

“Ninth: The prophet can receive revelation on any matter, temporal or spiritual.

“Tenth: The prophet may be involved in civic matters.

“Eleventh: The two groups who have the greatest difficulty in following the prophet are the proud who are learned and the proud who are rich.

“Twelfth: The prophet will not necessarily be popular with the world or the worldly.

“Thirteenth: The prophet and his counselors make up the First Presidency—the highest quorum in the Church.

“Fourteenth: [Follow] . . . the living prophet and the First Presidency . . . and be blessed; reject them and suffer.”⁸

Brothers and sisters, like the Saints of 1848, we can choose to follow the prophet, or we can look to the arm of flesh. May we have the wisdom to trust in and follow the counsel of the living prophets and apostles. I am a witness of their goodness. I testify that they are called of God. I also testify that there is no safer way to approach life,

find answers to our problems, gain peace and happiness in this world, and protect our very salvation than by obeying their words. I bear this witness in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, as quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
2. See Bryant S. Hinckley, *The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers* (1956), 9–15; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Remarks at Pioneer Day Commemoration Concert,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 70–72.
3. See Bryant S. Hinckley, *The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers*, 11–12; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Remarks,” 71.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:19.
6. Amos 3:7.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
8. Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (1981), 30.

Elder Gerrit W. Gong

Blessing generations

Dear brothers and sisters, when our son was in the Provo Missionary Training Center, Sister Gong mailed fresh-baked bread to him and his missionary companions. Here are some of the missionary thank-you notes Sister Gong received: “Sister Gong, that bread was a taste of home.” “Sister Gong, all I can say is wow. That bread is the best thing to enter my mouth since my mother’s enchiladas.” But this is my favorite: “Sister Gong, the bread was wonderful.” He then jokingly continued, “Keep me in mind if things don’t work out between you and Mr. Gong.”

We love our missionaries—each elder, sister, and senior couple. We are eternally grateful to that special missionary who

first brought the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to our family. I gratefully testify that an eternal perspective of gospel conversion and temple covenants can help us see rich blessings in each generation of our forever families.

The first convert in our Gong family to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is our mother, Jean Gong. As a teenager in Honolulu, Hawaii, she listened; she knew; she was baptized and confirmed; she is continuing in faith. Faithful Church members helped my mother so that she had gospel friends, Church callings, and continued nourishment by God’s good word. In today’s parlance, each new convert, young single adult, those returning to Church activity, and others bless generations when they

become fellow Saints in the household of God.¹

One family who nurtured my mother was that of Gerrit de Jong Jr. A linguist who loved the language of the heart and Spirit, Grandpa de Jong tickled my little boy imagination by sayings like “Blackberries when red are green.” Today, speaking of electronic handheld devices, I tell young friends, “Blackberries read in Church make green bishops blue.”

My parents, Walter and Jean Gong, were married three times: a Chinese ceremony for family, an American ceremony for friends, and a sacred ceremony in the house of the Lord for time and eternity.

Temple mirrors of eternity

Our Primary children sing: “I love to see the temple. I’m going there someday.”² Our youth pledge to “receive the ordinances of the temple.”³

I recently stood in a house of the Lord with a worthy couple there to receive blessings by covenant. I invited them to make their first honeymoon last 50 years, then after 50 years to begin their second honeymoon.

I found myself looking with this beautiful couple into the temple mirrors—one mirror on this side, one mirror on that side. Together the temple mirrors reflect back and forth images that stretch seemingly into eternity.

Temple mirrors of eternity remind us that each human being has “divine nature and destiny”; that “sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally”;⁴ and that, growing together in love and faithfulness, we can give children roots and wings.

In temple mirrors of eternity, I reflected on First Dragon Gong, born A.D. 837 (late Tang dynasty) in southern China, and the succeeding Gong family generations to my father, our family’s 32nd recorded generation. My brother, sister, and I are

in our family’s 33rd generation; my sons and their cousins, the 34th generation; our grandson, the 35th recorded Gong family generation. In temple mirrors of eternity, I could not see a beginning or end of generations.

I then imagined not only a succession of generations but also a succession of family relationships. In one direction I saw myself as son, grandson, great-grandson, back to First Dragon Gong. In the mirrors in the other direction, I saw myself as father, grandfather, great-grandfather. I could see my wife, Susan, as daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter and, in the other direction, as mother, grandmother, great-grandmother.

In temple mirrors of eternity, I began to understand my wife and myself as children of our parents and parents to our children, as grandchildren of our grandparents and grandparents to our grandchildren. Mortality’s great lessons distill upon our souls as we learn and teach in eternal roles, including child and parent, parent and child.

The Savior’s Atonement

Scripture describes our Savior as “the Father and the Son.”⁵ Having dwelt in flesh and subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, our Savior knows how to succor us, His people, in our pains, afflictions, temptations, sicknesses, even death.⁶ Having “descended below all things,”⁷ our Savior can bear our griefs and carry our sorrows.⁸ “He was wounded for our transgressions, . . . bruised for our iniquities . . . ; [with our Savior’s] stripes we are healed.”⁹

From the councils in heaven, our Savior sought only to do His Father’s will. This pattern of Father and Son can help explain the paradox “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”¹⁰ The world pursues enlightened self-interest. Yet the power is not in us to save ourselves. But it is in *Him*. Infinite and eternal,¹¹ only our Savior’s Atonement transcends time and space to

swallow up death, anger, bitterness, unfairness, loneliness, and heartbreak.

Sometimes things go wrong even though we have done our very best. A Lamb innocent and pure, our Savior weeps with and for us. When we always remember Him,¹² He can stand with us “at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in.”¹³ His “faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.”¹⁴ In drawing us to Him, our Savior also draws us to our Father in Heaven. While some things are imperfect on earth, we can trust our Heavenly Father to complete “redemption’s grand design, where justice, love, and mercy meet in harmony divine!”¹⁵

Opening the way for generations

A miracle of the images we discern in temple mirrors of eternity is that they— we—can change. When Jean and Walter Gong entered the new and everlasting covenant, they opened the way for ancestors (such as First Dragon Gong) to be sealed and for posterity to be born in the covenant. Please remember: as we reach out to each sister or brother, we bless generations.

The world is in commotion,¹⁶ but in His “only true and living church,”¹⁷ there is faith and no fear. In the words of the Apostle Paul, I also solemnly testify:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, . . .

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from

the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹⁸

I humbly witness: God lives. He “shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes”¹⁹— except the tears of joy when we see through temple mirrors of eternity and find ourselves home, pure and clean, our family generations sealed by priesthood authority in love, to shout, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Ephesians 2:19.
2. “I Love to See the Temple,” *Children’s Songbook*, 95.
3. “Young Women Theme,” *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 3.
4. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
5. Mosiah 15:2.
6. See Alma 7:11–12.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 122:5–8.
8. See Isaiah 53:4.
9. Isaiah 53:5.
10. Matthew 10:39.
11. See Alma 34:14.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
13. Mosiah 18:9.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 121:44.
15. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26; 88:91.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
18. Romans 8:38–39.
19. Revelation 21:4.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

My beloved brothers and sisters across the world, I express my deep admiration for the faith and courage I see in your lives. We live in a most remarkable time—but a challenging time.

The Lord alerts us to dangers ahead

The Lord has not left us alone in our quest to return to Him. Listen to His warning words alerting us to the dangers ahead: “Take . . . heed, watch and pray.”¹ “Beware lest ye . . . be deceived.”² “Be watchful and