

# Doctrinal and Cultural Developments within the LDS Church

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## Compiler's Remarks and Explanation

*The following blog post quotations convey a detailed explanation of some of the doctrinal and cultural developments which have transpired within the LDS church since the time of Joseph Smith.*

*I have collected seven blog posts written by Denver Snuffer back in 2010, while he was still in good standing with the church, three years before he was excommunicated. I have also ended off with a very illuminating blog post by Alan Rock Waterman. These articles are not combative. They simply relate the historic reality as contained in the written record.*

*The reason I did this is because I keep hearing from LDS family members and friends that the leaders of the LDS church are led by revelation, that everything they say and do is the revealed will of God, that they really are, in all reality, prophets, seers, and revelators, and that they will not and indeed cannot lead us astray. I wanted show in writing that this is demonstrably incorrect, by their own public accounts and testimonies, and in accordance with the public written record. LDS apostles and presidents do not claim to receive open revelation, visions, or visitations; in fact, they claim just the opposite. Many of them have openly stated that they do not experience these things and that they know few, if any, who do. This being the case, it seems inappropriate and dishonest to claim for these men that which they do not claim of themselves. These men are prophets, seers, and revelators, holding these titles only, but not in manifest actuality. Again, this being the case, we should not regard them as infallible prophets or spokesmen for the Lord; but as equals and as equally fallible.*

## The traditions of men, part 1

April 21, 2010

<http://denversnuffer.com/2010/04/the-traditions-of-men-part-1/>

*I received this question in a comment: "You often refer to incorrect traditions that you see members following. Can you give me a few specifics?"*

...here are some of the things which have changed dramatically and are the product of accepted tradition now, but were entirely innovative when they happened.

The discarding of the Presiding Patriarch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There is no scriptural authority for this change and there was nothing in the original order which suggested that a change would be made. Now the current state of things is equivocal. We actually have still a Presiding Patriarch who is still living. He is emeritus. Whether the church intends to terminate the office upon his death is unclear. If they do, that will be an innovation and (in my personal opinion) unfortunate.

The alteration of the Presiding High Priest's status from "President" to "Prophet." From the time of Joseph Smith until 1955 the term "Prophet" was used exclusively to refer to Joseph Smith. It was changed in 1955 to apply to

the living President, David O. McKay. Before then no living man was ever referred to as “Prophet” within the church, other than Joseph Smith. When the word “Prophet” was used after Joseph’s death, it was understood the term meant Joseph Smith.

The result of this change was to create a “cult of personality” around the church president in much the same way that the Catholic Church has created a “cult of personality” around Mother Mary. You need to understand that whole subject before you get too excited by my putting it that way. If you do not understand this technical description then you need to become acquainted with it to be able to comprehend what I am saying here. To briefly touch upon the subject, the Catholic view of the “cult of personality” around Mother Mary is positive. It does not get viewed by them as a defect or some terrible aberration. Pope John Paul II considered himself a part of that “cult” involving Mary.

In our context, what has happened as a result of this alteration is that the former significance of the church’s president was administrative, and priestly. He was a final arbitrator and judge, a presiding authority and a leader whose words were to be considered carefully. He was NOT considered infallible or to be invariably inspired. In fact, during the presidencies of the Prophet Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young and President John Taylor, they all spoke against any notion of infallibility of the church’s president. President Young was particularly cautionary about trusting church leaders instead of the Holy Spirit as your guide. President Young said too much trust of a church leader would bring the saints to hell.

President Woodruff was so criticized by members for the Manifesto that he defended himself by claiming that the Lord wouldn’t let him make a mistake on that order. He said that the Lord just wouldn’t let the church’s president lead the saints astray. That comment was what would later be used to buttress the notion popularly believed today that the “prophet is infallible.”

President Heber J. Grant was an unpopular church president. One of the problems with getting the saints to respond to the church president’s counsel was solved when the president of the church became the living “Prophet.” You can reject or question counsel from an administrative authority. But to question a “Prophet of God” was to invite the damnation of hell. So the change in nomenclature worked a mighty change in the perceptions of the Latter-day Saints. The “cult of personality” was an inevitable result. Everything the president did would be done as “God’s Living Prophet.” No matter what decisions were made, no matter their wisdom, goodness or undesirability, the result was the same: “They MUST be inspired. We may not have the human capacity to see it, but God’s ways are higher than man’s after all. To question is to lack in faith.”

The change put the president into a league in which at a minimum criticism was disrespectful. Worse, if you were convinced that he made a mistake, it followed almost as an inevitability that you were absolutely forbidden from saying so because to do so revealed a “weakness in the faith.” In fact, there are General Conference talks which speak about criticizing the church president (or “Living Prophet”) claiming that the criticism was due to a weak faith, and it would lead to apostasy unless a person repented.

This cult of personality has grown as a result of internal structural changes, including correlation. The outcome is particularly dramatic with respect to the tolerance of women’s inspiration. Whereas, in the early years a woman could be regarded as a “prophetess” (Eliza R. Snow, for example), today that recognition would be offensive to correlation, where all functions are combined under priesthood, and all priesthood is subject to the president alone as final authority.

The changes have been evolutionary, and over a single person's lifetime not all that dramatic. However the cumulative effect from the start to now is dramatic. Right now the church views any revelation or miraculous event originating with a woman as suspicious. It was so markedly contrary to this trend when a mission president's wife foretold the Chilean earthquake, and the Meridian Magazine covered the event without any notice that the message came through the wife, that I linked to that article on this blog. The article presumed the propriety of the inspiration. But the message came to the wife, not the mission president. That would be an uncorrelated event today, and there is an existing infrastructure that would frown on that. Happily the event was not questioned, but instead celebrated.

The "cult of personality" has been extended to cover everything. You name it it is now covered. Take any complaint at all: The chapel paint is hideous! Well, there are those who will argue that the chapel's paint is chosen by the regular authorities of the church, who are chosen by the prophet, and your complaint about the paint color is really questioning the Prophet of God's authority. Therefore you are on the road to apostasy....

It doesn't matter the subject. The argument works by extension to everything. The Bishop cheated his business partner: You shouldn't question that because ... yada, yada, .. you're questioning the Prophet of God. Therefore you are on the road to apostasy.

Try: My child was molested by her primary teacher. Oddly enough it even works there, too. At least there are many people willing to apply that by extension to every ridiculous proposition advanced. So the cult of personality has now assumed a front and center position to curtail discussion, debate or consideration of even healthy alternatives to the way things are. EVERYTHING is inspired. EVERYTHING, by extension, is happening because a "Prophet of God" has made it so. Therefore unless you concede that "All is Well in Zion" you are questioning the "Prophet of God" and on the road to apostasy.

The stifling effect of this is pernicious. It is not a view shared at the top. In fact, the brethren preach against this notion, but to no avail. I have coined the term "Brethrenites" to describe the result of this cult of personality in my book *[Eighteen Verses](#)*. There's a chapter in there that discusses this problem.

Crap, this is going to take longer than I thought. Well, here we go again. This will be "Part One" and I'll continue this with something more.

## **The traditions of men, part 2**

April 22, 2010

<http://denversnuffer.com/2010/04/the-traditions-of-men-part-2/>

Continued:

Originally, the view of personal revelation or any visionary experiences was quite different than what many believe today. In fact there are those who claim that ANY vision, visitation or revelation not received by the Prophet (meaning the president of the church alone) should be viewed as false. God speaks to the Prophet, and only to the Prophet, and we are to wait to hear what God wants us to know from the Prophet. This is an extension of the adoption of the term "Prophet" and the resulting cult of personality.

During Joseph Smith's time, he welcomed the revelatory experiences of others. He neither discouraged them nor felt threatened by them. His enthusiasm for what others told him of their revelations, and the acceptance of others' revelations is readily apparent in the first volume of the *Joseph Smith Papers*. Today the tradition is quite

the contrary. Today, if anyone has a revelation they are advised to keep it to themselves. When others hear about them the cautionary attitude adopted is – ‘if it were something important then the Prophet of God would have told you about it.’

The effect of the adoption of the term “Prophet” for the living church president has been far ranging and dramatic. There has been a dramatic change in people’s expectation of personal revelation, as a result of this title shift. The result is, of course, if you do not expect revelation you are not going to receive it. The expected charismatic gifts of the Spirit during the early church is now replaced by the assumption that charismatic gifts are driven by office and position. Bishops get revelation for wards (and by extension no one else does or can). Stake presidents get revelation for stakes (and by extension no one else does or can). Mission presidents get revelation for missions (and by extension no one else can or does—except in the notable case of the recent earthquake in Chile, as I mentioned before). What has always been true is that presiding authorities alone are the final say on revelation or guidance for their calling. What is not true is that no-one else can, has or does get revelation. Revelation comes to those who are prepared. It comes in response to seeking, asking, knocking, and not automatically as a result of a new office or position. Now someone called to office may humble themselves, begin seeking, asking and knocking and then get revelation. But the revelation was always available, and the same information is available to all, “even the least of the Saints” as Joseph Smith put it. The proposition that there is a control over available revelation is one of the results of the post-1955 development of the cult of personality centered on the President as the Living Prophet of God.

Another change now firmly in place is the administration of temporal affairs within the church. For example, the Presiding Bishop’s office controlled the operations involving all the church’s construction projects until the David O. McKay presidency. As a result of some problems (beyond the scope of this), the **First Presidency** decided to take construction over as part of their duties. One of the members of the First Presidency got involved in some difficulties (again beyond the scope of this), and to placate the Quorum of the Twelve, the responsibilities were shared. The result was that the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve now have budgetary involvement with the church’s building program. This is a massive undertaking. It involves worldwide construction of church facilities. It is a major duty devolving upon these men. However, it was one time an Aaronic Priesthood assignment, and the duty of the Presiding Bishop’s office. Temporal concerns are associated with that order of Priesthood. On the other hand, the higher Priesthood is involved primarily with the spiritual concerns of the church. It’s all in the D&C. But the shift of Aaronic/temporal concerns onto the shoulders of the Melchizedek Priesthood leaders has its effect. The extent of that effect has been reflected in comments made by those who serve in the Twelve or First Presidency. They hardly have time to do more than move from one meeting to another. One said he never had time to reflect or meditate.

The original Twelve Apostles of this dispensation were given a charge by Oliver Cowdrey that their ordination was not complete until they had received an audience with Christ. That audience was what would entitle them to be a witness of the resurrection. The charge was given to newly ordained Apostles from the time of the first called Twelve until 1911, when the charge was discontinued. It was discontinued because so few of them had ever received an audience with Christ. Since then the Apostles have been encouraged to bear a witness of Christ based upon their spiritual conviction that He lived, died and rose from the dead. The manner in which this is done is to suggest an actual witness of His resurrection. But the words are carefully chosen.

When he was put under oath by the Senate Confirmation Committee, President Joseph F. Smith was asked directly if he was a “prophet of God.” His response was, “my people sustain me as such.” The senator asking the question didn’t understand the answer, and asked again. After some back and forth, President Joseph F. Smith

was asked directly if he had ever had a revelation; to which he responded that he had not. He added a bit later that he, like all other members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a testimony that Joseph Smith was a Prophet and Jesus Christ had appeared to him.

[Now as an aside, this testimony was in 1905. Later, in 1918 President Joseph F. Smith received the vision now published as Section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants; the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead.]

The church holds the tradition that the First Presidency and Twelve are sustained as “Prophets, Seers and Revelators” and as a result of that sustaining vote they must necessarily have all seen Christ. This idea/tradition is so widespread that even when the brethren clarify what their testimony consists of most members of the church won’t listen to, or accept what they say. I’ve posted about President Packer’s talk on his own testimony a little while ago in another [post](#). There are those who don’t believe him, and insist he is holding back because such things are just “too sacred to be revealed.” However, the calling of an Apostle, as set out in Section 107, is to **bear witness of Jesus Christ**. There isn’t anything “too sacred” about bearing testimony of Him that would prevent an Apostle from stating without equivocation they are a witness by having seen the Risen Lord. President Packer has been truthful, forthcoming and honest. I accept what he says at face value and I respect and sustain him all the more because of it. He is indeed an Apostle of Jesus Christ. And he is also an honest witness of Him. However, he has essentially explained what his testimony consists of honestly, truthfully and fully in General Conference. People continue to ignore his words and substitute the myth for the reality.

The terms “prophet, seer and revelator” come from scripture where the president of the church is to “be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God.” (D&C 107: 92.) The way this is read in the church today is that any person who holds the office of President of the High Priesthood is ipso facto a “seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet.” Meaning the office defines the gifts. What if that is not the intent of the scripture? What if the scripture means, instead, that a person who is these things is the only one to be called to the office? That is, unless the person “be” such a person possessing these gifts, he is not and cannot be the President? Such questions are not even possible to be asked today. They are, according to the current reading of that verse, evidence of weak faith and evidence someone is headed for apostasy. Therefore a discussion about this verse’s meaning and possible differences of meaning are excluded and no other view is possible to be discussed.

President David O. McKay did not get a testimony of the church until sometime after he had been called as an Apostle. President Gordon B. Hinckley, when asked about revelation, said “I don’t know that we need much revelation anymore.” President Packer has defined revelation as when the presiding authorities reach an agreement. President Nibley (a counselor in the First Presidency and Hugh Nibley’s grandfather) said if an angel were to appear to him he would jump out the window. There are other examples, but the point is that there are many statements which have been made by the highest authorities in the church which contradict the popular myth that the Lord has and does regularly appear to, meet with, and speak face to face with the presiding authorities. Despite this, there are people who presume the Lord is in the weekly meeting in the Temple, every Thursday, telling them how to run His church. In contrast, President Young said when he asks the Lord for guidance and then he receives nothing, he will make his best judgment and proceed. And the Lord is bound to sustain him in his decision, since he asked for guidance. That approach is healthy, and allowed President Young and others to move forward. However, it is one thing for men of good faith and decency, who are making honest and worthwhile efforts to manage the church to have our prayers, faith and confidence; and quite another to assume these men quote the Lord with their every breath. As a church this subject is just not discussed. As a result those who suspect that the brethren are making great efforts and are good men, but who may not have had

an audience with the Lord are kept from asking the question. When a Gentile reporter has the impertinence to ask such a question, they are rebuked and told things like that are sacred.

A Prophet of God is not required to have seen Him. A prophet can and has been inspired to speak for the Lord by the inspiration of the Spirit. But when the scriptures use this phrase “and the word of the Lord came unto me, saying...” This formula assures the listener that the words which follow originate from the Lord and not a good and honest man’s best advice. All this has happened in the past and therefore you cannot discount a prophet’s calling because the word of the Lord comes by the Spirit, rather than from a personal visitation. Visitations are rare. However, the calling of a prophet in scripture was not institutional. The Lord was directly, personally and individually involved. Moses was told by the Lord, directly, as the Lord stood in a pillar-cloud at the door of the tabernacle: “Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” ([Numbers 12: 5-6.](#))

When the Church was led by a president (from the death of Joseph Smith until 1955) there was no cult of personality around the church president. He was the presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood. When the title shifted, things began to change. Today a discussion about this process is not possible because the subject matter is too charged.

The difference between good men doing good things in good faith, who are entitled to our support in their calling and efforts on the one hand, and a prophet of God whose words are questioned at the peril of eternal damnation on the other hand is the overwhelming difference which now plagues the church. We cannot have a discussion that questions the wisdom of church policies, procedures or decisions. When even obvious mistakes are made, people who notice are not to speak of it, and if they do they are told that they are weak in the faith and on the road to apostasy. Criticism is essential to a healthy mental state. Without feedback and criticism you cannot raise a normal, healthy child. Try raising a child to whom you lavish only praise, and to whom you say, without regard to how bad, poorly or evil an act they commit: “You are inspired! You are right! It was good of you to have done that! God Himself inspired that act!” What you would raise up would be a monster. Without criticism and challenges to decisions made, no-one can ultimately become anything worthwhile.

We have a church in which those who love it the most, and whose perceptions may be the keenest, are required to take a host of questions, suggestions or criticisms and never give them voice. The only negative feed-back must originate from either outside the church, or if inside they are cast out because they are weak in the faith and on the road to apostasy. This was the inevitable evolution from the cult of personality. It is still unfolding. It will progress in a funnel which narrows over time until, at last, when the work has been fully completed, we will have a Pope who is infallible. Not because he is always inspired, but instead because he holds the keys to bind on earth and in heaven, and as a result God is bound by whatever he does. History assures us this will be the case. UNLESS, of course, we open things up to a more healthy way of going about our Father’s business.

Well, this is too long. I’m not done. But I’ll add more later.

### **The traditions of men, part 3**

April 22, 2010

<http://denversnuffer.com/2010/04/the-traditions-of-men-part-3/>

Continued:

This subject causes a great deal of anxiety for saints. The fact it causes anxiety is proof that the saints have become conditioned to a mythology which requires everything to be good, all to be well, our current path a direct line to Zion itself, and all questions concerning the current state of affairs to be wrong. More than “wrong,” questions are evidence of weak faith and the road to apostasy.

From the questions which started as soon as this subject began, I see I need to reiterate what I said at the first. I have a testimony, I am active in the church, and I am not in a position to change things. I support the brethren, pay tithing, serve where called and do not challenge the right of the regularly constituted authorities to manage the affairs of the church. I rise when President Monson enters a room I am in, I sustain him with my vote, my prayers and my confidence. I admire him. I posted about him a few days back. I meant what I said. I do not envy him nor aspire to church leadership. I am not called and do not anticipate I would ever even be considered; in part because of things like this subject appearing on this blog and concerns raised in books I have written.

I love the church and I am content as a Latter-day Saint. I love my ward and serve gladly wherever I am called.

The fact that those clarifications need to be added again, although it should have been apparent from the beginning remarks, is again revealing how shaky the saints are today. We do not have a foundation that allows us to consider alternatives. We have a single “on/off” switch for all subjects and for our testimonies. That is NOT as it should be. We should be able to confront dilemmas, difficulties, troubling news and failures by leaders while we suspend judgment and tolerate dissonance. We want instant messages, instead of having the patience to see the Hand of the Lord work over decades to bring good things from bad.

An open, candid and critical look at ourselves is not possible with people who are so insecure that they feel threatened. The progression of these insecurities will be disastrous unless at some point it is reversed. When those who raise questions are excluded, told they are weak in the faith and are on the road to apostasy, eventually everyone who is thoughtful is chased away from the church. Instead of celebrating their critical thinking and working to understand issues better, we chase some of the best minds out of the church. I wish all our critics were active members. I wish all our discussions were open enough to allow the marketplace of ideas inside the church to air everything. As I have said before, I believe the truth will prevail. You can knock it down, burn it, pave it over, kill it and threaten it, but it will prevail. A whisper of truth will overcome a hurricane of opposition. It endures. It will triumph.

I’ve only touched on a few matters here. I’m not going to go further at this point. However, the greater mischief we face at present is the de-emphasis of doctrine. We are raising a new breed of Latter-day Saint today whose familiarity with doctrine is negligible. They understand only a fraction of what has been restored, and for many of the doctrines, their understanding is incomplete, or so skewed that they are incorrect. Doctrine has become less important. We feed upon “inspirational stories” that salve the emotions, but do not edify the soul or bring the personal changes necessary to return to God’s presence. More and more of the saints grow up inside this new environment and have never even gained a fundamental command of the doctrines which Joseph Smith restored. Gospel Doctrine classes rehash the same material every four years, which is quite challenging to those who have a memory which goes back decades. The format adopted for teaching involves group discussions, and the teacher becomes a “discussion leader.” Little is learned. The group is made to share fellowship, and feel better for having attended, without any forward momentum in understanding the doctrines of salvation and exaltation.

When, over time, the leadership is replaced at all levels by those who are raised in the current milieu, the church will have completed a transformation back into a Protestant, powerless body of good people who want to do right and feel good about themselves. But the power of godliness will have fled them.

President Packer again sounded the alarm in General Conference. (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/04/the-power-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>) It was a brilliant talk. I use the term “brilliant” to describe the light within it. He said we had done a “good job of correlating” the priesthood “authority” but we had failed to disburse any “power” in the priesthood. I think it was a wonderful talk. What I would like to see discussed is whether there is a cause-and-effect between the correlation process on the one hand, and the admitted failure of priesthood power on the other hand. That discussion, however, cannot happen in the current environment. To ask the question about the underlying wisdom of the correlation process would be to directly challenge the “inspiration” of the prophet Harold B. Lee, who created this process. Therefore, any questions about correlation demonstrates that the one asking questions is weak in the faith and on the road to apostasy. So the discussion cannot occur. That is until we become a little more secure in our faith and are willing to de-mythologize the cult of personality and recognize that questions are the first step to getting answers.

I love the church, and my fellow saints. I mourn many of the changes. However, I also celebrate the fact that the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with all its gifts, privileges, opportunities and power remains still on the earth. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints administers the fundamental ordinances of that Gospel. How far you take it is up to you.

There was a talk in General Conference given by a Seventy named Poleman, in which he distinguished between the church and the gospel. The talk is still available on-line in its original form. However, he was required to re-record the talk to conform to the correlation department’s challenge to any statement which distinguished between the church and the gospel. Right now testimonies within the church recite the mantra “I know the church is true.” The correlation process has made the church into god. People’s testimonies of the “church” have supplanted their testimonies of Christ. Read any Ensign issue of any Conference held within ten years after the triumph of the correlation process, and consider how many of the talks focus upon the church and the church’s processes and goodness, in contrast to how many of the talks focus upon Jesus Christ and His doctrines. Christ’s role has been diminished by the emphasis upon the correlated church.

These are trends and traditions. They are at their incipient stages. We are a 180 year old church. Barely out of the cradle, so to speak. But trends endure. Add another 200 years of progression of these trends and you will vindicate the fellow who said: “When Mormons have been Mormons as long as Catholics have been Catholics, the Mormons will be more Catholic than the Catholics.” If you want to see the future of the church in its present course, attend Mass this Saturday evening (held on Saturday so as to keep your Sunday open for basketball playoffs and MLB play now starting).

## **President Packer’s Testimony**

March 28, 2010

<http://denversnuffer.com/2010/03/president-packers-testimony/>

I have enormous respect for President Boyd K. Packer. To me he is one of the great lights in the church. I know he had a role in the excommunication of seven “intellectuals” years ago, and that controversy remains today. One of those affected was a fellow who attended law school at the same time as I did. I feel for both him

and President Packer. I do not feel inclined to criticize him, nor have I. I do wish the breach between my friend and the church were healed.

President Packer has given many important talks in his career. Perhaps one of the most significant was given in the October, 1977 General Conference. In it he made the following explanation of his testimony and of the testimonies of General Authorities. He is speaking of the time when he was first interviewed to be called as a General Authority by President :

*President McKay explained that one of the responsibilities of an Assistant to the Twelve was to stand with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as a special witness and to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ. What he said next overwhelmed me: "Before we proceed to set you apart, I ask you to bear your testimony to us. We want to know if you have that witness."*

*I did the best I could. I bore my testimony the same as I might have in a fast and testimony meeting in my ward. To my surprise, the Brethren of the Presidency seemed pleased and proceeded to confer the office upon me.*

*That puzzled me greatly, for I had supposed that someone called to such an office would have an unusual, different, and greatly enlarged testimony and spiritual power.*

*It puzzled me for a long time until finally I could see that I already had what was required: an abiding testimony in my heart of the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, that we have a Heavenly Father, and that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. I may not have known all about it, but I did have a testimony, and I was willing to learn.*

*I was perhaps no different from those spoken of in the Book of Mormon: "And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not" (3 Nephi 9:20; emphasis added).*

*Over the years, I have come to see how powerfully important that simple testimony is. I have come to understand that our Heavenly Father is the Father of our spirits (see [Numbers 16:22](#); [Hebrews 12:9](#); [D&C 93:29](#)). He is a father with all the tender love of a father. Jesus said, "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" ([John 16:27](#)).*

*Some years ago, I was with President Marion G. Romney, meeting with mission presidents and their wives in Geneva, Switzerland. He told them that 50 years before, as a missionary boy in Australia, late one afternoon he had gone to a library to study. When he walked out, it was night. He looked up into the starry sky, and it happened. The Spirit touched him, and a certain witness was born in his soul.*

*He told those mission presidents that he did not know any more surely then as a member of the First Presidency that God the Father lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father; and that the fulness of the gospel had been restored than he did as a missionary boy 50 years before in Australia. He said that his testimony had changed in that it was much easier to get an answer from the Lord. The Lord's presence was nearer, and he knew the Lord much better than he had 50 years before.*

*There is the natural tendency to look at those who are sustained to presiding positions, to consider them to be higher and of more value in the Church or to their families than an ordinary member. Somehow we feel they are worth more to the Lord than are we. It just does not work that way!*

*It would be very disappointing to my wife and to me if we supposed any one of our children would think that we think we are of more worth to the family or to the Church than they are, or to think that one calling in the Church was esteemed over another or that any calling would be thought to be less important.*

*Recently, one of our sons was sustained as ward mission leader. His wife told us how thrilled he was with the call. It fits the very heavy demands of his work. He has the missionary spirit and will find good use for his Spanish, which he has kept polished from his missionary days. We also were very, very pleased at his call.*

*What my son and his wife are doing with their little children transcends anything they could do in the Church or out. No service could be more important to the Lord than the devotion they give to one another and to their little children. And so it is with all our other children. The ultimate end of all activity in the Church centers in the home and the family.*

*As General Authorities of the Church, we are just the same as you are, and you are just the same as we are. You have the same access to the powers of revelation for your families and for your work and for your callings as we do.*

*It is also true that there is an order to things in the Church. When you are called to an office, you then receive revelation that belongs to that office that would not be given to others.*

*No member of the Church is esteemed by the Lord as more or less than any other. It just does not work that way! Remember, He is a father—our Father. The Lord is “no respecter of persons.”*

*We are not worth more to the onrolling of the Lord’s work than were Brother and Sister Toutai Paletu’a in Nuku’alofa, Tonga; or Brother and Sister Carlos Cifuentes in Santiago, Chile; or Brother and Sister Peter Dalebout in the Netherlands; or Brother and Sister Tatsui Sato of Japan; or hundreds of others I have met while traveling about the world. It just does not work that way.*

*And so the Church moves on. It is carried upon the shoulders of worthy members living ordinary lives among ordinary families, guided by the Holy Ghost and the Light of Christ, which is in them.*

*I bear witness that the gospel is true and that the worth of souls is great in the sight of God—every soul—and that we are blessed to be members of the Church. I have the witness that would qualify me for the calling I have. I’ve had it since I met the First Presidency those many years ago. I bear it to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”*

I believe President Packer means it when he says his testimony was “the same as I might have in a fast and testimony meeting in my ward.” When someone in a position of Church leadership has an audience with Christ, we hear about it. Joseph Smith told us. Oliver Cowdrey told us. Sidney Rigdon told us. So did President John Taylor, President Joseph F. Smith and David B. Haight. Their calling is to bear a witness of Him. When they have an actual audience, I believe they tell us.

The calling of the Twelve is to “bear witness” of Christ. (D&C 107: 23.) Because of that calling, they must proclaim they have a “witness” even if it could be more correctly described as a testimony born of the Spirit. I accept their “witness” of Christ and believe it is authoritative. However, I do not read into their testimony what they do not put there themselves.

I accept the “witness” of the living Apostles, although it is a rare exception when one has an audience with Christ. In recent talks Elder Scott has gone to some length to testify and describe his own spiritual experiences. I trust in them. I trust him. I believe him to be an Apostle. It is not necessary for an Apostle in The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints to have a personal audience with Christ.

Years ago Elder Mark Peterson said he did not think it possible for a gentile to receive an audience with Christ. He thought that was confined to pure-blooded Israelites. Since he was a gentile apostle to a gentile church, he did not believe it possible for him to receive such an audience. As I understand it, that is the general view among the brethren. The charge given by Elder Oliver Cowdrey to the Twelve (telling them they must receive an audience with Christ for their ordination to be complete) was discontinued in 1911 by President Smith. It was discontinued because so few had received that audience. But that does not make these men any less apostles.

I trust President Packer. I accept his testimony. I believe it is enough to qualify him for the work, just as President McKay told him. I am impressed with his humility in explaining his testimony in General Conference. It increases my trust in him as a servant of the Lord.

## **Boyd K. Packer's testimony, part 2**

April 1, 2010

<http://denversnuffer.com/2010/04/boyd-k-packers-testimony-part-2/>

Because of a question contained in the comments section under an earlier [post](#), I am adding this explanation:

Elder Mark E. Peterson explained his view regarding the Second Comforter (a visitation by Jesus Christ with a believer) in conversations of his which have been repeated to me. He had been asked about the issue, and explained his view to those who asked. He believed that the Second Comforter experience was not available to Gentiles. He quoted [3 Nephi 15: 20-24](#) as the basis for his view, which includes this statement by Christ to the Nephites at the time of His appearance at the Temple in Bountiful: “they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching. And they understood not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice— that I should not manifest myself unto them save it be by the Holy Ghost.”

I interpret the above quote differently than Elder Peterson. It is my view that this statement made by Christ was explaining His immediate post-resurrection appearances. Those were limited to the scattered sheep of Israel. These scattered sheep were unknown to each other, and therefore “lost” from each other’s knowledge. However, they remained (just as the Nephites) in organized and believing bodies of scattered Israelites. It was to these organized bodies alone that the risen Savior’s ministry extended immediately following His resurrection.

In contrast, in the latter-days the prophecies are to the contrary. In the latter days, Christ’s appearances as the Second Comforter have been without regard to any limitation of who may be visited. Now, those who believe who are identified with the Gentiles, are grafted into the branches of Israel and become part of the covenant people. (See e.g., [1 Ne. 10: 14](#).)

With respect to the Gentiles in our day, it is promised directly to them by the Lord, through Nephi, that His appearances will include Gentiles, in very deed: “And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks—” ([1 Ne. 14: 1](#).) This is that day.

## Charge to Twelve

May 10, 2010

<http://denversnuffer.com/2010/05/charge-to-twelve/>

This is really a “comment” in response to a question belonging to the [earlier post](#) on Elder Packer’s Testimony. However, it was too long to put in there as a reply comment, so will be put up here as a blog entry. It is an interruption. Sorry. There is a fellow asking for it, and I delayed for so long that I feel I owe him a response. I am really writing this to him.

Taken from *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*. (A good book by Quinn. He’s written some bad ones, but this is not one of them. I think he was stinging from criticism and in this book proved he was still a good historian.)

“In 1835 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdrey emphasized to the newly organized Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that their calling was charismatic, evangelical and also institutional. Of the three, the charismatic definition of the apostleship was the earliest, going back to 1829. Cowdrey told the new apostles: ‘It is necessary that you receive a testimony from heaven for yourselves; so that you can bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that you have seen the face of God.’ Then he continued: ‘That is more than the testimony of an angel ... Never cease striving until you have seen God, face to face.’ Cowdrey acknowledged that most of the new apostles had depended on visions of others for their faith and suggested that some might even be skeptical of visions. Thus it was not necessary to see Jesus to be chosen as an apostle. However, once ordained each man had a lifelong obligation to seek this charismatic experience: a vision of deity. Some apostles from 1835 onward reported having had such visions before their ordination. Apostles in the nineteenth century referred publicly to their visionary witness.

“... some LDS apostles, including Orson Pratt and Heber J. Grant, felt inadequate because they had not had such encounters.

“In the twentieth century, charismatic apostleship changed in several ways. First, the ‘charge’ at ordination no longer obligated apostles to seek visions. Second, the Presidency and apostles began down-playing the importance of these experiences. Third, apostles began speaking of a non-visionary ‘special witness of Christ’ by the Holy Ghost in terms which allowed listeners to conclude that the apostles referred to an actual appearance of deity. Fourth, apostles were reluctant to discuss their visionary experiences publicly. Fifth, evidence indicates that a decreasing number of apostles experienced visions before or after ordination.

“The change in the apostolic ‘charge’ apparently began with the appointment of Reed Smoot as an apostle in 1900. General church authorities had long regarded him as ‘reliable in business, but [he] has little or no faith.’ President Lorenzo Snow blessed him to receive ‘the light of the Holy Ghost’ so that he could bear testimony of Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith. That was an extraordinary departure from the apostolic charge as given since 1835.

“...Twentieth-century apostles began applying this ‘as if’ approach to their spoken testimonies. Usually this involved wording their ‘special witness’ of Christ in a way that encouraged listeners to assume the leader has had a more dramatic encounter with the divine than actually claimed.”

The full discussion ranges from pages 1 through 6 and would require too much typing to do it here. But the above, taken only from pages 1-2, gives you some more particulars than my brief reference before. The whole discussion is documented with references from the Church's archives where the writer reviewed the transcripts of the actual ordinations, etc. They are all set out in the footnotes, which are omitted from the quote I have excerpted above.

## Prophet, Seer, Revelator

May 21, 2010

<http://denversnuffer.com/2010/05/prophet-seer-revelator/>

I was asked this question:

"If the first presidency and the twelve really operate much like the lay members do, how then do you reconcile the MEANING of the words: Prophet; Seer; and Revelator. Aren't these gifts unusual and set apart for the highest positions of the church? Wouldn't one necessarily receive visions and dreams to qualify as a Prophet, Seer, or Revelator? How else would one SEE into the past, or the future, let alone clearly understanding the present? How do you reconcile the current revelatory state of the leadership with the meaning of the words, prophet, seer, and revelator?"

Inside the Church the current interpretation is that the "office" has associated with it a "title" set out in scripture. The "office" of the President of the High Priesthood (D&C 107: 65-66), who is the President of the Church, also bears the "title" of "prophet, seer and revelator." (D&C 107: 91-92.) The current interpretation of these verses is that the possessor of the office is entitled to the title of "prophet, seer and revelator" by virtue of office alone. Therefore, nothing more is needed in current church usage other than possession of the office, which alone gives the possessor of the office the title accorded to the office. So, no, our current terminology does not require something other than office.

It is possible to read the words of the verses differently, of course. First, the words we have adopted as they appear in scripture are not actually "prophet, seer and revelator" but are instead: "a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet." Those are different words and include in the phrase "a translator" in addition to "seer, revelator and a prophet." We have dropped the word "translator" from the title we now use.

Second, it is possible that the following words may be viewed to mean something different than the way we currently read them, "to be like unto Moses— Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet," (D&C 107: 91-92). They could be read to mean that before you fill the office of President of the High Priesthood you must first locate "a seer" who is also, by definition, "a revelator" and "a translator" who is undoubtedly therefore "a prophet" and, having found such a person, you are to sustain him into the office. The office doesn't make the man, but the Lord makes a man into such an instrument, and having done so then the church is to put him into the office. There are of course those who have these gifts. Many of them have no church office involving priesthood, because they are female. They may possess gifts, but they are disqualified for office. Then there are men who possess such gifts, but they may be living in South America, serving in a small branch, and completely unnoticed by the leadership, and therefore, never called.

The problem with the second point is that it invites near chaos. You would have dozens, hundreds or perhaps thousands of people who would step forward and make the claim that they are entitled to the office. Ambitious men who are either deceived or, worse still, cunning and dishonest, would seek to gain the office to further their

ambitions. Such a parade of the deluded or the dishonest would be foisted upon the Saints every time the President died. Therefore, no matter how much merit you may think the second interpretation holds, it would be far more problematic to implement than the current interpretation and method.

The advantage of the current system is that the man who fills the vacancy is distinguished by how long he has held the church's office of Apostle. Generally that means an elderly man, often suffering from the decline of advanced years and poor health. That means you are likely to have a man whose ambitions and exuberance are tempered by the maturity of age and the wisdom that comes from long life's experience. It gives stability to the decision, as well as the person chosen.

If the second approach were to be adopted, then the choice would need to be made by the serving President before he left office (died), by making the choice of his successor as part of his official service. This is the method that the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith. ([D&C 43: 3-4.](#)) Joseph attempted this, but the one he chose to succeed him died with him (his brother Hyrum). So the office was left vacant and we had to sort it out.

There is another method that we haven't tried, so far as I know. That would be to use "lots" to choose from every male in the church. This method was used to fill Judas' vacancy in the original Twelve in Jerusalem. ([Acts 1: 21-26.](#)) The description there is ambiguous, but was intended to be random, unpredictable and not just a vote. It was a recognized way to choose someone. (See, e.g., [1 Ne. 3: 11.](#)) It has been used to sort through the entire nation of Israel when all twelve tribes were assembled. Someone had stolen an idol, resulting in the withdrawal of the Lord's Spirit from them in battle. The result was defeat for Israel and the death of many men. They needed to find the one who committed the offense. So they had to choose from the entire gathering of all twelve tribes. Beginning at the tribe level, they sorted through to find the right tribe (Judah). Then proceeded to sort through the tribe to locate the larger family involved (Zarhites). Then went through the family to find the individual involved (Achan). The whole thing is in the scriptures. ([Joshua 7: 13-23.](#))

Such a system was uncontrolled by man, done by lot, completely random, but produced the right person. Left to God, it obtained God's answer. Did with the sons of Lehi, and with the vacancy in the Twelve in the Book of Acts, too. There is no reason why such a system wouldn't generate the Lord's choice today.

If the President died without a successor having been designated, then random choosing using a lot system would put the choice in the Lord's hands. But I suppose we don't have the stomach to try it, particularly when we already have a system that seems to work for us.

Your question raises the issue of "authority" or office on the one hand, and "power" or gifts of the Spirit on the other hand. You should read President Packer's talk in last General Conference for a recent statement by a respected church leader on that subject. I think I've commented on that talk enough already. As I re-read it this week I was again stirred by President Packer's sagacity. I believe he is being candid, honest and giving the Saints the absolute best advice and counsel he can at this time.

Interesting subject. Something worth contemplating. Perhaps there will come a time when we are able to implement the system in [D&C 43](#). Or when we put the Lord's hand to work by using lots to choose a President. Though I do not expect to see any change made during my life.

### Some additional quotes from *Passing the Heavenly Gift*:

President Heber J. Grant, in an address given on October, 1942 in the Tabernacle, stated: I have never prayed to see the Savior, I know of men—Apostles—who have seen the Savior more than once. I have prayed to the Lord for the inspiration of His Spirit to guide me, and I have told him that I have seen so many men fall because of some great manifestation to them, they felt their importance, their greatness.” (PTHG, p. 64)

President Heber J. Grant to Mrs. Claud Perry, 13 April 1926, found in the First Presidency letterbooks, vol. 72: “I know of no instance where the Lord has appeared to an individual since His appearance to the Prophet Joseph Smith.” It is the gap between the misconception held by many Latter-day Saints of Christ’s regular appearances to church leaders, and the reality of His absence that creates distress. If their expectations were not misinformed, there would be no disappointment. (PTHG, p. 65)

In 1859 Brigham Young said: “I have flattered myself, if I am as faithful as I know how to be to my God, and my brethren, and to all my covenants, and faithful in the discharge of my duty, when I have lived to be as old as Moses when the Lord appeared to him, that perhaps I then may hold communion with the Lord, as did Moses. I am not now in that position, though I know much more than I did twenty, ten, or five years ago. But have I yet lived to the state of perfection that I can commune in person with the Father and the Son at my will and pleasure? No,—though I hold myself in readiness that he can wield me at his will and pleasure. If I am faithful until I am eighty years of age, perhaps the Lord will appear to me and personally dictate me in the management of his Church and people. A little over twenty years, and if I am faithful, perhaps I will obtain that favour with my Father and God.” (JD 7:243) Three years later, in 1862, Brigham Young reaffirmed he never had any being, angelic or otherwise, from a higher sphere speak with him. (PTHG, p. 90)

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*Here is another bonus tidbit, not from Denver Snuffer:*

During a recent Youth Conference in Washington State (23 January, 2016), four pre-selected youth were allowed to each ask a question of Elder Oaks.

One of the youth asked: “What should we pray for to receive the same testimony and/or conversion that Alma the Younger experienced, for our friend who are not members?”

Elder Oaks answered: “I’ve never had an experience like that and I don’t know anyone among the 1st Presidency or Quorum of the 12 who’ve had that kind of experience. Yet every one of us knows of a certainty the things that Alma knew. But it’s just that unless the Lord chooses to do it another way, as he sometimes does; for millions and millions of His children the testimony settles upon us gradually. Like so much dust on the windowsill or so much dew on the grass. One day you didn’t have it and another day you did and you don’t know which day it happened. That’s the way I got my testimony. And then I knew it was true when it continued to grow.”

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1if0SFyuPseQKNyIrFOOFDLxiXPAVfuxTNCqTRZ7f5LY/edit>

[https://m.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/42prnf/oaks\\_confirms\\_no\\_apostle\\_has\\_ever\\_seen\\_christ\\_had/](https://m.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/42prnf/oaks_confirms_no_apostle_has_ever_seen_christ_had/)

## Did the Lord Choose Not to Anoint “The Lord’s Anointed”?

Posted by Alan Rock Waterman

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2016

<http://puremormonism.blogspot.com/2016/12/did-lord-choose-not-to-anoint-lords.html>

I have a wonderful cousin who I love like the dickens, but she recently rebuked me online by writing "You are so deceived. I'd rather follow a prophet than someone who is disgruntled, leading others astray. I feel sorry for you."

Well, I get that now and then. But when it comes from someone who hasn't seen me in more than a decade, I feel a correction is in order. So I would like to put my dear cousin's mind at ease and reassure her that I do follow a prophet; a prophet I believe to have been divinely appointed by Jesus Christ to be not only a prophet, but a seer and a revelator as well. This is a prophet I presume my cousin also looks to as divinely anointed: Joseph Smith, Junior.

On a blog so boldly titled as "Pure Mormonism" you would think readers would be aware of my testimony of Joseph Smith and my devotion to the gospel of Christ he was instrumental in restoring. But it turns out that a good number of active members of the Church -some of whom know me personally- haven't actually read much of my words here, choosing instead to assume I have devolved into a nasty, unrepentant nonbeliever. So I guess a reminder that I remain devoted to the faith, and to the prophet who founded it, may be in order now and then.

This prophet, Joseph Smith, is the only man our pioneer ancestors thought of as the prophet to the church, and he had that sole distinction among the membership throughout the entire lifetimes of the generation who knew him. Even though Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and others attained the office of president of the Church, Joseph Smith was the only one the 19th century Saints ever recognized as the prophet of the Most High.

You can find numerous references to "the prophet" in the journals and writings of the Utah Saints, and even repeatedly in the Deseret News up through the turn of the century. And every time that term was used, it almost never referred to the current Church president, whoever that might have been. When "the prophet" was spoken of, it was in reference to Joseph Smith the martyr, and him alone.

I think where I part ways with my cousin is that although I believe Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet, seer, and revelator, I am no longer convinced the same can be said of the men who currently manage the affairs of the LDS Church. And I think my reasoning on this is sound.

If the Lord intends for us to revere these men the way we revere our founding prophet, shouldn't we be able to arrive at a testimony of them the same way we came to know of Joseph Smith's divine calling? Should we not, for instance, be able to fairly demonstrate that Thomas Monson has been anointed prophet, seer, and revelator by utilizing the same means and criteria that brought us to the knowledge that Joseph Smith was?

### **Solving The Prophet Puzzle**

Every missionary in my day was familiar with a talk by apostle Hugh B. Brown, "Profile of a Prophet." In this recorded talk, Elder Brown outlines the historic and scriptural criteria by which any of us should be able to recognize the appearance of a true prophet of God. It is a powerful and convincing talk, and at only 25 minutes long, well worth your time. You can listen to it [here](#).

For the sake of brevity, I'll list the following characteristics Elder Brown outlines that should be evident in any man who purports to be a prophet of God:

1. He will boldly claim that God had spoken to him.
2. Any man so claiming would be a dignified man with a dignified message—no table jumping, no whisperings from the dead, no clairvoyance, but an intelligent statement of truth.
3. Any man claiming to be a prophet of God would declare his message without any fear and without making any weak concessions to public opinion.
4. If he were speaking for God he could not make concessions, although what he taught would be new and contrary to the accepted teachings of the day. A prophet bears witness to what he has seen and heard and seldom tries to make a case by argument. His message and not himself is important.
5. Such a man would speak in the name of the Lord, saying, "Thus said the Lord," as did Moses, Joshua, and others.
6. Such a man would predict future events in the name of the Lord, and they would come to pass, as did those predicted by Isaiah and Ezekiel.
7. He would have not only an important message for his time but often a message for all future time, such as Daniel, Jeremiah, and others had.
8. He would have courage and faith enough to endure persecution and to give his life, if need be, for the cause he espoused, such as Peter, James, Paul, and others did.
9. Such a man would denounce wickedness fearlessly. He would generally be rejected or persecuted by the people of his time, but later generations and descendants of his persecutors would build monuments in his honor.
10. He would be able to do superhuman things—things that no man could do without God's help. The consequence or result of his message and work would be convincing evidence of his prophetic calling: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).
11. His teachings would be in strict conformity with scripture, and his words and his writings would become scripture. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

Elder Brown's impressive outline had a great deal to do with my acquiring a testimony of Joseph Smith's divine calling. But that was not the only way I arrived at my testimony. I found ample evidence that Joseph Smith was called of God, because God himself acknowledged it. Here's one of the first revelations from the Lord signifying He had selected Joseph Smith to accomplish His purposes:

"Behold, thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord." (D&C 3:9)

Now, a cynic might conclude that since it was Joseph Smith himself who wrote those words, Joseph Smith could have been the one making the claim. Only a fool, it might be said, would accept that statement at face value.

Well, I may be a cynic and a fool, but I also like to think I'm a seeker of truth. So I did what we are all commanded to do, and took that statement and others like it directly to the Lord for confirmation. What I received in answer

to my prayers was a witness of the spirit that those words indeed came from the mouth of the Lord. Joseph Smith, I was assured, was indeed called of God to do God's work.

We are charged in scripture [not to take any man's statement at face value](#), no matter his rank or title. We are instructed to examine every single utterance that claims to have come from the Lord, then take that utterance to the Lord in prayer to get a witness through the Holy Ghost that the message did indeed come from Him.

We rarely do that. We have gotten lazy, preferring to believe that our leaders somehow are incapable of leading us astray, even though the Lord has never given us that assurance, but has constantly warned us otherwise. Believing without question what management tells us is just so much easier than actually inquiring of the Lord.

Our great failure as a people is that more often than not, once we receive divine confirmation that the Book of Mormon is true, we tend to accept everything else that is preached from the pulpit without thinking, even things that are taught that are contrary to what the Book of Mormon itself is trying to tell us.

The apostle Paul directs us to "prove all things," then "hold fast to that which is good." The word "prove" means to test a thing, to evince by examination. The LDS Church in the 21st century seems to have formally abandoned that instruction. Indeed, the very act of testing, examining, or questioning certain teachings or practices within the Church in our day is deemed grounds for Church discipline, and even expulsion, according to the Church Handbook of Instruction. (Vol 1, pg 57; see also Jensen, [Modern Apostasy](#), 2014.)

### **Taking It To The Source**

Some years ago I came to the realization that not everything I was taught growing up about my religion was entirely reliable. Some of it was error mixed in with truth.

So in an effort to separate truth from falsehood, I realized I would have to set aside my entire system of fixed beliefs, and start over from scratch. So over time, as I re-read the revelations in the Doctrine & Covenants given to us through Joseph Smith, I made certain that each and every one of them was accurate. And I did so by asking God directly, "did you say this?"

And each time I asked I got a clear witness. Yes, those words were the very oracles of God.

Here are a few more verses affirming Joseph's role as God's mouthpiece in these last days. I asked about each one, and got the same affirmation:

"I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments." ([D&C 1:17](#))

"Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ." ([D&C 21:1](#))

"Thou wast called and chosen to write the Book of Mormon, and to my ministry...And thou shalt continue in calling upon God in my name, and writing the things which shall be given thee by the Comforter, and expounding all scriptures unto the church." ([D&C 24:1,5](#))

"No one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses." ([D&C 28:2](#))

Then there was this revelation given to the members of the church in 1830, which I found most instructive:

"Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth..." (D&C 21:4&5)

I noted that members of the church back then were not told to follow or obey the counsel of the prophet, as I was being taught to do in regards to the president of the Church in my day. This revelation says we shall "give heed to all his words." To "heed" means to give consideration to, give careful attention, to examine and ponder.

Quite a far cry from unquestioning obedience.

Something else I noticed in that revelation: we are not commanded to accept everything Joseph Smith ever said as if it were gospel. Only those words he speaks as he receives them from God. It is only those words that come "as if from mine own mouth" that we are commanded to give heed to. While it is true that Joseph Smith, having seen and conversed with Jesus Christ and the Father, doubtless came away from that experience brimming with wisdom and insight; and while Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet personally ordained by God, not every utterance that ever came out of his mouth is to be accepted ex cathedra. Only those words he delivers as coming from the mouth of God are considered doctrinal. Which brings us to...

### **The Grand Daddy Of All Scriptures**

All of us have our favorite scriptures. For most of us it's a direct quote from Jesus Christ, as well it should be. But there is one chapter in the Book of Mormon that we ought to take as our guide before we consider any other teaching of the Church, and that is [1st Nephi Chapter 8](#).

This is the chapter that teaches us that the only sure path to God is by holding to the rod of iron, the symbolic guardrail that represents the word of God. Therefore, nothing we read in our Sunday School manuals, nothing we're taught in Church, nothing we hear in general conference, is allowed to trump the actual word of God. Only our Lord's actual words as revealed through His prophets are the words we should be clinging to; anything not measuring up to the word of God fails the iron rod test.

When we're trying to figure out whether some man's word is to be taken as God's will, it's not enough to simply rely upon what we were taught growing up in the church. We have to go to the source, and that source is the revealed word of God. Harold B. Lee, himself a former president of the church, delineated what he thought was the biggest danger facing the LDS church in modern times:

"I say we need to teach our people to find their answers in the scriptures. If only each of us would be wise enough to say that we aren't able to answer any question unless we can find a doctrinal answer in the scriptures! And if we hear someone teaching something that is contrary to what is in the scriptures, each of us may know whether the things spoken are false -it is as simple as that. But the unfortunate thing is that so many of us are not reading the scriptures. We do not know what is in them, and therefore we speculate about the things that we ought to have found in the scriptures themselves. I think therein is one of our biggest dangers of today."

"The Lord has given us in the standard works the means by which we should measure truth and untruth. May we all heed His word: '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.' " D&C 42:59 ([First Presidency Message, Ensign, December 1972](#). Emphasis mine.)

So, are we to simply allow men in leadership positions to govern the church of Christ according to the policies and procedures they institute on their own? Or are they required to govern the church only in accordance with the instructions promulgated by God? We latter-day Saints have a sacred duty to make an important determination, and this determination should be made carefully and prayerfully: whether the men who succeeded Joseph Smith actually are his successors as authorized by God, or if they are there only because our vain traditions call for them to be.

The way to get to the nub of it all is to seek God's word in the matter. It is not enough to simply accept the next guy in line as though he were appointed by God. We should insist on seeing evidence of that appointment.

I had just begun to question my faith in church succession some years back, when Gordon B. Hinckley was president. In march of 2003, the president of the United States launched an invasion of a foreign country that had done us no harm, in violation not only of the constitution's separation of powers, but also in direct violation of the words of Jesus Christ, who declared in D&C 98:33 that his people "should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them."

So I was looking forward to general conference three weeks later. We were finally going to hear an actual prophet of God lay into the civil authorities for an act of aggression every bit as unwarranted as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, or the German Blitzkrieg on Poland. This should be worth tuning in to!

But when conference arrived and president Hinckley finally got around to addressing this topic at the final session, it was clear he wasn't going to act anything like a true Old Testament prophet speaking old fashioned truth to power. In fact, he admitted [he didn't know what to think](#) about this current war, but he was sure the whole thing would be over in a few short weeks. It was the most wishy-washy, non-committal, unprincipled, and uninformed pile of nothing I had ever heard come out of the mouth of a reputed prophet of God in my life. Caught me completely by surprise.

Hinckley did offer one pertinent quote from Jesus, where the Lord commanded his people to "renounce war and proclaim peace." Then he spent the rest of his talk with a metaphoric shrug as if to say, "But hey, whatcha gonna do?"

Thus began my first crisis of faith in modern Church leadership. So I went to the Lord to ask the question it had never occurred to me to ask before: is Gordon B. Hinckley your appointed mouthpiece on the earth?

I don't want to put words in God's mouth, because he didn't answer me with an audible voice. But if I were to reconstruct the conversation in English, it might have gone something like this:

"Is Gordon B. Hinckley your anointed prophet, seer, and revelator?"

Show me some of Gordon's prophecies and revelations and I'll give you my answer.

"But he has never issued any prophecies or revelations."

Well then, there's your answer.

### **Follow the Whosit?**

A while back, when re-reading 1st Nephi 8, I noticed something I had only glossed over in previous readings, then instantly forgotten. The prophet Lehi was describing a dream in which he found himself in a dark and dreary wilderness. Suddenly a well-dressed, important looking man appeared and bade him follow. Lehi would be rescued from the darkness, for surely this impressive figure -a man of God if ever there was one- would lead Lehi back into the light.

But Lehi soon discovered it had been a mistake to follow this man, for he was only led further into the dark and dreary wasteland. Lehi found himself lost "for the space of many hours," until it occurred to him to call on God directly. Only then was Lehi brought into the light. Now he could see many things clearly, among them that rod of iron along the straight pathway to God's pure love. Lehi realized that the only sure path to God was not by putting his trust in any man, but instead to cling tenaciously to the word of God.

As a devout believer in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, I can think of no more pertinent question in our day than to assess whether we are doing the Lord's will in following certain men, or if we are being misled. Even Joseph Smith himself lamented that the people were depending so much on him that they were becoming "darkened in their minds." ([Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book](#), pg 51). If the prophet would issue such a warning to the people in his day to back off, why are so many Mormons so anxious to ignore that advice when it comes to Church leaders today?

Brigham Young said something interesting:

"Perhaps it may make some of you stumble, were I to ask you a question—Does a man's being a Prophet in this Church prove that he shall be the President of it? I answer, no! A man may be a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and it may have nothing to do with his being the president of the Church. Suffice it to say, that Joseph was the president of the Church, as long as he lived: the people chose to have it so. He always filled that responsible station by the voice of the people. Can you find any revelation appointing him the President of the Church? The keys of the Priesthood were committed to Joseph, to build up the Kingdom of God on the earth, and were not to be taken from him in time or in eternity; but when he was called to preside over the Church, it was by the voice of the people; though he held the keys of the Priesthood, independent of their voice." ([Journal of Discourses](#) 1:133 Emphasis added.)

Joseph Smith was appointed by God to be the Lord's mouthpiece. It so happened that Joseph was also elected by the people to preside over the fledgling church. Each of those positions is not the same as the other. Joseph just happened to have worn both hats back in the day. It could have easily been the case that while Joseph acted as the mouthpiece of the Lord, some other person -Hyrum Smith, for example, or Sidney Rigdon- could have been elected by the members and sustained as president of the church at the same time Joseph Smith was their prophet.

So the thing we deserve to come to an understanding of in our day is this: how can we know if the president of the church also happens to be a prophet?

### **How About We Ask The Same Questions?**

Obviously, to get an answer to our question we would use the same criteria we used when we came to a knowledge that Joseph Smith was ordained to be God's mouthpiece. We might first compare the current president to the list of qualifications apostle Brown taught would be recognizable in a prophet. Secondly, we would look for instances where the Lord has declared the modern president to be his mouthpiece, as he did numerous times in regard to Joseph Smith.

Trouble is, we can find no instance where Thomas S. Monson has boldly made the claim that God has spoken to him. Neither has he declared he has received any messages "in the name of the Lord." Neither has president Monson predicted future events, or endured persecution, or met any number of the qualifications recognizable in a true prophet outlined by Apostle Hugh B. Brown above.

Where do we find God's endorsement of Thomas Monson similar to the one given regarding Joseph Smith? We have no statement from the Lord telling us to "give heed unto all Monson's words and commandments which he shall give unto you, for his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth."

I looked for such an endorsement of President Hinckley, and those who came before him. And then when I got to Heber J. Grant, I read this bombshell from a letter President Grant had written to a Mrs. Claud Peery in 1926:

"I know of no instance where the Lord has appeared to an individual since His appearance to the Prophet Joseph Smith."

Wait...WHAT?! I was always taught that the living prophet met with Jesus face to face on a regular basis in the upper room of the temple. And now here's one of those prophets admitting that not only has he never met or spoken to Jesus, but nobody he knows ever has either!

I felt maybe the thing to do was track this all the way back to Brigham Young. Seeing as how Brigham was Joseph Smith's BFF, surely he had the authority to speak for God, and maybe at least I would learn that authority was somehow handed off to those who came after.

### **The Trail Dead Ends**

It turns out, though, that Brigham Young wasn't really all that close to Joseph Smith, for the simple reason they didn't spend much time together. Joseph lived in Nauvoo, while Brigham was constantly off laboring in the Eastern States and Great Britain.

We have this idea that Brigham Young was Joseph's second in command, but the records don't support that. He wasn't a member of the First Presidency. The minutes of the Nauvoo High Council don't show him in attendance because he was not a member of that body. His association to Joseph Smith, to the extent it was significant at all, was in company with others, not the two of them alone. There were plenty of other men who had a closer association to Joseph Smith than Brigham Young did. Plenty of others. There was no exclusivity.

The myth that Brigham Young and Joseph Smith were best buds was fostered by Brigham in the decades following Joseph's death, and developed over time into the official Church narrative.

More surprising, when one looks at the record, is that now and then Brigham Young would pop off with some astonishing admissions denying any role as God's anointed:

"I don't profess to be such a Prophet as were Joseph Smith and Daniel." ([Journal of Discourses 5:77](#))

Like all Latter-day Saints at the time, Brigham expected that one day Joseph Smith's eldest son would take the reins of church leadership. Until then, Brigham would act as a sort of placeholder:

"What of Joseph Smith's family? What of his boys? I have prayed from the beginning for sister Emma and for the whole family. There is not a man in this Church that has entertained better feelings towards them. Joseph said to me, "God will take care of my children when I am taken." They are in the hands of God, and when they make their appearance before this people, full of his power, there are none but what will say—"Amen! We are ready to receive you."

Brigham Young had been president of the church for 13 years when he made the following statement in 1860:

"The brethren testify that brother Brigham is brother Joseph's legal successor. You never heard me say so. I say that I am a good hand to keep the dogs and wolves out of the flock. I do not care a groat who rises up. I do not think anything about being Joseph's successor." ([Journal of Discourses 8:69](#)).

Someone "to keep the dogs and wolves out of the flock" is exactly what Brigham proposed to be when he went before the assembly that day in August just weeks after Joseph and his brother were murdered. He indicated there would be no prophet to replace the one who had fallen.

"Heretofore you have had a prophet as the mouthpiece of the Lord to speak to you. But he has sealed his testimony with his blood, and now, for the first time, are you called to walk by faith, and not by sight." ([Complete Discourses of Brigham Young](#), (1844, pg 20)

That doesn't sound like a man who believed the mantle of the prophet had fallen on him. And sure enough, he goes on to propose something else entirely:

"I ask the latter-day Saints: do you, as individuals, at this time, want to choose a prophet or a guardian? Inasmuch as our Prophet and our Patriarch are taken from our midst, do you want someone to guard, to guide and lead you through this world into the kingdom of God or not?"

Brigham was attempting to persuade the crowd to reject Sidney Rigdon, the only member of the First Presidency left alive. But if he was hoping to be elected to the top position himself, he was talking them out of choosing him, too.

"All that want some person to be a guardian or a prophet, a spokesman or something else, signify it by raising the right hand."

They must have been confused by the way he worded the question, because the record states no hands were raised.

Brigham ended up suggesting that the best choice for governing the church would be to turn it over to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, acting together as a body. Not one man in particular, mind you, but the whole Twelve would make all the governing decisions as a group. So that's the plan the congregation voted to accept.

Three years later, Brigham persuaded the saints assembled at Winter Quarters to elect him as president of the Church, which they did. Mind you, they did not anoint him their prophet, seer, and revelator. Brigham himself had told them, "You cannot fill the office of a prophet, seer, or revelator. God must do this."

The people never did consider Brigham Young to be prophet, seer, and revelator for the church as was Joseph

Smith. They sustained him as their president, the guy whose job it was to preside over the church, not receive revelations for it.

Fast forward thirty years to Brigham Young's death, and now the Twelve are convened to decide what to do next. Brigham had ruled the church with such an iron hand, that once he was gone John Taylor convened the Twelve and said (I'm paraphrasing), "Let's not do that again. From now on, let's all twelve of us be the governing body as originally proposed so as not to risk having another dictator."

And that's what they did. For three years, the Church was run by a twelve-man board of directors, with no president at its head. And then John Taylor decided maybe he would like to try his hand at presiding after all, so he got the Twelve to go along with him and at conference the people were asked to sustain him as their president. Not their prophet, just church president.

In the Spring 2014 issue of the Journal of Mormon History, historian Edward Leo Lyman has documented the slap-dash, make-it-up-as-they-went methods by which the Quorum tried to figure out who should be the next in charge every time one of them shuffled off his mortal coil. (See [Succession By Seniority: The Development of Procedural Precedents in the LDS Church](#)).

The way the apostles struggled to work things out over each series of "crises" makes for some fascinating reading. There was still no one in the church hierarchy operating as Joseph Smith had, receiving revelations from God, so they didn't know how they were supposed to handle things. The minutes of the meetings of the Quorum in those days show a lot of debate, infighting, alliances, and jockeying for position. About the only thing the Brethren were ever united on was their agreement that none of them wanted to see George Q. Cannon become president. I wish I knew why, but the minutes don't say.

By the 20th century, a popular narrative had taken hold in the church to the effect that ever since the death of Joseph Smith, there has always been "a living prophet" at the head of the church to guide us and instruct us in God's will. Nothing could be further from the truth. None of these supposed "prophets" ever conveyed a direct revelation to the members from which the saints could ascertain the will of God. Check your Doctrine & Covenants and you'll see. [The oracles simply peter out](#) once Brother Joseph exits the scene.

There is one more loose thread to this story. The "preferred narrative" most of us were taught growing up in the church states that before he died, Joseph Smith anointed the Twelve apostles to succeed him, and that he turned over to them all the keys and authority to act in the name of God. That part of our history isn't true either. But it makes an interesting tale.

So sit back and get comfy; we're not done yet.

### **Who Needs Checks And Balances In The Lord's True Church?**

LDS Church tradition claims the "Twelve" were given all the "keys" (whatever that is) by Joseph Smith to control everything. This is said to have taken place in a meeting that was held on March 26, 1844. This claim is contrary to scripture, but has not stopped LDS leaders from insisting it is how the Twelve Apostles came to be in charge of everything "Mormon."

I say it is contrary to scripture because the great revelation on priesthood ([D&C 107](#)) expressly limits the

jurisdiction of the Twelve. Jesus Christ Himself, through revelation to his prophet, directed that the governing bodies of the church are to be co-equal in authority, in order that no single entity encroaches on the responsibilities and commissions of another.

If you were to list them in order of importance of governing authority (and we shouldn't, because the Lord set them up to be co-equal branches), the list might look like this:

The First Presidency

The High Council

The Quorum of the Seventy

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

The apostles would probably be last, because they had no governing authority within the church. Most of the time they weren't anywhere near Church headquarters, because the common name for the Twelve Apostles was the "Traveling Elders." These were the missionaries sent out to all the world to spread the gospel. They were only home occasionally before going back out again. The High Council, headquartered at Nauvoo, did most of the governing within the church, handling the day-to-day administrative affairs of the church.

You may have noticed there is no High Council operating at Church headquarters anymore. That office simply disappeared once Brigham Young took charge of things. Like it never existed.

Under the Lord's plan, the Twelve have no authority within any organized stake. They are co-equal with the other bodies, but with very limited jurisdiction. Yet the Twelve today claim they get to own, control, operate and dictate to all other bodies and to every part of the church, both inside and outside organized stakes. All this because of a meeting that took place on March 26, 1844.

The meeting was held by a group known as The Council of Fifty, or more expansively "The Kingdom of God and his Laws, With the Keys and Power Thereof, and Judgement in the Hands of His Servants." (See [Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records](#), p. 45.) The thing is, this council was not a part of the church. It operated outside the church; independent of it. And that's because it included both members of the church and non-members.

It is important to recognize that the kingdom of God was not the church, and the Council of Fifty was not part of the church. It was separate. It was not a religious society like the church, but a civil organization newly organized in 1844 as a first step toward Joseph Smith's vision of an eventual civil and political "kingdom" belonging to God. Its intended purpose was to ensure that the rights of all people were protected, regardless of one's beliefs or religious affiliation. (I go into greater detail on the purposes of the Kingdom of God in [a previous post](#).)

Although the Council of Fifty kept minutes, the March 26, 1844 minutes make no mention of the Twelve getting to control everything, or getting any "keys" from Joseph Smith that day. In fact, there is nothing in the minutes to support the claims of the LDS Church that the Twelve were superior to every other church body, and in possession of all the "keys" (whatever that means).

Because the minutes do not support the claims, the LDS Church Historian's Office wrote an introduction and provided footnotes for the minutes of the 26 March 1844 meeting. The Historian's Office thinks that is most likely the probable meeting when the "keys" were passed along.

Their introduction begins on page 62, and the minutes run through page 72 of the volume titled Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records. If it were not for the Historian's Office interjecting the claim into their introduction and footnotes, there would be nothing in the minutes of the meeting to support the claim that the Twelve got all the "keys" from Joseph Smith to run everything on that day.

Essentially the Historian's Office explains that missing proof does not prove it didn't happen.

If it did happen as the LDS Church claims, it is a pretty significant omission. But the omission from March 1844 is not the only proof that this important event did not happen. The story about "keys" got mentioned the following year, in minutes that should lay the LDS Church's claims to rest.

The minutes of 25 March 1845 of the Council of Fifty meeting has an introduction written by the LDS Historian's Office that attempts to support the traditional story thus:

"Orson Hyde read to the council a two-page statement that he hoped to publish as part of his pamphlet on a 'farewell to Rigdonism.' The document concerned JS's 'appointing the Twelve to take the responsibility of leading the church,' an event that likely occurred at a Council of Fifty meeting on 26 March 1844, and Hyde asked how many council members had been present on that occasion and could sign the document as witnesses. Rather than taking up Hyde's question, the council briefly considered the content of Hyde's account. After discussion, Young denied Hyde's request to publish the document and instead instructed him to focus on Rigdonism in his pamphlet 'and let the Twelve alone.' " (Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records, p. 371.)

This introduction is not really a fair account of what happened in the meeting or what was in the minutes. Here is what the minutes of that meeting say when it is mentioned the first time early in the meeting:

Coun. O. Hyde wanted information as to who were here to day who were present Joseph Smith laid the responsibility of leading the church on the Twelve.

The chairman said E[ld]r Hyde would have to lay that matter over a little. (Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records, p. 375.)

The reference to "The chairman" is to Brigham Young. There follows three pages of notes before the discussion returns to Hyde's topic. Here is what the minutes say when Hyde's topic is discussed later in the same meeting:

Coun. Hyde read a certificate which he had wrote for publication concerning prest Joseph Smith appointing the Twelve to take the responsibility of leading the church.

Coun. J. Young moved that the last expression in the article, "so help us God" be left out.

Coun. Hyde said he had wrote this article and submitted it to this council to find out how many of those here were present at the time it was done, and who can sign it as witnesses.

Coun. O. Pratt was present when observations similar to those in the document were made by prest Smith; but would it not be carrying an idea abroad that this was the commencement of the authority of the Twelve. They had the same authority before the time referred to in the document. He should have no objections to the article going forth if the proper date of the authority and appointment was stated.

Coun. Hyde gave further reasons why he had wrote the article and requested its publication.

The chairman said he should not want the article to go into the history of [Sidney] Rigdon at all. He wants Er Hyde to write his farewell to Rigdonism and let the Twelve alone. He dont [care] whether the world know the authority and power of the Twelve or not, when the time comes they shall feel our power and we shall not try to prove it to them. In regard to Joseph's remarks, he did not mention anything about the anointing; he said it was this council of fifty which had to bear the responsibility of establishing the kingdom in all the world." (Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records, pp. 378- 380.)

The last remark by Brigham Young ("The chairman") puts the matter to rest. There was no "anointing" and the "keys of the kingdom" were not given to the Twelve in any earlier meeting. Instead it was "this council of fifty which had to bear the responsibility." Meaning that there was nothing uniquely given by Joseph Smith to the Twelve, but instead it was given to the "council of fifty." The council's members included both Mormons and non-Mormons. The LDS Historian's Office adds a footnote to explain the troubling remark from Brigham Young that Joseph Smith "did not mention anything about the anointing" by explaining:

In his statement Young apparently was not affirming that no anointing occurred but clarifying that JS did not perform such an anointing in the late March 1844 meeting of the Council of Fifty. There is no evidence that any ordinance, ordination, or anointing occurred in any meeting of the Council of Fifty; (Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records, p. 380, footnote 598.)

I want to make sure you caught that: There is no evidence that any ordinance, ordination, or anointing occurred in any meeting of the Council of Fifty!

According to the LDS Historian's Office, there was no ordinance passing the "keys of the kingdom" to the Twelve in the Council of Fifty! Nor was there an ordination passing the "keys of the kingdom" to the Twelve in the Council of Fifty! Nor any sort of anointing passing the "keys" to the Twelve!

But the official tradition in the church today remains. The Twelve somehow got the "keys" in a meeting of the Council of Fifty sans ordinance, sans ordination, and sans anointing.

You may ask yourself, "How did that work?"

And the tradition has an answer. Here is the official way that the Twelve got their power in the March 26, 1844 meeting, according to the LDS Historian's Office. I've highlighted the weasel words for you:

"A significant event likely occurred in this meeting, probably in the morning session, about which the minutes are silent but which council members discussed a year later in connection with a written summary prepared by Orson Hyde. Clayton's brief note that JS spoke "on heavenly things, and many other important subjects" likely marks what was later referred to as JS's "last charge." This may have been an extension of the charge relating the history, purpose, and rules of the council that was typically given to new members and that JS may have delivered in this meeting. (Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records, pp. 62-63. Emphasis mine.)

That's a generous passel of "likely"s, "probably"s, and "may have"s in a paragraph ostensibly written by professional historians.

I'm accustomed to reading raw historical data just as it stands. And when a historian deigns to describe a document to me, I expect him to stick to what is actually in the document he's describing, without speculating and forcing the data to conform to what he wants it to say.

But because traditions of men now dictate that Joseph Smith must have turned over his authority to the traveling elders at some point in history; and because these particular court historians depend upon the corporate Church for their salaries and their pensions, they have apparently decided that this is the moment the invisible transfer of power must have taken place. They chose this moment in history to put words in the mouth of a true prophet of God, so that future "prophets" would have some officially sanctioned event to hang their hats on when declaring their authority to act in God's name. In the opinion of these company shills, that meeting in 1844 simply had to be the time and place where Joseph Smith turned over all his authority to the Twelve. It just had to be!

Yet there is absolutely no indication in the record that anything of the sort ever took place.

Would you like to see what Wilford Woodruff wrote in his journal on this most momentous occasion, when the prophet of the Restoration reportedly rolled off all his authority onto the shoulders of Woodruff and his pals in the Quorum? The usually loquacious Woodruff apparently hadn't seen anything notable take place that day:

"26th A rainy day. I met in council with the brethren."

([Wilford Woodruff's Journal](#), Vol. 2, pg. 371, see also [The Council of Fifty: A Documentary History](#), pg 34)

The Lord's Version

We do have a record of the Lord appointing someone other than Joseph Smith to be a prophet, seer, and revelator to the church, and that was Joseph's brother, Hyrum. Hear the words of the Lord in this instance:

"And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph." D&C 124:94)

In that same revelation, Jesus appointed Brigham Young to his place in the church:

"I give unto you my servant Brigham Young to be a president over the Twelve traveling council."

And that's it. That is the only calling Brigham Young ever received by the voice of the Lord: director of the missionary program.

This convoluted megillah showing how Joseph is imagined to have given the Twelve full authority to run the whole shebang is more than a bit of a stretch. Note the historian's obscure reference to Joseph Smith's "last charge" to the Twelve, a "charge" that no one has seen in writing, and that is now imagined to maybe be the "charge" Joseph "may have delivered in this particular meeting."

So now "keys" are given by a "charge" to someone? In scripture, normally a "charge" is either an accusation or a warning. For example, as an accusation: I charge you with murder. (See, e.g., [Numbers 5:21](#); [Acts 23:29](#); [1 Tim. 5:16](#); [D&C 121:11](#).)

As a warning: I charge you to stay away from Sodom or be killed. (See, e.g., [Gen. 28:1](#); [Exo. 19:21](#); [Mark 7:36](#); [Acts 16:23](#); [Alma 35:16](#).)

If the LDS Historian's office admits Joseph "charged" the Twelve, but did not give an "ordinance, ordination, or anointing" then how was he charging them? Was he warning them? Or was Joseph accusing them? Either of these would not empower the Twelve, but would caution/accuse them against wrecking the "kingdom"—something

which has happened.

If you want to read a good example of Joseph Smith giving Church leaders a "charge," turn to section four in [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#). This is the section discussed in [my last post](#) on this forum. There the prophet goes on for eight pages charging members of the Twelve not to exalt themselves as had the fallen leaders these men were now replacing. He charged them to be humble; to not betray God, to not betray the church, to not betray their brethren; he charged them to be careful. That is the kind of thing we are used to reading whenever Joseph Smith issued a "charge" to the brethren.

This is how Denver Snuffer explained the death of the Council of Fifty and the "kingdom of God" in a post on [October 18, 2016](#):

"The "kingdom of God" is not the LDS Church and the LDS Church is not the "kingdom of God." They are separate.

'Joseph Smith stated that the 'literal kingdom of God [that is, the Council of Fifty], and the church of God are two distinct things' as 'the laws of the kingdom are not designed to affect our salvation hereafter.' (Joseph Smith Papers Administrative Records, p. xxiii.)

"So if Joseph rolled the 'kingdom of God' off his shoulders and onto the Twelve, it has nothing to do with giving the Twelve jurisdiction to assume complete autocratic control over the church. There was already a revelation in place ([D&C 107](#)) that confirmed the role of the Twelve in the church to co-equality with the seventy, stake high councils, and gave them no jurisdiction within an organized stake. The assertion that the charge allowed them expanded jurisdiction contrary to, and in violation of Section 107 is not justified when the 'kingdom of God' and the church are two separate things. The 'kingdom of God' is 'not designed to affect our salvation' and therefore did not, indeed cannot, subjugate the church.

"Further, even if you accept the charge given to the Twelve, rolled to them the 'kingdom of God,' they abandoned it:

'The final meetings of the council were held in the mid-1880s. Thereafter the council's records appear to have remained in the custody of the Office of the First Presidency. In 1922 church president Heber J. Grant reportedly entrusted Joseph Anderson, who served as secretary to Grant and the First Presidency, to safeguard the records. In 1932 Grant and Franklin S. Richards—the last two living members of the council—met together and read through some of the Council of Fifty records. The minutes were also accessed in the late twentieth century. In 2010 the First Presidency transferred the Nauvoo-era record to the Church History Library.' (Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records, p. 6.)

"Thus died the 'kingdom of God' which Joseph Smith probably may have charged the Twelve to possess. They neglected the 'kingdom of God' because they were preoccupied with acquiring complete, unfettered control to dictate over the church and hold at defiance any who dared to challenge them. They reign over the Seventies and stake high councils with impunity. Their autocratic control holds the approximate 30% of those who remain nominally active in the church in complete submission.

"They have the 'keys of the kingdom'—which kingdom has lapsed into complete oblivion. But they've parlayed that into dictatorship over the other organization, the Church."

The foundational claims of our religion can be tested by inquiring of the Lord. But the more closely the authority claims of the LDS Church are examined, the more groundless they become.

The Restoration happened. Joseph Smith spoke with God and accomplished things only a prophet could accomplish. But that has nothing whatever to do with supporting the anti-scriptural claims by the Twelve that they have the right to complete ownership and control of a church that was founded through an actual prophet of God.