

PROPHET OF THE HIGHEST

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Asked to explain John the Baptist's exalted rank among the prophets, Joseph Smith answered: "First. He was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Whoever had such a trust committed to him before or since? No man.

"Secondly. He was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands, to baptize the Son of Man. Whoever had the honor of doing that? Whoever had so great a privilege and glory? Whoever led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, and had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the sign of the dove, in witness of that administration? . . .

"Thirdly. John, at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. The Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned by their own law; and Christ himself fulfilled all righteousness in becoming obedient to the law which he had given to Moses on the mount, and thereby magnified it and made it honorable, instead of destroying it. The son of Zacharias wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven, and these three reasons constitute him *the greatest prophet born of a woman.*"

Then the Prophet explained how "he that is least in the kingdom of God" is greater than John. "Whom

did Jesus have reference to as being the least? Jesus was looked upon as having the least claim in God's kingdom, and [seemingly] was least entitled to their credulity as a prophet; as though he had said—'He that is considered the least among you is greater than John—that is I myself.'" (*Teachings*, pp. 275-276.)

Prophets. See APOSTLES, CHRIST, HOLY GHOST, PROPHECY, PROPHET, PROPHET OF THE HIGHEST, REVELATION, SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS, SEED OF CHRIST, SEERS, TESTIMONY. A prophet is a person who knows by personal revelation from the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10; *Teachings*, pp. 119, 312.) Accordingly, every prophet bears record of Christ. "To him give all the prophets witness" (Acts 10:43; Jac. 4:4), and if a professing minister of salvation is not a witness for Christ, he is not a prophet.

Nothing more than the testimony of Jesus is needed to make a person a prophet; and if this revealed knowledge has not been received, a person is not a prophet, no matter how many other talents or gifts he may have. But when a person has received revelation from the Spirit certifying to the divinity of Christ, he is then in a position to press forward in righteousness and gain other revelations including those which foretell future events. On this basis, should the necessity arise, those who are proph-

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ets are in a position where they "could prophesy of all things." (Mosiah 5:3.)

Prophets in all ages, accordingly, have taken frequent occasion to foretell the future. "Search the revelations of God," Joseph Smith said. "Study the prophecies, and rejoice that God grants unto the world seers and prophets. They are they who saw the mysteries of godliness; they saw the flood before it came; they saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder that reached from earth to heaven; they saw the stone cut out of the mountain, which filled the whole earth; they saw the Son of God come from the regions of bliss and dwell with men on earth; they saw the Deliverer come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob; they saw the glory of the Lord when he showed the transfiguration of the earth on the mount; they saw every mountain laid low and every valley exalted when the Lord was taking vengeance upon the wicked; they saw truth spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven in the last days, before the Lord came the second time to gather his elect; they saw the end of wickedness on earth, and the Sabbath of creation crowned with peace; they saw the end of the glorious thousand years, when Satan was loosed for a little season; they saw the day of judgment when all men received according to their works, and they saw the heaven and the earth flee away to make room for the city of God, when the righteous

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receive an inheritance in eternity. And, fellow sojourners upon earth, it is your privilege to purify yourselves and come up to the same glory, and see for yourselves, and know for yourselves. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (*Teachings*, pp. 12-13.)

The mission of prophets is not alone to foretell the future. Even more important is the witness they bear to the living of the divinity of Christ, the teachings they give of the plan of salvation, and the ordinances which they perform for their fellow men. All of the great prophets are possessors of the Melchizedek Priesthood; as legal administrators some have possessed keys enabling them to administer the fulness of gospel ordinances.

There are, of course, ranks and grades of prophetic responsibility and authority. Every member of the Church should be a prophet as pertaining to his own affairs. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" was the prayer of Moses. (Num. 11:29.) Prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit to which all the saints are entitled (1 Cor. 12:10), and faithful members of the Church are exhorted to "covet to prophesy." (1 Cor. 14:39.)

Those who hold offices in the Church, however, should be prophets both as pertaining to their own affairs and the affairs of the organization

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over which they preside. A quorum president should be a prophet to his quorum, a bishop to his ward, a stake president to his stake. Members of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch to the Church are all sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church. Any new revelation for the Church would, of course, be presented to the people by the President of the Church, he being the mouthpiece of God on earth. (D. & C. 21:1-7.) "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.)

Apostles and prophets are the foundation upon which the organization of the true Church rests. (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20.) Where there are no apostles and prophets there is no divine Church, but where these officers are found, there is the Church of Christ in all its glory, beauty, and perfection. The inspired promise is that these officers will remain in the Church "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13.)

The sectarian practice of calling some of the Old Testament authors *major prophets* and others *minor prophets* is one of the many apostate notions engulfing erring Christendom. In large part this division is based on the amount and literary excellence of such of the writings of the prophets concerned as have been preserved in the Bible. Elijah and John the

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Baptist were two of the greatest prophets, and we do not have any of their writings. We know that Adam (Moses 6:5), Enoch, Joseph the son of Jacob (2 Ne. 3), Zenos (Jac. 5), Zenock (Alma 33:15), Neum (1 Ne. 19:10), and many other prophets wrote many things which have not come down to us in our days. We can only speculate as to what Methusaleh, Lamech, Noah, Shem, Melchizedek, Esaias, Gad, Jeremy, Elihu, Caleb, and a great host of known prophets may have written. Further, there are prophets by the thousands who have lived and died of whom we have no knowledge whatever.

The mere statement that there are and have been true prophets is also an assertion that there are and have been false prophets. Our Lord's council, "Beware of false prophets" (Matt. 7:15), is pointed instruction to weigh the claims of the prophets, accepting the true, rejecting the false.

"When a man goes about prophesying, and commands men to obey his teachings," the Prophet taught, "he must either be a true or false prophet. False prophets always arise to oppose the true prophets, and they will prophesy so very near the truth that they will deceive almost the very chosen ones." (*Teachings*, p. 365.)

Joseph Smith also said: "If any person should ask me if I were a prophet, I should not deny it, as that would give me the lie; for, according to John, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; therefore, if I profess to

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be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy, and that constitutes a prophet; and *any man who says he is a teacher or preacher of righteousness, and denies the spirit of prophecy, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and by this key false teachers and impostors may be detected.*" (*Teachings*, p. 269.)

With all their inspiration and greatness, prophets are yet mortal men with imperfections common to mankind in general. They have their opinions and prejudices and are left to work out their own problems without inspiration in many instances. Joseph Smith recorded that he "visited with a brother and sister from Michigan, who thought that 'a prophet is always a prophet'; but I told them that *a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such.*" (*Teachings*, p. 278.) Thus the opinions and views even of prophets may contain error unless those opinions and views are inspired by the Spirit. Inspired statements are scripture and should be accepted as such. (D. & C. 68:4.)

Since "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32), whatever is announced by the presiding brethren as counsel for the Church will be the voice of inspiration. But the truth or error of any uninspired utterance of an individual will have to be judged by the standard

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works and the spirit of discernment and inspiration that is in those who actually enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost.

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

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

"Every man who writes is responsible, not the Church, for what he writes. If Joseph Fielding Smith writes something which is out of harmony with the revelations, then every member of the Church is duty bound to reject it. If he writes that which is in perfect harmony with the revealed word of the Lord, then it should be accepted." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, pp. 203-204.)

Prophet's Time. See TIME.

Propitiation. See ADVOCACY, ATONEMENT OF CHRIST, EXPIATION, INTERCESSION, MEDIATION, RECONCILIATION. Our Lord's atoning sacrifice brought