



By President Hugh B. Brown (1883–1975)

First Counselor in the First Presidency

THE CASE FOR A LIVING PROPHET

In 1939, before the outbreak of World War II, Brother Brown was invited by a member of England’s House of Commons to present a legal argument for Brother Brown’s claim that Joseph Smith was a prophet. In an address given at Brigham Young University on October 4, 1955, titled “The Profile of a Prophet,” President Brown described their conversation (see speeches.byu.edu).

I began . . . , “You say that my belief that God spoke to a man in this age is fantastic and absurd?”

“To me it is.”

“Do you believe that God ever did speak to anyone?”

“Certainly, all through the Bible we have evidence of that.”

“Did He speak to Adam?”

“Yes.”

“To Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Joseph, and on through the prophets?”

“I believe He spoke to each of them.”

“Do you believe that contact between God and man ceased when Jesus appeared on the earth?”

“No, such communication reached its climax, its apex, at that time.”

“Do you believe, sir, that after Jesus was resurrected, a certain



lawyer—who was also a tentmaker by the name of Saul of Tarsus—when on his way to Damascus talked with Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, resurrected, and had ascended into heaven?”

“I do.”

“Whose voice did Saul hear?”

“It was the voice of Jesus Christ, for He so introduced Himself.”

“Then, I am submitting to you in all seriousness that it was standard procedure in Bible times for God to talk to man.”

“I think I will admit that, but it stopped shortly after the first century of the Christian era.”

“Why do you think it stopped?”

“I can’t say.”

“You think that God hasn’t spoken since then?”

“I am sure He hasn’t.”

“There must be a reason. Can you give me a reason?”

“I do not know.”

“May I suggest some possible reasons? Perhaps God does not speak to man anymore because He cannot. He has lost the power.”

He said, “Of course that would be blasphemous.”

“Well, then, if you don’t accept that, perhaps He doesn’t speak to men because He doesn’t love us anymore and He is no longer interested in the affairs of men.”

“No,” he said, “God loves all men, and He is no respecter of persons.”

“Well, then, if He could speak, and if He loves us, then the only other possible answer, as I see it, is that we don’t need Him. We have made such rapid strides in science and we are so well educated that we don’t need God anymore.”

And then he said—and his voice trembled as he thought of impending war—“Mr. Brown, there never was a time in the history of the world when the voice of God was needed as it is needed now. Perhaps you can tell me why He doesn’t speak.”

My answer was: “He *does* speak, He has spoken; but men need faith to hear Him.” ■