I'm a reader, an editor, and a writer. Taking words seriously is what I do. And the struggle to see how a message may apply to me is also part of taking President Hunter seriously as the Lord's prophet.


By Lavina Fielding Anderson

INTRODUCTION

Howard W. Hunter was an important person to our family. My husband, Paul, grew up in the Pasadena Stake in California, where Stake President Hunter, then an attorney, provided vigorous and personalized leadership. When Howard W. Hunter became an apostle, he was always “our apostle” to my parents-in-law, as he was to thousands of Californians.

When Paul and I became engaged in 1977, Paul diffidently asked Elder Hunter to perform our marriage and was warmed by the gladness of his reply. We were disappointed when he had to substitute for another general authority at a weekend conference and, hence, would be out of town for our wedding, but we understood. But on the Sunday afternoon before our wedding, he called our home and said he had come back early. He did not want to interfere with any other arrangements we had made but would love to attend our sealing. We were overjoyed. Later we reconstructed the amazing chain of phone calls a busy and travel-weary apostle had made to track us down.

In the temple, he was unhurried, gracious, and cordial, treating my parents, who were strangers to him, with the same warmth he showered on Paul’s parents, who were old friends. His humor put the guests at ease. His reverence made the rolling phrases of the sealing ceremony ring with power.

He has been a special part of our prayers ever since, particularly as he suffered the loss of his first wife and then a series of hammer blows to his own health. We always enjoyed his conference talks, although, to be candid, it was more because of who he was to us rather than for their content. Then, in 1990, he began a stunning series of Christ-centered addresses that lifted prophetic discourse to new heights. Paul and I both frequently had tears in our eyes as we listened to him. I revisited the talks in the Ensign with a lump in my throat. President Hunter was ill and did not speak at general conference in October 1993, the month after my stake president excommunicated me; we wondered what he might have said.

In the waning years of President Ezra Taft Benson’s presidency, we shrank from the thought that President Hunter, in his frail health, would have to assume the burdens of the presidency, but we still prayed that he would be spared to bless the members of the Church with a continuation of the same clear and powerful vision, despite his physical weakness. We needed him so.

I remember thinking during sacrament meeting on Sunday morning, 5 June 1994, that his ordination as prophet was probably occurring about that time in the temple. I breathed a silent prayer of gratitude for what President Hunter had already given the Church, with the urgent hope that he would be strengthened for years to come. Learning in January 1995 that his 1980 cancer had recurred and metastasized to his bones was like a physical blow. Sadness subdued our feelings in the remaining weeks of his life as we prayed for his relief from pain and, finally, his release, which came on 3 March 1995.

On Monday morning, 6 June 1994, when he held his first press conference as Church president, I was away from either television or radio and was startled to see Paul appear in the middle of the day with a copy of his statement (see sidebar). I had exactly the same reaction as I did to the announcement in 1978 that all worthy men, including blacks, could be ordained to the priesthood. Chills ran over my body. My hands and knees started to shake. I started to cry; and even when I thought I was perfectly calm, I couldn’t talk without my voice breaking. This reaction lasted for hours. The Spirit was confirming to me that I was hearing a prophetic voice, and I responded to it with intense gratitude. Many people heard his
Statement at Press Conference,
6 June 1994

There are two invitations I would like to leave with the members of the Church as we strive to keep the commandments of God and receive the full measure of His blessings. First of all, I would invite all members of the Church to live with evermore attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed.

I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. We do have high expectations of one another, and all can improve. Our world cries out for more disciplined living of the commandments of God. But the way we are to encourage that, as the Lord told the Prophet Joseph in the wintry depths of Liberty Jail, is “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;... without hypocrisy, and without guile.” (D&C 121:41-42.)

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say, come back. To those who are hurt and staggered with sorrow, I say, “Come back. Stand with us. Carry on. Be believing. All is well, and all will be well. Feast at the table laid before your tears. To those who are confused and assailed by error on every side, we say, come to the God of all truth and the Church of continuing revelation. Come back. Stand with us. Carry on. Be believing. All is well, and all will be well. Feast at the table laid before you in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strive to follow the Good Shepherd who has provided it. Have hope, exert faith, receive—and give—charity; the pure love of Christ.

Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of Church temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.

Let us be a temple-attending and temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only for our kindred dead, but let us also go for the personal blessings of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within those hallowed and consecrated walls. The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us.1

“come back” message and assumed that he was announcing a policy change that would halt the attack on scholars and feminists. I did not. I sensed that the outpouring of the Spirit I was feeling was a confirmation to me of President Hunter’s prophetic calling but not a promise of a reversal. Not then nor afterward did I feel that my personal ordeal was over.

However, I think President Hunter’s statement changed things for the Church. What he did was preach the gospel, and the word of God “is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow; soul and spirit;... a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (D&C 33:1.) Preaching the gospel is a radical, electrifying, powerful thing to do in a Church that is often driven by programs, bureaucracy, routine, and pressures for conformity.

This paper sets President Hunter’s 6 June statement in the broader context of eighty messages given since he became a general authority in October 1959. They were published in the Ensign, the Improvement Era, or in That We Might Have Joy, in a collection of his essays published in 1994.2

PRESIDENT HUNTER’S MAJOR ADDRESSES, 1959–94

Consider the topics he spoke on during his apostleship. Thirteen of all of Howard Hunter’s addresses were for specialized occasions or audiences—an address to singles or a talk about the centennial of the Tabernacle. Eighteen focused on religious practices such as sacrament, prayer, and reading the scriptures. Eighteen dealt with such principles as faith, peace, and the importance of law. Fifteen dealt either with Easter or with a single scriptural event or parable of Christ. A final group of seven, all delivered between April 1990 and April 1994, focused intensely on living a Christ-like life.

Typically, President Hunter’s addresses were neither spectacular nor sensational. He seldom discussed in detail social issues, controversial topics, or Church programs. His talks were somewhat conventional and traditional in content and organization, though more carefully crafted than many. They are usually focused on a single idea and developed through a chain of associated ideas or a list. He rarely used personal references, told illustrative stories, or quoted other authors. Of his quotations, 48 percent were from other general authorities. (See the appendix on page 24, “Messages of Howard W. Hunter, 1950–95,” which contains the citations to the addresses quoted below.)

Though free from conspicuous rhetorical flourishes, President Hunter’s addresses have a distinctive eloquence. For example, there is an epigrammatic quality to this statement: “Contrition is costly—it costs us our pride and our insensitivity, but it especially costs us our sins.” In his conclusion to this same address, observe the simple but powerful effect of four sentences of mostly single-syllable words, parallel to each other in construction: “May we be more devoted and disciplined followers of Christ. May we cherish him in our thoughts and speak his name with love. May we kneel before...
him with meekness and mercy. May we bless and serve others that they may do the same. 

A change in his speeches came in April 1990. The previous conference had been President Benson's last public address. I believe that President Hunter, then senior apostle, accepted the mantle that he saw was coming. From that point, he spoke in a prophetic voice. His addresses were new in passionate pleading for more Christ-like living, their intense focus on the Savior, and their structure—organized around a single extended example.

THE PROPHET'S INVITATION TO ENHANCE TEMPLE WORSHIP

EVEN though President Hunter was president of or on the board of the Genealogical Society of Utah from 1960 to 1975, he gave only one major address on genealogy and temple work, in 1971. Thus, the temple was a new theme for him as Church President. I interpreted his press conference invitation to be wholly within the spirit of bringing temple blessings, including eternal family sealings, within the reach of more members of the Church, a trend that began during the presidency of David O. McKay and accelerated dramatically during the presidency of Spencer W. Kimball. The pattern of increased temple building recognizes the increasingly large segment of Church membership outside Utah. I believe that the main motivation behind increased temple building and renewed emphasis on increased temple attendance is a desire that all worthy members of the Church may share in temple blessings. I rejoice in these efforts to bring full gospel blessings to all members, although I am saddened when they too often are reduced to measuring temple attendance over temple worship.

Another possible outcome from focusing the attention of members on the temple may be the strengthening of group identification. Mormon identity has always depended to a great extent on differences: the Book of Mormon, polygamy, the Word of Wisdom, etc. An increasingly diverse membership, many of whom have been members of the Church for only a few years (not generations), needs a shared symbol of the faith that transcends national, cultural, and ethnic barriers. Mormon historian Michael Quinn argues that a redefinition of the presidential office into the icon of "the prophet," attended by increased awe and reverence for the man who occupies that office, occurred during the presidency of David O. McKay. If Quinn is correct, and I believe he is, then the president of the Church has become a symbol of Church unity in much the same way that respect for the reigning monarch in Great Britain provides a common symbol to members of the Commonwealth.

However, I feel that it has been increasingly difficult for members of the Church to sustain a high level of identification with the prophet during periods of prolonged illness, and as Mormon historian Jan Shipps notes, it is difficult to transfer these feelings about a prophet to a committee of apostles. During the closing years of President Benson's presidency, when he had not appeared or spoken at several general conferences, I listened in my ward fast and testimony meeting as adults bore fervent but slightly defiant testimonies that they knew he was "still a prophet." The outpouring of love for and interest in President Hunter and the genuine joy manifested at his ordination certainly had a great deal to do with his loving personality. But I think it also manifested a good deal of relief at the end of the five-year hiatus in leadership. President Hunter immediately launched a vigorous travel schedule that took him to Nauvoo, Switzerland, Arizona, and California; he gave dedicatory addresses and prayers in the multi-day ceremonies for the Orlando Florida Temple and the Bountiful Utah Temple, inaugurated BYU-Hawaii president Eric Shumway, and in Mexico organized the Church's 2,000th stake. On weekends when he was not traveling, he still made a number of public appearances and/or addresses: he spoke to missionaries at the Missionary Training Center by satellite, addressed the Relief Society general meeting, spoke three times at October general conference, was honored at the hundredth anniversary of the Genealogy Society, and spoke at the First Presidency's Christmas fireside. The LDS Church News covered all of these events in detail. Hundreds of thousands attended these events or read about them. At last, the Church again had a president who moved among his people.

I rejoiced with the other Saints at this blessing of presence, even while I felt pained at President Hunter's obvious frailty. The commendable frankness of Church leaders in announcing his second (though not his first) hospitalization and the saddening news of his cancer's recurrence and metastasization called forth renewed prayers and faith on President Hunter's behalf from members of the Church. But it also confirmed our feelings that the days of his leadership were precious because they were few. Although President Gordon B. Hinckley's vigor and assurance are a reassuring message in themselves, it seems inevitable that the pattern of an aging and increasingly inaccessible president will repeat itself sooner or later. The increased attention to the temple provides the Church with another unifying symbol besides the office of prophet.

President Hunter's Temple-Related Statements

PRESIDENT HUNTER made a total of ten reported statements about the temple between June 1994 and February 1995, not counting dedicatory addresses and prayers at the Orlando and Bountiful temples. The first was his press statement, set like a lighthouse at the beginning of his presidency. This invitation was notable in its conscious designation of the temple as a "symbol" of membership, an aspect of temple work that has not, to my knowledge, been made before. He also distinguished between temple worthiness and temple attendance, a sensitive acknowledgement to members outside the core region of Mormonism whose access to the temple is still limited. Perhaps most important, the motivations employed in this invitation were all positive. There were no appeals to authority, no commands, no warnings about what would happen if members failed to accept this invitation.
Evolution of an Invitation:  
“Be a Temple-Loving People”

On two subsequent occasions to his press conference, President Hunter expanded his call for increased temple worship, emphasizing the significance of temple marriage and temple work as a direct pathway to millennial world peace.


Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of Church temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.

Let us be a temple-attending and temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only for their membership and the supernal setting of the temple but also for the personal blessings of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of the deepest desire of my heart to have every adult member to be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

Let us be a temple-attending and temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only for their membership and the supernal setting of the temple but also for the personal blessings of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of the deepest desire of my heart to have every adult member to be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

Let us truly be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. We should hasten to the temple as frequently, yet prudently, as personal circumstances allow. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply about the purposes of the temple and its significance of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple worthily and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call. Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we ever have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife.

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God’s presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of Church temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.

Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord.

Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple worthily and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call. Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we ever have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife.

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God’s presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly in order that the millennial day may come, that promised time when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . .” (Isa. 2:4–5.) . . . And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, through the power and authority of the priesthood vested in me and by virtue of the calling which I now hold, I invoke my blessings upon you. I bless you in your efforts to live a more Christlike life. I bless you with an increased desire to be worthy of a temple recommend and to attend the temple as frequently as circumstances allow.


Thus, it should be no surprise to us that the Lord does desire that his people be a temple-motivated people. I repeat what I have said before: It would please the Lord for every adult member to be worthy of—and to carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing. Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing. Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing. Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing. Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing.

May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly in order that the millennial day may come, that promised time when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . .” (Isa. 2:4–5.) . . . And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, through the power and authority of the priesthood vested in me and by virtue of the calling which I now hold, I invoke my blessings upon you. I bless you in your efforts to live a more Christlike life. I bless you with an increased desire to be worthy of a temple recommend and to attend the temple as frequently as circumstances allow.

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God’s presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

As the prophets have said, the temple is a place of beauty; it is a place of revelation; it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It must be holy and important unto us.
and no stressed citation of duty to the dead. Instead, he spoke of “loving” the temple and seeking “personal blessings” of sanctity, safety, beauty, and revelation. It was a call for holiness and a promise that there is a personal dimension as well as a corporate dimension to temple worship. If faithful women and men are going to the house of the Lord at a prophet’s invitation with the expectation of increased holiness, I fully expect the results to be increased revelation and personal power for all Latter-day Saints. (See “Evolution of an Invitation: Be a Temple-Loving People” on page 18.)

Only twenty days after his inaugural statement, President Hunter delivered three addresses in Nauvoo to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the martyrdoms of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. In two of the three, he commented on temple work, including our responsibility to the dead. President Hunter also spoke on temples at conferences in Arizona and Mexico and in each of his three October 1994 general conference addresses.

In his closing remarks, President Hunter returned to the theme of temple attendance, repeating and expanding the part of his 6 June statement that stressed the beauty and personal blessings of temple experiences:

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot attend to God’s presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly in order that the millennial day may come, that promised time when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . [but shall] walk in the light of the Lord.” (Isa. 2:4-5.)

In this iteration of the temple theme, President Hunter made an extraordinary, powerful, and poignant promise, linking temple worship with the longed-for millennial peace that has always included both personal peace of mind and political peace between nations. It is a promise that resonates deeply, comforting and steadying in our chaotic and violent society.

President Hunter also positioned the temple as the peak spiritual experience in mortality. Interestingly, he did not make specific promises about what will occur in the temple to create this spirituality, but placed the responsibility on the member: “Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience.”

Unquestionably, the Saints are responding to President Hunter’s second invitation. Without providing any statistics, Gaylan Gallacher, Provo Temple recorder, in October 1994, confirmed “a very measurable increase in attendance” in response to President Hunter’s call to attend the temple more frequently. Other anecdotal reports also indicate increased temple attendance.

I hope that many people accept President Hunter’s invitation and become worthy or maintain worthiness to go to the House of the Lord, and do so often, willingly, and joyfully. But most of the statements I have heard about the temple on the local level are designed to produce guilt. I regret that pressure from leaders may load the temple experience with anxiety for some members, making it not an invitation accepted but an obligation discharged. I also regret that some members, resisting the pressure, may refuse the invitation and thereby cut themselves off from what may be a source of great spiritual strength.

Still, I anticipate that temple attendance will assume new importance in Mormon culture as a result of President Hunter’s emphasis, in ways that will focus, stabilize, and bring joy to many members of the Church.

THE INVITATION TO “COME BACK”

PRESIDENT HUNTER’S invitation to live a more Christlike life and (to those who are alienated) to “come back” was, for him, like his temple invitation, a lighthouse that had not flashed this signal before. In 1985, the First Presidency issued a Christmas message: “To those who have ceased activity and to those who have become critical, we say, ‘Come back. Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the Saints.’” Other general authorities, but not Elder Hunter, had followed with similar calls.

Thus, it was highly significant, in my opinion, that President Hunter directed part of his inaugural statement “to those who have transgressed or been offended, . . . who are hurt and struggling and afraid, [or] . . . are confused and assailed by error.” I responded with gratitude and appreciation. However, despite President Hunter’s strong statements about personal integrity, personal commitment to Christ, and the importance of agency, there is no indication in his remarks that the Church itself could ever create conflicts for a member in any of these areas. His addresses as an apostle affirm a predictable pattern of orderliness and obedience for members. The 1990–94 addresses, which focused on Christ and Christian living, hold up a shining standard of individual faith and behavior. However, at his opening statement, his presidential statements demonstrated what I interpret as an increasing focus on administrative concerns and a diminished focus on Christian living, by comparison with the 1990–94 addresses.

Apostolic Addresses

THE flavor of Apostle Hunter’s traditional-style orthodoxy is apparent in these typical statements: “We can have the benefits of modern scholarship and scientific advances without turning to the theories of the modernist . . . . Truth is eternal and never changing, and the gospel of Jesus
Evolution of an Invitation:
“Come Back”

President Hunter’s 6 June invitation to “Come back” evolved through subsequent deliveries in ways that, to me, eroded its promise in small but significant ways.


I would invite all members of the Church to live with ever-more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed.

I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. We do have high expectations of one another, and all can improve. Our world cries out for more disciplined living of the commandments of God. But the way we are to encourage that, as the Lord told the Prophet Joseph in the wintry depths of Liberty Jail, is “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile.”

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say come back. To those who are hurt and struggling and afraid, we say let us stand with you and dry your tears. To those who are confused and assailed by error on every side, we say come to the God of all truth and the Church of continuing revelation. Come back. Stand with us. Carry on. Be believing. All is well, and all will be well. Feast at the table laid before you in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strive to follow the Good Shepherd who has provided it. Have hope, exert faith, receive—and give—charity, the pure love of Christ.

Christ is ever contemporary in a changing world.” We know that this is the true and living church institutionally, but am I a true and living member individually? In October 1982, he used an Old Testament example to praise unquestioning obedience: “Surely the Lord loves, more than anything else, an unwavering determination to obey his counsel. Surely the experiences of the great prophets of the Old Testament have been recorded to help us understand the importance of choosing the path of strict obedience. How pleased the Lord must have been when Abraham, after receiving direction to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, did as he was instructed, without question and without wavering.”

On only two occasions, Elder Hunter drew a contrast between the spirit and the letter of the law. In 1978, he contrasted Paul’s use of religion (as “a form of worship” and as “a religion of iron rules, laws and traditions inherited from his Hebrew lineage”) with that of James, who “very pointedly defines what he refers to as pure religion, as distinguished from forms of ritualistic worship and iron rules of practice as described by Paul.”

The second occasion was in his April 1990 general conference address. He called for stronger commitment, then added: “Please understand that I do not speak only of a commitment to the Church and its activities, although that always needs to...
be strengthened. No, I speak more specifically of a commitment that is shown in our individual behavior, in our personal integrity, in our loyalty to home and family and community, as well as to the Church.  

There is also no question that Elder Hunter took a conservative position on theological and scholarly issues. In a 1970 denunciation of “the twisted teachings of the modernist,” which is unique among President Hunter’s conference talks for its level of anxiety, he denounced biblical criticism, attempts to “modernize” the Bible, alternate forms of spirituality; and the “so-called new morality.” He insisted: “We need to study the simple fundamentals of the truths taught by the Master and eliminate the controversial. Our faith in God needs to be real and not speculative. . . . If it is old-fashioned to believe in the Bible, we should thank God for the privilege of being old-fashioned.”

Apostle Hunter did not seem unduly fearful about intellectuals, the politically oriented, or other special interest groups. His addresses portray divisiveness as bad, not because it is incorrect theology, displeasing to God, or dangerous to the Church, but because it reduces the quality of group life. In April 1976, he made his only direct statement, before becoming president, against internal disharmony. It is traditional in that disagreements are defined as exclusively individual rather than possibly organizational; he suggests no remedies except for individual repentance:

However great the need may be for unity within nations, there is ever greater need for harmony and interdependence within the worldwide church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[He then quoted 1 Corinthians 12:21, in which one part of the body cannot say to another, “I have no need of thee,” then continued:] Nor can the North Americans say to the Asians, nor the Europeans to the islanders of the sea, “I have no need of thee.” No, in this church we have need of every member, and we pray, as did Paul when he wrote to the church in Corinth, “that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. . . .” Our ideas may not always be quite like those who preside in authority over us, but this is the Lord's church and he will bless each of us as we cast off pride, pray for strength, and contribute to the good of the whole.

By the same token, I know of no stronger weapons in the hands of the adversary against any group of men or women in this church than the weapons of divisiveness, faultfinding, and antagonism.

As Church president, he repeated these two paragraphs in Mexico in December 1995. This approach does not acknowledge the existence of a category of peaceful and productive disagreement, legitimate questions, or dissent from the “ideas of those who preside over us.” It suggests that any negativity is exclusively a result of the member’s pride and weakness and that the Church itself bears no responsibility either to remove conditions that are causing problems for members or in providing support to a member who is working through negative feelings.

---

**Presidential Addresses**

A Church president, Howard W. Hunter strongly affirmed hierarchical authority. About a fourth of his opening address at October general conference described the authority of his counselors and the Twelve, who carry the work on when the prophet is ill. In his closing remarks, he further counseled Saints to follow the general authorities.

I also saw an intensifying trend toward authoritarianism during President Hunter’s brief presidency. His invitation to “come back,” as it reappeared in his presidential speeches, shows a number of textual changes that have altered the original statement, eroding the promise of his press conference in small but, to me, serious ways. (See “Evolution of an Invitation: ‘Come Back.’”)

---

**MESSAGES TO WOMEN**

I HAVE a particular interest in President Hunter’s messages to women, given the intensified pressure in the Church during the 1970s and 1980s to encourage women to concentrate on their opportunities as mothers. While this goal is unquestionably worthy, the strategies used by some have been to close off other options for women, blame working women for social ills ranging from abortion and divorce rates to juvenile delinquency, and “correlate” women’s programs to the point where the voices women hear in their own Relief Society manual feature seven or eight quotations from general authorities for every one from a woman. Given Jesus’ radical acceptance of women as disciples and his culture-breaking affirmation of their inherent worth, did President Hunter’s messages, particularly after his ordination as prophet, manifest possible expansions in the limited roles now permitted LDS women?

I feel that President Hunter was an extraordinarily generous and loving individual whose innate decency forbade ill-treatment of anyone; but I also think that he was very much a product of his generation. In this view, men should protect women, not accept them as full partners; the continued exclusion of women from full membership in the Church was not only inevitable but also righteous.

For example, Elder Hunter’s conference talks as an apostle are very much in the cultural mainstream of the 1960s and 1970s. They include only two stories about nonscriptural women: Mary Fielding Smith’s faithfulness in paying tithing, and Mary Ann Baker’s writing the faith-affirming “Master, the Tempest Is Raging” after the death of her brother.

Interestingly, in 1987, as President of the Council of the Twelve, President Hunter made a reference rare among general authorities to Mother in Heaven, by quoting a passage from Spencer W. Kimball’s Faith Precedes the Miracle in which Elder Kimball quotes turn-of-the-century apostle Orson F. Whitney.
on adversity: “It is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.”

On the issue of work for women, Elder Hunter took a traditional position but was fair to women in cases where employment was a “necessity.” Addressing the welfare session in October 1975, he described his efforts to complete law school at night while holding a full-time job. His wife stayed home with their second son (a first had died), and a third was born during these years. He paid her a tribute, then made a broader statement about women as homemakers before encouraging women to prepare for the possibility of supporting themselves:

“Our wives deserve great credit for the heavy work load they carry day in and day out within our homes. No one expends more energy than a devoted mother and wife. In the usual arrangement of things, however, it is the man to whom the Lord has assigned the breadwinner’s role.

There are compelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts.19

Claire Jeffs Hunter worked as assistant personnel manager at a department store after the death of their first child “to keep her mind off her heartbreak,” Eleanor Knowles’ biography of Claire Jeffs Hunter explains. Knowles quotes his careful explanation: “This was the only time during our marriage that Claire was employed.”20

In 1992, he also gave what I consider to be his most important message to women. As president of the Twelve, he addressed the general women’s meeting on 26 September, eighteen months after his marriage to Inis Eagan Stanton. As Church president, he repeated this talk on 24 September 1994 (retitled “Stand Firm in the Faith”) at the General Relief Society Meeting.21 Both messages were warm, respectful, loving, and empowering. However, a pattern of differences between the earlier and later verses left the presidential version, in my opinion, much less empowering for women. Here are seven of the differences.

1. He quoted Moses 1:30: “For . . . this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” In the earlier version, he explained that “man” was “the generic scriptural term which also means woman,” but did not give this gender-inclusive explanation in the later version.

2. In the earlier version, but not in the later one, he stated that Jesus “enjoyed the company of women and had close friends among them.”

3. In the first version, but not in the second, he referred to women as Christ’s “daughter-disciples” who “are privileged to have been given . . . the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

4. In the earlier version, he made a personal statement of extraordinary vulnerability:

“As special witnesses of our Savior, we [general authorities] have been given the awesome assignment to administer the affairs of his church and kingdom and to minister to his daughters and his sons wherever they are on the face of the earth. By reason of our call to testify, govern, and minister, it is required of us that despite age, infirmity, exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy, we do the work he has given us to do, to the last breath of our lives.

He then pled with Mormon women to stand “with us and for us in stemming the tide of evil that threatens to engulf us.” I responded to this appeal with deep emotion. It was the first time that I felt women were being told that they were needed, as well as honored and respected. That plea remained in the second version, but the paragraph expressing personal vulnerability was omitted, diminishing the impact of the appeal.

5. In the earlier version, President Hunter said that Jesus “needed the women of his time for a comforting hand, a listening ear, a believing heart, a kind look, an encouraging word, loyalty—even in his hour of humiliation, agony, and death” (emphasis added). In the later version, Jesus did not need women; he “looked to” them to provide these services.

6. President Hunter closed his earlier speech by asking the Lord’s blessing on women as they served others and “as you strive to become all that you have the potential to become.” In the later speech, this conclusion was condensed to “May the Lord bless you as you stand firm in the faith.”

7. In the earlier version, he said: “Sisters, continue to seek opportunities for services. Don’t be overly concerned with status. Do you recall the counsel of the Savior regarding those who seek the ‘chief seats’ or the ‘uppermost rooms’? . . . It is important to be appreciated. But our focus should be on righteousness, not recognition; on service, not status.”22 In a context of recent addresses lauding “priesthood protocol,” his encouragement to women to seek service, not status, was a refreshing corrective, but it seems to have been aimed at the wrong audience and had to be read as a rebuke, however gently phrased. It was not in the later version.23

This address to women, which President Hunter delivered twice (once as president of the Twelve and once as president of the Church), sets what I see as a pattern in his public statements. These statements are generous, spiritual, and kindly. They breathe a loving warmth and faith that I can compare only with President Kimball at his mellowest and President McKay at his most eloquent. But taken as a whole, they do not empower women. They reinforce a traditional view that sees women as limited in their contributions and circumscribed in their roles.

President Hunter gave a lengthy address at the October 1994 general priesthood meeting that, though directed at men, also includes some important messages for women.24 He commanded “perfect moral fidelity” and told men to “express regularly . . . reverence and respect” for their wives. Perhaps most important was the dignity he conferred upon wives. Even though “by divine appointment, the responsibility to preside
in the home rests upon the priesthood holder,” he stated: “A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. . . . For a man to operate independent of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion.”

President Hunter also denounced “any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled” sexual behavior, rebuked “any man who abuses or deems his wife physically or spiritually,” and reminded: “Sexual abuse of children has long been a cause for excommunication from the Church.”

On the subject of married women working, he reiterated a familiar message: “No man can shift the burden of responsibility [of earning the living] to another, not even to his wife. . . . We urge you to do all in your power to allow your wife to remain in the home, caring for the children while you provide for the family the best you can.” He warned divorced fathers that their temple eligibility would be jeopardized if they neglected child support. 25

Perhaps the most disquieting message to women from President Hunter was an interview with the Los Angeles Times in mid-October 1994:

Q: There have been occasions in the past when some churches have recanted certain teachings. Galileo comes to mind. . . . Is it possible in light of continuing revelation that the Mormon Church may change its opposition to women in the priesthood?

Hunter: At the present time there isn’t an avenue of ever changing. It’s too well defined by revelation, by Scripture. And we follow strictly the scriptural pas-sageway in matters of that kind. I see nothing that will lead to a change of direction at the present time—or in the future. 26

"COMING BACK/GOING ON"

T was impossible for me to read or hear President Hunter’s addresses in any way other than the personal. I am probably a source of offense to some leaders of the Church, just as some of them have injured and hurt me. Am I wrong to take these messages and their revisions personally? I have described them an invitation to continue searching my soul for anger, pride, and other unworthy motivations; simultaneously, I find in them great consolation, boundless mercy, and grace-filled healing. President Hunter inspired us with breathtaking and stunning vision of the Savior’s redemptive power. He painted a sweeping picture of the gospel as inclusive and of Christ as the exemplar for each individual. He called us to the Christ-like life with a power and a passion and a tenderness that will, I believe, have a permanent effect on the Church. He reawakened the noblest powers in Mormonism, powers which can, not immediately but ultimately, I believe, redress the current imbalance between individual and institutional authority, renew trust that the glory of God is intelligence, affirm that the truth of the gospel has nothing to fear from the truths of other spheres, dissolve the insistence on women’s inferiority, eliminate the charade many ecclesiastical leaders feel they have to dominate members, empower members to contribute without defensiveness and defend themselves when such abuses occur, call our attention to the principles of grace and charity; and reenthrone conscience, rather than conformity, as the channel by which members know they are pleasing God.

I do not know how long it will be before my testimony of the gospel and my obedience to my covenants will be seen as more important than my thinking, speaking, and writing. But I cling to what I do know.

I know that Howard W. Hunter was the inspired successor to Joseph Smith, and that he has, in turn, been succeeded by Gordon B. Hinckley as an equally legitimate prophet and president. I love this Church. I accept its priesthood authority, and I accept the divinity of its message. I believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God. And underlying all of this is my profound knowledge that our Heavenly Parents live, that they love us, that they hear our prayers, that they cherish us as individuals, that they sorrow with us in our grief and over our errors, and that they rejoice with us as we use our agency to grow in wisdom and in love. I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior and Redeemer. I have felt the power of the Atonement in my life, and I know that the depth of love I feel for him is only a shallow reflection of the love he feels for me. I am grateful to the good people in our ward who have continued to welcome me and my family, and I am grateful for the peace and renewal I feel as I partake spiritually, though not physically, of the sacrament. My commitment is to maintain my covenants privately until I can once again make them in community. In keeping these covenants, I will be strengthened by President Hunter’s luminous and loving vision of a Christ-centered life.

NOTES

2. President Hunter did not speak in October 1980 (he was still recuperating from a June heart attack) or October 1993 (he was recuperating from gall bladder surgery).

3. Hunter, "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."


5. See Jan Shipps, "The Difficult Problem of Maintaining Balance between Center and Periphery in an Expanding Church," address given at the 1994 Sunstone Symposium (tape order #SL#4-300).


7. High councilors in my stake spoke in January 1995 about attending the temple more often, referring often (though without quoting) to President Hunter's invitation. The gentle and positive spirit of President Hunter's invitation was subsumed in the all-too-familiar techniques of sports metaphors by one ("Go for the gold. Go for the celestial kingdom") and guilt by the other ("Here you are seventeen blocks from the temple, so why don't you go—and if you go already, why don't you go oftener?). One speaker reported that as of November 1994, our stake had 1,283 nomendaded adults and 1,384 endowed adults. Of those endowed, 731 (52 percent) do not hold current recommends. (David Beterz and Larry Garske [Wells Stake high councilors], addresses, Whittier Ward sacrament meeting, 1 January 1995; notes in my possession.)


9. Richard G. Scott, in 1986, speaking to inactive members, said, "I plead, come back. Come back to the cool, refreshing waters of personal purity. Come back to the warmth and security of your Father in Heaven's love. Come back to the serenity that distills from the decision to live the commandments of Christ." (Richard G. Scott, "We Love You-Please Come Back," Ensign, May 1986, 11-14.)

10. Six months later, Elder F Burton Howard urged "the less active, the critics, the uncompromising, and the rebellious . . . to come back to the Lord." (F Burton Howard, "Come Back to the Lord," Ensign, Nov. 1986, 76-78.) Apostle Marvin J. Ashton gave the first message directed at members who had been disciplined in 1988: "My plea and invitation to all, especially to those who have temporarily lost certain privileges, is come back. Your lives are as important to us as they should be to you." (Marvin J. Ashton, "While They Are Waiting," Ensign, May 1988, 62-64.) Elder Adney Y. Komatsu, in 1992, also invited all to come unto Christ. "Come back, and partake of His joy." (Adney Y. Komatsu, "Please Hear the Call!" Ensign, May 1992, 29-31.)

11. Hunter, "Of the World or of the Kingdom?" Ensign, Jan. 1974, 56.


17. Hunter, "That We May Be One," Ensign, May 1976, 105-06.


Speeches of Howard W. Hunter, 1959-94

These eighty-two addresses were given in general conferences unless otherwise noted. The addresses given since April 1990 are significantly focused on the importance of a Christ-like life.

October 1959. "What Is in My Heart?"

Improvement Era, December 1959, 962. In this, his first address as a general authority, Elder Hunter expressed love for President McKay and counselors, provided some biographical background, and affirmed: "I want you to know that I have a firm, uncompromising conviction that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that the gospel is true, that the Church is the vehicle that makes it possible to live life as God loves us to live it."

April 1960. "Secretly a Disciple?"

Improvement Era, December 1960, 949-49. Joseph of Arimathea, "secretly a disciple . . . would not lift a finger to condemn the Savior, nor would he defend him openly. . . . Secret followers of Jesus and half-hearted lukewarm Christians are almost in the same category as those who are antagonistic. . . . We have more respect for one who honestly doubts than for one who fears to declare loyalty." (April 1961. "Put Your Hand to the Plough."

Improvement Era, June 1961, 398-99. He quoted Luke 9:62 ("No man, having put his hand to the plough. . . ."). "To disturb the conventional, to overturn the traditional, or to attempt to make changes in the deep-rooted way of doing things in the lives of individuals requires toil and sweat. . . . We have in Church leadership great plowmen with firm hands and stout hearts—stake presidents and mission presidents—determined men. . . ."


Improvement Era, December 1961, 962-63. "Religion can be part of our daily work, our business, our buying and selling, building, transportation, manufacturing, our trade or profession, or of anything we do. . . . [The Lord] makes no distinction between temporal and spiritual commandments . . . Morality is just one part of our eternal life."


Improvement Era, June 1962, 442-43. Solomon did not ask for a long life of wealth (like Madias) or power over his enemies, "but a spiritual gift—an understanding heart. . . . If the Lord was pleased because of that which Solomon had asked of him, surely he would be pleased with each of us if we had the desire to acquire an understanding heart . . . An understanding heart results from the experiences we have in life if we keep the commandments."

October 1962. "To Believe Is to See,"

Improvement Era, December 1962, 914-15. "Those who lose or lack faith, live in the past—there is a loss of hope for the future. What a great change comes into the life of one who finds an abiding faith to give assurance. . . ."

The blind man
“Our ideas may not always be quite like those who preside in authority over us, but this is the Lord’s church and he will bless each of us as we cast off pride, pray for strength, and contribute to the good of the whole.” (April 1976)

believed and was permitted to see. Thomas refused to believe until after he could see.

April 1963. “Evidences of the Resurrection,” Improvement Era, June 1963, 512-13. “We can come to only one conclusion, the resurrection is a historical fact amply proved by authenticated documentary evidence and the testimony of competent witnesses.

October 1963. “Prophets in This Dispensation,” Improvement Era, December 1963, 1098-110. “To peoples of past dispensations and ages, the most important prophet was the one then living, teaching, and revealing the will of the Lord in their time. . . . It is the present living prophet who is our leader, our teacher. It is from him we take direction in the modern world.

April 1964. “The Windows of Heaven,” Improvement Era, June 1964, 475-77. “If tithing is a voluntary matter, is it a gift or a payment of an obligation? There is a substantial difference between the two. A gift is a voluntary transfer of money or property without consideration. . . . If tithing is a gift, we could give whatever we please, when we please, or make no gift at all. It would place our Heavenly Father in the very same category as the street beggar to whom we might toss a coin in passing.”

October 1964. “The Road to Damascus,” Improvement Era, December 1964, 1086-8. “Paul’s life had been bisected by Damascus Road. Before, he was an aggressive persecutor of Christianity, but after Damascus Road he was one of its most fervent propagators. There are many men in the world who could be like Paul, men who could be changed in the twinkling of an eye if willing to change the object of their lives as did Paul.

April 1965. “And God Spake All These Words. . . .”, Improvement Era, June 1965, 510-11. “He loves the Lord with all his heart who loves nothing in comparison of him, and nothing but in reference to him, who is ready to give up, do, or suffer anything in order to please and glorify him. He loves God with all his soul, or rather with all his life, who is ready to give up life for his sake and to be deprived of the comforts of the world to glorify him. He loves God with all his strength who exerts all the powers of his body and soul in the service of God. He loves God with all his mind who applies himself only to know God and his will, who sees God in all things and acknowledges him in all ways.

October 1965. “Organization of the Church of Christ,” Improvement Era, December 1965, 1145-47. The organization of Christ’s church comprises apostles, seventies, bishops, and so forth. Elder Hunter comments that modern churches lack this organization, affirms the importance of apostolic succession, and testifies that the modern church has the same organization as the primitive church.

April 1966. “Motivations for Good: Fear, Duty, Love,” Improvement Era, December 1965, 1145-47. “There has never been a time when man has been forced to do good or forced to obey the commandments of God. He has always been given his free choice—his free moral agency. If one looks back through. . . . history, there come into view the results of the great masses of men who kept the commandments of the Lord and made the choice on his side. One also sees stunned along the wayside the ruins that stand as silent reminders of those who chose otherwise. Both had their fear and duty, the one on his side, the other on his side.

September 1966. “Where Is Peace?” Improvement Era, December 1966, 1104-5. He describes the irony of a student demonstration in which placards proclaimed, “We demand peace.” “There is no promise of peace to those who reject God, to those who will not keep his commandments, or to those who violate his law. . . . Peace can come to an individual only by an unconditional surrender—surrender to him who is the Prince of peace, who has the power to confer peace. . . .”

April 1967. “Gospel Imperatives,” Improvement Era, June 1967, 101-3. “The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a gospel of belief; it is a plan of action. His gospel is a gospel of imperatives, and the very nature of its substance is a call to action. He did not say, ‘Observe my gospel!’ he said, ‘Live it!’ He did not say, ‘Note its beautiful structure and imagery!’ he said, ‘Go, do, see, feel, give, believe!’ The gospel of Jesus Christ is full of imperatives, words that call for personal commitment and action—obligatory, binding, compulsory.

September 1967. “Is a Church Necessary?” Improvement Era, December 1967, 44, 46-47. “I submit that the church of Jesus Christ is necessary in the lives of men and women today as it was when established by him, not by passive interest or a profession of faith, but by an assumption of active responsibility. In this way the Church brings us out of darkness of an isolated life into the light of the world, where belief is turned into doing, according to the admonitions of scripture. This is the hope of the individual, the family, the Church, the nations of the earth.”

April 1968. “We Owe Allegiance to Sovereignty,” Improvement Era, June 1968, 79-81. Religious people “owe fealty to two separate monarchs” and “have allegiance to two separate and distinct sovereign powers”—the laws of their nation and the laws of God. This is a day when civil disobedience seems to be prevalent and even advocated from some pulpits, but the position of this Church and its teachings is clear. . . . My knowledge of these [divine] truths moves me to allegiance to divine sovereignty, also to sustain the law of the land.

October 1968. “Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen,” Improvement Era, December 1968, 103-8. “Modernists deny the virgin birth. . . . dispute that the Master voluntarily offered himself to accuse for the sins of mankind. . . . deny the fact that Jesus rose from the tomb. . . .” and the fact of his ascension. . . . To those who have faith in him is given the right or the authority to become the sons of God. . . . There is a bigger faith than one which comes from seeing and hearing, a faith that can dispense with tangible proof and visible evidence. It is the faith that comes from reliance upon the word of the Lord.”

April 1969. “The Reality of the Resurrection,” Improvement Era, June 1969, 106-7. “We believe in the literal resurrection of the body, reunited with the spirit, becoming the spiritual body or the soul as defined by scripture. If we should eliminate from our religious beliefs the doctrine of the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of mankind, there would be nothing left but a code of ethics. . . . In a society of turmoil, immorality, freethinking, and questioning of the reality of God, we reach out for the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the gospel which gives us comfort, hope, a desire for righteousness, and peace in our heart.”

October 1969. “Ethics Alone Is Not Sufficient,” Improvement Era, December 1969, 96-97. “There is a distinction between one whose life is based on mere ethics and one who lives a truly religious life. We have a need for ethics, but true religion includes the truths of ethics and goes far beyond. . . . For the same reason man cannot be saved by bread alone, he cannot be saved by a code of ethics.

April 1970. “The Reality of God,” Improvement Era, June 1970, 33-35. “To find God as a reality, we must follow the course which he pointed out for the quest. The path is one that leads upward; it takes faith and effort, and it is not the easy course. . . . Many men will not devote themselves to the arduous task of proving to themselves the reality of God.”

October 1970. “Where, Then, Is Hope?” Improvement Era, December 1970, 115-16. “In this world of confusion and rushing, temporal progress, we need a return to the simplicity of Christ. We need to love, honor, and worship him. To acquire spirituality and have its influence in our lives, we cannot become confused and misled by the twisted teachings of the modernist. One of the great strengths of the Mormon religion is this translation of belief into daily thinking and conduct. This replaces turmoil and confusion with peace and tranquility.”

April 1971. “Prepare Every Needful Thing,” Ensign, June 1971, 51-52. Elder Hunter describes the function of the meetinghouse library. The Church has a scriptural responsibility to teach the gospel, and the commandment to “prepare every needful thing” provides the scriptural justification for creating visual aids.

October 1971. “Elijah the Prophet,” Ensign, December 1971, 70-72. Elijah’s life and prophetic mission were centered on recalling Israel to obedience to God and included such memorable events as his contest with the false “prophets of Baal,” his courageous opposition to the unrighteous King Ahab, his taking refuge with the starving widow whose faith was rewarded by an unfailing supply of flour and oil, and his
miraculous ascension to heaven. To this Old Testament record, Latter-day Saints can add his return to earth to bestow special priesthood keys on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland temple.

April 1972. "A Teacher," Ensign, July 1972, 85. A fledgling watched a larger bird thump his feet, cock his head, pull up a worm, and swallow it. The little bird hovered on the lawn, thumped its feet, cocked its head, and pulled up a worm of his own. "God bless the good people who teach our children and our youth.

October 1972. "Spiritual Famine," Ensign, January 1973, 64-65. The Church offers the blessing of spiritual authority to members in modern times. "In what appears to be a spiritual famine, there are many who have found a spiritual abundance.

April 1973. "This Is My Gospel," Ensign, July 1973, 118-21. When Chrisp appeared to the Nephites, he preached the gospel to them and organized his church among them. "An analysis divides the gospel plan into two parts: First, that which is preparatory and administered under the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood.... Second, the fullness of the gospel administered by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.... The pathway of the preparatory gospel for the forgiveness of sins and entrance to the kingdom is clearly marked. The way is pointed out for the fullness of the everlasting gospel to be enjoyed by man, blessed by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, to so live as to obtain a knowledge of God and receive his approbation upon resurrection."

October 1973. "Of the World or of the Kingdom?" Ensign, January 1974, 53-56. "In this day of increased knowledge, higher thought, and a modernization of the old, the simple has been overlooked and the profound sought after. The basic, simple, fundamental truths of the gospel are being ignored."

April 1974. "His Final Hours," May 1974, 17-19. "In contrast to the haste and busy affairs of our day, [Christ's] life was one of simplicity. He lived in humble circumstances. He had not surrounded himself with the proud and mighty of the earth, but with the poor, the humble, and those of modest circumstances. There was nothing complicated about his life or teaching. As we now enter the Passover week of old, may we think on the resurrected Christ, the living Son of the living God. May we, in his name, unite our hearts, love one another, and keep his commandments."

October 1974. "To Know God," Ensign, November 1974, 96-97. "Science has done marvelous things for man, but it cannot accomplish the things he must do for himself, the greatest of which is to find the reality of God. The task is not easy; the labor is not light; but...great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory."
ters throughout the world. It is a commitment to share the gospel that has come to us and the greatest gift we could give to them—an understanding of the fulness of the gospel. . . . We who are here today claim a special, unique knowledge of the Savior's gospel. Most striking of all, to those who first become acquainted with us, is our declaration to the world that we are guided by a living prophet of God—one who communicates with, is inspired by, and receives revelation from the Lord.

April 1982. “True Greatness,” Ensign, May 1982, 19–20. True greatness “always requires regular, consistent, small, and sometimes ordinary and mundane steps over a long period of time. . . . We have an unlimited number of opportunities to do the many simple and minor things that will ultimately make us great.”

October 1982. “Commitment to God,” Ensign, November 1982, 57–58. “Surely the Lord loves, more than anything else, an unwavering determination to obey his counsel. Surely the experiences of the great prophets of the Old Testament have been recorded to help us understand the importance of choosing the path of strict obedience. How pleased the Lord must have been when Abraham. . . . did as he was instructed, without question and without wavering.”

April 1983. “Evidences of the Resurrection,” Ensign, May 1983, 13–16. “It is truly a beautiful message that there will be life after death, we can return to live with our Father in Heaven once again, because of the sacrifice the Savior has made for us, and because of our own repentance and obedience to the commandments.”

October 1983. “Parents’ Concern for Children,” Ensign, November 1983, 63–64. “A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent.”

April 1984. “The Pharisee and the Publican,” Ensign, May 1984, 56–60. “Humility is an attribute of godliness possessed by true Saints. It is easy to understand why a proud man fails. He is content to rely upon himself only. This is evident in those who seek social position or who push others aside to gain position in fields of business, government, education, sports, or other endeavors. Our genuine concern should be for the success of others.”

November 1984. “Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” Ensign, November 1984, 33–35. “We will all have some adversity in our lives. It is possible that we can reasonably see that of some it will have the potential to be violent and damaging and destructive. Some of it may even strain our faith in a loving God who has the power to administer relief in our behalf. To those anxieties I think the Father of us all would say, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And, of course, that has to be faith for the whole journey, the entire experience, the fulness of our life.”

April 1985. “Christ, Our Passover,” Ensign, May 1985, 17–19. “The Savior instituted the ordinance now known as the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. With the suffering of Gethsemane, the sacrifice of Calvary, and the resurrection from a garden tomb, Jesus fulfilled the ancient law and ushered in a new dispensation based on a higher, holier understanding of the law of sacrifice. This is the majesty of the Atonement and Resurrection, not just a passover from death, but a gift of eternal life by an infinite sacrifice.”

October 1985. “Fast Day,” Ensign, 1984, 72–74. “After summarizing the history of fasting from the Old and New Testaments and the early Church, Elder Hunter explained that its purpose is to set aside the temporal so that we might enjoy the higher qualities of the spiritual.”

April 1986. “An Apostle’s Witness of the Resurrection,” Ensign, May 1986, 15–17. “Without the Resurrection, the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a litany of wise sayings and seemingly unexplainable miracles—but sayings and miracles with no ultimate triumph. No, the ultimate triumph is in the ultimate miracle: for the first time in the history of mankind, one who was dead raised himself into living immortality. He was the Son of God, the Son of our immortal Father in Heaven, and his triumph over physical and spiritual death is the good news every Christian tongue should speak.”

October 1986. “The Lord’s Touchstone,” Ensign, November 1986, 34–35. “I suggest to you that the Lord has prepared a touchstone for you and me, an outward manifestation of inward dis- cipleship that marks our faithfulness and will sur- vive the fires yet to come. . . . The key is to love our neighbor, including the neighbor that is diffi- cult to love.”

April 1987. “Am I a ‘Living’ Member?” Ensign, May 1987, 16–18. “[Being a living member] means that we now and always will love God and our neighbors as ourselves. It means our actions will reflect who we are and what we believe. It means that we are every day Christians, walking as Christ would have us walk.”

October 1987. “The Opening and Closing of Doors,” Ensign, November 1987, 54, 59–60. “From out of the dark, damp confinement of Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith learned that if we are called to pass through tribulation, it is for our growth and experience and willulti- mately be counted for our good. . . . Where one door shuts, another opens, even for a prophet in prison.”

April 1988. “He Is Risen,” Ensign, May 1988, 16–17. “[When Christ’s] body was taken from the cross and hastily placed in a borrowed tomb, he, the sinless son of God, had already taken upon him not only the sins and temptations of every human soul who will repent, but all of our sick- ness and grief and pain of every kind. He suffered these afflictions as we suffer them, according to the flesh. He suffered them all. He did this to perfect his mercy and his ability to lift us above every earthly trial.”

October 1988. “Blessed from on High,” Ensign, November 1988, 59–61. “Perhaps no promise in our message-there will be life after death, we can re- member that Jesus Christ possesses the power to remit sin in all periods of time. We, too, must have an abiding commitment to marriage and children and morality. We must succeed where success counts most for the next generation.”

October 1990. “Come unto Me,” Ensign, November 1990, 17–18. “Here is the promise of personal peace and protection. Here is the power to remit sin in all periods of time. We, too, must believe that Jesus Christ possesses the power to ease our burdens and lighten our loads. We, too, must come unto him and there receive rest from our labors.”

April 1991. “The Sixth Day of April, 1830,” Ensign, May 1991, 63–65. “Joseph Smith was not only a great man, but he was an inspired servant of the Lord, a prophet of God. His greatness con- sists in one thing—the truthfulness of his declaration that he saw the Father and the Son and that he responded to the reality of that divine revela- tion.”

April 1991. “The Gospel—A Global Faith,” Ensign, November 1991, 18–19. “As members of the church of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring all truth together. We seek to enlarge that circle of
love and understanding among all the people of the earth. Thus we strive to establish peace and happiness, not only within Christianity but among all mankind. The validity, the power, of our faith is not bound by history, nationality, or culture. It is not the peculiar property of any one people or any one age.

April 1992. "A More Excellent Way," Ensign, May 1992, 61-63. "When we feel the floods are threatening to drown us and the deep is going to swallow up the tossed vessel of our faith, I pray we may always hear amid the storm and the darkness that sweet utterance of the Savior of the world: 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.' " (Matt. 14:27.)

April 1993. "Jesus, the Very Thought of Him," Ensign, May 1993, 63-65. "How often do we think of the Savior? How deeply and how gratefully and how ardently do we reflect on his life? How central to our lives do we know him to be? Surely life would be more peaceful, surely marriages and families would be stronger, certain neighborhoods and nations would be safer and kinder and more constructive if more of the gospel of Jesus Christ 'with sweetness' could fill our breasts."

October 1993. Elder Hunter did not speak.

April 1994. "What Manner of Men Ought Ye to Be?" Ensign, May 1994, 64. "Only Christ can be our ideal, our bright and morning star (Rev. 22:16). Only he can say without any reservation, 'Follow me, learn of me, do the things you have seen me do. Drink of my water and eat of my bread. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the law and the light. Look unto me and ye shall live. Love one another as I have loved you.'"

June 1994. "The Pillars of Our Faith," Ensign, September 1994, 54-55. (Sacrament meeting address, Nauvoo Ward.) Elder Hunter identified four pillars: the First Vision, the Book of Mormon, the institution of "the sacred and holy priesthood," and the temple and its ordinances. "May we each live our lives in such a way as to be worthy to receive a temple recommend and enter into the temple to provide opportunity for salvation (or the dead) and for the personal blessings of temple worship which will come into our lives."

June 1994. "The Temple of Nauvoo," Ensign, September 1994, 62-64. (Address at Nauvoo Temple site.) "As in Joseph's day, having worthy and endowed members is the key to building the kingdom in all the world. Temple worthiness ensures that our lives are in harmony with the will of the Lord, and we are attuned to receive His guidance in our lives."

June 1994. "Come to the God of All Truth," Ensign, September 1994, 72-73. (Satellite broadcast Sunday evening from Carthage, Illinois.) "This world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The gospel provides the only way the world will ever know peace. We need to be kinder with one another, more gentle, and more forgiving. We need to be slower to anger and more prompt to help. We need to extend the hand of fellowship and resist the hand of retribution."

September 1994. "He Invites Us to Follow Him," Ensign (First Presidency Message), September 1994, 2, 4-5. "The Lord's invitation to follow him is individual and personal, and compelling. We cannot stand forever between two opinions. Each of us must at some time face the crucial question: 'Whom say ye that I am?'" (Matt. 16:15.) Our personal salvation depends on our answer to that question and our commitment to that answer.

September 1994. "Stand Firm in the Faith," Ensign, November 1994, 96-97. (Address at the Relief Society general meeting, virtually identical to earlier address to that group, "To the Women of the Church," Ensign, November 1992, 95-97.) Elder Hunter expressed appreciation to the women for their service, pointed to the distresses of the world's turmoil, held up Christ as the answer to sorrow and confusion, and appealed to the women to "stand with and for the Brethren in stemming the tide of evil that surrounds us and in moving forward the work of our Savior."

October 1994. "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises," Ensign, November 1994, 7-9. "I bear solemn and grateful witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Certainly he is the center of our worship and the key to our happiness. Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and all walks of life. Let us make him our exemplar and our guide."

October 1994. "Being a Righteous Husband and Father," Ensign, November 1994, 49-51. (Address at the general priesthood session.) "Men who abandon their family and fail to meet their responsibility to care for those they have fathered may find their eligibility for a temple recommendation and their standing in the Church in jeopardy. In cases of divorce or separation, men must demonstrate that they are meeting family support payments mandated by law and obligated by the principles of the Church in order to qualify for the blessings of the Lord."

October 1994. "Follow the Son of God," Ensign, November 1994, 87-88. (Address at closing session of general conference.) "All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot attend to God's presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants."

February 1995. "A Temple-Motivated People," Ensign, February 1995, 2-5. Perhaps based on texts of addresses delivered at the dedications of the Orlando and Bountiful temples, this First Presidency message systematically describes temple ordinances (baptism for the dead, the endowment, celestial marriage), discusses Doctrine and Covenants 137 and 138 and their relevance to work for the dead, and urges temple-going Saints not to "lose a blessing by not seeking their own kindred dead as divinely directed by latter-day prophets."

---

**PRAYER IN A GARDEN**

Moon floods the walled garden
Of white lilies and blue sweet Williams,
Making their petals translucent and transparent
As the shroud draped about an unborn child's face.

Mist gathers, then flows over the pond,
Scatters beneath the low-hanging branches of fruit trees.
I come here at night to search for the loveliest rose
And make of it a sacrifice. Each petal is a word
Given to the pond whose center is the round, full moon.
When the last petal floats upon the lunar face,
I send the final word of my prayer
On the water, the mist, and the wind
To whatever gods and goddesses will listen—
Oh bring the souls of the faceless children
I have heard laughing in the tall grass at dusk,
Singing from the trees like thrushes at sunrise.
Plant them in the walled garden of my flesh
So that they may watch the light on white lilies,
Running with the wind beneath the moon.
Laugh in the tall grass at dusk
At secrets that belong to us.

---

*Cara O'Sullivan*