Request for a Common Council Tribunal - D&C 107:82-84

Submitted by: A common elder in the Melchizedek priesthood
Submitted to: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Care of: Doug Andersen, Director of Media Relations
Date of Submission: December 18, 2025

Dear Bishop Waddell,

Early in his tenure as an apostle, President Oaks wrote that one of the ways to properly handle a grievance with an officer is "to communicate with the Church officer who has the power to correct or release the person thought to be in error or transgression." (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "Criticism", *Ensign,* 1987).

That is good doctrine, but there seems to be a belief in the Church that there is an exception to that rule, and that presidents have immunity from investigation and disciplinary oversight, even though D&C 107:82-84 expressly indicates that no such immunity exists.

In 2010, eight years prior to pursuing open publication of my complaint against President Oaks and other members of the First Presidency in 2018, I asked my stake president to forward my opposing vote to the Presiding Bishop of the Church, since that is the officer who has disciplinary authority over members of the First Presidency, per the Common Council protocol in D&C 107:82-84.

My request was denied, my temple recommend was canceled in response to my vote of opposition, and I was warned to drop my grievances and to avoid mentioning such issues going forward.

Other opposing voters have been treated in similar or even harsher ways, and their votes have been ignored and trampled on. One example is when Sam Young made a complaint in 2018 about the

impropriety of Church officers being allowed to engage in sexually explicit questioning of minors during Church-sponsored interviews. As part of his complaint, Sam issued a vote of opposition against the First Presidency.

Instead of handling Sam's vote with respect and due process, the stake president arrogated power to himself that rightly belongs to the Presiding Bishop, and he dismissed Sam's vote out of hand. And then on top of that, he went full goose step, albeit with good intentions, and hanged Sam from the ecclesiastical gallows. Not cool.

In the Church at present, excommunication is being used at the local level in a way that accidentally damns or destroys the due process that is indicated by the laws of the Church in cases where a president of the Church is accused of wrongdoing or neglect of duty.

In response to his excommunication, Sam offered the following analysis:

> "What a supreme disappointment. Let me start by forgiving my stake president. In a church court he is the sole decision maker. No one else has a vote. But, I'm not going to lay this travesty on him. I don't believe he had any choice. This has been orchestrated by the very people who felt their authority was threatened by me—the leadership at the very top. They have shown their true colors. This verdict is all about them and their power structure. They sent down the edict to protect themselves…"

While Sam is correct that the orchestration was from the top (at least passively, due to the existing policies and doctrines), he is mistaken that the stake president had no choice. If the stake president had been

honoring the charter of his calling, he would have immediately delivered Sam's vote of opposition to the Presiding Bishop.

Logically and scripturally, stake presidents have no authority to adjudicate opposing votes that are made against officers who outrank them. A stake president who tries to dismiss a vote that is made against a member of the First Presidency is like a local police officer who mistakenly tries to hide or dismiss an affidavit of misconduct that has been made against a mayor or chief of police.

The lower level officer lacks any authority to manage that complaint, other than to promptly forward it to a duly appointed attorney general or judge, so that it can be actioned and brought to closure by whichever officer has the relevant jurisdiction.

In this regard, there has been a failure to respect the high level disciplinary laws of the Church for many years, and as a result the overall disciplinary environment in the Church is out of order.

If there really is nothing amiss in the Church, the questions that are noted later in this letter should be easy for you to answer, and you should be able to get back to me promptly with straightforward, honest, and cogent responses to all of those questions.

But the fact of the matter is that you won't want to answer my questions. Further, chances are probably close to 100 percent that the First Presidency would not "authorize" you to answer those questions.

Importantly, you don't need the permission or approval of the First Presidency to answer my questions, and you would be violating the charter of your office if you yielded to their preference in the matter, instead of coming to an independent decision on your own.

When it comes to answering questions that intersect with D&C 107:82-84, you outrank the First Presidency. In this one narrow area of Church governance, your keys have primacy. If you don't understand or appreciate that reality, I would suggest that you should resign from your position immediately.

Although you don't have the right to create new laws within the Church, you do have the right and the responsibility to interpret all of the existing laws with accuracy and righteousness, and to be a check and balance on the First Presidency and hold them accountable if they violate any laws of the Church in a serious or persistent way.

If you are looking to the First Presidency to be your babysitter or rule-giver with regard to what the laws of the Church are, or how to enforce those laws, then you aren't going to be able to do your job in a meaningful or virtuous way.

Every common member also has the right and responsibility to understand by the Spirit what D&C 107:82-84 actually means and what a proper application of it is (Moroni 10:5, Moroni 7:15-16).

However, you are the only member of the Church at present who has the administrative authority to actually operationalize that law and put it into real-world practice.

One of the complaints I've gotten from local officers is that I'm being "unforgiving" towards the presiding officers. That doesn't happen to be accurate, and even if it was, it would not in any way neutralize the legitimacy of my grievances. I freely forgive the officers for all of their mistakes and no doubt I would make 100x worse mistakes than they

are making, albeit probably in different areas of governance, if the roles were reversed.

There is an important difference between spiritual forgiveness and operational toleration. Was the Savior lacking in forgiveness towards the Sanhedrin in Matthew 23? Why was he being such a Big Meany, and publicly criticizing the presiding priesthood officers with such intensity and sharpness?

As much as he clearly forgave the leaders on a personal or spiritual level, he could not silently tolerate their operational violations of the law at the temporal level. Such tolerance would have involved an unrighteous level of complicity. Same situation here. Spiritual or personal forgiveness is separate from holding abusive officers accountable at the temporal or operational level.

If we find out that someone is harming a child, we can and should immediately forgive that abuser on a spiritual or personal level, and consider that they might have been abused themselves, when they were a child, and give them all of the compassion and broken-heartedness towards their situation that is merited.

But at the same time we don't tolerate their crimes. We immediately and with extreme prejudice seek to do everything within the law that is possible to protect the child that is being harmed, and to hold the abuser accountable, and to remove that abuser from society.

Or at least we *should* be doing that. It seems that the Church's current policies are to some extent backwards and sketchy with regard to handling sex abuse within the Church, and some of those policies need immediate improvement. Hence my grievance #3 noted later in this letter.

It has been said that “the Church is not a democracy.” Okay, granted, it’s not a democracy. What is it, then?

In 1979, President N. Eldon Tanner asserted that the Church is: “a theocracy, where God directs his church through representatives chosen by him.”

Okay, sure, that fits during the moments when good revelation is at work. But what about when the leaders are teaching ignorant and abusive things like when Brigham Young was teaching in favor of slavery, violence, and revenge, in opposition to D&C 101:79, Exodus 20:13, and D&C 98?

What should we call the Church during those painful times of bad leadership? A failed theocracy? As if God cannot keep his own house in order?

It turns out that what the Church actually is, is a *constitutional stewardship*. According to scripture, the Church is a constitutional organization that is built upon eternal law (D&C 42:59-60). The laws of the Church outrank the temporary mortal stewards.

In this regard, the Church is not an automatic or flawless theocracy at any given moment. It’s a constitutional structure in which the opportunity for a theocracy to manifest itself does exist, but there is no guarantee that such an outcome will actually take place.

There is no divine enforcement that all of the “Christmas lights” on the tree will be on at the same time, or that the lights turned on by one presidential administration will be kept on by the subsequent administration(s).

In the Church's blueprint are divinely established balances of power and precisely arranged disciplinary mechanisms that allow us to maintain a house of order, should we be obedient enough to actually follow those rules. Having been given correct principles, our task is to govern ourselves righteously.

Both the presiding officers and the common membership have the responsibility to understand and honor the laws of the Church, but that doesn't mean that they will actually do either of those things.

Given the long laundry list of abuses and acts of neglect that have been committed by essentially every president in Church history, it is more than clear that the Common Council protocol (D&C 107:82-84) has been underutilized and improperly ignored for the vast majority of the Church's timeline (cross reference D&C 121:39).

When the slavery, violence, and revenge doctrines were being taught in the 1850s and 60s, the Presiding Bishop should have impaneled a Common Council tribunal to rein in Brigham Young and correct or release him.

Unfortunately, Edward Hunter, the Presiding Bishop during Brigham's presidency, agreed with Brigham Young in relation to those errant doctrines, as did most of the membership, thus there was no accountability, and the bad behavior prevailed. Orson Pratt implored the Church to repent, but his efforts weren't enough to turn the tide. The Church and its laws were perfect, but the mortal obedience to those laws was lacking.

Adding to the chaos, starting in 1890, it became more or less outlawed within the Church to even talk about Common Council tribunals in an open or dispassionate way, and public criticism of the leaders became

forbidden. Votes of opposition against the top officers were eventually outlawed, at least implicitly, when in 1934 the temple recommend interview started to include questions that interfered with the free-will aspect of the vote.

In 1981, Elder Bruce R. McConkie attempted to convince BYU professor Eugene England of the following:

> "It is my province to teach to the Church what the doctrine is. It is your province to echo what I say or to remain silent. You do not have a divine commission to correct me or any of the Brethren. If I lead the Church astray, that is my responsibility, but the fact still remains that I am the one appointed with all the rest involved so to do."

The fact of the matter is that common members *do* have a divine commission to correct the leaders (D&C 124:144). Common votes of disapproval represent a soft (non-binding) veto which acts as a symbolic or persuasive scepter of opposition against doctrinal errors, unrighteous dominion, bad policies, or anything else that we might not like.

Along with that, the Common Council protocol (D&C 107:82-84) has an administratively binding power to discipline or remove abusive or neglectful presidents of the Church.

Asking for that disciplinary tribunal to be impaneled in relation to alleged bad behavior of the president has precedent.

In 1834, Sylvester Smith "brought charges" and asked the Presiding Bishop to consider calling a Common Council to investigate Joseph Smith. A tribunal was impaneled, and Joseph was investigated quite

intensively. The court eventually determined that the president was innocent on all counts. The accusations had included a claim that tithing funds had been misused, along with an accusation that Joseph had tried to physically harm Sylvester by throwing the camp bugle at him, and accusations that Joseph had engaged in unrepentantly abusive tirades and/or unmitigated tyrannical behavior in general.

Although it was established during the trial that Joseph did have a bit of a temper and had potentially gotten out-of-line a few times, it was felt by the tribunal that those mistakes did not rise to the level of requiring formal punishment or a release from office.

Nonetheless, the fact that the tribunal had been impaneled in the first place, and that Joseph had been subjected to intensive scrutiny and investigation, was in itself a relatively sharp censure, or a “check and balance” of the president.

Joseph himself noted that as painful as the episode had been, it was not necessarily unwarranted, and that it might have been a net positive for the Church:

> “If the Sylvester Smith case brought Joseph’s leadership into question, it also vindicated the procedures he had put in place for dealing with controversy. The long debates in council settled the “great difficulty,” as Joseph called it. Sylvester stayed on to become a president of the soon-to-be-appointed Seventy and act for a time as Joseph Smith’s clerk. Looking back, Joseph concluded that such experiences may be "necessary to perfect the Church.” A council with many Church members present had heard both sides, deliberated, and decided. The fifteen outside members attested to the results and assured the Church “that every appearance of evil is, in this place, searched out,” by

> implication meaning purported evil in the Prophet himself." (Richard Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, page 249)

When the complaints were made against Joseph Smith in 1834 (and against Sidney Rigdon in 1844), the grievances in those cases were promptly delivered to the Presiding Bishop and it was then at his discretion as to whether a Common Council was warranted or not.

There was no hand-wringing or squeamishness about the fact that such complaints existed or had been made, and the plaintiffs were not automatically considered to be "apostates." It was understood that the Church's blueprint contained an orderly protocol for how to handle grievances with members of the First Presidency, and due process was followed.

In addition, the process in 1834 was carried out in an open and transparent manner. The common membership knew that a Common Council had been asked for and then convened, and they were awaiting the results:

> "...the *Evening and Morning Star* printed the council's findings for the benefit of the Church. Everyone wanted to know how their prophet behaved and if he lived in accord with "the true principles of his profession as a man of God." (*Rough Stone Rolling*, pg. 247)

More to the point: because the alleged transgressions that were at issue were committed and witnessed in public, or were related to the official duties of the president, the laws of the Church required a public response (D&C 42:91).

With regard to public criticism of officers, there is at present a mistaken definition of "evil speaking" that is being enforced in the Church: the idea that all public criticism of priesthood officers is evil. This is trampling on innocent members of the Church and creating an environment that is hostile to free speech.

D&C 121:16-19 clearly indicates that "evil speaking of the Lord's anointed" has to do with making *false* accusations. As the Savior demonstrates in Matthew 23, public criticism of priesthood officers is virtuous as long as it is (1) accurate and (2) the transgressions or mistakes that are being criticized are relevant to the public (D&C 42:91).

Maxine Hanks has put forward a good explanation for how freedom of speech can be respected while still maintaining a house of order:

> "Many of the requirements in the letters to John and Kate are totally unrealistic — that they should take down their web sites and renounce their public views. While all of us can improve our communication, temper ourselves in ways that are more sensitive or professional or effective, none of us should ever silence ourselves, our truth, our convictions in the public sphere of ideas, which is where they belong. This is why I cited the difference between secular and sacred spaces — it's reasonable to ask Ordain Women to refrain from bringing public dissent about doctrine into Church spaces (Temple Square and wards). But it's unreasonable to ask OW to cease their public discussion or dissent, since the public, secular sphere is where discussion and debate belongs."

At present, the Church is seriously out of order from a high-level disciplinary point of view. The top officers are not abiding by some of

the plainly written and obvious rules that exist, votes of opposition have been implicitly outlawed, freedom of speech has been chilled to the bone, and the current culture and policies of the Church make it essentially impossible to even talk about the situation.

It's clearly not being done on purpose or with any kind of malice. The leaders are obviously trying hard to do a good job, and they deserve all due respect and honor for the many good and inspired things they accomplish in many areas of Church governance. It's not even their fault that some of the current problems exist in the first place (they inherited bad traditions from earlier officers) but it is their duty to fix these issues.

Irrespective of how we got into the present mess, if the incumbent officers aren't willing to fix the problems, then it's your duty to intervene and restore order (D&C 107:82-84). Whether you like it or not, that is one of the responsibilities that comes with your keys.

In sum: at its core, the Church is technically not a theocracy. The Savior is not babysitting or micromanaging the mortal officers in a continuous or constant way. God is bound by eternal law, and there are limits to the level of interaction that he can engage in, when it comes to correcting mortal officers or enforcing a house of order. All of the laws, principles, and keys that we need to manage the Church properly have already been delegated to us, we simply have to use them.

At minimum, there are three conditions that must be met for the Church to operate as a house of order and for it to be the self-regulating *constitutional stewardship* that it was divinely designed to be:

1. Common members must understand and honor their voting duty (D&C 124:144).

2. The Presiding Bishop must understand and honor his keys in relation to acting as a check and balance on the top level executive officers (D&C 107:82-84)

3. The First Presidency must allow basic freedom of speech and not punish votes of opposition (D&C 121:41-46). Allowing free speech means the allowance of respectful criticism of the officers, policies, and doctrine in secular forums, so that honest and constructive discussion can take place.

If and when we choose to honor our stewardships more completely, resolve the long-standing problems that exist, and make a true commitment to maintaining a house of order, a new era will begin, and there will be a renaissance of immense value and progress within the Church.

GREIVANCES

1. Dishonesty
2. Potential Misuse of Church Funds
3. Improper Sex Abuse Policies
4. Mistaken Definition of Evil Speaking
5. Mistaken Definition of Apostasy
6. Priestcraft
7. Idolatry
8. Corruption of Common Consent
9. Chaos with Law of Chastity Guidance
10. Improper Legal Structure of the Church
11. Improper Investments

12. Improper Teachings about Violence

Dishonesty

Exhibit A

President Oaks was an apostle in 1993 and there's no reason to believe that he's improved his behavior since that time. It's not reasonable to believe that he's ignorant of the behind-the-scenes orders that led to what Paul Richards complained about. This is a problem that merits investigation:

> "The church wants to portray an image of being unified in all it does. It wants Mormons to be unquestioning. I worked in public affairs for the church for 13 years, and I had to lie all the time, and this has really battered my faith." (Paul Richards, former BYU spokesman, *Arizona Republic*, October 10, 1993).

Exhibit B

In 2014, during a back-channel SCMC hunting expedition to get a member of the Church excommunicated who was perceived to be troublesome, there were allegedly public relations lies that were authorized by top officers (see here). That situation needs to be investigated and officers need to be held accountable if those lies were authorized or passively allowed to be put into circulation by officers who are now members of the First Presidency.

Exhibit C

President Oaks was an apostle when the following travesty took place: The Best Conference Talk You've Never Read.

The presiding officers published an edited and misleading version of a General Conference address in a way that intentionally presented the edited version of the talk as if it had been the original version.

Key words were removed or altered, in order to dramatically change the original intent and meaning of the message, with no disclaimer about the changes that were made. It was an intentional falsification of the official record, which, notwithstanding was motivated by good intentions, was a violation of the trust that officers are supposed to uphold, and it was an unacceptable act of unrighteous dominion.

It's fine if the leaders didn't like Poelman's talk. They could have issued a press release clarifying that the Church's official position on XYZ was actually thus and so, and that Poelman talk wasn't up to par.

But trying to gaslight people or twist reality into a fairytale is totally out of line. There's no way that the Savior is okay with this sort of behavior. We need to acknowledge those past mistakes and make a commitment to avoid repeating them.

One of the current temple recommend questions is: "Do you strive to be honest in all that you do?" Are the current leaders actually able to answer that question in the affirmative?

It seems the leaders are in some cases striving with immense effort to actually mislead and deceive people. Not acceptable. Public acknowledgement is needed, rather than the anti-repentance, anti-apology position that we currently have.

Exhibit D

LDS scholar Armand Mauss once called the Church's "we don't know" position in relation to Brigham's early teachings "a good public relations tactic" but "somewhat disingenuous". He wrote:

> "I am aware that the official "explanation" offered these days for denying the priesthood to blacks is that "we don't know." …It is also a good public relations tactic, since it has the effect of changing the subject before it gets complicated. Yet it is also somewhat disingenuous to say that we don't know, and it is certainly an unsatisfactory response to any of our converts, investigators, or youth who are conscientiously troubled by this chapter in our history, especially if they are black. The fact is that we do have a lot more relevant historical knowledge than would be indicated by the we-don't-know response. This knowledge, furthermore, is based on authoritative historical research by responsible scholars…"

Less diplomatic members would use slightly sharper language than Mauss used. Such as: the leaders are being intentionally deceptive or wilfully ignorant, due to their misguided attempts to prop up Wilford Woodruff's 1890 "impossible to lead you astray" fairytale. They are trying to force his misguided worldview onto reality, and it results in an unacceptable and dishonest mess.

With regard to the practice of banning blacks from the priesthood, the current wording (established in 2013) for the preface to *Official Declaration 2* asserts: "Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice".

That statement is patently false and dishonorable. Brigham Young's public speeches are undeniably "Church records", and those records provide conclusive evidence in the matter. In 1973, Lester Bush noted the following:

> "Young appears to both confirm himself as the instigator of the priesthood policy, and to bear testimony to its inspired origin: "Any man having one drop of the seed of [Cain] … in him cannot hold the priesthood and if no other Prophet ever spake it before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ I know it is true and others know it." This clearly is one of the most important statements in the entire history of this subject."

It is beyond argument that Brigham Young originated the ban and we know his exact doctrinal reasons for doing so, which happens to be embarrassing to the Church.

Claiming that we have no clear insights into the priesthood ban is an unacceptable falsehood that actually *destroys* people's trust in the Church. Please take the time to understand what happened to a member named Marcelo in this regard. If the Church would simply be honest about the matter, and repent of the long-standing dishonesty that has been taking place, it would heal a lot of wounds.

Anyone who has looked at even a fraction of Church history with the slightest measure of honesty or dispassion knows that the Saints have been led astray for long periods of time on very important issues, and that various major doctrines and policies have turned out to be uninspired and problematic. Bruce R. McConkie essentially admitted that fact to Eugene England in 1981, but then McConkie frames the issue –the problem of high-level officers accidentally leading the

membership astray– as being an elite leadership issue that only the top officers need to worry about.

Elder McConkie was acutely mistaken about that. By taking the position that he took, which is essentially still the position of the leadership at present, it creates a sort of improper “Indulgence” or permission to sin, for leaders who hide problematic information based on faulty ends-justify-the-means logic, or who use deception in an attempt to gaslight the membership or create plausible deniability.

Of relevance:

> "An unwillingness to call the former policy racist and, therefore, wrong, unjustified, harmful, un-Christian and indefensibly regrettable is, however subtly, still fundamentally racist," Brad Kramer, a BYU graduate who lives in Ann Arbor, Mich., wrote on the Mormon blog bycommonconsent.com. "The priesthood/temple ban is, at present, not just a symptom of a racist past. It is ... an unhealed open wound on the body of a still racist present." The sooner Mormons "condemn the racism of our past," Kramer argued, the sooner they can "experience the full power of repentance." (source)
>
> "Any celebration is only half as good without a heartfelt and sincere apology to people of African descent," says Darron Smith, a black Mormon activist who teaches physician-assistant studies at the University of Tennessee in Memphis. "An apology must also be directed to the white membership who were, likewise, led astray by the racist teachings of church authorities and, thus, crippled in their understanding of the concept of race. Smith keeps hoping, he says, believing the church "can do better." (source)

> “One of the problems we have in Mormonism is that we have loaded too much into the Truth Cart. And then when anything in the cart starts to rot a bit, or look unseemly upon further inspection, some have a tendency to overturn the entire cart or seek a refund for the whole lot. We have loaded so much into the Truth Cart largely because we have wanted to have the same kind of certainty about our religious claims—down to rather obscure doctrinal issues—as we do about scientific claims. . . Over the years the church leadership and laity have also done our religion no favors by putting more in the cart than the cart could possibly bear. . . . Many of the things which trouble people are things that we probably should never have been all that dogmatic about in the first place. I find that a little humility about our doctrine, especially given the contingencies of its historical development, goes a long way in remaining satisfied with the whole. . . .” (Patrick Q. Mason, Leonard J. Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture at Utah State University, *Planted*)

At present, instead of the leaders having a modicum of humility towards Church doctrine, they are imperious, defensive, insecure, adversarial, guilty of gaslighting, obsessed with plausible deniability, and sometimes blatantly dishonest. All of that needs to stop immediately. We need to do better.

Also from Patrick:

> “We have treated our prophets too often as demigods. We do not believe in prophetic infallibility. This cannot be said enough, and it cannot be taken seriously enough. We give it lip service but too often do not believe it, nor consider its implications, other than

> the intellectually lazy conclusion that the whole thing must either be all true or a complete fraud…"

I think Patrick is actually mistaken about the fact that "we do not believe in prophetic infallibility". The "impossible to be led astray" doctrine is very much the current "keystone" of Mormonism. He is right that we *shouldn't believe* that irrational idea, but as a people, we do aggressively teach it, it is in the canon (Official Declaration 1 and multiple curriculum items), there was an aggressive and explicit confirmation of it in 2014, and many members sincerely believe it.

Some members, when they finally realize the infallibility doctrine is hot garbage, they utterly melt down and mistakenly throw the baby out with the bathwater.

The infallibility doctrine is basically a timebomb. It is very harmful and destructive to true faith. All of the hand-wringing and gaslighting and dishonesty that goes into trying to prop up that albatross of a doctrine ultimately accomplishes the exact opposite of what those efforts are intending to do.

Rather than protecting "fledgling testimonies," the efforts to protect the infallibility doctrine create hollow pillars or sandy foundations that sooner or later will fall and must be rebuilt with something more solid and logical.

Exhibit E

The anti-baptism policy in 2015-2019 was a clear violation of 3 Nephi 11:23, 2 Nephi 26:33, D&C 68:27, and Moses 6:54. As if that wasn't bad enough, it appears that a very potent amount of dishonesty was eventually added into the mix.

President Nelson's asserted in 2019 that the reason for the 2015 ban was:

> "We wanted to facilitate harmony in the home and avoid pitting children and parents against each other. Thus in 2015, the policy was made to assist children and their parents in this circumstance, namely that children being raised by LGBT parents would not automatically be eligible for baptism at age eight. Exceptions to this policy would require First Presidency approval."

It appears that what actually happened is that in the aftermath of the Obergefell v. Hodges ruling in 2015, a bevy of misguided and overwrought attorneys convinced the presiding officers that various policy changes were necessary in order to protect the church from anti-discrimination or equal-rights lawsuits that might soon be launched.

The First Amendment clearly protects the church from those kinds of lawsuits, and the leaders should have known this, and should have avoided getting caught up in the hysteria that affected so many other religious organizations when the Obergefell ruling took place.

Gregory Smith's FAIR article argues that regardless of what the stated or intended reasons were, we can't necessarily know the real reasons. He quotes President Oaks to support that view:

> "Let's [not] make the mistake that's been made in the past … trying to put reasons to revelation. The reasons turn out to be man–made to a great extent. The revelations are what we

> sustain as the will of the Lord and that's where safety lies." [source]

This position doesn't necessarily hold water in light of 2 Nephi 26:33, Moroni 7:15-16, Moroni 10:5, Matthew 7:7, James 1:2, D&C 1:19, 2 Nephi 28:4, and 2 Nephi 28:31–

> "And [the Lord] doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men…"
>
> "And by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things…"
>
> "…and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night. For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man…"
>
> "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."
>
> "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."
>
> "...man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh—But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world…"
>
> "And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance."

> “Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Gregory Smith also argues:

> “Some will use the policy change to claim that the Church is not led by revelation, or that policies with which they disagree are not inspired. Others will have a witness of their own that the leaders are led by God, and be moved to sustain them. There are at least two potential differences between these groups. The second has revelation of their own which puts them at peace with current policies, but which can also incline them to welcome change if it comes. The first does not, yet. The first group risks judging the Church and its leaders by whether their decisions accord with their ideas of how things should be, on the timetable that they think proper. The second group understands that prophets, by their nature, may say or do things we do not expect or understand. They have faith, which includes trust in both God and those he has called to lead.”

This “all or nothing” logic is profoundly immature and does not take into account the obvious mistakes that have taken place when councils get twisted around the axle on important issues and unanimously choose the wrong path. If we are willing to recognize mistakes have been made in areas XYZ, this does not mean that we cannot also recognize valid revelation was received in areas ABC.

Rather than trying to reduce reality into a strict binary, we should recognize that the Church is *sometimes* led by revelation, and that it *sometimes* led by the well-intentioned but very damaging mistakes of men. And Moroni provides the antidote to that painful reality by warning us on the title page of the Book of Mormon that we should not

allow the mistakes of men to destroy our connection to the divine. We should not throw the baby out of the window along with the dirty bathwater.

Putting blind or unreserved faith in mortal officers leads to a situation where members will eventually find themselves in opposition to the Spirit in some areas of the gospel. In such cases one of four outcomes typically occurs:

- Members who are determined to continue anchoring their faith in mortal officers will quench the Spirit and support bad policies and doctrine.
- Members who are spiritually weak will melt down and reject the Church and its leaders wholesale.
- Members who are spiritually careless will put the topic on their "shelf of mysteries" without pressing for a resolution.
- Members who have taken the Spirit to be their guide (D&C 45:57) will come to understand the mistake for what it is, and will overlook the issue if it's not of high importance, or will offer righteous opposition, if the situation merits such opposition (D&C 124:144, D&C 107:82-84, Mosiah 18:9).

To support his "all or nothing" thesis, Gregory Smith includes the following quote from President Nelson:

> "When we convene as a Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, our meeting rooms become rooms of revelation. The Spirit is palpably present. As we wrestle with complex matters, a thrilling process unfolds as each Apostle freely expresses his thoughts and point of view. Though we may differ in our initial perspectives, the love we feel for each other is constant. Our unity helps us to discern the Lord's will for His

> Church. In our meetings, the majority never rules! We listen prayerfully to one another and talk with each other until we are united. Then when we have reached complete accord, the unifying influence of the Holy Ghost is spine-tingling! We experience what the Prophet Joseph Smith knew when he taught, “By union of feeling we obtain power with God.” No member of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve would ever leave decisions for the Lord’s Church to his own best judgment!”

The implication here is that “union of feeling” in the top council(s) is always an indication that the Spirit has presented the truth and that the truth has been accepted. That is wishful thinking. Sometimes a union of feeling exists when a spirit other than the Holy Ghost has prevailed, or due to the impure desire to have easy closure of a complex issue, or to yield unrighteously to the president or to the majority, in which case the objectors don’t properly hold their ground.

Based on the lack of transparency from HQ regarding other important policies, and the fact that the anti-baptism policy was not proactively presented to the membership and only became known after it was leaked, those realities lend credence to the conclusion that the entire episode was improperly handled and that some level of dishonesty and/or willful ignorance were involved.

The obvious answer to the 2019 dilemma would have been something like this:

> “Dear members. Effective immediately, baptisms for [_____] no longer require special approval. We’d like to acknowledge that the original policy regarding the restriction on baptism was overreaching and mistaken. In retrospect we can see that, but at

> the time it was not clear to us. Please forgive us for that mistake and support us as we strive to do better going forward. Many of the issues at hand are highly complex and layered, and we don't always get things right. Please be as charitable and patient with us as possible, as we do our best to honor our callings and institute policies that seek to protect the Church and its members. Going forward, before instituting changes to leadership handbooks, we will present any proposed policy updates during General Conference and will carefully assess any and all feedback before implementing the proposed updates."

Would that really be so hard? Would it really be the end of the world to just be honest with the membership? Would it result in the instantaneous end of Mormonism, and everyone would run screaming for the door, to go join other churches or become atheists?

Honest and down-to-earth behavior from the leaders would improve the morale and faith within the Church. It seems one of the reasons why this is being resisted is because of the sunk cost fallacy that is taking place with the 1890 impossible-to-be-led-astray fairytale.

The fact that we mistakenly canonized Wilford Woodruff's idolatrous and irrational infallibility idea, circa 1890-1908, doesn't mean that we can't *un-canonize* it. And we should un-canonize it, immediately.

Exhibit F

I've been asked to avoid sharing specific details about one incident of the leadership's dishonesty because it would doxx the member who was on the receiving end of that dishonesty. An employee of the Church was instructed by top level officers to tell an explicit and premeditated lie to this person and quite a few others. It's similar to

what Paul Richards was complaining about in Exhibit A, but it involves a different employee of the Church. If you care to know the details, I'll send you the evidence.

Consider how perverse and evil it is that we currently teach the following doctrine:

> "…if [the president] ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it." (source)

The Lord does *not* in fact bless members who lie at the behest of the president. Prophets cannot hand out "Indulgences." Claiming otherwise is a form of taking the Lord's name in vain. That nakedly evil doctrine, the idea that committing sin for the president results in blessings from God, needs to be denounced and taken out of our active curriculum. And it needs to be done immediately.

Potential misuse of church funds

- Gift budgets for officers
- University tuition and extracurricular activities for officers' family members
- Excessive numbers of bodyguards
- Maid services
- Wasteful, un-Christlike lawsuits

All of the above things should be investigated and adjudicated by a Common Council to find out if any of those allegations have merit.

If these kinds of extravagant expenditures are being made with the Widow's Mite per the First Presidency's authorization, it would be an example of "grinding upon the face of the poor" and it warrants investigation and remediation, especially in light of the fact that impoverished members are in some cases being taught to pay tithing even when it means going without basic necessities.

If I give you my last 10 dollars I have for the month, in order to support the Church and its mission (preach the gospel, publish scriptures, etc.), and I make real sacrifices in order to make that monetary contribution, and then I find out you have gone out shopping and bought frivolous things with that Widow's Mite, or paid college tuition bills or soccer fees for your relatives, or wasted it on lawyers for mindless and misguided lawsuits, and you told me in the name of Christ that I'd be damned if I didn't give you that money, that is a de facto abuse of the tithing process.

In addition, the long-standing lack of expenditure transparency is unacceptable and violates the divine commandment that all things in the Church are to be done by common consent. It might also be that the Church's current guidance on tithing is not scripturally sound, and needs improvement.

Mistaken definition of evil speaking

President Oaks has put forward a mistaken definition of evil speaking. He claims that all public criticism of priesthood officers is evil, which is based on a mistaken reading of D&C 121. This is trampling on innocent members of the Church and creating an environment that is hostile to free speech.

Punishing members for presenting criticism in secular forums in relation to Church policies or doctrines is not appropriate, unless it can be proven that those who are offering such criticism are guilty of:

> (1) lying about the officers or making false accusations about them (D&C 121:16-19),
> (2) splashing details of actual or alleged private sins that don't relate to official duties (D&C 42:92), with a possible exception for sins that involve secular criminality.
> or (3) leaking private documents or breaking temple privacy covenants.

Here's an example for clarity's sake:

In 1852 as president of the Church, Brigham Young began teaching in favor in slavery, violence, and revenge, in opposition to D&C 101:79, Exodus 20:13, and D&C 98

Orson Pratt considered Brigham's teachings about slavery to be highly offensive and unacceptable. In response, he openly criticized Brigham Young and attempted to persuade him to improve. When Orson Pratt did that, the following conditions were relevant:

1. The accusations were true. Brigham was indeed teaching the things that Orson claimed were being taught.
2. Orson's criticism was related to teachings that Brigham Young was presenting in public. Actual or alleged sins of a private nature were not at issue.
3. Orson was not revealing privileged information nor was he breaking any covenants or promises.

A Common Council would have been entirely merited, in order to investigate Brigham Young and hold him accountable for the impure teachings he was putting forward.

The problem was that Edward Hunter, the Presiding Bishop at the time, had no interest in holding Brigham accountable. He largely agreed with the things that Brigham Young was teaching, and so did most of the Saints at the time.

Thus, Orson's lone "vote of opposition" was crushed and trampled on, and the abusive things that were being taught continued to hold sway for many years. A house of order was not maintained, and the Saints failed in their duty to hold the president accountable for his mistakes.

There was zero "evil speaking of the Lord's anointed", on Orson Pratt's part, in that situation. His public criticism of Brigham Young was justified and righteous, and it's tragic and dishonorable that very few if any members of the Church supported Orson's effort to resist the unrighteous things that Brigham Young was teaching.

Another example: in Galatians, with the Incident at Antioch, Paul publicly criticized Peter because Peter was openly teaching that convert baptisms should not proceed without circumcision for males. Paul argued that such a position was not in accordance with the commandments of God.

After significant public debate and disagreement, Peter and James relented, and acknowledged that Paul was correct to proceed with convert baptisms "as is". There was no evil speaking that took place on Paul's part. His public criticism of Peter was valid and turned out to be an important moment of progress that needed to happen. Public

mistakes from the presiding officers deserve a public response (D&C 42:91).

It's more than obvious that if the Savior were to come among us incognito as a common member at present, he would be cast out of the temple, and he would probably be excommunicated. No doubt he would violate the anti-free-speech provisions in our misguided definition of evil speaking in the most aggressive and pointed way possible. He would openly criticize our mistakes and our trampling on the laws of the Church, and we would take instant offense and find deep fault with him.

By outlawing all public criticism of priesthood officers, we have created a situation in the Church where bad doctrines and abusive behavior from the presiding officers is allowed to dominate our culture with impunity.

Mistaken definition of apostasy

Our current definition of apostasy is abusive and misguided. It's based on a poor reading of D&C 121.

Priestcraft

Institutionally enforced priestcraft at BYU and other Church-controlled environments where pay-to-teach contracts severely limit free speech is unacceptable. The so-called Academic Freedom policy is a deal with the devil because it makes the truth secondary to flavor-of-the-month orthodoxy.

Example: overlaying the Academic Freedom policy onto 1852, BYU instructors would be obligated to support Brigham Young's violent and pro-slavery teachings.

Meanwhile, instructors in the present day are expected to quietly avoid acknowledging Brigham Young's mistakes, and to treat his heresies and sins as being in the realm of "we don't really understand those things".

At present, the Church is paying elite professional scholars at BYU to teach a watered-down and tightly-censored version of the gospel.

While it would be unfair to say that BYU religion professors are failing to seek the welfare of Zion in a general sense, it is nonetheless the case that seeking the welfare of Zion is not their highest value in some areas of the gospel.

This is because to survive and advance in the pay-to-teach environment they've entered into, they have to gain and keep the praise of the temporary mortal officers, and to do that means that some topics of inquiry are off limits and must be ignored, even if doing so is neglectful and damaging to the welfare of Zion.

Paid teachers of religion within the Church are in a position where they are being asked to serve two different masters with equal loyalty, and that is not possible (Matthew 6:24). In light of this dilemma, a relatively strong argument can be made that having paid teachers of religion is inherently misguided and unrighteous in the first place (Alma 1:26, Mosiah 27:4-5).

Assuming for the sake of argument that paid religious instruction can be righteous and justified, the first and most obvious change that

would need to be instituted is a more intelligent and thoughtful policy with regard to freedom of speech (i.e., true academic freedom).

And for that to be possible, the current official definitions of apostasy and evil speaking would have to be improved, and the 1890 “impossible to be led astray” doctrine would have to be officially pulled down and broken apart.

Idolatry

In contrast to Brigham Young’s virtuous acknowledgement that he was capable of leading the Church astray, which included his admonition that the membership should anchor their trust in the Spirit rather than in mortal officers (which accords with 2 Nephi 28:31), the current officers teach that we should unreservedly obey mortal men.

This poison is found in our current curriculum and in Official Declaration 1. These current teachings are in violation of Exodus 20:3, 2 Nephi 28:31 and Matthew 6:24.

Given that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and Moroni did not claim doctrinal perfection, the 1890 Woodruff infallibility assertion is illogical and idolatrous. Further, Woodruff’s idea was adamantly and pre-emptively warned against by the apostle Franklin D. Richards in 1852 as being a doctrine that involves “slavery in the extreme.”

In sum: our claim that we can’t be led astray is an anti-repentance doctrine that was sowed into the Church in 1890 based on good intentions but bad logic, and it has resulted in a bumper crop of Tares. The “can’t be led astray” idea is crass idolatry, and it motivates endless dishonesty and gaslighting when trying to prop it up.

However, as radical, unscriptural, and nakedly idolatrous as Woodruff's "can't be led astray" idea actually is, it is not entirely out of the blue. It is likely that he derived it from D&C 21:4, as others have also done. In that revelation, the Lord commands:

> "Wherefore, meaning the Church, thou shalt give heed unto all the words and commandments which he [the president of the Church] shall give unto you…"

If one stops reading at the ellipsis, a relatively ironclad argument can be made that we do in fact have an unreserved or unconditional imperative to obey the prophet, whether he is right or wrong, and that the Lord will bless us in either case.

But the ellipsis is not where the commandment ends. There is an important caveat that follows, and ignoring that caveat results in a mistaken reading of what is actually being commanded.

In that scripture, the Lord is commanding us to heed the prophet to the exact extent that the prophet receives divine words and gives those words to us "as he receiveth them [from the Lord], walking in all holiness before the Lord".

From 1847-1877, is it the case that Brigham Young received words from the Lord regarding the Lord's position on slavery and violence toward blacks and others? And did he accurately relay divine words to us as he received them from the Lord, and was he walking in all holiness before the Lord in those particular matters?

Of course not. In those particular matters Brigham accidentally took the Lord's name in vain and presented teachings in the name of the

Lord that were not inspired, based on a reliance on his own mortal traditions and upbringing.

The Saints therefore had no obligation to obey Brigham Young in relation to those matters –quite the opposite. And Mountain Meadows would have never happened if the Saints would have been following the Spirit rather than obsessing over Brigham Young's misguided rhetoric.

Juantia Brooks proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the Saints were obsessed with Brigham's rhetoric, they were treating him as a god or an idol, and they ended up extrapolating and operationalizing his violent, revenge-focused rhetoric into real-world actions that violated the commandments of God.

It seems relatively clear that Brigham didn't personally or explicitly order the massacre, but a good handful of Saints believed that he was in favor of attacking or taking revenge on the perceived enemies of the Church, and his "tough guy" words provided plenty of room for that belief, and so their unreserved faith or worship in Brigham brought them into grievous sins.

Before the Saints could have rightly given heed to Brigham Young's instructions regarding slavery, killing blacks, or taking revenge on the perceived enemies of the Church, they first had an obligation to obtain a knowledge from the Holy Ghost that those words and instructions were actually from the Lord (2 Nephi 28:31). They failed to do this, and it brought dishonor upon the Church.

In the pure and original laws of the Church, there is no categorical or unreserved imperative to obey the president of the Church. We inserted that corruption into our scriptures in 1908 (18 years after the

1890 declaration), by canonizing Woodruff's "can't be led astray" idolatry.

Woodruff's outlawing of polygamy was virtuous, but not the poisonous "can't be led astray" tack-on that came with it. We might as well have canonized Brigham's pet doctrines related to slavery, and killing black-white interracial couples and their children.

But canonizing those misguided teachings would not have overruled the truth that is in D&C 101:79 or Exodus 20:13, or made Brigham's teachings magically true. And canonizing Woodruff's mistaken doctrine did not make his idea magically true. What it did accomplish is to massively dishonor the Church and to create a 100+ year fracture in our Armor of God, and take us deep into the mists of darkness predicted in 2 Nephi 28.

In sum: in D&C 21 is a conditional and limited imperative to obey the president. Unreserved obedience is not the command. We will be cursed if we follow prophets blindly or in an unreserved way (2 Nephi 28:31).

The Church as a whole has been cursed for engaging in that kind of blind followership. We have been cursed and yoked for many years with leaders who relentlessly reinforce Woodruff's idolatrous "impossible to be led astray" idea. The leaders have made his doctrine into the new and unholy keystone of modern Mormonism, overshadowing to some extent, the true gospel of Christ.

What this entire mess reveals is that holding keys and using them properly are two different things. One of the most critically damaging misunderstandings that currently exists in the Church is that being

called of God to preside is a great big “attaboy” pat on the back from the Lord. That belief is far from being accurate.

Being called of God to preside is partially a compliment and partially an insult. The compliment-to-insult ratio depends on how spiritually mature or immature the core average of the group happens to be (see 1 Samuel 8:7, Ezekiel 14, and D&C 130:20-21).

The more righteous the group is, the more of a compliment it is to be called to preside over that group. The more slothful and disobedient the group is, the more of an insult that calling is.

If Joseph Smith was a 9.8 level prophet, an honest person would have to admit that Brigham Young was somewhere around a 5.8 in terms of spiritual maturity, and maybe quite a bit lower.

When we see that dramatic fall in spiritual maturity from Joseph Smith to Brigham Young, why did that happen? Why did the Lord call by a revelation a racist, violent, immature tyrant to lead the Church, immediately after we had one of the most egalitarian, most peaceful, most spiritually mature, and most humble individuals that the world has seen since the Savior himself (D&C 135:3)?

The reason for that is because the law of restoration is real (D&C 130:20-21). We get the leaders we deserve and ask for. If we reject truth, that which we already have is taken away from us, and we become dumber spiritually the next day than we were the previous day (2 Nephi 28:30).

The early Saints rejected a significant amount of what Joseph taught. They were not willing to unpack and live the gospel on its own terms. They refused to engage with the Holy Ghost in many areas of the

gospel (2 Nephi 28:31), they refused to experiment upon the word or unlock the finer points of the commandments, and they wanted a babysitter or strongman to unpack the gospel for them and to command them in all things. And in many ways that is what Brigham Young was for the Saints and what he did for them.

God did not want to give the Saints a violent, immature, and racist leader, but the Saints were a violent, immature, and racist people, so that is all that the Lord could give them, per the law of restoration. The blind must be called to lead the blind. It is an immutable law (1 Samuel 8:7; Ezekiel 14).

The law of restoration requires that the blind must lead the blind, and that the virtuous must lead the virtuous. Both of these things are accomplished simultaneously when the Lord calls by revelation men who are on the high end of the core average to lead the group (e.g., King Saul, King David, Brigham Young, you and the other incumbent officers of the Church).

Importantly, Brigham Young was also chosen for his virtues. The early Saints were righteous and valiant in many important areas of the gospel, and so was Brigham Young. The Saints deserved Brigham as a leader for his virtues, and they respected him because he had those virtues. He was reflecting back to them their righteousness, while also reflecting back to them their blindnesses and mistakes.

The idea that “whom the Lord calls the Lord qualifies” is a mistaken idea. God is no respecter of persons, titles, or offices. He qualifies individuals in their callings to the exact extent that they approach him in humility and faith, and demonstrate to him that they are worthy to obtain the wisdom they are seeking. Holding the keys and using those keys to the full extent of their power are two very different things. Just

because the words of the officers are scripture when they speak by the Holy Ghost doesn't mean they will be speaking with that power in all official situations (or even that they will ever do it, e.g., Caiaphas).

In light of this reality, it can be understood why God would want us to vote against those who he has called by revelation (D&C 124:144). He wants us to symbolically reject blind leaders and press for improvement. He is forced to give us blind leaders (1 Samuel 8:7, Ezekiel 14, D&C 130:20-21), but he does not want us to have them.

If we were righteous he could give us righteous leaders but since we are spiritually immature as a group, he is forced to choose spiritually immature leaders – leaders like yourself and the other incumbent officers, who are tangled up in institutional yesmanship, idolatry, and other bad behaviors, because that is a reflection of the overall spiritual condition of the membership.

At the same time, you and the other officers are very righteous men in many areas of the gospel. You have lived lives of deep service and high virtue, and you are very much on the high end of the average.

The Church rightly deserves the excellent and inspired leadership that you provide in many areas of the gospel, because the core average of the Saints are a highly virtuous people in the same areas of the gospel in which you are righteous.

Meanwhile, the Church deserves your blindness, carelessness, and poor leadership in various other areas, because those weaknesses are a reflection of the overall condition of the core average of the Church membership. In sum, you and the other presiding officers are simultaneously acting as righteous and wicked placeholders within your callings. (By proving contraries, the truth is made manifest.)

When a critical mass of members repents and improves, the existing leaders will either take the hint and repent and improve along with the core average, or God will replace those leaders in relatively short order with new ones who are at the newly attained level of spiritual maturity that the group is manifesting, so that the overall virtue of the group will be reflected back to the group.

In either case, the membership will always be blessed and rewarded –or cursed and punished– with exactly the caliber of leaders that they deserve (D&C 130:20-21). In this way, spiritual parity is maintained between the mortal leadership and the core average of the membership.

Whether we like it or not, that is how the law of restoration operates, and this idea is not a new one. It's found in 1 Samuel 8:7, Ezekiel 14, and in Joseph Smith's Ezekiel 14 speech. The Lord is not babysitting or micromanaging the Church. He's already delegated to us all of the necessary self-governance laws for the Church to be self-regulating and self-healing as an organization.

At present, we are afflicted or obsessed with a kind of chronological idolatry: "living prophets outrank dead ones". That is not a virtuous or intelligent way to understand the gospel, and it ignores 2 Nephi 28:31. As already mentioned, the slavery issue proves that living prophets don't automatically outrank dead ones. Here is another example:

- 1841 - Joseph Smith - D&C 124:144 commandment from the Lord to "approve or disapprove" of officers during general conference - but there was no clear explanation about what the vote actually means, lots of different ideas were discussed and tried out

- 1879 - John Taylor - common consent votes during general conference are administrative, mob democracy, majority rules

- 1904 - Joseph F. Smith - common consent votes are symbolic, the vote is free-will, vote your conscience, it's fine to vote in opposition

- 1919 - George Albert Smith - voting in favor means you are promising to obey the officers in an unreserved way, and you should always vote in favor

- 1934 - Heber J. Grant - members have to vote in favor else no temple recommend will be issued, plus it's an oath of obedience like what George Albert Smith taught

- 1970 - Harold B. Lee - reconfirms the 1919-1934 interpretation during General Conference

- 2014 - Russell M. Nelson - reconfirms the 1919-1934 interpretation during General Conference

That is heavy chaos, we've got 4 major interpretations that don't match up, so whose interpretation is correct? It's supposedly fine to just choose the most recent interpretation?

The best interpretation of common consent happens to be from Joseph F. Smith, 1904.

And the reason I know that is because I've taken the time to experiment upon the word (Alma 32, John 7:17), and to ask the Lord with real intent about it (Moroni 10:5, James 2).

In our current approach, there is little to no testing that takes place in the harder-edged areas of the gospel. Plenty of testing is done in the light and sweet and easy areas of the gospel, and everyone gets the right answers, but in the more difficult areas, the Saints are passive and waiting to be told what to believe and how to behave, which amounts to crass idolatry.

Corruption of common consent

The symbolic vote of common consent (D&C 20:65-67, 124:144) has been corrupted into a mandatory and improper oath of unreserved obedience to mortal men.

As a result, there is an ongoing failure to record and respond appropriately to opposing votes. Stake presidents are being mistakenly allowed to dismiss votes of opposition made against members of the First Presidency, in violation of D&C 107:82-84, which indicates the Presiding Bishopric has jurisdiction.

When a common member gives his sacred vote of symbolic consent to leaders who he knows are being abusive, neglectful, or are trampling on the laws of the Church, that member becomes complicit in that abuse and fails in his duty to be a responsible and righteous voter within the Church.

The right to vote in opposition (D&C 124:144) exists for a good reason, and opposing votes are underused and misunderstood in the Church at present.

The current interpretation of what the vote is and how it should be used is a travesty and an insult to the laws of the Church. It involves multiple policy innovations that cannot be reconciled with the obvious intent of the scriptural passages at issue, or with the plain and simple concept of “common consent”.

One of the problems that arises with a failure to record and process opposing votes that are made against the First Presidency, is that we lose track of what our overall Unity Index is.

Because the vote has been twisted into a mandatory oath of obedience or testimony moment for keys/callings, and has gotten tangled up with the temple worthiness process (which took place in 1934 and is not the divinely appointed purpose of the vote), many of the apparent votes of approval are coerced or automatic rubber stamps, and are not genuine expressions of approval.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that less than 65 percent of the active membership would vote in approval of the incumbent officers if they were not being coerced or forced to vote in approval due to the temple access issue. And it would probably be a significantly lower percentage than that, if members understood the divinely appointed purpose of the vote.

The vote is not supposed to be a testimony moment about keys/callings or an idolatrous oath of obedience. It’s supposed to be an honest report card that reveals how unified or fractured we are, by providing frequent symbolic pass/fail grades for the leadership.

Common members have a divinely appointed opportunity to “approve or disapprove” of how the officers are behaving in their callings. The mandatory oath idea that we are currently engaging in is a made-up

policy innovation that was put in place more than a hundred years ago. The current approach to the vote doesn't match up with the scriptures or with inspired prophetic guidance from earlier times.

Not only are we failing to obtain a true Unity Index metric by using the vote as a forced pledge of allegiance, but we are also failing to obtain an itemized breakdown of where the pain points are within the membership as a whole, and are missing out on all of the crowd-sourced intelligence and lived experience the membership that would be available if votes of opposition were recorded and taken seriously.

By making votes of opposition against general officers essentially illegal, we are damning ourselves into a forced or artificial unity that will never result in resolving our issues or becoming a people of one heart and one mind.

The current oath of obedience approach to voting, that is tangled up with temple recommend interview process, is unacceptable, and it has nothing to do with the spirit or letter of the law of common consent. At present, opposing votes are implicitly outlawed due to the improper way that the temple recommend questions are worded.

If you take the time to study the law of common consent with real intent, what becomes clear is that the law of common consent is actually the law of repentance at the group level.

Many members of the Church have essentially zero knowledge about what the law of common consent is or why it is important. They have not studied or prayed about it, and they are attempting to live on borrowed light in this area of the gospel. Our failure to obey this law is one of our most critical sins and blind spots as a people.

Properly understood, the law of common consent is an engine or activation lever for the law of repentance at the group level. Without obeying the law of common consent, we will forever be hiding our group sins and fractures, we won't be able to repent in some areas of the gospel, and we will continue to fail in our efforts to become a people of one heart and one mind.

When the Lord commands us to "approve, or else disapprove" of the officers that are presented to us at general conference (D&C 124:144), it is a divinely established way for the entire membership to communicate a symbolic expression of how unified or fractured we are. It is a group confession –a mass confession moment.

During that sacred moment, the Lord is inviting us to become vulnerable and exposed to one another, and to reveal the true state of our oneness or disunity. It is one of the most intimate and important moments in Mormon culture or experience (or at least, *it should be*).

During the mass vote of common consent, there is a remarkable event taking place at the macro level. The Savior is interviewing the woman that is the Church, his bride-to-be. He is asking his future bride for a public, mass confession of unity and purity, to find out the condition of his betrothed, to find out if she is prepared and ready for the Wedding Feast.

By requiring a public manifestation of approval or disapproval towards the presiding officers from the common membership, the Lord is implicitly asking all of the questions listed below, all at once:

- My bride, are all things in readiness?
- Have you prepared every needful thing?
- Have you taken care of the poor as I commanded?

- Are there any dissensions or contentions among you?
- Are there any false traditions or mistaken policies?
- Is there any unrighteous dominion from the presiding officers?
- Have you provided transparency of tithing expenditures as I commanded?
- Are you treating women, children, and new members properly within the Church?
- Is the curriculum honest and pure?
- Is there any priestcraft among you?
- Are you keeping proper records as I commanded you?
- Is the wedding dress clean and well mended?
- My beloved betrothed, can you confess with honesty and purity that you are of one heart and one mind? Are you ready in all things for the Wedding Feast –ready to present yourself without reservation or doubt, in humility, virtue, and righteousness?

When a member indicates a sign of approval during the vote of common consent –what we currently call "sustainment", which is not the language the Lord uses in the scriptures– that member is asserting to other members, to the leadership, and to the Lord, that he has no well-reasoned or firmly held objections to the status quo. He is making an assertion to heaven and to earth that *all is well in Zion.*

At present, in response to those implicit questions that the Savior is asking during the vote, the members of the Church are in many ways offering a false confession every six months. And so the Lord has to turn away in sorrow, and wait for repentance, before he can call the Wedding Feast.

In 1902 and 1904, Joseph F. Smith taught the following:

> “We desire that the brethren and sisters will all feel the responsibility of expressing their feelings in relation to the

> propositions that may be put before you. We do not want any man or woman who is a member of the Church to violate their conscience. We would like all to vote as they feel, whether for or against." (President Joseph F. Smith, 1902 October General Conference)
>
> "We desire that the Latter-day Saints will exercise the liberty wherewith they have been made free by the gospel of Jesus Christ; for they are entitled to know the right from the wrong, to see the truth and draw the line between it and error; and it is their privilege to judge for themselves and to act upon their own free agency with regard to their choice as to sustaining or otherwise those who should exercise the presiding functions among them. We desire the Latter-day Saints to exercise their prerogative, which is, to vote as the Spirit of the Lord prompts them on the measures and the men that may be presented to them." (President Joseph F. Smith, 1904 October General Conference)

In keeping with those incisive and inspired words, if members were encouraged today to vote honestly and according to their conscience –if the vote was treated as a free-will expression of approval or disapproval as it should be treated– there would be, at minimum, hundreds of thousands of opposing votes at the outset. Our fractures and disunity would be on full display.

That honest confession of our lack of unity would be devastating, but at least it would be accurate. It would provide a necessary starting point for beginning to address and heal our fractures with love, patience, longsuffering, repentance, and pure knowledge.

At present we are not making an honest confession. We are hiding our sins and fractures. We are pretending to be unified and pure, but we are not. Why is this happening? Why are we offering a false confession to the Savior?

One of the reasons for this is that a long time ago, we started to ignore the plain meaning of common consent and began to policy-innovate the symbolic vote of approval/disapproval into oblivion, changing it into a pledge of allegiance or a mandatory oath of obedience to the mortal officers– more or less a kind of misguided hosanna shout related to keys and callings.

This corruption of the law of common consent appears to have taken place during the period of 1919-1934, through policy innovations from George Albert Smith in response to the 1890 Wilford Woodruff doctrine that asserted "the Lord will never allow the president of the Church to lead the Saints astray" (canonized in 1908 as part of Declaration 1).

By 1908, the Church appears to have entirely forgotten or rejected these hard-edged early teachings:

> “President Joseph Smith read the 14th chapter of Ezekiel—said the Lord had declared by the Prophet, that the people should each one stand for himself, and depend on no man or men in that state of corruption of the Jewish church—that righteous persons could only deliver their own souls —applied it to the present state of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—said if the people departed from the Lord, they must fall—that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 237)

And from Brigham Young:

> “Suppose you are careless and unconcerned, and you give way to the spirit of the world, and I am led, likewise to preach the things of the world and to accept things not of God, how easy it would be for me to lead you astray! But I say to you live so that you will know for yourselves whether I tell the truth or not. That is the way we want all Saints to live.” (President Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 18:248)

And from the Book of Mormon:

> “Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.” (2 Nephi 28:31)

During the policy making events that overturned the free-will aspect of the general vote, it appears that George Albert Smith reasoned it this way: if it is really true that we can't be led astray (and he had come to believe that mistaken idea was true), then opposing votes are not only meaningless, they are actually evil.

Hence it was determined that it was necessary to retool what the vote meant and eventually make it mandatory for members to “vote the right way", under threat of losing one’s temple recommend. Voting in approval of the executive officers became mandatory for temple worthiness in 1934.

Thus the vote of common consent, which has the power to reveal the actual state of our unity and help us improve that unity and repent of

cultural mistakes over time, was transmuted into a lever of coercion that motivates or demands an expression of artificial unity, or an inappropriate (idolatrous) oath of obedience to temporary officers. This corruption of the law was not done on purpose, but due to carelessness and a reliance on mistaken doctrine.

In our current curriculum, we still make the claim that policies are supposed to be presented for a symbolic vote, even though this aspect of common consent has not been practiced for a long time. In some cases this lack of obedience to the law of common consent has led to embarrassing fallout for the leadership.

In sum, our treatment of the general vote of common consent over the course of our history has involved a tragic level of naivete and dismissiveness.

To understand how deep-seated and widespread our current fractures in the Church are, one must look no further than the First Principle of the Gospel. The level of disagreement and doctrinal fracture surrounding this core pillar of the gospel is devastating.

In August of 2013, I sent a survey to 2,000 members of the Church. The email list included Institute instructors worldwide, Seminary teachers, Church employees, members of the Boston Stake in Massachusetts, LDS authors, and several hundred BYU faculty members –comprising a relatively deep and broad cross-section of what might be considered the most dedicated, informed, and mature members of the Church to be found anywhere.

The survey question was as follows:

> If the prophet commanded you from a position of authority to do thus and so, and after your best efforts to ask with real intent and obtain confirmation from the Holy Ghost in the matter, you became convinced that the commandment was not from God and should not be followed, would you:
>
> **A**) Violate your conscience and obey the prophet.
>
> **B**) Hold your ground, disobey the prophet, and do your best to follow the impressions of the Holy Ghost.
>
> **C**) Not sure.

In response to that survey I received 401 replies. The percentage break-down of the answers was as follows:

- 62 percent answered **A** (follow the prophet)
- 12 percent answered **B** (follow the Spirit)
- 26 percent answered **C** (not sure)

It might be argued that the 62 percent are the tares of the Church or the unwise virgins, those who lack oil in their own lamps. They are not the tares categorically, since they are exceptionally righteous and virtuous in many areas of the gospel. But they are the tares within the context of what true faith in Christ actually means: when push comes to shove in the hard-edged areas of the gospel, what Master do you serve? Are you an idolator or a disciple of Christ?

Likewise, it might be argued that the 12 percent are the wheat of the Church, the wise virgins, those with oil in their own lamps. They might not be the wheat of the Church categorically, since they might be disobedient or blind in other areas of the gospel, but in this very

important area of the gospel, the understanding and acknowledgement of who the true Master is and where our faith should be anchored, they are the wheat.

And it might be argued that the 26 percent are lukewarm members of the Church, which would make them part of the unwise virgins. They will be spit out of the Lord's mouth (Rev. 3:16) if they don't eventually become hot or cold in the various areas in which the Lord requires us to become hot or cold.

In sum, as a people, we don't even agree on what Faith in Christ is. It appears that most of the members are worshipping the mortal officers –in some areas of the gospel, not categorically– and have fallen into the trance or darkness of mind that Joseph Smith warned about in his Ezekiel 14 speech, which is the same warning found in 2 Nephi 28:31.

If and when the leaders start taking common consent seriously, and stop with the 1890 Woodruff hobby horse doctrine, maybe we can start to solve some of the disunity and fracture that currently exists in the Church.

At present the Church is unified in a coercive or artificial way. That is the devil’s way of doing things, and we are being his zombie agents in various areas of the gospel. He has partially hijacked us.

It’s time to have a spiritual coming of age in the Church. We’ve got to get back to our roots and start honoring the pure and original laws.

Improper Sex Abuse Policies

Allowing clergy-penitent privilege legislation to take primacy over the safety of children is unacceptable. One potential remedy is to require

all adult members to sign a waiver extricating the Church and its officers from all such laws in relation to suspected sex abuse crimes. As you are no doubt aware, tragedies that intersect with the Church's current policies are documented here, here, here, here, here, and here. The current policies appear to be broken or insufficient.

It might be that in order to fully mitigate the current failures in this area of church governance, other or additional changes not related to the clergy-penitent privilege issue need to be made. As C.D. Cunningham has written, we need to ensure "no policy or practice inadvertently shelters abusers."

Suggested Waiver of Clergy-Penitent Privilege

> "I hereby waive, in perpetuity, any and all clergy-penitent privileges that currently exist or that might exist in the future within any legal jurisdiction in which The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operates or may eventually operate, with regard to confession details that are believed by Church officers to involve criminal actions of a sexual nature. I agree to hold harmless the Church and its officers with regard to any disclosures they make to law enforcement agencies insofar as such disclosures are made in good faith and accurately represent confession details that are believed by Church officers to involve criminal actions of a sexual nature."
>
> [Date / Signature]

The above waiver should be required from every adult member, and permanently attached to adult membership records. Further, it should be Church policy that if you are an adult-aged confessor and you want to obtain spiritual absolution from the Church for sex offenses –if you

want to be considered a repentant sinner who is potentially eligible to regain fellowship in the Church– you must first submit to the following process:

1. Put into writing what occurred and when it occurred and where it occurred and who it occurred with, including names, addresses, times, and actions. Sign and date the confession.
2. Hand-deliver your confession to the nearest police department or sheriff's office, and wait in person for it to be reviewed by a detective-grade or senior level officer and then submit to the arrest and booking process, as applicable.
3. Mail or hand-deliver the previously noted confession to your stake president.
4. Plead guilty to any and all accurately charged crimes if you are arraigned in a court of law.
5. Follow all requirements and submit to all instructions issued by secular authorities and officers of the Church in relation to your crimes/sins, in order to complete the repentance process.

If God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance (meaning temporal accountability must be enforced, which does not interfere with spiritual forgiveness), then we should take that principle seriously, and not look with any allowance or toleration upon anyone who engages in sex abuse.

One of the counter-argument against having policies of the kind mentioned above is that it might significantly reduce the number of confessions, and as a result, some children who might have been removed from an abusive situation might not be removed, since knowledge of their abuse might be kept secret.

That is a tragic possibility, but that devastating outcome is already happening “as is” in some of these cases. Attempting to prevent counterfactual unknown outcomes rather than applying real-world remedies that have obvious value, is not justifiable. As the axiom goes, there is no such thing as solutions, only tradeoffs.

The current policy in the Church is unacceptable because it doesn't put the safety of children as the highest priority. The current policy gives improper primacy to the Church's reputational importance, tramples on innocent victims and increases the harm done to them, and gives inappropriate power to poorly written and misguided secular laws.

Chaos involving law of chastity guidance

If surveys are to be believed, 50+ percent of our young people are not virgins at marriage. That is a devastating metric. It seems within the realm of possibility that hyper-prudish and extremist policies regarding masturbation might be leading children into extremely negative, unhealthy, and repressive attitudes towards sex, and leading many into rebellion, tragedy, and/or unnecessary sexual tension and poorly managed interactions during adolescence, young adulthood, and after marriage (see here, here, here, and here).

Based on anecdotal evidence and various blog posts by members, it appears that wildly different things are being taught about masturbation by various bishops and stake presidents within the Church. It also appears that the Church’s legacy teachings about masturbation are contradictory and quite different from what is currently outlined in the official policy guides. Thus it would seem that

mistaken doctrine was being taught in the past on this issue, and/or mistaken doctrine is currently being taught.

An honest revisiting of this issue is merited, and various viewpoints should be discussed dispassionately. There does seem to be a relatively strong level of chaos on this topic within the Church.

I realize the premarital sex study noted above is in relation to young women, but it's likely if not certain that most of the individuals that those young women are breaking the law of chastity with are the young men in the Church, hence the full half of our population who are involved in this problem.

The 50+ percent fornication rate is totally insane. There's no way that it's reasonable for the people of God to have children who are falling by more than half our total population into the devastating transgression of fornication. Chances seem relatively high that we are doing something wrong in our culture, and that policy improvements are needed.

Improper legal structure of the Church

A corporation sole? Seems pretty imbalanced and sketchy.

In the current arrangement, it would seem your office doesn't have a legal or enforceable way to veto spending bills. You are supposed to have that power per D&C 120.

Besides that, for D&C 107:82-84 to have any teeth, you would need a way to cut the flow of money off from the First Presidency.

I suppose even if you had that power they could try to bypass you by unceremoniously releasing you, or trying to influence things behind the scenes to get your locals to kick you out of the Church, but at least they would have to actually do those things, and crassly ignore a Common Council, before they could keep abusing the Church, which at least would provide some basic barrier or first line of defense against such abuse.

As it currently stands, the president can do essentially whatever he wants. He has been exalted to the status of a god or idol who can do no wrong, and he can authorize whatever he wants to authorize, because that is what a corporation sole allows. It really doesn't match how the D&C indicates we should be operating.

Suppose for the sake of argument that you come to disagree with the funding level and charter of the SCMC. How would you hold the First Presidency accountable? If push came to shove, you couldn't do anything. And that doesn't match up with the power you are supposed to have per D&C 107:82-84, D&C 119, and D&C 120:1.

A board of directors arrangement with provisions for automatic transfer of assets in cases of release from office or excommunication, in relation to the presidents any of the three asset-disposition-authorized councils, would seem to be a more balanced approach, and more in keeping with the laws of the Church as outlined in D&C 107, 119, and 120.)

Improper investments

The Church's investment arm avoids investment in the so-called "sin stocks" (cigarette companies, alcoholic beverages, casinos, and adult

entertainment). Good for us, we should be avoiding investment in those stocks.

But then in hypocritical or deeply ignorant fashion, we have heavy holdings in many of the most evil and corrupt companies that have ever existed or will ever exist, whose business practices and collusion with corrupted government is so naked and so evil (Ether 8:24-25) that unless you are a complete Pollyanna all-is-well-in-Zion baby (which apparently you and the other presiding officers currently are, else we wouldn't be having this conversation), you couldn't possibly be blind to how deeply destructive and evil these companies are. Their poisonous influence matches or vastly exceeds the evil of the traditional "sin-stocks".

It's an unacceptable travesty that we are propping up these worst-of-the-worst companies and empowering them to do even more evil than they would be accomplishing without our help.

We need to dump all of that stock immediately, and invest in causes and companies that are actually virtuous and that are striving to uplift and liberate humanity rather than investing in companies that are poisoning, brainwashing, robbing, and enslaving humanity.

Many of our early prophets warned against an excessive entanglement with Babylon, and it seems we've completely ignored those warnings, and fallen into the darkness that Nephi predicted.

As you may or may not know, the behind-the-scenes doctrinal warfare that took place between Hinckley and Benson was partially about Ether 8:24-26, and about the fact that Benson was recommending books written by Elder H.V. Andersen, that asserted that most of the

Church, including the leadership, were in some level of apostasy against various true principles.

There were errors in both camps (Hinckley vs. Benson), but Benson had a much clearer view of the issue, in my opinion, and he was essentially an “1850s Orson Pratt” who was ignored by the rest of the Church. Rather than black slavery, it’s now about universal slavery (Ether 8:24-26). If you want to understand Benson’s position and the warnings he gave, you will have to understand fiat money versus hard (constitutionally sound) money. Please get up to speed on those issues so that you can help manage Church funds more righteously.

Unacceptable teachings about violence

In the Church at present are various unscriptural and misguided teachings on warfare and wars of aggression, in violation of D&C 98 and D&C 134:5 and 8. The 2002 and 2003 “go to war” General Conference addresses are deeply misguided and harmful. Those speeches were supported by the current officers and remain the current standard.

Those speeches encouraged many LDS servicemen and women (including, tragically, Alyssa Peterson) to kill, and to torture (via “enhanced interrogation”) people in other countries who did not attack the United States and had no part in any military actions against us. To better understand this issue, see here, here, here, here, here, here, and here.

Many LDS military personnel have been misled and are still in situations where illegal trespassing of sovereign borders (treaty protected borders per the Supremacy Clause of the US Constitution)

is taking place, and unrighteous bloodshed is taking place on the advice of the current doctrine in the Church.

I'm not a pacifist. Bloodshed is at times justified, but we should be extremely careful in our teachings about when that kind of violence is actually approved by God.

Shedding innocent blood is the worst possible thing there is. So let's not trifle with situations where we are recommending to the members that such behavior is righteous. We need some correction and precision on this issue. The current teachings are in violation of the scriptures.

In addition, we are supporting violence by proxy in various areas of our policies and teachings, and there are about a dozen other grievances that could be listed, but the 12 items listed thus far are among the most important, so they will suffice for now.

Questions

1a
Do you believe that as part of your priesthood keys, calling, or office, you have the authority to provide disciplinary oversight and adjudication with regard to accusations of transgression or neglect that are made against members of the First Presidency, per the Common Council procedure outlined in D&C 107:82-84?

1b
If No, what are your reasons or justifications for why that responsibility, duty, or power does not exist within the domain or purview of your keys, calling, or office?

1c
If you agree that the Common Council court does exist within the laws of the Church, in accordance with D&C 107:82-84, do you concur with the suggested tabular entry noted below? If not, what changes would you make?

Court…….Common Council
Members……..Presiding Bishopric + 12 ad-hoc high priests
Jurisdiction.....Members of the First Presidency
Appeal…….None

(In the Church's current curriculum, three Church courts are presented and explained in tabular format. The Common Council court is missing from the table, but there does seem to be a vague allusion to that court in a footnote, and the June 2019 *Articles of Incorporation* do indicate that excommunication of the president is possible, in the *Incumbency and Succession* section, page 3, paragraph 1.)

2a
If your answer to question **1a i**s Yes, what is your decision regarding the current request for a Common Council tribunal to be impaneled? Will you impanel a tribunal and conduct an investigation?

2b
What are your preliminary adjudications (a value judgment of **Valid**, **Invalid**, or **Unsure**) in relation to each of the 12 grievances noted earlier?

Explanations for clarity:

- **“Unsure”**. If after talking with the First Presidency and they claim perfect innocence in relation to a grievance, an **Unsure** value judgement on your part would mean that you don’t necessarily believe they are innocent, and that a Common Council might be needed in order to properly investigate, or at minimum, that you need to do a deep dive on the issue yourself, and come to an eventual conclusion that the First Presidency is either innocent or needs discipline.

- **“Valid”**. A preliminary value judgement of this kind would mean you either expect to (1) see immediate improvement from the First Presidency because they have acknowledged changes are needed, or (2) you intend to initiate a Common Council with the purpose of potentially removing them from office, because they claim innocence and you don’t believe that they are innocent.

- **“Invalid”**. A value judgement of this kind would mean that you feel the First Presidency is innocent of any serious abuses or transgressions in relation to a particular grievance. Given the level of circumstantial and hard evidence that already exists for the various grievances, if you do issue a preliminary judgment of **Invalid** for any of the grievances, please provide a paragraph or two in defense of your position, by responding to the evidence that has been provided, and explain why you believe that evidence lacks merit.

3

Given the current legal structure of the Church, do you believe that a constitutional crisis might exist? Why or why not?

(e.g., In the current corporation sole arrangement, it would seem your office doesn't have a legal or enforceable way to veto spending bills, or enforce disciplinary decisions by cutting off funding to the president, which doesn't match up with D&C 107:82-84, D&C 119, or D&C 120).

An Open Letter to the First Presidency

Beloved Brothers,

One of the only reasons this conversation is thorny and uncomfortable in the first place, is because no one wants to acknowledge the elephant in the room.

So I will do you the favor of being the kid in the crowd who points at the Emperor and explains his nakedness in blunt and honest terms:

Woodruff's "impossible to be led astray" fairytale from 1890 is a dead duck and always has been. If you are willing to stop worshipping that ridiculous nonsense and go back a few years to the real story from Brigham Young, that would be a good starting point.

Brigham Young's doctrinal position is mutually exclusive to Woodruff's, and Brigham's position is obviously the correct one in terms of prophetic fallibility.

Ironically and tragically, Brigham Young proved that fact himself, by teaching slavery, violence, revenge, etc., in opposition to D&C 101:79 and D&C 98, among making many other mistakes that led the Church grievously astray and took the Saints into serious darkness in various areas of the gospel.

Multiple Common Council tribunals should have called in relation to the brutal abuses that Brigham Young exercised on the Church. He was involved in wagon loads of false doctrines and bad behavior, and there was zero accountability. Orson Pratt tried to enforce some order, but no one helped him, and his efforts weren't enough to turn the tide.

We should never have canonized Woodruff's assertion of prophetic infallibility. Total madness. He was correct and inspired in outlawing polygamy, but the "tack-on" doctrine in Declaration 1 regarding infallibility was irrational and destructive, and it accidentally dumped a massive wagon load of Tare Seeds into the Church.

We canonized Woodruff's epic disaster of a doctrine and therefore we can and should immediately *un-canonize* it. His doctrine violates the First Commandment that God gave to Moses, it violates 2 Nephi 28:31, and it's been leading us into the darkest parts of 2 Nephi 28 for well over 100 years.

All is not well in Zion, and the sooner you figure that out, the sooner we can get this wagon out of the mud and back on track.

President Oaks, in your "Criticism" address, you make the claim or implication that the Lord will not tolerate unrighteous dominion or neglectful behavior from the top officers. The implication is that they will be instantly dealt with by the Lord and there will be a total and permanent "Amen" to their priesthood, i.e, death, or some other kind of removal from office.

That idea is essentially a repeat of Wilford Woodruff's doctrine when he claims the Lord will "remove the President out of his place" before allowing things to go off the rails (Official Declaration 1).

That idea is clearly mistaken, and Brigham Young is a prime example. Brigham thrashed around like a bull in a China shop and trampled on all kinds of major commandments, led the Saints astray in very grievous ways for many years, and so did Wilford Woodruff, and the Lord didn't remove either of them.

The "Amen" to one's priesthood happens in an automatic and context-specific way within whatever channel of the gospel is being neglected or abused. Brigham Young left various keys dormant and ended up not using those keys because of his mistakes, same with Wilford Woodruff. It was "Amen" to their priesthood in those specific channels of the gospel, by means of self-inflicted disobedience to law, which then resulted in their inability to lead righteously in XYZ areas.

Meanwhile, they used other keys in very righteous and effective ways. They received important revelations and honored their callings in very critical areas, and accomplished magnificent things. I love and appreciate both Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff on a very deep level, and I have zero doubt of their importance or legitimacy as prophets of God. They deserve all due honor and respect.

But the fact of the matter is that it's not an "all or nothing" situation. If it was, no one would last for more than a few months as president of the Church, and we'd be seeing divinely-carried-out public executions one after the next, every time a new leader was confirmed.

All of the above principles happen to be very obvious, scripturally based, and anchored in common sense, once you open your mind to them. If you are offended by any of it in the slightest, it can only be because the guilty take the truth to be hard (1 Nephi 16:1-3).

If you want to make any significant progress, you've got to let go of the one-sided "attaboy" mentality in relation to being called of God. Granted, it is a great honor to be called of God, and yes, it does mean that you are righteous in ABC areas of the gospel. So good job, but then take yourselves down about five notches from that pedestal and realize that it's also a massive insult to be called of God in many situations and contexts. You are being chosen because the blind must lead the blind. There is good scriptural support for that understanding of the situation, as outlined in my letter to Bishop Waddell.

In light of the "insult" side of the equation, which is mandated by the law of restoration in response to the core quality of the overall group, any good priesthood leader is going to realize that one of his tasks is to be ruthlessly introspective, and to frequently reassess or examine the status quo and his own worldview, with the honest expectation of finding at least a few mistaken traditions and problems that need fixing. And part of that approach means you can't be so hostile towards public criticism. Embrace it as potentially being accurate, and dig deep to make sure you are on the right side of it.

Our current position on "evil speaking" is based on a poor reading of D&C 121, along with a blind obsession with Woodruff's "impossible to be led astray" fairytale. If you are willing to let go of Woodruff's accidental poison, and start reading D&C 121:16-19, D&C 124:144, and Matthew 23 with open eyes, you will see that public criticism of priesthood officers is perfectly okay, and that it can be a net positive, as long as it's spoken in good faith and is accurate.

Obviously it should not be a free-for-all during Church meetings. But secular forums should be considered fair game. That is where free humans express themselves. So please stop being tyrants, and allow

members to criticize you without labeling them as apostates or allowing them to be hanged from the Church gallows.

My vote of opposition is 100 percent justified and my request for a Common Council tribunal is virtuous. You are leading the church astray in unacceptable ways, you are being abusive and neglectful (albeit by accident), and accountability is long overdue. If you don't make prompt and significant improvements, you deserve to be removed from office, by means of D&C 107:82-84.

In light of our current culture, there is little to no chance that you will be held accountable, and there is little to no chance that the Presiding Bishopric will use their keys to restore a house of order, but if you want to honor your callings in the way that they should be honored, you will need to repent and make major changes to the current policies, doctrines, attitudes, curriculum, and traditions within the Church.

Questions (FP)

1 Do you acknowledge that the Presiding Bishopric holds the keys to investigate and discipline you, per the Common Council protocol in D&C 107:82-84?

2 Will you allow the Presiding Bishopric to make a dispassionate and independent decision regarding my request for them to consider impaneling a Common Council, so that, if proper, my grievances against you can be investigated and adjudicated by that tribunal?

3 In an honest and vulnerable way, please indicate the approximate merit or legitimacy that you would attach to each of the 12 grievances

that I've submitted in the enclosed letter to Bishop Waddell, with 0 being no merit, and 100 being the strongest possible merit.

~

Conclusion: as a people, we are deeply addicted to the carnally pleasing nature of the Woodruff doctrine. It falsely promises to remove vast amounts of personal responsibility and replaces it with local idols for us to anchor our trust in, and that is flattering and pleasing to the natural man. It is idolatry.

Some day there will be progress. Whether or not you choose to be part of it, is up to you.

And whether you believe it or not, I do love you, and I pray for you daily. I appreciate all of the amazing and inspired things you are doing. I think you can do even better.

Your brother in Christ,
Joe Murff

