

#42: Continuing Revelation to Prophets

Monte F. Shelley, 6 Dec 2009

Quotes

- Today is God's way of giving us another chance. (Ziggy)
- The unthankful heart discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings! (Henry Ward Beecher, 1813-1887, Author)
- If you have only one smile in you, give it to the people you love. Don't be surly at home, then go out in the street and start grinning 'good morning' at total strangers. (Maya Angelou)

How long has it been since the Church received a revelation?

Harold B. Lee: Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Council of the Twelve once told of a discussion he had with a group of stake officers. ... Someone said to him, "Brother Widtsoe, how long has it been since the Church received a revelation?" Brother Widtsoe rubbed his chin thoughtfully and said in reply, 'Oh, probably since last Thursday.' (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 132-33)

Why did he say last Thursday? Meetings of 1st Pres & Apostles

Spencer W. Kimball: "We testify to the world that revelation continues and that the vaults and files of the Church contain these revelations which come month to month and day to day. Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication." (*Ensign*, May 1977, 78)

Mark E. Petersen: In each age when the Lord has had a people on earth, He has guided them by revelation... through a living prophet. The principle of prophecy has been restored. Probably more important than giving predictions is providing the day-by-day divine guidance which we need. Conditions vary from time to time, making continuous guidance necessary." (*The Way to Peace*, 280)

Changes in the Church: Temple & welfare changes discussed in previous lessons. Critics say changes mean church of man. I believe changes imply continuing revelation, line upon line.

Sources:

1. CH=Church History institute manual (institute.lds.org)
2. Beardall (beardall2000.com/gospdoct.shtml)

Timeline of Events of Some Changes in the Church	
1880	PGP canonized. New D&C edition with notes and x-refs.
1920	1920-1921. Triple with headings, notes, index.
1941	Apr. Five Assistants to the Twelve called (Marion G. Romney)
1949	General Conference television broadcast began
1950	Early morning seminary began in California and expanded
1951	Apr – Jan 1970. David O. McKay , president*
1952	First official proselyting plan (7 discussions)
1953	Church Educational System (CES) established
1955	Church College of Hawaii opened (2 year; 4 year in 1957)
1956	First student stake organized at BYU
1959	"Every member a missionary" (CR, Apr 1959)
1961	Missionary language training began (LTM) My dad was told to start reading the Book of Mormon in Spanish and he would learn it by the time he finished. Elders were experiencing lengthy delays in obtaining visas to enter Argentina and Mexico, so a special language training program was set up for them at Brigham Young University. Instruction focused on conversation; the "live your language" program encouraged missionaries to speak only in the tongue they were learning. There was

	also opportunity to practice the proselyting discussions with native speakers posing as contacts. Furthermore, the elders and sisters adhered to standards of missionary life and conduct and developed proper habits and attitudes even before reaching the mission field. Because of the program's success, it was officially organized in 1963 as the Language Training Mission. (CH)
	Church council established to correlate Church curriculum (Elder Harold B. Lee)
1963	Polynesian Cultural Center opened Language Training Mission (LTM) formally organized
1964	PEC and Ward Councils established to coordinate/correlate efforts at the local level Ward teaching → Home teaching; Ward Teachers represented the bishop. Quorums were expected to visit their members. Auxiliaries contacted the home relative to their programs. Home teaching was intended to bring all these visits under priesthood coordination. The General Home Teaching Committee said Home Teaching "emphasizes that every family head is responsible for the spiritual welfare of his family and that it is the responsibility of the priesthood, through the home teachers, to make available all of the resources of the Church to help each member in achieving his spiritual goals." (LDS Church News, 01/22/94)
	New York World's Fair— <i>Man's Search for Happiness</i>
1965	First family home evening manuals published
1966	Temple Square visitor's center with dioramas, displays, ...
1967	First Regional Representatives called
1969	Church Social Services set up (adoption, foster care, ...)
1970	Jan – Jul 1972. Joseph Fielding Smith , president Monday night for family time. No Church meetings held.
1971	<i>Ensign</i> , <i>New Era</i> , and <i>Friend</i> magazines began First Area conference held in England CES streamlined under commissioner Neal A. Maxwell First health missionaries called
1972	"Homefront" television spots began In a 1985 Opinion Research Corporation survey ... found 54 percent of Americans, when aided, could recall an LDS advertising message! Gospel Doctrine classes focused on the scriptures Jul – Dec 1973. Harold B. Lee , president* Committee was established to prepare scripture study aids.
1973	The General Welfare Program, Health Services, and Social Services were combined into the new Welfare Services department under the Presiding Bishopric. Dec – Nov 1985. Spencer W. Kimball , president*
1974	Church challenged to "lengthen its stride." "Today we have 18,600 missionaries. We can send more. Many more! ... Every young man should fill a mission"² (1985=29,265) Church sold LDS hospitals; Focus on improving health
1975	Annual auxiliary conferences discontinued Temple building increased (15 in 1974 to 47 in 1985) Oct. First Quorum of the Seventy organized as a General Authority quorum
1976	LTM moved to new missionary training complex in Provo Two revelations added to D&C (137, 138) Bruce R. McConkie: "Their contents have been known; their provisions have been in force; their principles have been widely taught. But now, at this hour, with their addition to the formal scriptures of the saints, they become

	a new commandment—they become a new divine pronouncement both to say and to do all that is required in the soul-expanding doctrine of salvation for the dead.” ²⁶ Oct. Assistants to the Twelve (38) became Seventies (Marion G Romney, Hugh B. Brown, GBH, N Eldon Tanner, Boyd K. Packer, MJ Ashton, DB Haight, JE Faust, LT Perry, NA Maxwell, RD Hales, J Wirthlin) Spencer W. Kimball: “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.”	curriculum for Priesthood and Relief Society. Teachings of Prophets and “Teachings for our Time” resulted.																																
1997	New Area Authority Seventies organized into 3 quorums GBH announced plans to build many small temples Area Authorities become Quorums of the Seventies GBH: “With these respective quorums in place, we have established a pattern under which the Church may grow to any size with an organization of Area Presidencies and Area Authority Seventies, chosen and working across the world according to need. Now, the Lord is watching over His kingdom. He is inspiring its leadership to care for its ever growing membership.” (CR, Apr. 1997)																																	
1977	General Conference shortened from three days to two.	2000 Apr. General Conference held in Conference Center																																
1978	Salt Lake City mission home closed. LTM → MTC Genealogical name extraction program introduced Jun 1. Revelation extended priesthood to all worthy males Sept 16. First annual women’s conference	2008 Eight Quorums of Seventy																																
1979	New LDS edition of the Bible (headings, footnotes, TG,...) Stake conferences changed from 4 to 2 per year	1. Student Enrollment in Church Educational Programs <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>1900</th><th>1920</th><th>1940</th><th>1960</th><th>1980</th><th>1997</th><th>1999</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Seminaries</td><td></td><td>2,980</td><td>26,128</td><td>62,253</td><td>199,317</td><td>379,267</td><td>373,887</td></tr> <tr> <td>Institutes</td><td></td><td></td><td>3,352</td><td>10,270</td><td>124,939</td><td>265,272</td><td>285,250</td></tr> <tr> <td>BYU</td><td>40</td><td>438</td><td>2,715</td><td>11,555</td><td>27,772</td><td>31,249</td><td>29,919</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		1900	1920	1940	1960	1980	1997	1999	Seminaries		2,980	26,128	62,253	199,317	379,267	373,887	Institutes			3,352	10,270	124,939	265,272	285,250	BYU	40	438	2,715	11,555	27,772	31,249	29,919
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1980	New Sunday 3 hour meeting schedule instituted The First Presidency explained that the new Church meeting schedule was designed to give families more time for scripture study, gospel discussion, and other family activities at home. ¹⁰ The consolidated schedule allowed Saints to become more involved in community service. Another benefit was reduced travel costs for members and reduced costs of heating and lighting meetinghouses.	2. Priesthood Coorelation Councils 1961 Harold B. Lee: Correlation means ... to place the priesthood of God where the Lord said it was to be—as the center and core of the Church and kingdom of God—and to see that the Latter-day Saint homes also have their place in the divine plan of saving souls. (<i>TPC:HBL</i> , 146, 149)																																
1981	New edition of triple combination Church satellite network established	The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve oversee correlation in the Church. Correlation includes:																																
1982	Church membership exceeded 5 million	a. Maintaining purity of doctrine.																																
1984	Area Presidencies appointed	b. Emphasizing the importance of the family and the home.																																
1985	Nov – May 1994. Ezra Taft Benson , president He counseled the Saints to read the Book of Mormon and allow it to help them come unto Christ. In nearly every address he gave as a prophet, he reemphasized the importance of the Book of Mormon. Missionaries (1986=31,803; 1994=47,311)	c. Placing all the work of the Church under priesthood direction.																																
1986	Oct. Stake Seventies quorums discontinued	d. Establishing proper relationships among the organizations of the Church.																																
1987	ETB: “flood the earth with the Book of Mormon.” Genealogy program → Family History	e. Achieving unity and order in the Church.																																
1988	Computerized Scriptures released	f. Ensuring simplicity of Church programs and materials.																																
1989	Apr. President Benson’s “pride” talk. Second Quorum of the Seventy organized May 16. BYU Jerusalem Center dedicated Nov. Berlin Wall opened or came down Ward and branch budgets funded from tithes	Bruce R. McConkie said that correlation is a process “in which we take all the programs of the Church, bring them to one focal point, wrap them in one package, operate them as one program, involve all members of the Church in the operation—and do it all under priesthood direction” (<i>GD Teacher’s Manual</i> 42).																																
1990	First genealogical data CDs sent to family history centers Missionary Equalization Program “Missionaries and their parents can now project fairly accurately the cost of a mission.” (LTP)	M. Russell Ballard: When the Church correlation program was introduced in 1963, Elder Harold B. Lee explained in general conference that emphasis was to be placed on “the responsibilities of the entire priesthood to ‘watch over the Church’ as commanded in the early revelations—to be concerned with the whole family as a group and as individuals.” He also announced that a “ward Home Teaching committee” was to be established in each ward of the Church, and that its members would “constitute the core of those who now will go out to ‘watch over the Church’” (Harold B. Lee , “The Correlation Program,” <i>Improvement Era</i> , June 1963, 504–505). This committee later became known as the ward priesthood executive committee. (Pinegar, chapter 42 quoting from <i>Counseling with Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family</i> , 100–101)																																
1994	May – Mar 1995. Howard W. Hunter , president “I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. ... Let us be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people.”	Simplification: In the 1990s, “the focus of Church correlation shifted from maintaining order among Church entities to simplifying and reducing programs and materials, and to limiting volume, complexity, and cost.” (<i>Encyclopedia of Mormonism</i> , 325)																																
1995	Mar – Jan 2008. Gordon B. Hinckley , president Missionaries (1995=48,631; 2008=52,686) Area authorities replace Regional Representatives (284) Sept 23. Proclamation on the Family	SIMPLIFY: Bishop’s 80 hours																																
1996	Apr 7. President Hinckley interviewed on <i>60 Minutes</i> GBH assigned Oaks and Holland to oversee new																																	

3. Family Home Evening 1965

Harold B. Lee: My mind has been filled with the realization that in 1964 and the year just preceding, we have been receiving as pertinent and important divine direction as has ever been given to the Church in any similar period in its history through the prophet and leader who now presides as the President of this Church. (CR, Oct. 1964, 137)

David O. McKay: The problems of these difficult times cannot better be solved in any other place, by any other agency, by any other means, than by love and righteousness, and precept and example, and devotion to duty in the home. (*FHE Manual*, 1965, iii)

"Families who prayerfully prepare and constantly hold their weekly Home Evenings, and who work together during the week to apply the lessons in their lives, will be blessed. There will be better feelings between husband and wife, between parents and children, and among children. In such homes the Spirit of the Lord will be made manifest." (*FHE Manual*, 1967, iii–iv)

4. Joseph Fielding Smith 1970 (CH Institute manual, ch43) Joseph Fielding Smith received his patriarchal blessing ... in 1913. In his blessing he was promised that he would never be confounded as he defended the divinity of the Prophet Joseph Smith's mission: "You have been blessed with ability to comprehend, to analyze, and defend the principles of truth above many of your fellows, and the time will come when the accumulative evidence that you have gathered will stand as a wall of defense against those who are seeking and will seek to destroy the evidence of the divinity of the mission of the Prophet Joseph; and in this defense you will never be confounded."³

Consider the impact just one of his more than two dozen books. Joseph Fielding Smith compiled *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* because many Church teachers had "accepted too readily the views of uninspired educators." Since its first printing, it has been a basic reference for doctrinal interpretation, Church policy, and Church government.

Joseph Fielding Smith declared in his first message as Church president: "All my days I have studied the scriptures and have sought the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord in coming to an understanding of their true meaning. The Lord has been good to me, and I rejoice in the knowledge he has given me and in the privilege that has been and is mine to teach his saving principles. ... What I have taught and written in the past I would teach and write again under the same circumstances." (CR, Oct. 1970, 5)

5. "Lengthen Our Stride" 1974 (CH Institute, chap 44)

At the Regional Representatives' seminar in April 1974, Elder W. Grant Bangerter remembered that President Kimball had not spoken very long when "we became alert to an astonishing spiritual presence, ... different from any of our previous meetings. It was as if, spiritually speaking, our hair began to stand on end. ... President Kimball was opening spiritual windows and ... inviting us to view with him the destiny of the gospel and the vision of its ministry."⁶

President Kimball spoke for forty-five minutes to the Regional Representatives, delivering what became one of his most oft-quoted discourses and set the pace for his administration:

"It seems to me that the Lord chose his words when he said [the gospel must go to] 'every nation,' 'every land,' 'uttermost bounds of the earth,' 'every tongue,' 'every people,' 'every soul,' 'all the world,' 'many lands.' Surely there is significance in these words! ... A universal command! My brethren, I wonder if we are doing all we can. Are we complacent in our approach to teaching all the

world? ... Are we prepared to lengthen our stride? To enlarge our vision? ... I believe the Lord can do anything he sets his mind to do. But I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors that we are not prepared to enter. Why should he break down the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain or any other curtain if we are still unprepared to enter? I believe we have men who could help the apostles to open these doors—statesmen, able and trustworthy—but, when we are ready for them. ... A year ago now I was in Japan and Korea, and ... I seemed to envision a great movement when there would be thousands of local men prepared and anxious and strong to go abroad. ... I seemed to envision again Mexican youth and Latins from Central and South America in great numbers qualifying themselves for missionary service within their own country and then finally in other lands until the army of the Lord's missionaries would cover the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep." (*Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 5, 7, 14)

"When President Kimball concluded, President Ezra Taft Benson arose and with a voice filled with emotion, echoing the feeling of all present, said, in substance: 'President Kimball, ... we have never heard such an address as you have just given. Truly, there is a prophet in Israel.'" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 27)

6. Extending the Priesthood to All Worthy Males 1978

At a press conference held shortly after Spencer W. Kimball was ordained president of the Church, he was asked about extending the priesthood to black members. He responded: "I am not sure that there will be a change, although there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord ... and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case he should ever wish to make a change." (quoted in LDS Church News, 06/04/88)

Though President Kimball announced that there was no plan to change this policy, the restriction of withholding the priesthood weighed heavily on his heart. In a talk given to missionaries in October 1978, President Kimball said: "I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. ... Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what He wanted." (quoted in LDS Church News, 06/04/88)

CH Institute Manual, chap. 44

For some time before the 1978 revelation, the General Authorities had discussed this topic at length in their regular temple meetings. In addition, President Kimball went frequently to the temple, especially on Saturdays and Sundays when he could be there alone, to plead for guidance. "I wanted to be sure," he explained.¹³

On 1 June 1978 President Kimball met with his counselors and the Twelve and again brought up the possibility of conferring the priesthood upon worthy brethren of all races. He expressed the hope that there might be a clear answer received one way or the other. Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve recalled, "At this point President Kimball asked the brethren if any of them desired to express their feelings and views as to the matter in hand. We all did so, freely and fluently and at considerable length, each person stating his views and manifesting the feelings of his heart. There was a marvelous outpouring of unity, oneness, and agreement in the council."¹⁴

After a two-hour discussion, President Kimball asked the group to unite in formal prayer and modestly suggested that he act as voice. He recalled: "I told the Lord if it wasn't right, if He didn't want this change to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I'd fight the world against it if that's what He wanted. ... But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it."¹⁵

Gordon B. Hinckley: "There was a hallowed and sanctified atmosphere in the room. For me, it felt as if a conduit opened between the heavenly throne and the kneeling, pleading prophet of God who was joined by his Brethren. ... Every man in that circle, by the power of the Holy Ghost, knew the same thing. ... Not one of us who was present on that occasion was ever quite the same after that. Nor has the Church been quite the same. ... Tremendous, eternal consequences for millions over the earth are flowing from that manifestation. ... This has opened great areas of the world to the teaching of the everlasting gospel. This has made it possible that 'every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world.' We have cause to rejoice and to praise the God of our salvation that we have seen this glorious day." (*Ensign*, October 1988, 69)

Bruce R. McConkie: "It was during this prayer that the revelation came. The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon us all; we felt something akin to what happened on the day of Pentecost and at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. From the midst of eternity, the voice of God, conveyed by the power of the Spirit, spoke to his prophet And we all heard the same voice, received the same message, and became personal witnesses that the word received was the mind and will and voice of the Lord." (Richard O. Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century*, 391)

David B. Haight: President Kimball arose from the altar. (We surrounded it according to seniority, I being number twelve.) . . . He turned to his right, and I was the first member of the circle he encountered. He put his arms around me, and as I embraced him I felt the beating of his heart and the intense emotion that filled him. He then continued around the circle, embracing each of the Brethren. No one spoke. Overcome with emotion, we simply shook hands and quietly went to our dressing rooms. (E. Dale LeBaron, 1992 Sperry Symposium; www.blacklds.org/declare2; (Quoted by Lucille C. Tate, *David B. Haight, The Life Story of a Disciple*, Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1987, pp. 278-280.; <http://www.mormonfundamentalism.com/Blacks.html>)

David B. Haight: I was in the temple when President Spencer W. Kimball received the revelation regarding the priesthood. I was the junior member of the Quorum of the Twelve. I was there. I was there with the outpouring of the Spirit in that room so strong that none of us could speak afterwards. We just left quietly to go back to the office. No one could say anything because of the powerful outpouring of the heavenly spiritual experience. (*Ensign*, May 1996, 22)

7. New Edition of Scriptures 1978

Boyd K. Packer: "With the passing of years, these scriptures will produce successive generations of faithful Christians who know the Lord Jesus Christ and are disposed to obey His will. ... The revelations will be opened to them as to no other [generation] in the history of the world. Into their hands now are placed the sticks of Joseph and of Judah. They will develop a gospel scholarship beyond that which their forebears could achieve. ... As the generations roll on, this will be regarded, in the perspective of history, as the crowning achievement in the administration of President Spencer W. Kimball. ... These references from the four

volumes of scripture constitute the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural information on the mission and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ that has ever been assembled in the history of the world." (*Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 53)

Boyd K. Packer: The *Computerized Scriptures* can be very useful. This powerful computer program can quickly find specific scriptures and display them in context. ... Never before have Church members had such excellent tools for studying and understanding the scriptures. Family home evenings, talks in Church, seminary and Sunday School lessons, and missionary work can all be improved by using the computer program. (*Ensign*, Apr 1988, 72)

8. Decision Making in Church Councils

Interview with President Henry B. Eyring after call to 1st Pres

When asked about how his educational background as a Harvard MBA and Ph.D. would impact his work in the First Presidency, President Eyring found himself suddenly emotional when relating his observation of decision-making at the top levels of church leadership.

As the new president of what was then Ricks College (now BYU-Idaho) in 1971, sitting in the first meeting he had ever observed with the church's Board of Education, he watched as an academic with a research background in group decision-making. He initially viewed their discussion as "the strangest encounter."

"Here you have the prophets of God, and they are disagreeing in a way you never see in business," when participants most often defer to the chairman. "I thought revelation would come to them all and they would all see things in the same way. It was not like anything I had ever seen in studying small groups in business."

After a while, the men began to find points of agreement, and he believed he'd seen a "miracle in unity" occur. Waiting for then-church President Harold B. Lee to announce a consensus decision, he was startled to hear him table the discussion after noting he felt "someone in the room who is not yet settled."

Afterward, he observed a member of the Quorum of the Twelve approached President Lee and thank him. With emotion stirred at the memory, President Eyring said he remembers thinking, "We're in another kind of thing here. This (church) is what it claims to be, the true Church of Jesus Christ. Revelation is real here, even in what you call the business side" of church operations.

"President Lee taught me a great lesson" in dialogue, "that we can be open, direct and talk about differences in a way you can't anywhere else. No one is trying to win or make our arguments dominate. We just want to do and to say what is right." (Deseret Morning News, Oct. 6, 2007)

<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51150/Elder-Eyring-named-new-second-counselor-Elder-Quentin-L-Cook-is-new-apostle.html>

²⁵ The Seventy . . . form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve . . . Apostles. . . . ²⁷ And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other. (D&C 107:25–28)

Conclusion

Prophets, seers, and revelators. Led by continuous revelation.

“Whosoever receiveth my word receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth those, the First Presidency, … whom I have made counselors … unto you” (D&C 112:20).

Ezra Taft Benson: God’s revelations to Adam did not instruct Noah how to build the ark. Noah needed his own revelation. Therefore, the most important prophet, so far as you and I are concerned, is the one living in our day and age to whom the Lord is currently revealing His will for us.” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 335)

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See www.sviewp.com for copies of handouts and notes.

¹ <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Bonneville-International-Corporation-Company-History.html>

² Spencer W. Kimball, “‘When the World Will Be Converted’,” *Ensign*, Oct 1974, 3 [talk to Regional Representatives]

³ Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., and John J. Stewart, *The Life of Joseph Fielding Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972), p. 195.