now to question number four: *What are the promises given for believing in his words?*

Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, should have eternal life. [D&C 20:26; emphasis added]

Let us observe the Lord’s anointed of today: President Spencer W. Kimball. May we first move back in time thirty years when, touched by the promise to the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures, he was lifted to a prophetic vantage point and pierced the future. He said in 1947, “The Lamanites must rise in majesty and power” (*Conference Report* [hereinafter referred to as *CR*], October 1947, p. 22).

In that day, in Central America, there were fewer than one hundred members of the Church, and in Mexico less than five thousand, about half of whom were up in the Mormon colonies. Now, after thirty years have passed, what is the situation? Central America has moved from less than one hundred members to over forty thousand. Mexico now has in excess of two hundred thousand members of the Church. Convert baptisms in Mexico and Central America in 1974 were 16,500; in 1975 they increased to 21,500. In 1976, there were 38,500 convert baptisms in one year. With those 38,500 came over twelve thousand children of record composing 7,521 families. Another way to state it is that in the year 1976 over fifty thousand eternal spirits came into the Kingdom. “The Lamanites must rise in majesty and power.”

“We must look forward to the day [continues President Kimball,] . . . when they shall

have economic security, culture, refinement, and education; when they shall be operating farms and businesses and industries and shall be occupied in the professions and in teaching” (*CR*, October 1947, p. 22). And at that time there were very few professional people among the members of the Church in Mexico and Central America.

Listen to this list describing stake presidencies, high councilors, and bishops in the Mexico City area: Engineers in all areas—agronomy, biochemistry, mechanics, aeronautics, petroleum research, topography, civil construction, and electrical power—doctors of medicine (including surgeons), dentists, nurses, business managers, tailors, carpenters, building contractors, teachers, school administrators, pediatricians, C.P.A.s, auto mechanics, business machine repairmen, blacksmiths, insurance agents—and the list goes on. And I was informed just a few moments ago that on this Friday in Mexico City there will be sixteen master’s degrees conferred upon Mexican nationals by Brigham Young University. They are responding, as you see, to the promptings that have come to them as described in this statement of the prophet.

President Kimball continues, “. . . when they shall be organized into wards and stakes of Zion” (*CR*, October 1947, p.22). In that day there was one stake in Mexico and Central America, in the Mormon colonies. As we look at Mexico today its stakes are like stakes in Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego as we move down the coast—except that the names down there would be Tijuana, Mexicali, Ciudad Obregón, Hermosillo, and Culiacán. As we would move inland to Salt Lake and Denver, in Mexico we would move to Ciudad Juarez, to Chihuahua, to Torreón. And moving farther east to the Chicago area would be like moving to Piedras Negras and Monclova and Monterrey, where there are four stakes.

Moving farther east, we would be in Valle Hermoso; and then, moving south to Mexico as if on the eastern border of the United States, we come to Tampico. Just up from Tampico we have Ciudad Victoria; and then, continuing on down the coast line, there is Poza Rica with two stakes, Veracruz with two stakes, and just inland in Orizaba another stake. Continuing on south we find Minatitlán, and up in the toe of the Yucatan Peninsula Merida, with two stakes. Moving closer to Mexico City, we find a stake in Guadalajara, another stake on the other side of Mexico City, three stakes in Puebla, and fifteen stakes close to Mexico City itself. All told, we find over fifty stakes in that part of the vineyard, approaching five hundred wards. “The Lamanites must rise in majesty and power.”

Yet another sentence of yesterday with future promise from President Kimball reads, “When they shall build and occupy and fill the temples, and serve in them . . .” (CR, October 1947, p. 22). Within the past few days, a temple has been dedicated by the prophet of the Lord in São Paulo, Brazil, and a temple in Mexico is in the final preparations for construction. We now look somewhat to the past to see the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The prophet has the vision to see the welfare of every living soul now on the face of the earth. Let us listen to a current, modern, far-reaching revelation—I now refer to the revelation of which you are all aware, but let me repeat it for emphasis.

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that

at some time, in God’s eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known His will for the blessing of all His children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of His authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel. [Ensign, July 1978, p. 75]

President Kimball looks to the future—the billions who await the blessings of the gospel. And I quote from President Kimball now:

The day is coming, and not too far ahead of us, when all temples on this earth will be going night and day. There will be shifts, of course, and people will be coming in morning hours of the day and throughout the day and we will have no vacations for the temples. But there will be a core of workers, night and day, almost to exhaustion because of the importance of the work and the great number of people who lie asleep in the eternity and who are craving, needing the blessings that come to them.

This expression is made in a day when many temples in the world are not operating at capacity, and on schedules considerably less than around the clock. We will watch the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Now continuing with President Kimball:

We are all familiar with the prediction of the Prophet Brigham Young, who saw the day when there would be hundreds of temples. It has even been spoken, thousands of temples. Of course, that will take time, but we can promise you many additional temples which will someday dot this land and the other lands of our world, of Europe, Asia, South America, the Islands of the Sea. Before temples are built in greater numbers we must, of course, prepare for them.

Temple building is at a higher level of activity than at any time in this dispensation. We are being moved toward the realization of the truths in this prophecy.

Now an expression of urgency from him whom we revere.

Most members of the Church are aware of our intense interest in the missionary work in the Church and the appeals we have made in many lands for the rededication to preaching the gospel and preparing missionaries to carry the good news of the restoration to people everywhere. I feel the same sense of urgency about temple work for the dead as I do about the missionary work since they are basically one and the same. I have told my brethren of the General Authorities that this work for the dead is constantly on my mind.

[Genealogical Seminar, Brigham Young University, August 1977]

As President Kimball expresses his intense interest in missionary work, we are brought to the realization of the tremendous growth in the Church. It is anticipated that one thousand stakes will be approved for organization before the end of this year, and, if time permits, may

even be organized. His urgency expressed toward temple work and the preparations for it will see fulfillment in the implementation of the records extraction program in genealogy where literally millions of names are now being made available from around the world.

To respond to the challenges of this great growth and expansion of the Church, he has reached into the implications of the revelations of the past. In Doctrine and Covenants 107:34, we read: "The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews." In October 1976 general conference, President Kimball made the following inspired utterance.

Since the accelerated, worldwide growth of the Church requires a consolidation of its administrative functions at the general level, the First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve, with the concurrence of the Assistants to the Twelve and the First Quorum of the Seventy, have felt inspired to call all of the Assistants to the Twelve into the First Quorum of the Seventy, to call four new members into the Quorum, and to restructure the First Council of Seventy.

With this move, the three governing quorums of the Church defined by the revelations—the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the First Quorum of the Seventy—have been set in their places as revealed by the Lord. This will make it possible to handle efficiently the present heavy workload and to prepare for the increasing expansion and acceleration of the work, anticipating the day when the Lord will return to take direct charge of His Church and kingdom. [Ensign, November 1976, p. 9]

Let us look at the organization of the Church. In the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we are enlightened concerning

the principles of the power and authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Verse 18 says: “The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church. The twenty-second verse says: “Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three presiding high priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.”

Twenty-third verse—the Twelve Apostles: “The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world.” And the Seventy—verse 25: “The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world.”

The formation of the First Quorum of the Seventy has now prepared the way to deploy Area Supervisors out in the world—Elder Kikuchi in Japan, who supervises Japan and Korea; Elder de Jager in Hong Kong to move the work forward in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand; Elder Didier in Belgium, having the responsibility for many nations. These Brethren and others from the First Quorum of Seventy can give close,

firsthand attention to the progress of the Church throughout the world where the Church is now established. The kingdom of God is rolling forth to prepare for the kingdom of heaven that will come (see D&C 65:6).

Now what of 2078? 3078? 4078? Where is your North Star for millennia from now? Will you heed his counsel of today to prepare you for tomorrow?

Here is a servant of the Lord who has the spiritual sensitivity to await the promptings of the Spirit and, when distilled upon from the heavens, has the courage to move forward fearlessly. There is a living prophet today. He is a reflector of the will of our Heavenly Father.

This is the Church of Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Redeemer. I bear you solemn witness that he lives. I witness unto you that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared in our day and reestablished the authority so that the gospel could be here. I pray humbly that the blessings of heaven will descend upon every one of you individually, that you will know there is a North Star; and that North Star, a prophet of God, receives its inspiration and direction from heaven. May we be blessed to watch, understand, and obey the prophet of God, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.