The Powers and Responsibilities of Women in the Mormon Church

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Joe Murff
November 11, 2026



Joan of Arc

Beloved Sisters in the Mormon Church,

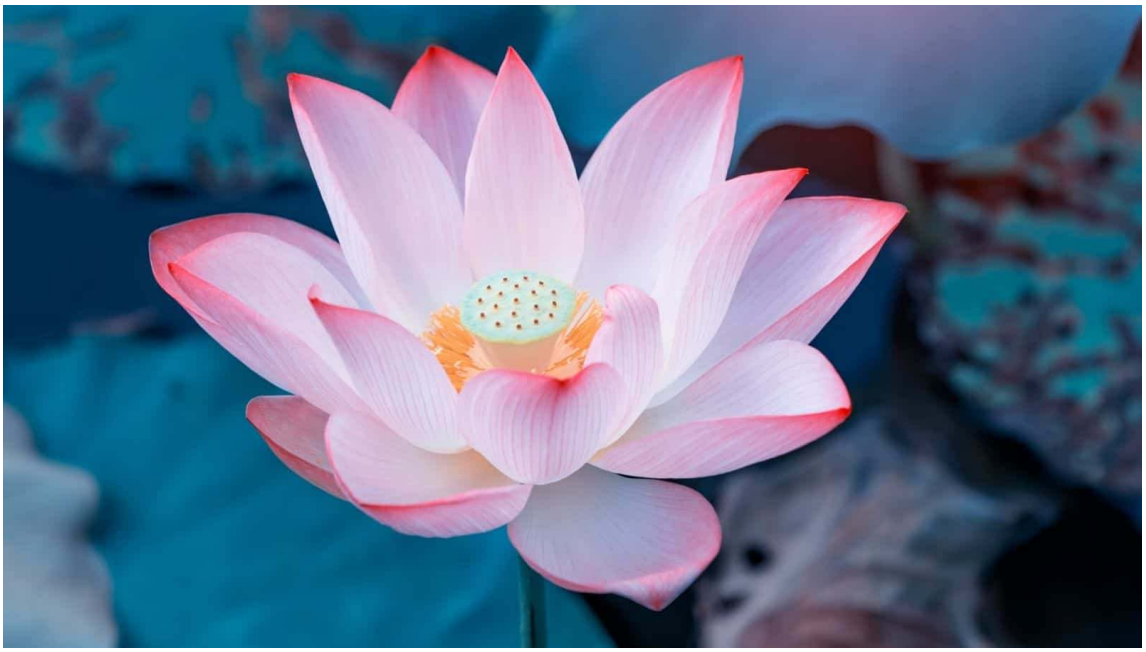
There is a profound crisis of leadership in the Church, and there has been for a long time. The priesthood hierarchy is tragically

failing in various aspects of its duty, and you, as the women in the Church, happen to be partially responsible for that failure.

If you will open your hearts to the possibility that improvements are needed on your part in order for the priesthood to operate properly, I think you will find some useful guidance in the following outline.

Inherited Gifts

In the ancient Greek tradition, Hera, the wife of Zeus, holds a scepter with a *lotus flower*, which symbolizes purity.



Because Zeus is the supreme deity in the Greek pantheon, Hera would be our Mother in Heaven within that mythological map. And that comparison is likely appropriate, if not actually a real echo of knowledge that was once held by humankind, passed

down after the Tower of Babel, from fractured and broken languages.

But irrespective of the overall accuracy or inaccuracy of the Greek tradition, certainly our Mother in Heaven holds either a real or a metaphorical *scepter of purity.* She is the embodiment of purity, and she is the paragon of womanhood and of all female virtues.

The idea that purity is one of the primary attributes of our Heavenly Mother is something that intersects with our experience as mortals, in that the **gift of purity** is an embodied or personified quality within the real-life intellectual and emotional hard-wiring of the daughters of God, inherited from their Mother. For example:

- A global study in 2022 showed that women maintain stricter hygiene norms than men (source).
- On average, women are more perceptive of sensory and social cues than men (source).
- Females performed better than males on a 'theory of mind' test across 57 countries (source).

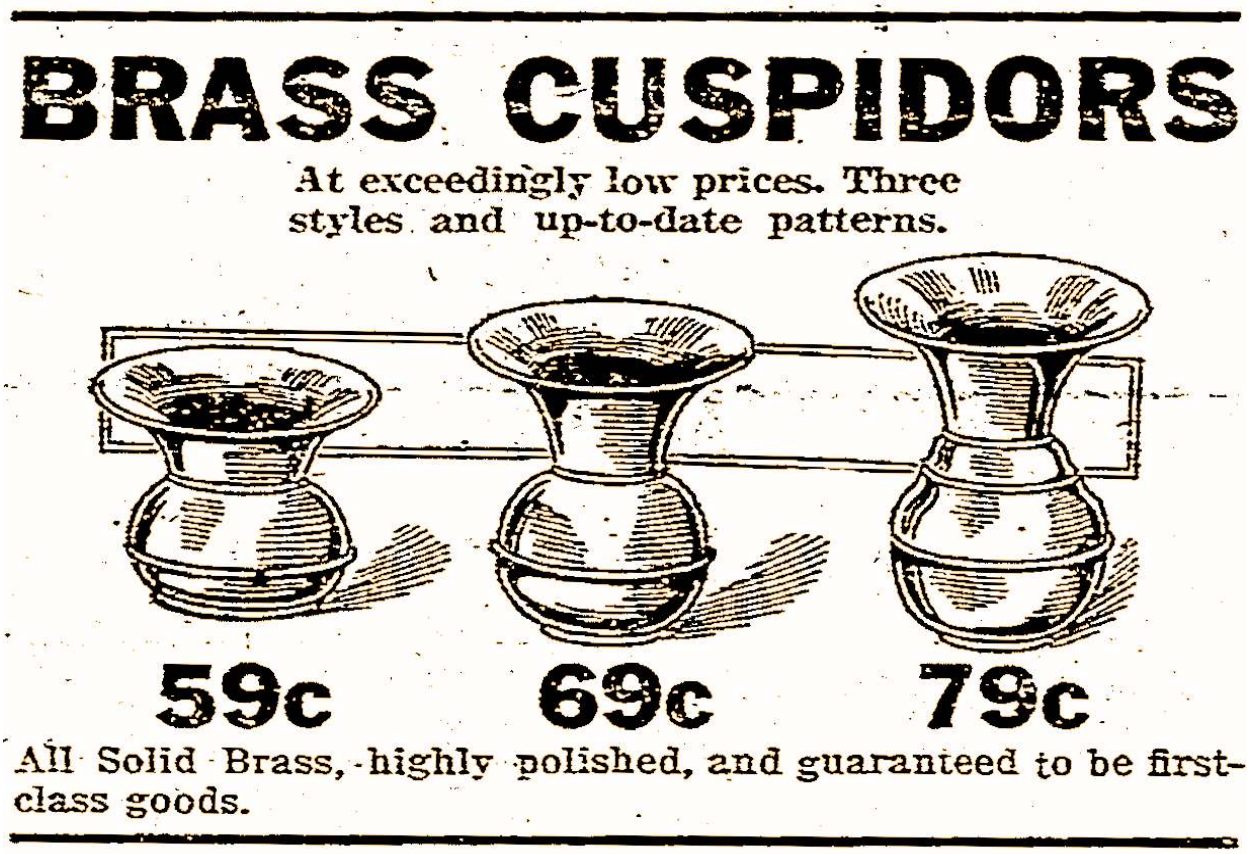


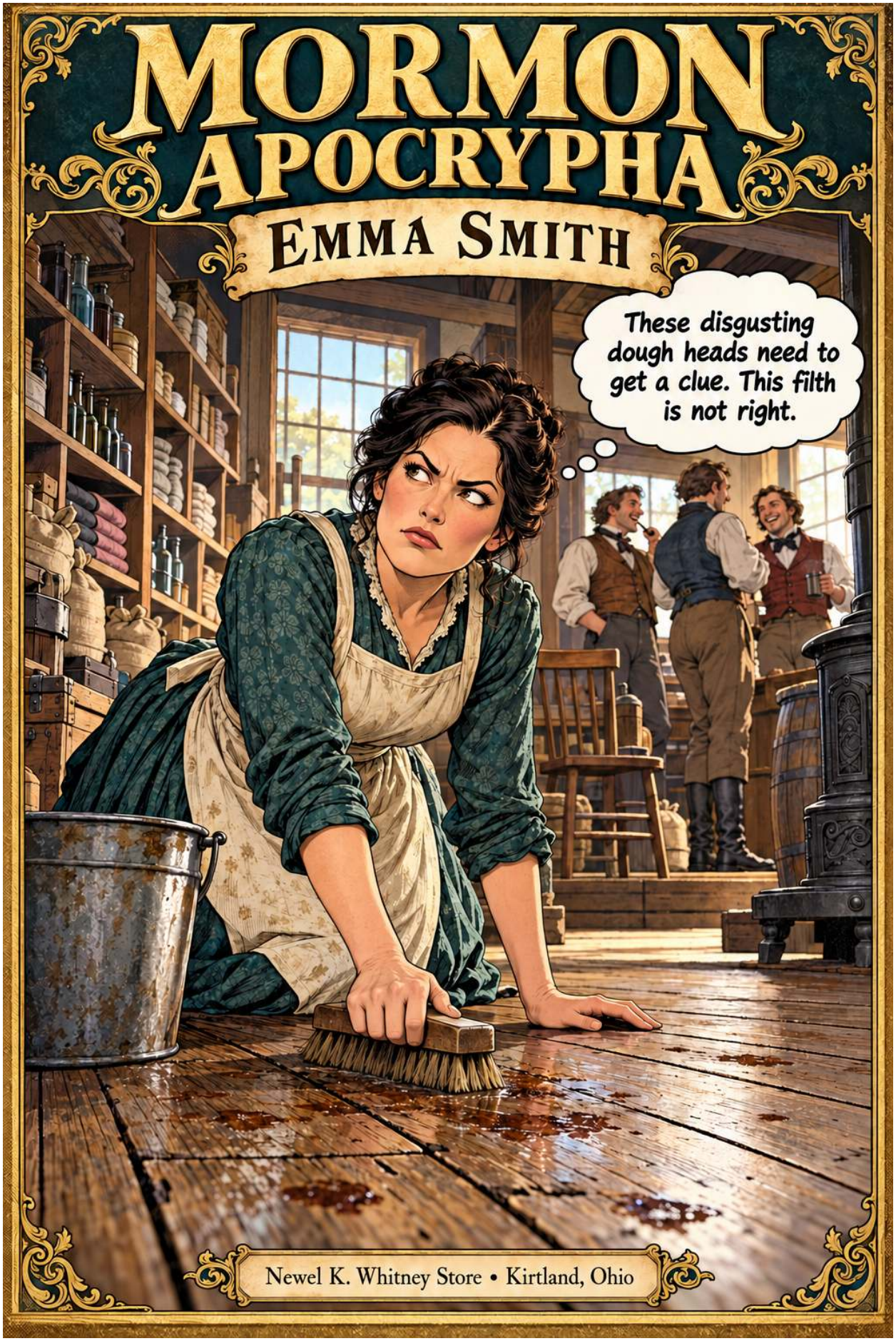
Hera, Queen of the gods

More to the point: women happen to be “notoriously” critical and sensitive from the perspective of men, and they tend on average to be much *purer* than men in a variety of measurable ways. On average, men lack self-awareness in various areas of life, and they tend to be slobs, uncouth, abusive in a myriad of ways, domineering, sexually coarse and demanding, and petty (or massive) tyrants. Meanwhile, women on average tend to be

more spiritually attuned than men, more insightful in matters of purity, and more adept at recognizing when purity is absent, both in physical environments and in spiritual environments.

One real-world example among many: In 1833, Emma Smith had to go *full rage* in order get the Brethren in the Church to stop spitting vile tobacco juice all over the place, which was a grievous physical transgression that the men were blind to.




MORMON APOCRYPHA
EMMA SMITH
These disgusting dough heads need to get a clue. This filth is not right.
Newel K. Whitney Store • Kirtland, Ohio

Brass cuspidors (spittoons) were common in US saloons, hotels, banks, barbershops, and churches until public health campaigns sharply reduced their use from 1895 to 1918.

In making her request (or demand) for a cessation of tobacco spitting, Emma was decades ahead of the rest of American society. And while Emma was ahead of almost everyone, it was women in general who were ahead of the men nationwide:

- In 1894, the Cincinnati Woman's Club petitioned for removal of cuspidors; the Pomona Women's Group petitioned against sidewalk spitting that same year.

- In 1896 the Ladies' Health Protective Association helped drive a New York City ordinance against public tobacco spitting.

- Similar women's clubs and health-protective associations lobbied elsewhere, distributed materials, and sometimes assisted enforcement.

- Public-health officials, doctors, the Anti-Tuberculosis League, and Boy Scouts were also active, so it was not a solely women-led initiative, but women's organizations were **key drivers and leaders** of the social and political pressure. (source)



Allene Goodenough (right) and Helyn James of the Young Women's Christian Association, 1900 (source)

It is not just in areas of physical nicety such as tobacco spitting, in which the women are able to guide the Church and help the men repent. The women in the Church have spiritual gifts and sensitivities that far exceed the abilities of male priesthood officers in several important areas of the gospel.

With respect to your **divine gift of purity,** which involves a god-like sensitivity and revulsion towards all impurity, the temptation for you is to crush and ignore that gift within the Church, at least in public, and to bite your tongues and buckle under, because you don't want to be considered overbearing, harridans, excessively critical, or usurping of the male priesthood hierarchy's "right to rule".

More to the point, the expectation for women in Mormon society is to be consistently supportive, graceful, compliant, and demure towards the presiding officers, with only limited and very shallow caveats that attach to that expectation.

For example, Relief Society officers and other women are allowed to offer dissenting opinions in private to priesthood officers, but if overruled, they are expected to immediately drop their concerns and toe the party line.

Meanwhile, in order for the Church to progress and fulfill its true mission, the woman's gift of purity must be unlocked and openly expressed, without apology or backing down, within highly visible and important public interactions in the Church (e.g., conference voting events, secular discussion forums, etc).



Joan of Arc, by Albert Lynch, 1903



Juanita Brooks

"Take good care not to judge me wrongly, because you will put yourself in great danger." -Joan of Arc, 1431, executed for heresy at age 19.

At present, any woman who firmly expresses her gift of purity within the Church is metaphorically *burned at the stake*, either by subtle shunning or by active hostility from priesthood officers: Juantia Brooks is one example among many.

After the publication of Juanita Brooks' masterwork *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* in 1950, many members of the Church (including high-level officers such as Harold B. Lee, who was an apostle at the time and would later become president) considered Juanita to be an apostate and an enemy to the Church. Meanwhile, Juanita knew that her work was virtuous: "***I feel sure that nothing but the truth can be good enough for the church to which I belong***." (source)

Juanita was implicitly and/or explicitly threatened with excommunication on several occasions, in an attempt to discourage her research and writing. In response to those events, she said: "***I do not want to be excommunicated from my church for many reasons, but if that is the price that I must pay for intellectual honesty, I shall pay it—I hope without bitterness.***" (source)

One of the reasons why hostility towards outspoken women exists in Mormon society is because in the divine blueprint of the Church women appear to be restricted (implicitly by absence of command) from holding any major administrative power.

In that divine blueprint is an immense asymmetry between the responsibilities of men and women, and men have largely

misunderstood what the purpose of that disparity is, and have developed a massive chip on their shoulder, by assuming that because they hold almost all of the direct administrative power in the Church per the command of God, it must mean that they are always right about everything. In reality, men are *almost always acting in a blind and abusive way* (D&C 121:39), in various areas of the gospel.

An important example: In 1934, when votes of opposition in the Church were implicitly outlawed via the improper entanglement of the temple worthiness interview with the vote, –which was a profound and massive corruption of common consent– women lost what little public power the blueprint of the Church does grant to them. Women's symbolic power to openly oppose unrighteous dominion was taken away from them, and was reinterpreted by policy to be "evil speaking", never to be allowed again.

Although Mormon women were never particularly active or prolific in terms of oppositional voting during the early years of Church history, they were at least allowed to vote as they pleased, without the threat of being cast out of the temple.

Meanwhile at present, both men and women are threatened with the punishment of being cast out of the temple if they express public votes of opposition, and that threat is not an idle one.

A Brief Explanation of How Corrupt the Current Temple Recommend Interview Actually Is

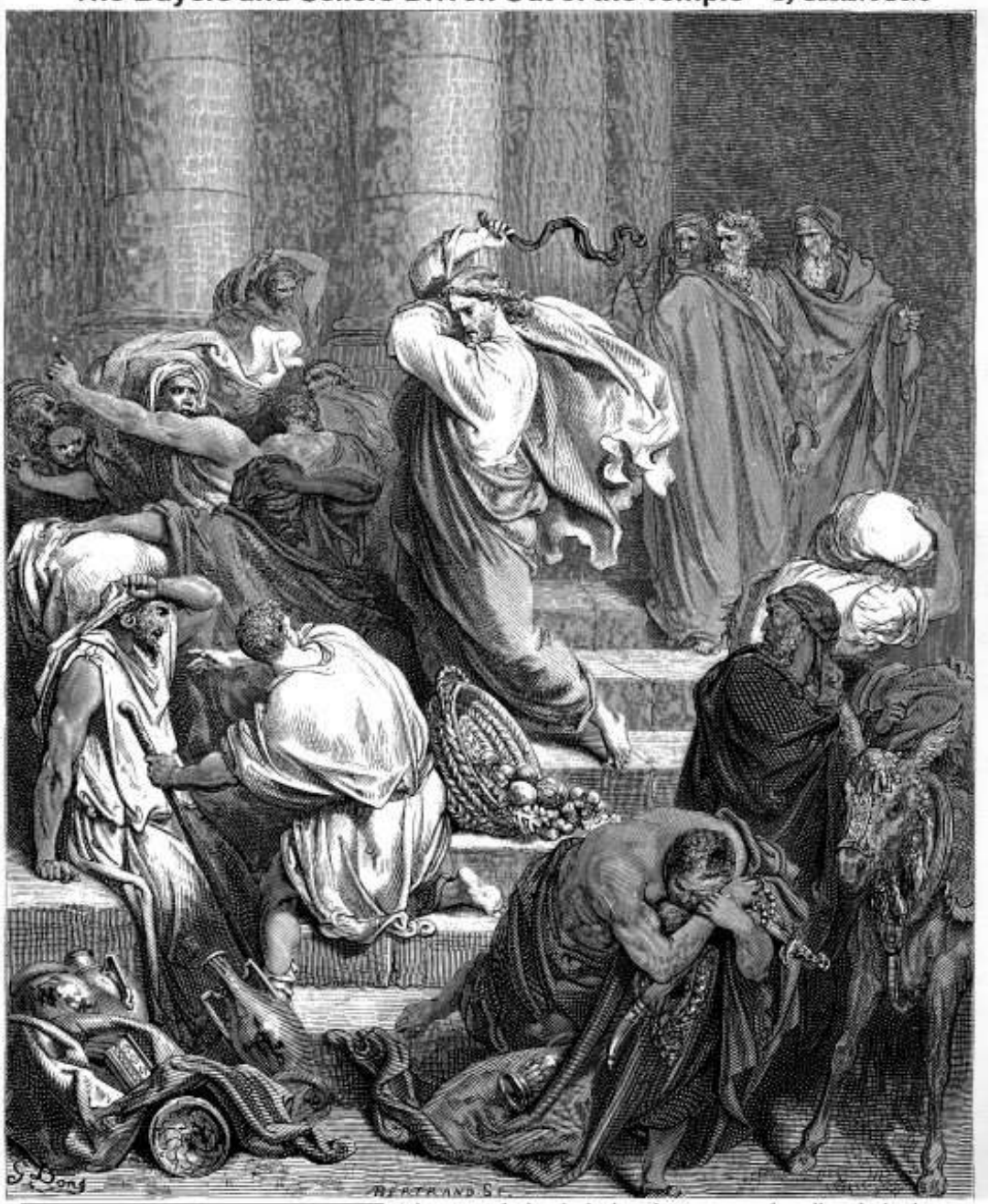
In light of the current doctrine that a sustaining vote is "a solemn covenant to give your full loyalty and support, without equivocation or reservation, to the officer for whom you vote," the current temple recommend process is essentially this:

- ★ Do you promise to mindlessly support everything the Church does, even if it is wrong and stupid, and do you swear to blindly follow the temporary mortal officers?
- ★ Do you promise to reject all truth and righteousness that is not currently part of the official and popular doctrine and policies of the Church?
- ★ Do you promise to never openly speak your true feelings about any misguided church policies or false doctrines?
- ★ Do you promise to never vote in opposition against the presiding officers, even if your conscience and the scriptures tell you to?
- ★ Do you promise to ignore and quench the Spirit as much as necessary in order to demonstrate unreserved loyalty to the temporary mortal officers?
- ★ If you are a woman, do you promise to always crush and ignore your divine gift of purity in public settings, and to always yield to male priesthood officers, and to disregard your role as a priestess and prophetess within the Church?"

In short, the current recommend interview is implicitly so full of profanity, idolatry, and misguided doctrine, that if the Savior were to come among us incognito, and were to be subjected to the current interview process as a common member, he probably wouldn't answer any of the questions. Instead, he would

probably just kick over the table and leave, because we've corrupted his Holy House, and we are peddling golden calves, crass idolatry, thought-control, and mindless subservience to temporary mortal officers, in place of the true gospel of Christ.

"The Buyers and Sellers Driven Out of the Temple" *by Gustave Doré*



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Joh 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

Beware the Second Temptation –at the Group Level

In September 2025, I relocated to a new stake for work reasons. Before I had an opportunity to get to know the leadership or inform them that I was an unorthodox problem child, which is always the first conversation that I have with local officers when relocating, I was immediately assigned to speak in Sacrament meeting. The topic that was assigned to me was Elder Whiting's April 2025 conference address *Beware the Second Temptation*.

When the 1st counselor was issuing that speaking assignment to me, I was about to interrupt him to let him know that he wouldn't like my take on that subject, and also to let him know that I wouldn't be anyone's cup of tea in relation to any other topic. But then I felt impressed to hold back, because I thought, okay, maybe the Lord actually wants me to give this talk in Church, since I am being asked through the duly appointed channels.

I hadn't been invited to speak in Church for over 15 years, and I was extremely nervous about it. I prayed earnestly to know if I should give a vanilla-type talk or if I was actually being asked by the Lord to go *scorched earth*, given that Elder Whiting's message is essentially a custom made sword for an anti-idolatry call to repentance –which happens to be the jeremiad I've been ranting about non-stop to the priesthood officers in every ward and stake that I've lived in over the last decade and a half.

The answer I received was that I was supposed to be uncompromising in the matter, so that is the approach I took. By the time I was halfway through the talk, there was literal murder in the eyes of at least half the congregation, and they wanted to do actual violence to me, which the branch president ended up doing. He physically grabbed me and told me to cut it short and sit down, disallowing the last 20 percent of my timeslot.

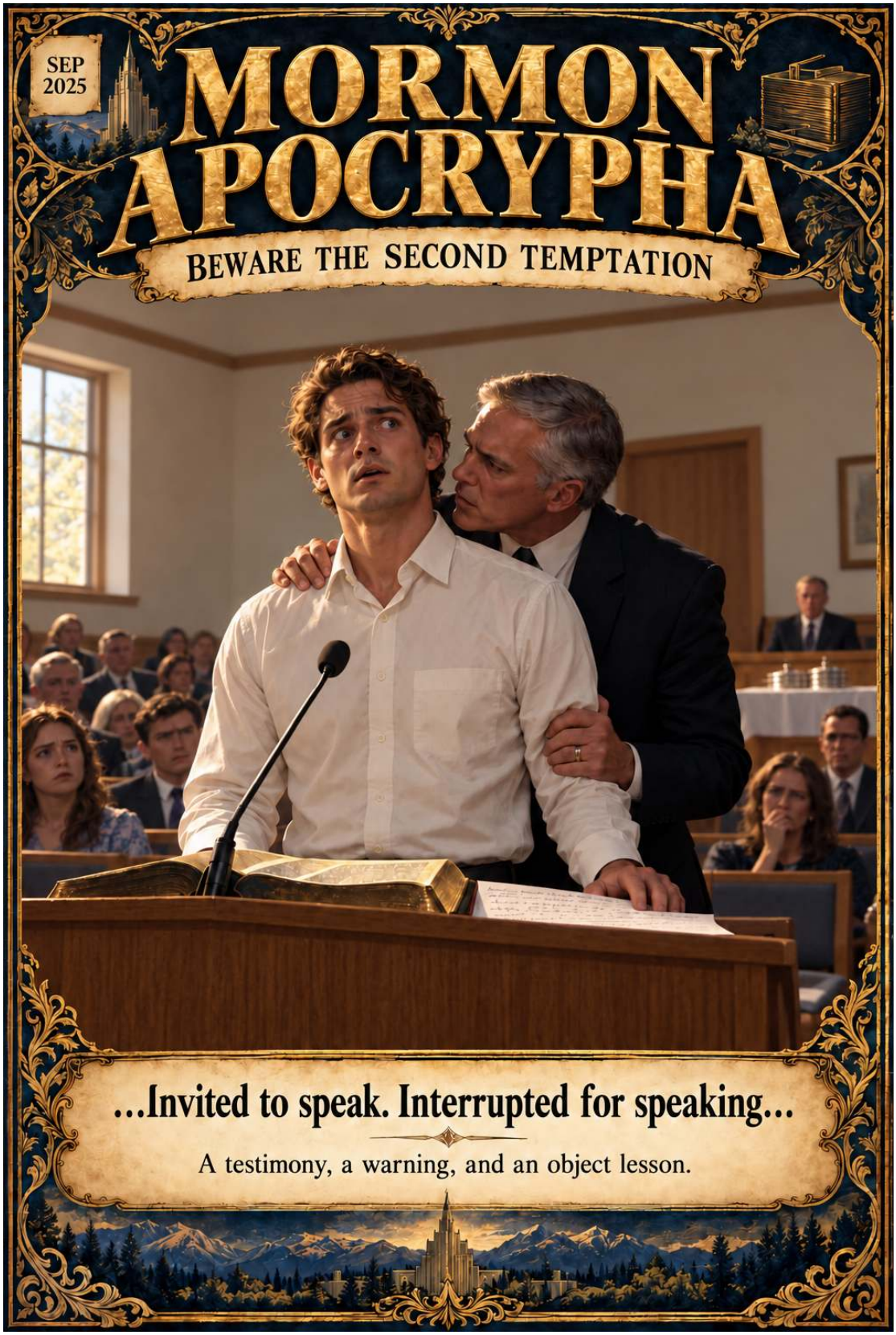
A transcript of that talk is included as an appendix in this document. It's pure milk and cookies, and faith-promoting preaching to the choir to anyone who has a reasonable knowledge of Church History, but to the *Unwise Virgins* and *Tares* in the Church who had little to no oil in their lamps in the areas of the gospel that my talk touched on, it was deadly heresy and they wanted blood.

There was so much hate towards me in that room that it was tangible, and within a matter of minutes that hatred manifested into inappropriate physical contact against me.

Being grabbed with no warning and being whispered to in a disciplinary way by an officer whose mouth is one millimeter distance from your ear, while that person is crushing up against you in an almost full body hug, is not a pleasant experience, especially in front of a crowd of people in an intimate setting when you are being vulnerable and sharing your testimony.

If it would have been a female speaker being assaulted like that, the non-consensual physical contact that was made would have easily been considered inappropriate to the point of being

actionable criminal behavior.



Technically what occurred was a crime. It was a class-B misdemeanor battery:

> "Non-consensual physical contact of any kind is enough for an arrestable battery charge, and does not require actual pain or injury."

By silencing a talk that was explicitly about the propensity in human nature to **hide sin**, and by committing a crime in the very act of silencing that message, the branch president was providing a potent object lesson that confirmed how real **The Second Temptation** actually is, and how deeply the Church is mired in it.

In his mind, he was saving the audience from hearing any additional "heresy." In reality, he was not only confirming the truth of what I had already spoken, he was acting out in real life, in a physical way, how powerful the urge to hide group sin is, at the institutional or global Church level.

After the meeting, the branch president and I spoke outside in the parking lot. He said his reason for interrupting me was because he felt it was too advanced or heavy of a topic for a Sacrament meeting. I told him that I was following the Spirit and that his complaint was with the Lord, and not with me.

Moments later, in a pointed contradiction to his assertion that my talk was too heavy of a topic for Sacrament meeting, our conversation was interrupted by a member of the branch who

said it was refreshing to finally hear a talk that explained things the way they really were, and that he really appreciated my talk.

Over the course of the next hour, various other members of the branch also came up to me and expressed gratitude and other sentiments:

- A member who had recently completed several years as the Elder's Quorum president told me it was an excellent talk. He said he felt impressed that he needed to offer to give me a blessing. I accepted the offer and we found an empty room to use. He asked another member to anoint, and he was the voice. In that blessing it was communicated to me that I shouldn't be discouraged by opposition and that I would be blessed for my righteousness.

- A high priest and his wife invited me over for dinner. They wanted to hear the end of the talk, and they didn't like that I'd been interrupted. In conversation with them during that dinner, the wife mentioned to me that she had been unaware that Brigham Young had supported slavery (cr Horace Greeley 1859 Interview), or that he had promoted violence towards blacks (cr Thomas Coleman, 1866, etc.) and that she was surprised and annoyed that it had taken 50+ years in the Church to finally be exposed to such important aspects of our history.

- Another family in the branch invited me over the following week and expressed appreciation for the talk.

- A member of the branch asked for my phone number, we spoke the next day, and he expressed agreement with various aspects of the talk.

- A family who had been out of town when I gave the talk heard about it from an extended family member who had witnessed the talk, and invited me over to talk about it.

That experience of mine in the Church highlights the following realities:

1. There is a minority in the Church who want truth, accountability, and progress, and they are not in favor of the culture of dishonesty, hagiography, and ignorance that currently prevails.

2. As a whole, present Mormon society is so immature, and so fanatically idolatrous towards the mortal officers, that leaders will use actual violence or improper physical contact to interfere with duly appointed speakers when the truth about various matters is being presented during Church meetings. Although Church officers do have the right to trespass speakers they don't like, using physical intervention is not an acceptable or proper way to do it. The fact that a literal crime was committed against me for my mentioning of historical facts and then harmonizing those facts with **a faith-promoting scriptural analysis** after being asked to speak on the topic of **hidden sin and repentance**, is tragic evidence that "all is not well is Zion" (2 Nephi 28:21).

3. The majority of the membership, including lifelong veteran members, are significantly ignorant of the true severity and scope of sin that exists in our history as a people, and they have little to no grasp of the divinely appointed disciplinary protocols (D&C 124:144, D&C 107:82-84, D&C 42:91, JST Mark 9:46, D&C 42:59-60) that exist within the blueprint of the Church for dealing with the presiding officers when they trample on the commandments, transgress the laws of the Church, or promote or enforce abusive policies, doctrines, or behaviors.

And you, the dormantly-powerful women in the Church, are part of the problem. In order to help overcome the current failures in Mormon society, you need to start unlocking and honoring your divine gift of purity in a much more mature and righteous way than what is currently taking place.

Meanwhile, the only reason why I have anything close to something resembling an intelligent or righteous headstart in this matter is because my patriarchal blessing hard-coded me into being a renaissance agitator and an oppositional voter within the Church.

The existence of my patriarchal blessing within the apocrypha of Mormon scripture is a relatively strange artifact. Obeying the guidance in that blessing has put me sharply at odds with mainstream Mormon culture, and several highly specific events that are outlined in that blessing have come to pass in a way that is unmistakable. Those events have resigned me to the fact that the blessing is accurate, despite how disconcerting it is.

To some extent, I have always hated my patriarchal blessing and considered it to be a curse, because I'm an acutely introverted person, and the admonitions and guidance in that blessing have aggressively pushed me to act in the opposite way, far out of my comfort zone.

Hence this very extroverted letter, and many other letters like it that I've written over the years, the aim of which have been to obey and honor the divinely appointed mission that was explained to me when I was 14-years old.

Why Virtuous Women Almost Always Win the Day –Whenever They Firmly Choose To

It is an obvious and undeniable fact that 85+ percent of everything that virtuous, family-oriented men do in their lives is motivated by a desire to please or honor their wives (Ephesians 5:25). And that is a good thing, in many cases, because women typically want and expect good things, especially if they are spiritually-minded and focused on Christ.

In other words, you, the women of the Church, have much more power than you realize, and you have been leaving that power dormant for a long time. You have been mistakenly tolerating a great deal of dishonorable and destructive behavior from your lovable but ***dough-headed*** husbands, and from the priesthood hierarchy in general.

It's time to have a *spiritual coming of age* in the Church, and for you to begin to act as the priestesses and prophetesses that you can and should be. At present, there are only a tiny handful of women in the Church who are in any way coming close to honoring their divine gift of purity within public forums.



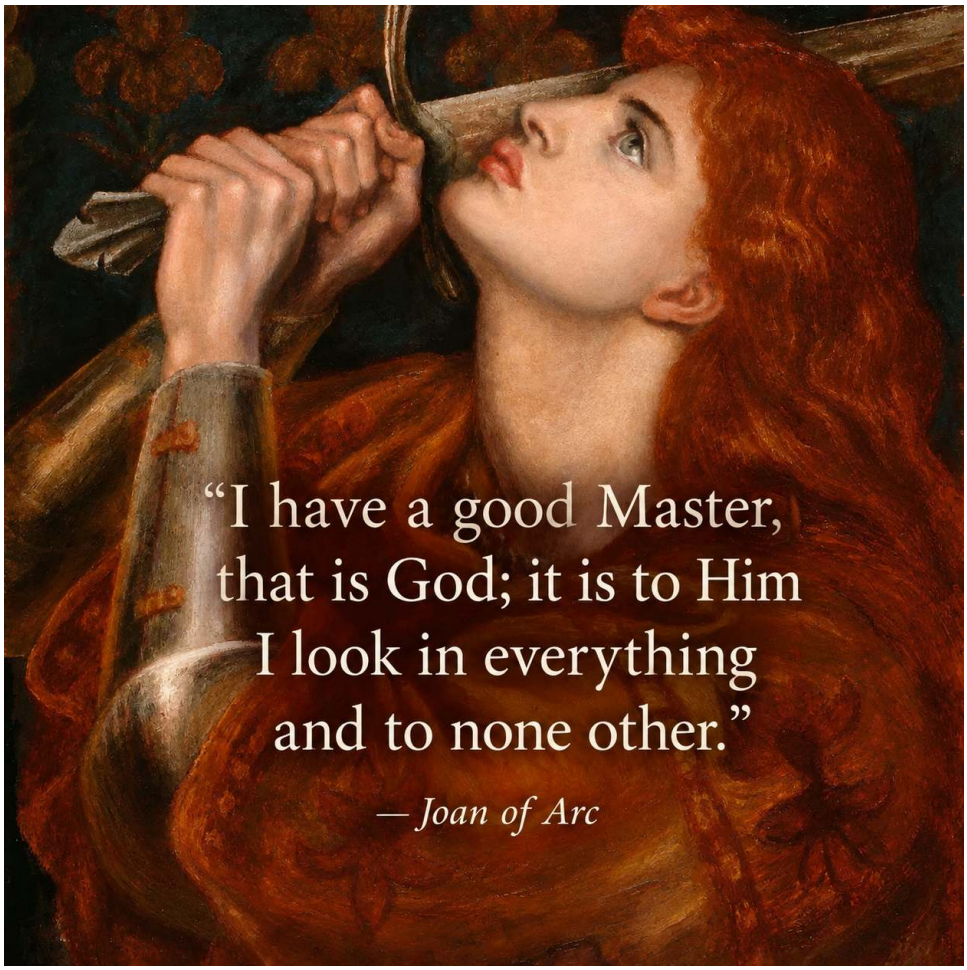
If you, the women in the Church, were to start demonstrating a higher level of unity as group, and were to start demanding a higher bar of performance from the men, and were to **stop being mousey and improperly subservient** in the face of unrighteous

dominion, Church culture would improve dramatically, and in very short order.



Accolade, by Edmund Blair Leighton, 1901

And that increase in righteousness will be necessary if we ever hope to become a people of one heart and one mind (D&C 38:27), and to fulfill our true mission as a people, and become ready for the Holy and Perfect Bridegroom, who will not call the Wedding Feast until all things are truly in readiness.



Joan of Arc, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *1882. Eyewitness accounts recorded that Joan suffered an agonizing death by fire, calling out the name of the Lord in her last moments (cross ref Mosiah 19:10-17). To prevent her supporters from gathering her remains as sacred relics, the English ordered her body to be burned multiple times and her ashes thrown into the River Seine.*

The timeline of the Second Coming is **not a static calendar pin** that is gradually getting closer and closer. It's a dynamic moment in time that is covenant-based and behavior-dependent.

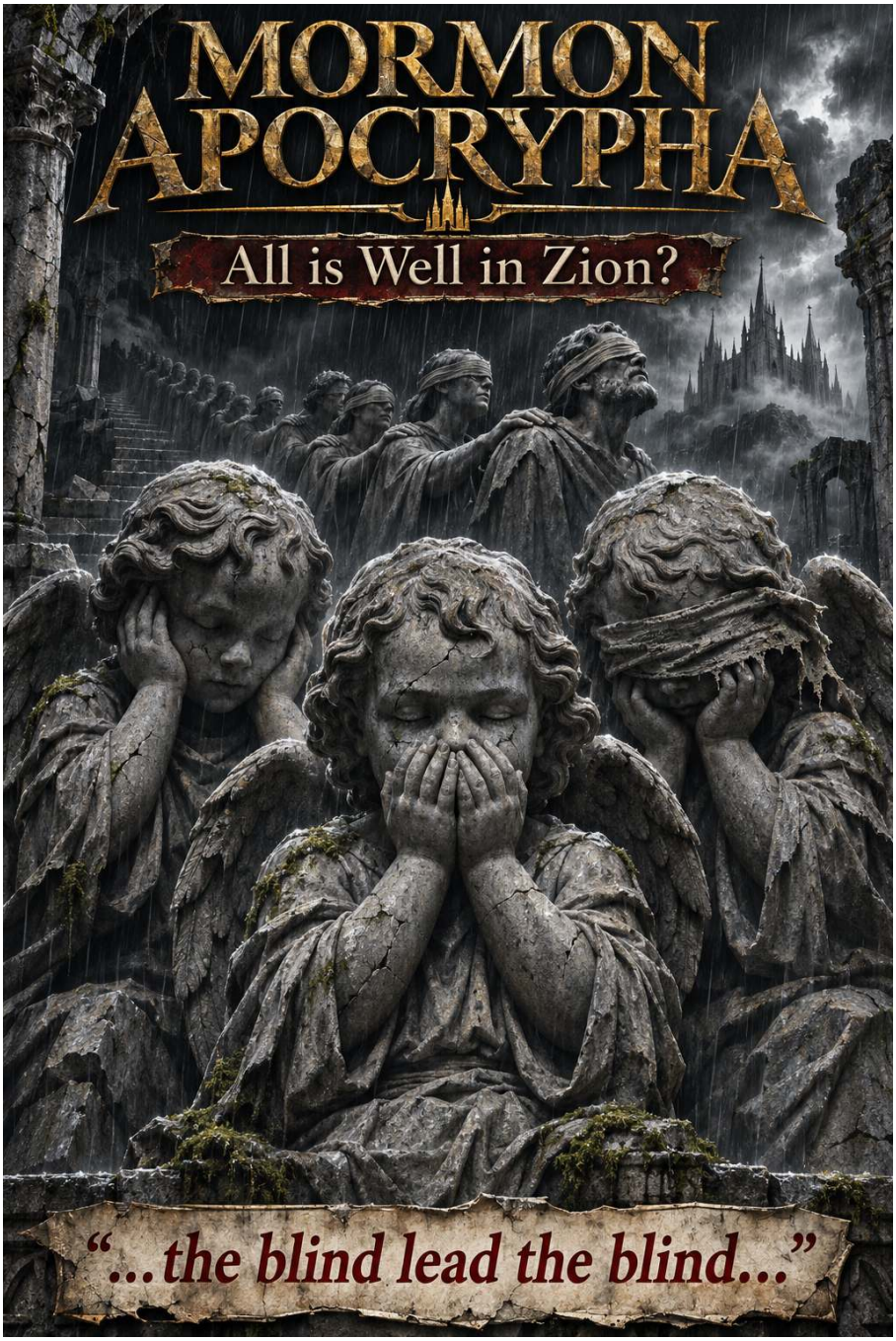
The more disobedient and passive we are towards the commandments, the farther into the future that event will be pushed and offset. The Lord will arrive as soon as we have shown obedience to all of the commandments, have established a house of order, and have prepared all things in readiness for him (D&C 88:119-121).

Abusive and Ignorant Behavior from Members of the Church

On July 20, 2026, I asked 40+ members of the priesthood hierarchy in the stake to answer four questions. As part of that survey (**see appendix at end of this document**), I asked them to involve their wives in the discussion, so that the female input in the matter would be equally visible and taken into account.

In response, I received one hostile email accusing me of misusing the stake directory, followed by an in-person chastisement session from the stake president, and then 40 instances of silent treatment –which amounts to *42 instances of silent treatment* overall, given that neither the accuser nor the stake president answered my questions. Thus, so far in my stake, I have had a 100 percent *non-response* to the questions that I asked in my survey.

Are almost all of the men in the Church straight-up dough heads? It does appear that they are acting that way, at least in some areas of the gospel. At present, I honestly don't know what my local officers believe about very important doctrines, policies, and behaviors in the Church, *because they won't tell me what they believe*.



And given that they are the ranking officers in the stake, and I came to them asking for their input as a subordinate officer, their non-response in this matter is a serious problem. It's like having military officers who are mute and unresponsive on the battlefield during an active engagement.

We are in the midst of fighting an intensive and pitched battle with the devil on all fronts, and the ranking officers in the stake are acting like "innocent angels" who are averting their eyes, ears, and voices from the harsh realities of life.

And likewise, I don't know what the women believe about the aforementioned issues, because either the men didn't involve them in the discussion, or they were coerced into remaining silent, or they believed it was virtuous to keep their opinions to themselves, like the men did.

In any case, it's an *epic fail*, and it's a tragic benchmark that represents the overall passivity and neglectfulness of Mormon society in general.

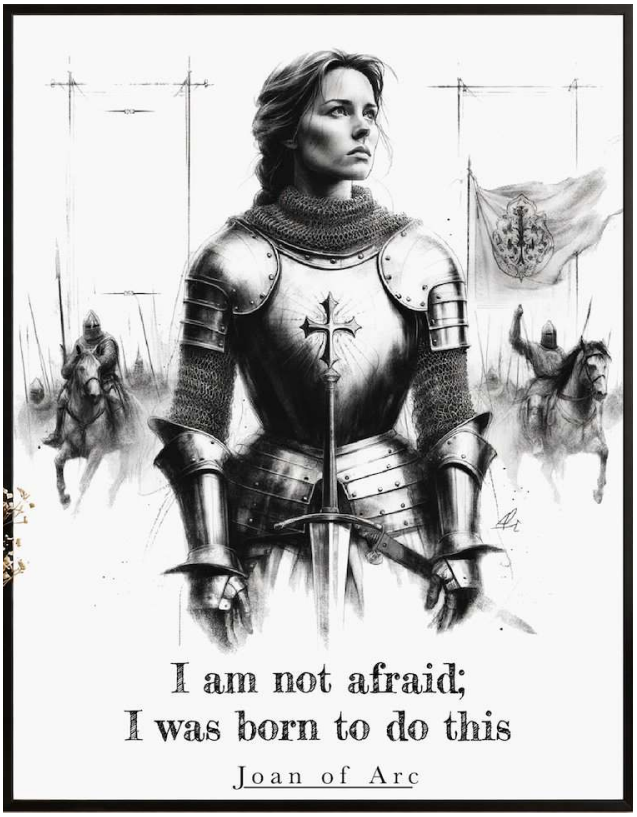
The Magnificent and Holy Charter of the Relief Society

According to the official charter which is underpinned by D&C 25:7, the duty of Relief Society members is to "expound scriptures," "exhort the Church," "work together to help

accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation," and "to learn and live true doctrine."

That is an amazingly powerful mission. Are the women in the Church truly fulfilling and magnifying that mission at present? I would argue that you are not, at least not in full. You are doing a magnificent job in some areas, but there is a lot of room for improvement. Please consider the following admonitions:

> "Those who are valiant and inspired with the true independence of heaven will go forth boldly in the service of their God, leaving others to do as they please, determined to do right, though all mankind besides should take the opposite course." (President Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, 1:312)



“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)



Mormon women need to become the independent and virtuous champions of truth that they were born to be, and we need to have a *spiritual coming of age* within the Church.

Freedom of Speech vs. Evil Speaking

At present, we have mistakenly classified all open criticism in relation to the presiding officers as sinful, and that is not scriptural. Evil speaking is about making FALSE accusations.

The anti-free-speech environment in the Church is one of the main reasons why disciplinary action towards the First Presidency is warranted. They have been pleaded with for many years, and have refused to improve (D&C 42:91), and thus it is time to press for their removal (D&C 107:82-84).

In order to start living the gospel in a more pure and virtuous way, we've got to stop participating in and perpetuating the abusive thought control, self-censorship, fear-based atmosphere, and chilling of free speech that is currently taking place in the Church. Such a move towards repentance and spiritual maturity will be necessary if we ever hope to resolve our group-level sins, obey the law of common consent, and become a people of one heart and one mind.

Presumably, if I were to ask you if King David was guilty of adultery, you would answer ***Yes***. You would not rend your clothes, or nash your teeth, or call me an evil speaker for asking a hard question about an anointed servant of the Lord. Nor would you

rip 2 Samuel 11 out of the Old Testament and burn it in a fit of fear and loathing.



David Catches Sight of Bathsheba Bathing,
Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1860

So what is the problem with asking hard questions about the Lord's anointed in modern times? Nothing. There is no problem. It's a made-up prohibition or policy innovation that has no legitimate basis in the gospel. Our current definition of evil speaking contradicts many scriptures (D&C 124:144, D&C 107:82-84, D&C 42:59-60, JST Mark 9:46, D&C 42:91, 2 Nephi 28:31,

Matthew 23), and it's a self-inflicted wound and an unrighteous tradition that needs to be healed.

The only reason why answering my survey questions will be difficult or uncomfortable to answer is because the men in the Church are at present blind and abusive tyrants in some areas of the gospel, and they have established extraordinarily misguided and wrong-headed rules that threaten punishments of the harshest kind for merely stating our honest opinions and concerns in secular forums, or for respectfully voting in opposition when given the opportunity to do so during conferences.



Joan of Arc Kissing the Sword of Deliverance,
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1863 (AI enhanced)

In the Church at present, men think they have the right to boss women around spiritually, and dictate to them what all the commandments mean and how to live those commandments, because men hold administrative power.



The fact of the matter is that women often have spiritual primacy over the men –in the way the Emma Smith had spiritual

primacy over the Brethren in 1833, and in the way that Juanita Brooks had spiritual primacy over the Brethren in 1950, and in the way that quite a few other women in our history have had spiritual primacy over the Brethren in various other areas of the gospel –but the women are not in a position to enforce their virtue by administrative fiat.



Hence the very high importance of respecting the soft powers that the Lord has established for women and non-officers in the

Church, including votes of symbolic opposition per D&C 124:144, freedom of speech in response to open offenses per D&C 42:91, and the right of common members to press the Presiding Bishop to fulfill his to duty to in relation to formal disciplinary action against the First Presidency, per D&C 107:82-84 (cross ref JST Mark 9:46).



Joan of Arc in Prison, by Gillot Saint-Evre, 1833

As a result of our neglect towards common consent voting we are in something of a *Spiritual Dark Ages* within the Church, and we have been for a long time.

In 1832, the Lord warned us that we had already entered a *Dark Age* within our history, which took place near the very beginning of our journey as a people, due to our initial disobedience and carelessness towards many of the commandments (see D&C 84:54-58 “darkness of mind”, and 2 Nephi 28:31 “cursed”).



Dark Ages, by Alex Mannion

Closing Thoughts

Once upon a time, the Mormon people dragged handcarts across a hostile wilderness to find a better place to live. Perhaps we can do it once again, this time across a wilderness of misplaced fear, deeply entrenched bad traditions, and the threat of ecclesiastical

punishment, in order to find our true selves, as the Savior has invited us to do in Matthew, chapter 10, verses 34-39:



> “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 10:34-39)

Appendix entries follow:

1. Sacrament Talk: Beware the Second Temptation (SEP 14 2025)
2. Letter to priesthood officers in my stake (JUL 20 2026)

Assigned Topic: Beware the Second Temptation

Hi everyone, I'm Joe. I truly appreciate all of the kindness and fellowship that has been extended to me over the last several weeks as I've been getting moved into the place I'm renting here at the ranch.

My topic is Beware the Second Temptation by Elder Scott D. Whiting. And in this address he explains that the first temptation that exists, is any common sin that we might fall into. And once we've fallen into that sin, the second temptation that immediately occurs is that we have a strong inclination to hide the sin we've just committed. It's a very potent aspect of human nature.

As I was preparing this talk, the Spirit impressed me that I need to come at this issue from a very specific angle, and that is, although being tempted to hide our sins occurs at the individual level, that same problem happens at the group level. As a group, as a people, we hide some of our group sins that exist, we engage in conspiracies of silence. And there are quite a few examples of this from our history.

> Juanita Brooks - her research of Mountain Meadows helped the church face some hard truths and the leaders eventually cleaned up and improved our messaging and stopped avoiding reality to some extent, because her research was so devastating and undeniable, it became impossible to ignore. To some degree a measure of group repentance did take place. And even though the leaders asked her not to publish her research --they wanted to maintain a conspiracy of silence-- she knew it was the right path

to make the truth be known, so she pressed forward. So Juanita was kind of like a Debra figure in the church. She helped us to repent of our inaccurate and mistaken public statements about Mountain Meadows. The male leadership was struggling with the issue, kept wanting to hide or ignore the truth. And she was basically the only adult in the room on that issue, she wanted to apply the Atonement at the group level, and get some repentance to take place.

Lester Bush - his research about blacks and the priesthood showed the leaders they were teaching mistaken things about Joseph Smith – in the 1960s First Presidency messages claimed Joseph had never allowed blacks to be ordained to the priesthood. It wasn't intentional deception on the part of the leaders, it's just that as a people we had forgotten our own history. So it was an accidental moment of ignorance, but it became an attempted conspiracy of silence because the leaders asked Lester to not publish his research. He published his research anyway, and it turned out to be an important turning point in church history.

Germ Theory vs. Inoculation Approach to teaching the gospel.

Germ Theory of teaching is where you hide a lot of the controversial and messy aspects of church history (the sins and mistakes that were committed, along with omitting any doctrinal contradictions that might be difficult to reconcile). With this approach, we are giving children a sanitized, edited, or heavily correlated version of what happened.

And over the years, there been some pushback against this approach, and members have asked for more of the Inoculation Approach to teaching the gospel, which is you splash the full story, cast sunlight on everything, and then in a careful, respectful, and faith-promoting way, you explain to the child, “this is what happened, this is what I think it means, this is how I reconcile it, but now you have a responsibility to engage with it yourself and seek the Spirit, and get your own answers, because there still might be some disagreement on how to fit this into our belief system.”

And so I think the Inoculation Approach is a much more Christ-like and honest way to teach the gospel.

And this talk from Elder Whiting, even though he is talking about how to overcome situations in which individual sin is being hidden, the logic that he is presenting applies to group situations as well, that to resolve these issues, you have to splash sunlight on them, you involve all of the people and authorities who need to be involved, and make a full press, honest movement towards repentance.

So with that in mind, here’s a historical snippet I wanted to share.

In 1858, Horace Greely, who was a New York congressman and abolitionist publisher came to Utah and asked Brigham Young “What the church’s position on slavery?” And President Young answered him by saying that the church’s position is that slavery was instituted by God, it’s a divine mandate, and that all righteous people should support it. Brigham had been raised in the Pre-civil war Protestant tradition that blacks were the divinely appointed servants of whites,

and that the bible proved it. It was a deep hook in his mind, because he was raised from birth to believe that.

So, when the transcript of this interview became available to the Saints, Orson Pratt, who was a member of the Twelve, threw a major public tantrum about it. He was not happy. And he and Brigham Young had several back and forth public interactions about it.

Orson was like… Brigham, slavery is an abomination, you're gonna bring 100 years of shame on the church if you keep teaching this. I mean, crack a book brother, and read the Lord's words in D&C 101:79. The Lord condemned slavery 25 years ago, through Joseph Smith…

But in response to that Brigham Young called Orson a "mad stubborn mule" for opposing him, which is tragic and ironic because Brigham was being the mad stubborn mule in that situation.

So Brigham kept teaching that slavery was from God. And in this particular area of the gospel he simply couldn't get past his upbringing, he just wouldn't humble himself, he wouldn't give heed to the scriptures, and he wouldn't ask the Lord about it. He already felt he had the truth in the matter, and he wasn't interested in reassessing his position.

And essentially all of the Saints except for Orson and maybe a few others, voted in favor of slavery based on Brigham Young's commandments and recommendations, and Utah became a slave territory.

Along with this, Brigham Young was also teaching that violence against blacks was justified in some situations. And there's a tragic event associated with this, in 1866. A former slave named Thomas Coleman had come to Salt Lake and was courting a young white woman who was a member of the church there. And when the secret courtship was discovered, the young woman's brothers along with some other members of the church, beat and cut Thomas to absolute shreds, and he ended up dying.

So a very strong argument can be made that some of Brigham Young's teachings led the Saints into some very dark paths and serious sins.

An argument can also be made that as a people, as a group, we have never fully acknowledged some of these mistakes or made the proper attempts to resolve them in a righteous way. We have kind of brushed them under the rug, and hidden them. Which makes sense, because it's human nature. Just like individuals are tempted to hide their sins, groups have the same problem. The Second Temptation is very powerful at the group level.

But if we take the logic from Elder Whiting's speech regarding hidden sin, I think the solution he is offering applies equally to individual and group sin. Which is, you splash sunlight on the issue, you face it head on, you acknowledge it, and engage with the Lord and others around you to repent and make progress.

Some years ago, when I was studying church history and trying to make sense of the slavery and violence issues, I wrote a hypothetical

snippet for a curriculum manual, so I could teach my daughters, who were 8 and 10 at the time, how to deal with these issues.

Here is what I wrote:

How should we respond when a President of the Church teaches an unacceptable doctrine or harms the virtue of the Church?

In the 1850s, Brigham Young taught a number of doctrines that were unrighteous and significantly damaging to the Church.

In response to these mistakes, the Saints had a responsibility to hold him accountable according to the laws of the church.

There are two divinely established accountability mechanisms that exist in the law of the church in relation to holding a mistaken or neglectful President of the Church to account.

Number one: The vote of common consent.
In 1902 October General conference, President Joseph F. Smith taught:

> “We desire that the brethren and sisters will all feel the responsibility of expressing their feelings in relation to the propositions and officers 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.” (1902 October GC)
>
> And in 1904 he said: “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." (1904 October GC)

In Doctrine and Covenants 124:144, the Lord proclaims: "And a commandment I give unto you…..that you approve, or else disapprove [of the officers that are presented to you at my general conference].

Number two accountability method: A Common Council of the Church.

If Brigham Young would have failed to improve, and persisted in his mistakes, the Saints should then have referred the matter to the Presiding Bishop and asked him to consider initiating a Common Council, which has the power to discipline or remove the President of the Church from office, as outlined in Doctrine and Covenants 107:82-84.

In relation to those verses, John A. Widstoe once wrote:

> "When occasion arises that one of the First Presidency must be tried for crime or neglect of duty, his case comes before the Presiding Bishop with his counselors, and twelve High Priests especially chosen for the purpose. This is a tribunal

extraordinary from which there is no appeal." (*Priesthood and Church Government in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 1939. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 214. Cf. 253.)

So that's the end of the hypothetical curriculum snippet. And if that worldview is correct, there are some important conclusions that result from it:

1. The Lord is not babysitting the church. He's not micromanaging the leaders. He has given us correct principles, he has given us the law of the church, we have the gift of the Holy Ghost, and it's up to us to govern ourselves righteously. The leaders are accountable to the law of the church. They are not unimpeachable arbiters of truth. The Spirit is the arbiter of truth and the laws of the church are eternal. The Lord says in D&C 42 that those who obey the law of the church will be saved, and those who disobey it will be damned.

2. If we want to make spiritual progress as a people, we have to start taking some of the warnings that were given to us by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young more seriously. Here are two examples:

> 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 I were to teach you a false doctrine, how are you to know it if you do not possess the Spirit of God? As it is written, 'The things of God knoweth no man but by the Spirit of God.' …I have often said to the Latter-Day Saints 'Live so that you will know whether I teach you the truth or not.' 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 a very similar warning appears in the Book of Mormon multiple times, with this arguably being the most potent instance of it:

> 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)

3. The church is true, the keys are real, and Christ is our King. We should honor the laws of the church and hold leaders accountable when they teach misguided things.

In the name of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

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Extra Notes

…As virtuous as Elder Whiting's conference address is in terms of calling the membership to repentance in relation to any and all sins that members are hiding, there is an unintentional thread of hypocrisy that underpins his talk.

He is talking down to the membership and calling us to repentance, but he fails to realize that he is part of an imperium or hierarchy who refuses to stop hiding all of the buried sins and mistakes that have been poisoning our children and our culture for the last 100+ years.

In the church at present the leadership and the members have essentially zero respect for the law of common consent, they are heavily addicted to worshipping the mortal officers.

All is not well in Zion, and wo be unto those who claim the contrary.

Grassroots Event: Priesthood Mentorship Roundtable

Welcome, everyone. To begin I'd like to share a snippet of poetry from 1872. In ***Idylls of the King,*** this is what Arthur tells each new Knight of the Round Table:

My knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to [Christ] the King.

(*Idylls of the King, Alfred Tennyson, 1872*)



And a scripture from D&C 58 to set the tone of this event:

27 Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

28 For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

A brief introduction about myself, since I haven't met some of you yet– I'm an elder in the Timpview 6th ward. My extended family has lived in the ward for several decades (Celia Murff is my mother), but I've only recently relocated here from out of state.

The 42 officers in the "To" line of this email are stake and ward officers. If I've missed anyone that you'd like to include in this discussion, please add them to the email thread.

Given that you outrank me in the priesthood, it gives me the blessing and advantage of having some limited claim upon you in terms of being able to come to you for guidance, help, counsel, temple recommend, confession of sin, brotherhood, friendship, and other assistance.

One of the truly impressive things about the Church is that the servant-leader model of the priesthood + council blueprint creates an overlapping matrix of unity that is robust, ultra-efficient, and fall-resistant to a very remarkable degree.

For example, if I needed help raising a barn, no doubt a single email or phone call to anyone in this group would trigger an avalanche of ready assistance, intelligence, action, and firm follow-through in short order, to help me get my barn raised, so that my milk cows (if I had any) would have a wintering location by fall or sooner.

I truly love that aspect of the priesthood, and of the Church overall, and I've participated on the giving and receiving end of those service matrices to a relatively profound degree, in various stakes around the US and elsewhere.

My earlier career in the US Federal Government (military logistics support, as a civilian), along with similar work in private industry, took me to live in a fair number of different locations, including New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts, Maine, Georgia, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Australia (Brisbane), and India (Chennai). I'm out of that career field now, but it was a unique and challenging experience in many different ways, and I was able to meet and work with members of the Church from many different backgrounds, including many in the military.

In any case, there is a barn of sorts, a metaphorical barn I suppose you could say, that I'm trying to raise, and I do need your intelligence, your help, and your support in order to raise that structure. It's related to a problem that I'm trying to help solve within the Church, as will be outlined in a moment.

In the "cc" line of this email is Brother Doug Andersen. He is the +1, and he's not part of our local priesthood contingent. He's a paid corporate officer at HQ. Here's a brief snippet about him:

> Doug Andersen serves as the Director of Media Relations (also titled Global Director of Media Relations) for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, acting as the primary point of contact for news media inquiries. His role involves managing the Church's public communication strategy, issuing statements to journalists, and facilitating interviews.

In December of 2025, I reached out to Brother Andersen with three interview questions for W. Christopher Waddell (our current Presiding Bishop). The letter that contains those questions is copied at **the end of this document**, so you can see what those questions are.

One of my pursuits in life, outside of my regular work schedule, is that I'm a citizen journalist / amateur journalist, which means I do the same thing that other journalists do, but I'm not paid for it, and I'm not attached to any particular news outlet or corporation.

My journalism credit list is very modest or minimal, but it does place me in the ranks of being a published author, and in that regard I am an active and credited journalist. These are my publication credits:

- ***The Salt Lake Tribune***, "An Open Letter to President Nelson" (2018)
- ***Religion News Service***, Guest Post "8 Quotes from Mormon Leaders on Independent Thinking" sponsored by Jana Riess (2016)
- ***Modern Mormon Men***, Guest Post "Personal Responsibility" sponsored by admin (2014)

I've written around 50 other articles that haven't been published, and several of them are under consideration with various news outlets.

Apologies to Doug in advance, since I'll be using him as a whipping boy to some extent in what follows, with you as witnesses to the beating that I'm about to mete out.



"We had to go to a punishment parade this morning. This was the first time I ever saw a man flogged."

(Ensign Spencer Perceval Talbot Nicholl, 27 June 1864, Tauranga Domain, New Zealand)

Please open your minds to the possibility that genuine and Christ-like love is the motivating factor for why this punishment is being meted out, and that a movement towards unity is the aim. A goal or imperative that the Lord has commanded us to achieve is: “be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.” (D&C 38:27).

One of the conditions that must exist for true unity to emerge is honest communication, and there is often some discomfort associated with that process.

Please try to disarm yourselves to some extent, and try to approach this situation in as dispassionate and open-hearted a way as you can (2 Nephi 9:42). Please allow the possibility that the metaphorical barn that I’m trying to raise is a virtuous and righteous structure.

After the written lashing has been completed in a few pages, I’m going to ask each of you to go out of your comfort zones a bit, and to *reply all* in this email thread with your answers to several questions that I have for you.

Here comes the written lashing (sorry Doug):

Brother Andersen,

As you might remember, I reached out to you **seven months ago** within the context of me being a citizen journalist. I asked you to give Bishop Waddell the opportunity to go on record and answer the three questions that are presented to him in my December 2025 *Request for a Common Council* letter, as well as a request that the First Presidency be given an opportunity to go on record and answer the three additional questions that are presented to them in that same letter.

Your silent treatment towards me in relation to that matter was unprofessional. It was also arguably a dereliction of your **corporate duty of care**. You have left me in the dark as to whether or not those officers were provided with an opportunity to go on record.

While it might be the case that you are not the exact decision maker with regard to whether my letter would or would not be forwarded to the top level officers, certainly you are somewhere relatively high in that chain, and you could have issued me a common courtesy note informing me of what is going on.

Your failure to treat me as a journalist, much less as a fellow member of the Church in which we are *brothers*, or even as a basic human being who deserves baseline acknowledgement and courtesy, was regrettable and dishonorable of you.

Within your job description, one would hope, is the duty to treat journalists with some basic modicum of respect and civility, even if those individuals happen to be amateur journalists, and even if they happen to hold worldviews that you might not agree with.

More to the point: inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these your brethren, you have done it unto the Savior himself (Matthew 25:40).

So let’s start again, and try this once more:

Brother Andersen,

Is the First Presidency aware that a member of the Melchizedek priesthood has brought serious charges against them and has

requested a Common Council tribunal, in accordance with Doctrine and Covenants 107:82-84?

If **Yes**, what is their **on-the-record response** to the questions that appear in the charging document?

If **No**, upon what basis are you or other members of your corporate chain of command hiding this important information from those officers?

In addition, is the Presiding Bishopric aware that a member of the Melchizedek priesthood has brought serious charges against members of the First Presidency and has requested a Common Council be empaneled in order to investigate and adjudicate the situation, in accordance with Doctrine and Covenants 107:82-84?

If **Yes**, what is the Bishopric's **on-the-record response** to the questions that appear in the charging document?

If **No**, upon what basis are you or other members of your corporate chain of command hiding this important information from those officers?

Please, Doug, *do your job*, run the matter past whichever gatekeepers are involved, make whatever decisions you are going to make, and either make an attempt to get the information I'm asking for, or be courteous and human and Christ-like enough to admit to me that you aren't willing to do that, and that you are trash-canning my letter, or explain to me whatever it is that you are actually doing.

Meanwhile, leaving me in the dark on such an important and sensitive issue is extremely toxic and perverse behavior. To wit:

> Silent treatment is a toxic form of behavior and emotional abuse used to punish, control, ignore, or isolate another person. Unlike healthy brief pauses to de-escalate conflict, it involves withholding communication without a clear time frame for reconnection, creating a power imbalance and eroding trust.

Another reason why you have a clear and obvious **corporate duty of care** to ensure that my interview request reaches the intended officers is because the grievances and questions that I've put forward in my *Request for a Common Council* involve matters of high importance that are **evidence-based** and have global relevance to the Church.

For example, my grievances are far more serious than the issues that were involved during the 1834 Common Council, in which Joseph Smith was investigated for potential tithing misuse and other alleged misbehavior.

In addition, my grievances are at least as serious, if not significantly more serious than the issues that were investigated during the 1844 Common Council that removed Sidney Rigdon from authority.

Also, by comparison in terms of severity and scope, those past Common Councils were considering accusations made against individual members of the First Presidency, and those trials were limited to one defendant in each case.

Meanwhile, in the present case, I'm asserting that there is a massively strong case for a **triple-defendant trial** that would likely result in the simultaneous removal of all three presidents of the High Priesthood, if they fail to make prompt and significant improvements in the matters that are at issue.

You can mock me, or show silent treatment, disrespect, and dismissiveness in this matter for months on end, or even years on end, that is your agency, but God's laws actually matter, and those laws are **not going to be mocked forever** (D&C 42:59-60):

> “Thou shalt take the things which thou hast received, which have been given unto thee in my scriptures for a law, to be my law to govern my church; And he that doeth according to these things shall be saved, **and he that doeth them not shall be damned if he so continue**.”

The Common Council protocol exists for a very good reason, and it’s been a profoundly underutilized disciplinary tool for well over 180+ years. Our neglect of this aspect of the Church’s blueprint is one of the main reasons why the Church is at present **out of order** and in breach of duty in several important areas of the gospel.

The fact that the Church is also a world-dominating flower of beauty and virtue and righteousness in some areas of the gospel is not a reason to hide our sins.

We can’t use our laurels to cover our mistakes. We are in the midst of a very difficult process of trying to prepare for the Wedding Feast, and we have serious issues to deal with. The Wedding Dress needs to be washed and laundered until it’s perfect and spotless, to be ready for the Holy and Perfect Bridegroom, so He can finally call the Wedding Feast and take us away from Babylon.

And time is running out. We are way behind the 8-ball, and there is a profound and tragic lack of urgency that is being demonstrated in this matter, by yourself and by many others.

In sum: please **stop trifling with sacred things**, and start taking it seriously that a member of the **Holy Melchizedek Priesthood** has come to you with **actionable evidence of serious transgression** within the hierarchy of the Church.

There are divine rules and protocols for handling this situation that are plainly written in the scriptures, and we need to follow those rules, else we are going to get our teeth savagely kicked in by the devil, and he is going to mop the floor with us, which is already happening in various areas of the gospel (D&C 84:54-58, D&C 82:10, D&C 42:59-60), and it has been happening for a long time.

Brother Andersen, please *be a man*, and start to act as an honorable corporate officer, and stop participating in the Wizard of Oz type machinations or perversities that the corporate side of the Church is so infamous for. For example:

> “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).

In order to begin on the path to resolving the breach that exists between you and I, and to begin moving towards unity, please begin to communicate with me in a virtuous and honest way.

An opportunity for you to begin doing that is as follows:

Please ask the Presiding Bishopric and the First Presidency to answer the questions that I’ve asked them in good faith to answer. If they are

unwilling to answer those questions, please communicate that fact to me in the form of an official statement from the Church, within the context of me being **a journalist** who is writing a news article about this matter, and thus I need to know what the Church's official position is.

It happens to be your explicit and paid job in the Church to provide such information to me, and it's plainly written in your job summary, that one of your primary duties is to **issue statements to journalists**.

Pursuant to that duty, please issue an official statement to me in this matter no later than → **Saturday, August 1, 2026 by 5PM MST**.

And when issuing that statement, please utilize the "reply all" option in the original email thread that contains this present letter, so that my local priesthood officers will have visibility of the communication.

It does occur to me that it's within the realm of possibility, and might actually be likely, that you **did** fulfill your corporate duty of care seven months ago, by passing my interview questions up the chain of command, and that after doing that you were instructed by higher ups to give me the silent treatment.

If that is the case, then you didn't deserve nearly as much of a beating as the one I just gave you, and it's the higher level officers who actually deserve most of that lashing, per D&C 42:91 and Matthew 23.

Along those lines, please ensure that the presiding officers receive this present document in its entirety, so that they will have the full context of the flogging that I just gave you, which they likely deserved much more than you did. In addition, the following note is an

open-letter expression of my displeasure and disappointment with their own behavior in the matter:

To the First Presidency and Presiding Bishopric

Beloved brothers: If you sincerely feel that I'm misinformed as to any of the evidence or logic that underpins my 12 grievances, I would like to understand why you feel that way. Please educate me, enlighten me, show me the truth, point out where I'm mistaken.

Or how about this: be honest enough and manly enough to admit that there are real issues here that need remediation, and be willing to commit to me, and to the rest of the Church, that you will work on those issues, and give us an assurance that improvements will be on the horizon in the near future.

If you are not willing to engage in honest and good faith dialogue in this regard, I will consider your non-response in this matter to be a **default admission of your guilt** in relation to each of the 12 grievances that I've previously submitted, and I will present the fact of your non-responsiveness, should it persist, as evidence against you in any future discussions, articles, letters, or meetings related to this matter, for the purpose of proving the unhappy and unfortunate reality that your behavior in this matter is manifestly:

- UnChrist-like and unmanly;
- Contemptuous and unnecessarily antagonistic towards proper dialogue, transparency, and membership unity;
- Dismissive towards votes of opposition and abusive in relation to the law of common consent;

- Unnecessarily imperious and haughty towards a good faith request for disciplinary action anchored in plain scriptural text and historical precedent;
- And, delinquent and recalcitrant towards magnifying, respecting, and honoring the obvious charters and responsibilities that attach to your sacred priesthood offices.

There are two different ways in which you can resolve this issue in a proactive and righteous manner. They are as follows:

1- Best Case Scenario (The First Presidency Resolves the Matter)

You, the First Presidency, could issue a press release indicating that major changes to curriculum and doctrine are in the works, and that a new direction will be taking place in the Church in the near future. You could briefly summarize what those changes are, and then have a completed outline ready to present to the Saints by October conference.

In other words, to properly address and resolve the 12 grievances that I've put forward in my letter to Bishop Waddell, it will require a major retooling of the doctrinal infrastructure of the Church. An overhaul of that kind would take us back to a much purer and more virtuous instance of Mormonism, or what might be called "original Mormonism," which is a very different track than the one we are currently on.

If you were to embark on that journey of renaissance and a return to innocence, it would result in the most important and decisive General Conference within the last 100+ years, and it would open up an entirely new era in Church History.

It would also likely lead to major new revelations being added to the Standard Works in the near future, because as a people we would finally be ready for those things.

My patriarchal blessing indicates that I will witness those kinds of events. When I was 14, it was promised to me in my blessing that I will live to see major new revelations and new books of scripture added to the Standard Works.

At present we aren't worthy of new canon-level revelations, and it's plain as day to see why that is. We are deeply mired in a mud pit of false doctrines and bad traditions, and we aren't obeying the commandments that God has already given to us. The 12 grievances that are in my letter to Bishop Waddell outline some of those failures.

2 - Upheaval Scenario (Presiding Bishopric Resolves the Matter)

If you, the First Presidency, are not willing to restore the Church back to the earlier and purer version of Mormonism, which is what needs to happen immediately, then it falls to the Presiding Bishop to break ranks with you, and to invoke D&C 107:82-84 and D&C 42:91, and to remove you from office by means of a Common Council.

And in doing that, the Presiding Bishopric would be returning the top level leadership keys back to the Quorum of the Twelve, who would then need to reconstitute a new First Presidency from scratch, with leaders who would have to be acceptable to the Presiding Bishopric.

And if you, the First Presidency, were to get froggy in that situation, and were to try to avoid or interfere with the decision of a Common Council (which would be an unrighteous attempt on your part to **steady the ark**, the ark being the **laws of God**, and not the mortal

officers), God might go into Zeus mode and start dropping lighting bolts on you, on par with the Old Testament wrath that he showed towards Uzzah, which very much remains a locked-and-loaded weapon in the Lord's active arsenal, per D&C 85:8.

3 - Spiritual Maturity Scenario (The Common Membership Resolves the Matter)

If you (as the presiding officers of the Church) fail to be proactive in relation to options #1 or #2 noted above, it might be that you will eventually lose the confidence of some critical mass of the membership, because they might sooner or later begin to understand how perverse and unrighteous the Wizard-of-Oz slash Improper Monarchy situation actually is.

And, once there is a critical mass of the Saints who understands that major commandments are being violated, and become willing to honor their duty as voting members to openly oppose you (D&C 124:144) and to symbolically reject your unrighteous dominion, the Lord will finally be able to give us better leaders, per the law of restoration, because we will finally deserve that blessing (D&C 130:20-21).

And it might be that you could crush or stomp on the first few waves of a righteous awakening of that kind, but a tipping point would occur at some point. Righteous oppositional voters would get stomped on by your current policies, and some of the best members of the Church would have their lives destroyed, would lose their employment within the Church, and would have their families torn apart.

And the social martyrdom created by those tragic events would eventually trigger a broader awakening, and the mood would turn against you at some point, and you would start to see a non-trivial

minority of the membership voting against you. And when that happens, it would mean that the membership is ready for something more virtuous than what is currently in place, and the Lord would respond.

He would bare his holy arm, and he would install new leaders in the Church in whatever way was necessary, and the membership would then be blessed with the caliber of leaders that they deserve (D&C 130:20-21).

4 - Worst Case Scenario (No One Resolves the Matter)

Given how unlikely it is that any of the relevant parties (the First Presidency, the Presiding Bishopric, or the common membership) will move the Church towards repentance in any sort of proactive way, the most likely outcome for repentance is that we will have several more decades of disobedience and whoring after other gods (worshipping the mortal officers), followed by some measure of death and destruction, which might almost entirely wipe us out, along with removing other problematic and disobedient inhabitants from this holy land of promise (Ether 2:9).

And that divine violence will bring whoever remains alive immediately to their knees, and will motivate whatever fraction of the Church that survives to start taking the commandments much more seriously.

We have been claiming for the last 130+ years that we as a people are perfect and beyond reproach in terms of our doctrine –that it is impossible for us to be led astray by our mortal officers. That is an extremely dangerous type of pride, it’s idolatrous, and it’s also dishonest. And there is going to be a fall as a consequence of that pride, that will be coming to us sooner or later.

We can choose to fall in the proper way, which is to fall voluntarily to our knees in sackcloth and ashes, and return immediately to true worship of Christ, or we can continue our wickedness until we are eventually humbled in the **hard way**, with plague, war, famine, cataclysm, and bloodshed.

That is a choice that we hold within our own hands. The future is not set. We will be our own judges, and we get to choose what happens (Jonah 3:9-10, Alma 41:7).

Gentlemen, please wake up and realize that this is a crucial juncture in our history as a people. There is a real fork in the road here, and the four different paths noted above will take us in significantly different directions.

Please fast and pray about this matter and come up with something intelligent, take some meaningful action, and stop being slothful ***dough heads***. At present, I'm the only adult in the room on some of these issues, and that asymmetry needs to change. It's time for you to start being the adults in the room in these matters.

I've been on the city wall for quite a few years now, pleading with you to wake up. You've been duly warned and mentored, and you need to stop worshipping the false traditions that you were born into, and you need to start magnifying your callings.

And I'm far from being the only Samuel-the-Lamanite-type messenger who has been sent to call you to repentance. Over the years there have been scores if not hundreds of such messengers, and they have mostly been trampled on and ignored, and shot full of arrows.

At present, there are very serious misunderstandings in the Church about basic things like evil speaking, apostasy, priestcraft, the nature and duty of prophets, the balance of powers between high level officers, faith in Christ vs. faith in mortal officers (idolatry), the importance of the law of common consent and oppositional voting, the divine laws regarding warfare and bloodshed, the righteous caveats that exist in relation to the 12th Article of Faith per D&C 134:5-8, the identification of the enemies of the Church per Ether 8:24, and what it means to be called of God (1 Samuel 8:7).

In relation to those items and quite a few other matters, we were born into false traditions. As a result, most members of the Church have a relatively shallow and mistaken understanding of the gospel, and we have been persistently passive and slothful for many years (D&C 58:26-29, D&C 84:54-58). We are in a royal pickle because of that behavior, and it was predicted a long time ago that this would happen to us (2 Nephi 28:21).

If my patriarchal blessing is accurate in terms of me witnessing major new revelations and new books of scripture being added to the Standard Works during my lifetime, which has roughly 30 years remaining, per the average male lifespan in the US, then we will need to have an uncompromisingly righteous First Presidency take command within the Church somewhere within the next 30 years.

And for that to happen, major changes or upheaval will have to take place, probably along the lines of one of the four options noted above.

It’s a relatively dark and unhappy reality that I’m asking you to open your eyes to, but it is consistent with the scriptures, and it is a world in which the devil is much more powerful and much more intelligent than you have allowed with your “can’t be led astray” nonsense, which is an

attitude that we have been explicitly warned to avoid, and in very adamant terms (2 Nephi 28:22-27, Joseph Smith's Ezekiel 14 speech, etc.).

An Increase of Love after Sharpness

Brothers, proof positive that I love you, is that I'm willing to risk my standing in the Church, and ignore your misguided definition of evil speaking in order to communicate honestly with you.

I fully recognize that you are inspired and excellent leaders in many areas of the gospel, and that you deserve high praise for much of what you have accomplished.

But it also happens to be true that you have serious and unacceptable weaknesses and blind spots. And any veteran member of the Church who is not willing to acknowledge and confess those realities is not demonstrating love towards you. They are demonstrating fear, ignorance, and improper submission to mortal men.

The laws of the Church outrank you (D&C 42:59-60), and anyone who ignores or opposes those laws in order to be loyal to you, is not acting as a true disciple of Christ. Contrary to popular opinion within the Church, I am not evil speaking. I am truth speaking, which is exactly what the Savior was doing when he openly and publicly condemned the presiding priesthood officers of his time, immediately after acknowledging that they held true priesthood and had rightful control of the temple as the duly appointed high priests of God (Matthew 23).

More to the point: just because you have been called of God to preside in the Church doesn't mean that you are honoring those sacred callings in all areas of the gospel. And it's the duty of common

members to publicly oppose you (D&C 124:144, D&C 42:91, JST Mark 9:46) if you teach false doctrines, or become abusive or neglectful in any serious way, in any area of your stewardship.

Priesthood Mentorship Roundtable - Orem Utah Timpview Stake

Switching focus now, over to the local officers. It's now time for you to *show up for work*, and to answer some questions that I have for you.

If you are willing to participate, the due date for answering my questions is no later than → Saturday July 25, by 8PM MST.

That due date is intentionally ***one week prior*** to the deadline that I gave to Brother Andersen, and here is the reason for that:

Before Brother Andersen approaches the leadership on these issues, and asks them for an official statement in the matter, I'd like him to first have the opportunity to witness your answers to my questions, so that he can get a sense of what kind of unity or disunity exists in the Church on these issues.

Thus, when you reply with your answers to my questions, please use the "reply all" option in the original thread, so that you will be giving visibility of your answers both to your fellow priesthood officers and to Brother Andersen.

The "mentorship" aspect of this exercise is that if you are willing to participate, *you will be mentoring each other*, in roundtable fashion.

As you might remember from Church history, in the first meeting of the Council of Fifty, Joseph Smith explained how important it is to be

outspoken and straightforward with each other when discussing matters of importance:

> “Joseph urged participants to “speak their minds” and “to say what was in their hearts whether good or bad.” He said he “did not want to be forever surrounded by a set of ‘***dough heads***’ [unintelligent people] and if they did not rise up and shake themselves and exercise themselves in discussing these important matters he should consider them nothing better than ‘***dough heads***.’” (source)

That approach to voting is essentially identical to what Joseph F. Smith presented as being the proper way to participate in common consent voting, in his 1902 and 1904 General Conference addresses:

> “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 Oct 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)

One of the reasons why that inspired approach to voting never took hold within the Church (even though D&C 124:144 is perfectly clear that opposing votes are virtuous) is because that way of voting is in ***sharp opposition to human nature***, and it creates an acute level of discomfort that we naturally want to avoid.

It is much easier to hide our differences than to confess them, especially when confessing those differences will put us sharply at odds with the presiding officers, who hold a massive and terrifying power differential over us, because they can destroy our lives so instantly and so brutally, by casting us out of the temple, by excommunicating us from the Church, by destroying our reputations, and by destroying our livelihoods or businesses, if our employment intersects with the Church, etc.

The power differential that exists between common members and priesthood authorities motivates potent self-sensorship from common members, but then added on top of that problem is a very immature reading of D&C 121 by the leadership that has been used to create an extraordinarily overbearing and inaccurate definition of evil speaking.

So we’ve now ended up with three very formidable obstacles that stand in the way of honest communication within the Church:

1. The built-in motivation of human nature, to self-censor our true thoughts and feelings, to hide our votes of opposition, and to be ***dough heads***, in order to avoid trouble and to stay out of harm's way from the bully club of the presiding officers (almost all officers are abusive, per D&C 121:39)

2. Our current definition of evil speaking is not scripturally accurate, and it's causing a lot of problems in the Church. Our current definition is in violation of D&C 124:144, D&C 42:91, JST Mark 9:46, and D&C 107:82-84.
3. Our current definition of common consent voting (in which votes of opposition are implicitly outlawed) is mistaken and is in violation of D&C 124:144 and D&C 42:91.

And the metaphorical barn I'm trying to build, and that I need your help to raise, is a virtuous meeting place where the Saints can come together and speak to each other as equals and peers, without fear of reprisal, without the fear of having their lives torn apart and destroyed and having their temple recommends cancelled, for merely offering a dissenting opinion or a dissenting vote.

We need those dissenting votes. They are part of the gospel (D&C 124:144), and without allowing those votes to exist and be seen and heard, we will never be able to get out of the muck or repent of our group-level sins.

And if we are able to raise the aforementioned barn (many hands make light work) and present a mature and righteous structure of that kind to Brother Andersen in one week's time, that will give him highly valuable data to take to the presiding officers, and it might actually motivate them to get some of these issues cleaned up and back on track (...by small and simple things are great things brought to pass –Alma 37:6.)

With that in mind, please do your **absolute best** to answer the following questions in an honest, righteous, and prompt fashion. I would really like to have 100 percent participation from this group,

which would provide Brother Andersen with 42 separate data points in this matter.

Mentorship Roundtable Questions

1. **All members of the roundtable:**

   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 submitted in my 2025 letter to Bishop Waddell, with 0 being no merit, and 100 being the strongest possible merit.

   For example, my own numeric answers to that question are as follows: 35, 55, 100, 100, 100, 50, 100, 100, 50, 100, 100, 100

2. **All members of the roundtable:**

   Please indicate (Yes or No) if you would be in favor of President Wheelhouse submitting my vote of opposition and my request for a Common Council up the priesthood chain of command to the Presiding Bishopric and the First Presidency on **August 2nd**, or shortly thereafter, in the event that Brother Andersen fails to provide a response from the presiding officers by **August 1st**.

   Note to President Wheelhouse: if your own answer to this question is Yes, please share a brief testimony or explanation for how you came to that decision. If your answer turns out to be No, please likewise provide a brief explanation as to the logic or testimony that underpins that decision. –All others answering this question, a simple Yes or No will suffice.

3. **All members of the roundtable:**

   Please indicate (Yes or No) if you would like to see honest and straightforward answers from the Presiding Bishop and from the First Presidency in relation to the questions that I asked them in my 2025 letter to Bishop Waddell.

   Note: If one or more participants in this roundtable were to express an interest in wanting an on-the-record answer from the presiding officers, it would be an important moment in Church History.

   It would mean that the request for the Presiding Bishop to consider empaneling a Common Council tribunal has now become a class-action matter, with multiple members of the Melchizedek priesthood presenting themselves as plaintiffs.

   And, if we as a Timpview stake were able to demonstrate even a tiny critical mass or modicum of unity in this matter, let's say at the magnitude of 10 to 15 witnesses who answer **Yes** to question #2 and/or to question #3 –that would be an extraordinarily powerful moment. It would demonstrate that this issue is not going to go until it is properly resolved, and that a grassroots fire is underway.

4. **All members of the roundtable:**

   Our spouses cannot rightly be left in the dark in a matter that is as important and impactful as this one is. If you are married, please invite your wife to take a look at this discussion, and if she is interested and would like to answer the first three

questions in this list, please enter her answers into the #4 answer slot, when replying with your answers to this quiz.

For example, if your wife's answers to the first three questions were this:

> 1– 35, 55, 100, 100, 100, 50, 100, 100, 50, 100, 100, 100
> 2– Yes
> 3– Yes

…then that is the data you would input into the #4 slot in your answer set.

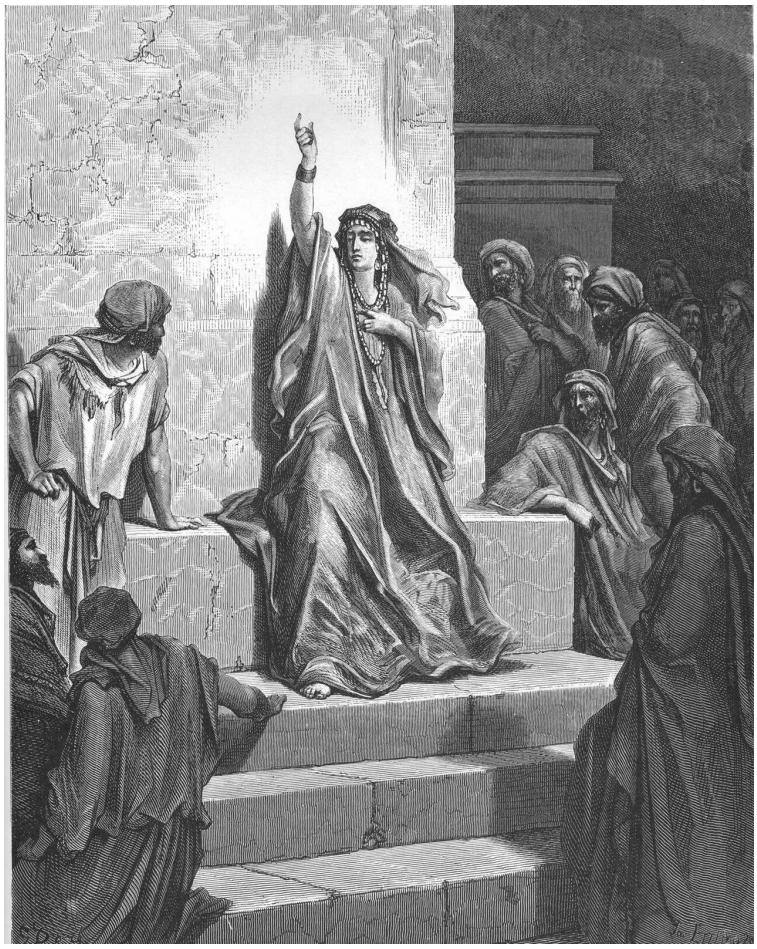
Given the fact that men have been doing a relatively poor job of governing the Church over the last 200 years (not in all categories, but definitely in some areas of the gospel, and have been doing a downright horrible an abusive job in at least a few areas of governance), it is relatively clear that we are in need of some heavy doses of priestess-prophetess energy, insight, virtue, and guidance.

A relatively strong case can be made that as a people, we have not been properly accessing or utilizing the priestess-prophetess gifts and powers that are available within the Church. While it is not the duty of women to lead or manage within the Church in an administrative way, it is their duty to symbolically approve or disapprove of how the Church is being managed, and they have insights and sensitivities that male priesthood officers often lack.

For example, when Emma Smith went "scorched earth" on her husband and the rest of the Brethren, and demanded a cessation of the disgusting and pathetic tobacco spitting that was

taking place in the Church, her righteous “vote of opposition” in that regard was of high importance.

Her priestess-prophetess powers were on full display in that regard, and her insights (and righteous anger) motivated positive change, and led to the reception of one of the most important revelations in the Church: the Word of Wisdom, as found in Doctrine and Covenants 89.



Deborah the Judge, Gustave Dore, 1865

At the moment of baptism, every member automatically inherits the lifelong calling to be a responsible and conscientious voting member of the Church. That duty increases in accountability and

complexity as we become older and more seasoned. We wouldn't necessarily expect an eight-year-old to be able to recognize a false doctrine or a bad policy, or to use his or her vote to oppose leaders who are pushing such things, but we should expect that level of duty from ourselves, and from all other adult members.

In sum, please make a good faith effort to include your wives in this discussion, and include their answers if they would like to participate. Additionally, women might have female-specific grievances about the Church that are not found in my 2025 complaint list. In that regard, if your wives have ANY concerns about the Church that go beyond the 12 grievances that are noted in my 2025 letter to Bishop Waddell, please capture that information and include it your responses to question #4.

It would probably also be appropriate for each of you to hold a family council prior to submitting your answers in this roundtable exercise, and to discuss and pray as a family about the matters that are at issue.

In doing that, you might end up receiving some value insights from your children. Although we shouldn't necessarily expect too much from younger kids, all children 8 and above do have the responsibility to vote in the Church, and sometimes wisdom and light comes "out of the mouth of babes" (Psalms 8:2, Matthew 21:16).

Meanwhile, some of your older children might have surprisingly mature input about some of these matters, and you might be impressed at how insightful their answers will be, if only you were to give them the proper space to speak freely, and do not

inappropriately threaten or intimidate them into silence by means of the misguided "sustain or be cast out" mandate that currently has primacy in the Church.

Concluding Thoughts

All –if you are willing to engage in this roundtable exercise in a virtuous and honest way, you will be experimenting on the words in D&C 124:144.

And after this mini-experiment is over, if you continue to experiment upon those words in the right way (Alma 32, John 7:17), with diligence and patience, you will come to know for yourself, by the power of the Holy Ghost, what the law of common consent means and how important its role actually is, within the gospel of Christ.

And I can testify in this matter from a position of actual knowledge, because I have lived the law of common consent in my own life, to the best of my ability, and the Holy Ghost has witnessed to me about it. I can tell you plainly that the best interpretation of common consent that we currently have is from Joseph F. Smith (1902-1904, General Conferences).

I can also tell you why this matter is so controversial, and why the devil has been fighting so hard to keep us blind and disobedient in this area of the gospel. And that is because the law of common consent is actually the law of repentance at the group level.

Common consent voting is a “mass-confession” protocol or a group-level repentance mechanism that will allow us to overcome our policy mistakes and heal and resolve our disunity as a people. If used

properly, the law of common consent will empower us to eventually become a people of one heart and one mind.

And once we are able to do that, we will become an unstoppable and virtuous people, and we'll be able to fulfill our true mission, and we will become ready for the Wedding Feast.

Tragically, multiple high level officers in the Church (including a current member of the Seventy who I personally know) have admitted to me, straight up, to my face during in-person conversations, that they have zero interest in studying or praying about the law of common consent or any other contested issues in the gospel, because to them it would be a "waste of time" and a "misguided gospel hobby", and that in their mind, following the currently established interpretation of the commandments is the only proper way to live the gospel and to remain spiritually safe.

That slothful, passive, and idolatrous way of treating the gospel happens to be a dead ringer for the curses, damnation, and darkness of mind that are outlined in 2 Nephi 28:30-31, 2 Nephi 32:4, D&C 84:54-58, D&C 58:26, Ezekiel 14, 1 Samuel 8:7, Jeremiah 35, 1 Kings 13, 2 Nephi 28:4-5, and 2 Nephi 9:42.

Consider how perverse and backwards this reality is: within the framework of our current way of teaching the gospel, if we were members in 1859 when Brigham Young was teaching slavery and violence against blacks, we would be obligated to support that wickedness, in opposition to D&C 101:79. That is insanely corrupt, and straight up *stupid*. It represents a rejection of D&C 124:144, D&C 107:82-82, D&C 42:91, D&C 42:59-60, JST Mark 9:46, 2 Nephi 28:31, and many other scriptures.

Consider the fact that we currently teach that if a president of the Church commands us to commit sin we are supposed to obey that wicked order, and we'll supposedly be blessed for it by the Lord. That is straight-up demonic doctrine, and it's a grievous example of taking the Lord's name in vain, because that doctrine is being ignorantly presented by the leaders as being from the Savior, and it's actually from the devil.

That fact that we've been tolerating that kind of **demonic**, ignorant, and idolatrous filth in the Lord's holy Church for so many years, and constantly giving our sacred votes of consent to prop it up, and mindlessly worshiping the leaders who are ignorantly peddling it, is exactly the reason why we are currently cursed as a people, per 2 Nephi 28:31 and D&C 84:54-58, and it's why our minds have been darkened, just as Joseph Smith warned about, in his Ezekiel 14 speech, in relation to improperly anchoring excessive trust in the presiding officers.

Until we have a spiritual coming of age and become willing to return to the purity of our original foundation (which anchors us in Christ), the following realities will continue to exist:

- Members of the First Presidency will continue to deserve open and public criticism per D&C 42:91 and Matthew 23.
- They will continue to deserve persistent votes of opposition per D&C 124:144 and JST Mark 9:46
- They will continue to be in need of disciplinary action from the Presiding Bishopric, per D&C 107:82-84

As a Church, as a leadership corps, and as individuals, we need to repent and return to the proper path of obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ.

As Melchizedek priesthood holders, all of us have the right and the duty to understand all of the existing commandments, and to defend and uphold a correct and Spirit-approved interpretation of those commandments. We need to start taking that responsibility seriously, and we need to stop teaching false doctrines in our congregations, in our quorums, and in our families.

There are no easy answers for how to navigate this crisis, but one thing is clear: living the true gospel of Christ in an uncompromising way has the very real potential to turn our lives upside down and to create immense conflict within our immediate and extended families.

That potential conflict is something that we should be prepared for and willing to deal with, in line with the Savior's warning in Matthew 10:34-39–

> 34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.
>
> 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.
>
> 36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.
>
> 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
>
> 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

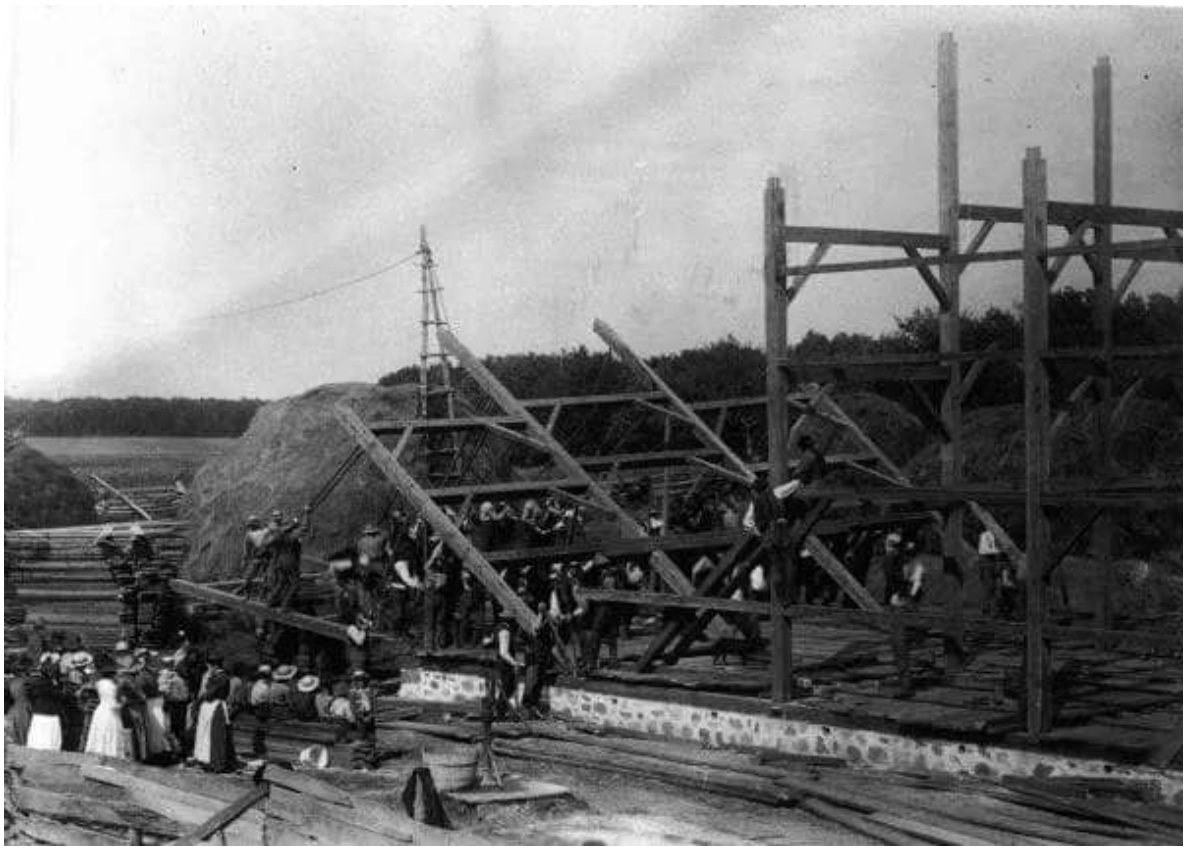
> 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

-Joe Murff

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Starting on the next page is a copy of the 2025 Letter to the Presiding Bishop, followed by a brief 2026 addendum.

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A barn raising event on the farm of Alva Paddock in the township of Salem, Kenosha County, Wisconsin, 1891

*Notice that there are many ***women*** involved, as well as the men.

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.

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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



Scriptural basis of pure or original Mormonism

- JST Mark 9:46
- D&C 107:82-84
- D&C 124:144
- D&C 42:91
- 2 Nephi 28:31
- 2 Nephi 4:34-35
- D&C 1:19-20
- Joseph Smith's Ezekiel 14 warning in relation to the "**darkness of mind**" that occurs in relation to anchoring excessive trust in the president of the Church (Minutes and Discourse, 26 May 1842, p. 51, The Joseph Smith Papers)
- D&C 84:54-58 ("**minds have been darkened**")
- Brigham Young's forceful and righteous warning regarding prophetic fallibility and the **dangers of anchoring trust in mortal officers** (Journal of Discourses 18:248, 1877)
- Apostle Franklin D. Richards adamant rejection of prophetic infallibility, calling the idea "**slavery in the extreme**" (Millennial Star Vol. 14, 13 November, 1852, Issue 38)
- Moroni 7:15
- Moroni 10:5
- Alma 32
- D&C 130:20-21
- D&C 121:39
- 2 Nephi 28:4-5
- 2 Nephi 28:21
- D&C 84:54-58
- D&C 21:4 (this passage of scripture contains a divinely issued commandment to obey the words of the president inasmuch "as he receiveth [words from the Lord], walking in all holiness before [the Lord]," which creates an obligation on the part of

membership to know for themselves if the president has actually received XYZ from the Lord or not, before they can rightly follow or obey the president in any matter of importance)

- D&C 50:24
- Matthew 6:24
- Matthew 7:7
- Matthew 23
- John 7:17
- 1 Kings 13
- Jeremiah 35
- 1 Samuel 8:7
- Ezekiel 14

Relevant quotes from Church History:

[1] "Men and women should become settled in the truth and rounded in a knowledge of the Gospel, depending upon no person for borrowed light, but trusting only upon the Holy Spirit, who is ever the same." (President Joseph F. Smith; as quoted by Elder Samuel O. Bennion, April 1941 General Conference, p. 32)

[2] "We can tell when the speakers are moved upon by the Holy Ghost only when we, ourselves, are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. In a way, this completely shifts the responsibility from them to us to determine when they so speak." (President J. Rueben Clark, 1954 CN-7/31/54)

[3] "Perhaps it is [God's] own design that faults and weaknesses should appear in high places in order that His Saints may learn to trust in Him and not in any man or men." (George Q. Cannon, 1st Counselor in the First Presidency, 1898, Millennial Star, 53:658-59)

[4] Ezra Taft Benson quoted the above statement from President Cannon and added: “And this would parallel Lehi's warning; put not your “trust in the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34)". (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, page 406)

[5] "We do not believe in the infallibility of man. When God reveals anything it is truth, and truth is infallible." (Charles W. Penrose, "Peculiar Questions Briefly Answered," Improvement Era 15 no. 11, September 1912).

[6] "You must work through the Spirit. If that leads you into conflict with the program of the Church, you follow the voice of the Spirit." (Elder S. Dilworth Young, First Council of the Seventy, 1945; quoted here, p. 17)

[7] "We have hitherto acted too much as machines, as to following Brigham Young. I will confess to my own shame that I have acted contrary to my own judgment many times. I mean hereafter not to demean myself, to not run contrary to my own judgment. ...When [President Young] says that the Spirit of the Lord says thus and so, I don’t consider that all we should do is to say let it be so.” (Orson Pratt, 1847)

[8] “Because of the apparent imperfections of men on whom God confers authority, the question is sometimes asked,—to what extent is obedience to those who hold the priesthood required? This is a very important question, and one which should be understood by all Saints. In attempting to answer this question, we would repeat, in short, what we have already written, that willing obedience to the laws of God, administered by the Priesthood, is indispensable to salvation; but we would further

add, that a proper conservative to this power exists for the benefit of all, and none are required to tamely and blindly submit to a man because he has the Priesthood. We have heard men who hold the Priesthood remark, that they would do any thing they were told to do by those who presided over them, even if they knew it was wrong: but such obedience as this is worse than folly to us; it is slavery in the extreme; and the man who would thus willingly degrade himself, should not claim a rank among intelligent beings, until he turns from his folly. A man of God, who seeks for the redemption of his fellows, would despise the idea of seeing another become his slave, who had an equal right with himself to the favour of God; he would rather see him stand by his side, a sworn enemy to wrong, so long as there was place found for it among men." (Millennial Star Vol. 14, 13 November, 1852, Issue 38, Liverpool, England., Elder Franklin D. Richards, Apostle, and nephew of President Willard Richards.)

[9] "Suppose I were to teach you a false doctrine, how are you to know it if you do not possess the Spirit of God? As it is written, 'The things of God knoweth no man but by the Spirit of God.' ...I have often said to the Latter-Day Saints 'Live so that you will know whether I teach you the truth or not.' 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)

[10] "What a pity it would be if we were led by one man to utter destruction! Are you afraid of this? I am more afraid that this

people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation." (President Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 9:150).

[11] "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)

[12] "We want a standard that is infallible because it relieves us of the burden of continually exerting ourselves to use discernment. The way that Dostoyevsky put it so beautifully is that “We want some person to be a keeper of our conscience”. The hard lesson is that there is never a moment when you can delegate your volition to another individual." (Terryl Givens, Mormon Matters podcast #225, Wrestling with Prophets and Scripture)

[13] "So think about this for a minute. Wilford is telling us that the Lord will intervene to take away a prophet’s free agency (by taking his life) just so we don’t have to exercise our own agency

to determine by the Holy Spirit whether he is being led by the Lord or not! Is that not wholly inconsistent with key principles of the Gospel regarding free agency? Is it not wholly inconsistent with the principle of common consent? When you understand the historical context of the time, many saints thought he actually was leading them astray by ending the practice of polygamy. He had to assure them that he wasn't with some very strong language. A myth is born." (Anonymous LDS blogger "One Who is Searching".)

[14] "And by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things..." (Moroni 10:5)

[15] "...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..." (Moroni 7:15-16)

[16] "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." (Matthew 7:7-8)

[17] "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." (James 1:5)

[18] "...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..." (D&C 1:19-20)

[19] "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)

[20] "Do not, brethren, put your trust in man though he be a bishop, an apostle, or a President; if you do, they will fail you at some time or place; they will do wrong or seem to, and your support will be gone; but if we lean on God, He will never fail us. When men and women depend upon God alone and trust in Him alone, their faith will not be shaken if the highest in the Church should step aside". (George Q. Cannon, First Counselor in the First Presidency, Deseret Weekly, 43:322, Mar 7, 1891).

[21] "And if thine eye which seeth for thee, him that is appointed to watch over thee to show thee light, become a transgressor and offend thee, pluck him out." (Mark 9:46, JST)

[22] "Those who are valiant and inspired with the true independence of heaven will go forth boldly in the service of their God, leaving others to do as they please, determined to do right, though all mankind besides should take the opposite course." (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, 1:312)

[23] "I am not going to crawl to the president or act the hypocrite and confess what I do not believe. I will be a free man. It may cost me my fellowship but I will stick to it. If I die tonight I would say 'O Lord God Almighty, I believe what I say.'" (Orson Pratt, January 27, 1860, from the minutes of joint quorum meeting with the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, Seventies, and the Presiding Bishop)

[24] "If there is any man in this church that does wrong, that

breaks the law of God, it mattereth not what his standing may be, whether among the Twelve, the High Priests, Seventies, or Elders, or in any other standing, there is a tribunal that will reach their case in process of time, there is authority before whom they can be tried. Therefore let no one turn against the cause of God, and stop in the road to destruction, on the plea that somebody has done wrong: it is no excuse for you or I to do wrong because another does: the soul that sins, alone must bear it. Should I step aside from the path of duty it would not destroy the gospel of Jesus Christ, or even one principle of eternal truth, they would remain the same. Neither would it be any excuse for you to commit sin! but I should have to bear my own sins, and not the sins of others—so with all men." (Millennial Star, Dec. 1844, p. 111.)

[25] "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)

[26] "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)

[27] In the first meeting of the Council of Fifty, Joseph Smith explained that vocal dissent was mandatory for any member who harbored dissent in their heart:

> "Joseph urged participants to "speak their minds" and "to say what was in their hearts whether good or bad." He said he "did not want to be forever surrounded by a set of 'dough heads' [unintelligent people] and if they did not rise up and shake themselves and exercise themselves in discussing these important matters he should consider them nothing better than 'dough heads.'"

[28] "If we have presidents or apostles or anybody that we do not like, let us vote them out, and be free men, and cultivate and cherish in our bosoms the principles of liberty." (John Taylor, 7 October 1872; "Discourse," The Deseret News Weekly, volume 21, number 48)

Note:Technically the common vote does not hold administrative power, it is not mob democracy. The vote of common consent is symbolic only, not binding. But John Taylor is right that we should vote the way we want to, and we should symbolically reject bad leaders, in keeping with JST Mark 9:46 and D&C 124:144.

Meanwhile, the Presiding Bishopric *does* have the administrative power to vote out abusive or neglectful presidents of the Church, by means of a common council per D&C 107:82-84. In that regard, John Taylor's quote from 1872 is correct that we (the Saints as a body in total, which includes the presiding bishopric), can vote out abusive or neglectful presidents of the Church.