

## **The Power To Change:**

### ***A Closer Look at the Great Day of Change in the LDS Church***

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The multitude of changes that have taken place so quickly over the last 4 years in the LDS Church under President Nelson have many members both excited and reinvigorated, with these changes being seen as evidence of God revealing His will to His modern day prophet. Others, however, have concerns that these rapid changes reflect the further erosion of Common Consent and fear that too much power to make changes is now concentrated in the hands of too few.

When Russell Nelson became the 17th president of the Church four years ago this past January, Salt Lake Tribune writer Jana Reiss referred to him as “a company man” and predicted that not much, if anything, would change under his leadership. In a more recent article she reminds us that she was not alone in her thinking. NBC News, the Chicago Tribune, the Wallstreet Journal and every other major news outlet that was covering the story were all assuming then that the 93-year-old Nelson “wasn’t expected to move the church in any major new direction...” and that he would “uphold or continue current church teachings and seek to draw new members.”

Jana Reiss added this:

“I was underwhelmed by Nelson’s initial news conference,” she reported, “particularly that his response when asked about the roles of women in the

church amounted to ‘you can know I love women because I have nine daughters!’ It was the typical and disappointing Latter-day Saint patriarchy line that women are wonderful because they are wives, mothers and daughters who make life better and easier for men. If I was guilty of expecting little from a nonagenarian company man, I’ve had cause to repent. I’m very glad to have been wrong about President Nelson. **In a denomination that has for the past half-century implemented change glacially, if at all, he has moved forward on a number of fronts.”**<sup>1</sup>

Russel Nelson became an apostle in 1984, when he was called with Dallin Oaks to fill the vacated seats of LeGrand Richards and Mark E. Petersen. He had been a member of the Quorum of the Twelve for 34 years when he was called as the Church’s new president. During most of that time, he and the Church did in fact make changes “glacially” and Elder Nelson, based on all he had ever done or said in those 34 years, was simply NOT predicted to do anything differently.

The changes in the Church under President Nelson, however, have been so rapid and so surprisingly abundant and so far reaching that many are referring to this as a “revelatory season like none other.” “We live in a remarkable and revelatory season of the restored Church of Jesus Christ,” said Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.<sup>2</sup> He went on to refer to these revelations as “inspired adjustments.” Elder Holland has referred to the changes as “revelatory adjustments.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2022/01/20/jana-riess-top-changes/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.deseret.com/2018/10/7/20655492/a-remarkable-revelatory-season-highlights-church-s-general-conference>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2019/11/11/holland?lang=eng>

All of these sudden and unexpected “revelatory and inspired” changes and adjustments provoke some important questions. For example – **“What has changed to the process of making important decisions in the Church, where we went from ‘glacial’ changes to the rapid and extensive changes we now witness? And has the power to change things shifted in a way that undermines the Law of Common Consent?”**

Before getting to these questions, and others, let’s first take a closer look at some of the changes that have been made under President Nelson:

- 1) Church has gone from three hours down to two with Sacrament meeting now shortened.
- 2) The High Priest Quorums have been eliminated.
- 3) The age for Aaronic priesthood and temple attendance for youth have been lowered by up to one full year.
- 4) Witnesses for the ordinance of baptism can now be ANY baptized member, even as young as 8 years old, male or female for live baptisms. ANY endowed man or woman for temple sealings. ANY endowed member for temple proxy baptisms.<sup>4</sup>
- 5) There have also been further significant changes to the temple ceremony and to temple clothing.
- 6) The Church quit the Boy Scouts after over 100 years of it being effectively the Church’s young mens and priesthood programs. The timing of this, coinciding with billions of dollars being set aside for child sexual abuse claims against BSA, will undoubtedly mean the end of this institution. However, just a couple years back the LDS Church was giving millions of dollars to BSA to build the Thomas

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<sup>4</sup> <https://media.thechurchnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/02163832/first-presidency-letter.pdf>

Monson Lodge (FN) and was paying an estimated 30% or more of BSA's annual revenues. So for Church members this means no more Scout master, no more Friends of Scouting, no more Scout Committee, etc.

- 7) The word "Mormon" has now become unacceptable in referring to the Church and President Nelson is now insisting on using the Church's full name, calling it "no longer negotiable." Several LDS people online equate the change as being as important as no longer using the N-word.<sup>5</sup>
- 8) Not being able to use the word "Mormon" has led to changes in domain names, twitter handles, facebook pages, choir names, building names and much more. Sadly, "THE Church of Jesus Christ .com and .org" were not available for purchase and so even though President Nelson has said that the EXACT name of the Church is no longer negotiable – apparently the owners of that website consider its sale to the LDS Church also as non-negotiable.
- 9) Home teaching has been changed to "ministering" which allows LDS women to tell their non-member friends that they are "ministers" in their church. I think this is very deliberate messaging.
- 10) The way youth interviews are conducted has been changed, which seems to try to address the liability issues that Bishop Sam Young has been speaking about for many years.
- 11) Missionaries are now able to call home and zoom weekly instead of just on Mother's Day and Christmas. Mission calls are now done online instead of with a signed and mailed letter.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/mq3miq/another\\_win\\_for\\_satan/](https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/mq3miq/another_win_for_satan/)

12) Missionaries are now required to have a Covid vaccine to enter the MTC – same for students to attend BYU. I mention this because it affects so many people and many schools in the US (and many churches) have NOT mandated this – but our Church, without any vote from its members, have made a health decision that has ironically caused health problems for many young and healthy people who were not at risk from Covid. The Church’s requirement of masks and social distancing and NOT defending OUR rights to keep Church open during lockdowns, is a deviation from the past when the Church was far more bold and protective of such things.

13) The Church also (in this same vein) refuses to allow bishops or stake presidents or anyone in the Church to grant ANY religious exemptions from experimental vaccines that are derived from aborted fetal tissues, with President Nelson promising us that the vaccines are “both safe and effective,” thus deliberately employing the same messaging as our government leaders, who he says we need to now trust, along with the scientists who every day are contradicting themselves. I mention this, again, because it reflects the unwillingness of the Church to allow its bishops or other local leaders **or its members to make decisions for themselves.**

14) Sister missionaries are now able to wear pants and elders and sisters are able to wear more casual clothing as missionaries. Like some of the temple changes, this change seems to try to address women’s issues AND tries to make missionaries generally more relatable to today’s styles, norms, and customs. I.e. “less peculiar.”

15) Guns are no longer allowed to be concealed or carried on Church property. A dear friend of mine, age 82 from New York City, stopped attending Church over this issue. The Church made this decision without any vote of its members and made no exceptions as to where people are located. They likely made this change to appease the anti-gun sentiments of many on the left. My 82-year old friend was the self-appointed ward greeter who sat in the back corner of the chapel, no one aware of his concealed guns, who was on the ready to stop any live shooter incident, which all of us should be aware is a real threat, especially in Churches and Synagogues in America. And in the name of political correctness, announcing it to the world that Mormons no longer have guns at Church is an invitation to those who may wish to do us harm. It makes us a softer target than we already are. That was the last straw for my dear friend who had no other means of protecting the congregation he loved.<sup>6</sup>

16) Black Lives Matter, a divisive, openly communist, activist organization that sponsors and preaches violence and the destruction of the nuclear family and government, is being tacitly endorsed and supported by the Church, with Elder Oaks going as far as to say that Blacks Lives Matter “is an eternal truth all reasonable people should support.”<sup>7</sup> This might be like saying, “Planned Parenthood is an eternal principle, even though we don’t believe in all they do as an organization, we think their name is good and we want to be on record showing them support on the things we agree on.” Which, by the way is precisely why Planned Parenthood offers so many women’s services, in order to get

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.crossroadstoday.com/lds-church-bans-guns-on-church-property/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sitrib.com/religion/2020/10/27/black-lives-matter-lds/>

people in the door and comfortable for when they just may need an abortion. But, like BLM, Planned Parenthood's true objective is to destroy lives. Supporting these kinds of efforts is a drastic change for the Church.

- 17) Critical Race Theory is now being taught openly at BYU.<sup>8</sup> This is a HUGE departure from recent teaching standards and of course seems very hypocritical when contemplating the firing and excommunication of the September Six, for example, who the Church deemed held and taught unacceptable apostate views as professors at BYU. (FN)
- 18) The Church has furthered its partnership with the NAACP and other progressive organizations, and has pledged to "root out racism" in the Church at all levels. Most of us were unaware there was a systemic racism problem in the Church and/or don't believe there is one, at least not among the general membership. Making rooting out racism a focus is surely a change for Church and seems politically timed with all things BLM.
- 19) The Church now partners with the UN, a communist founded and communist run organization that President Benson warned was one of the evils that threatens America and freedom. (FN) The UN and the NAACP and other liberal causes the Church now partners with, fund and advocate abortion and other depopulation efforts. And now, sister Sharon Eubank of the General Relief Society presidency sits in long meetings with UN officials and offers to the Church's help in achieving their 2030 agenda. (FN)
- 20) Church pageants have been canceled permanently, again without any warning or vote from the people involved and affected.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0NmUKtDJrw>

- 21) Original Pioneer murals have been removed and destroyed from Salt Lake and almost Manti temples were it not for the local members making themselves heard.
- 22) Many new temples have been announced in exciting places like China (only to be quietly reversed). Temples have gone from 161 dedicated and operational temples as of late 2017 up to 265 now either dedicated, announced or under construction. This is the continuation of a trend and not so much a change. But, the sheer number being built represents a new more aggressive approach the likes of which we've never seen in my lifetime.
- 23) President Nelson has instructed the Church that no one at General Conference should gasp or make any noise expressing excitement when the Temple announcements are made. (The organic excitement from people in attendance or at stake centers or ward houses always touched me. Some people cried, some laughed with joy, some shouted "yes!", some gasped. All beautiful and appropriate responses from real people. Adults I might add, some of whom may have never had a temple within 1000 miles or more in their entire lives). This new "rule" seems to reflect a personal preference of President Nelson who has talked about reverence in many of his talks.
- 24) Temples have gone from 161 dedicated and operational temples as of late 2017 up to 265<sup>9</sup> either dedicated, announced or under construction in just four years. Interestingly, only 4 of which have been dedicated by Nelson v. Hinckley's 85.
- 25) Dramatic changes to Temple Square have taken place. Removing trees and other irreplaceable historic relics that were over 100 years old, shutting down the

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<sup>9</sup> <https://churchofjesuschristtemples.org/temples/chronology/>



Salt Lake temple to temple work and the visitors center (which was demolished) for over 4 years thus pausing all Temple Square missionary efforts. This is a radical change for the Church – again, which sadly no member had any say in.

26) The angel Moroni is no longer being added to most new temples. That's a big change.

27) With declining, perhaps troubling membership growth rates,<sup>10</sup> the Church decided to withhold membership data for the first time in over 4 decades.<sup>11</sup>

28) General Handbook changes and BYU Honor Code changes removing the term “homosexual behavior” and confirming that “same-gender attraction is not an honor code issue.”<sup>12</sup> This change inspired student to go to the Honor Code Office (HCO) to confirm that gays could now date, hold hands, and kiss as long as they were “chaste.” On February 19, 2020, the HCO confirmed this information, which led to many “first gay kisses” in front of Brigham Young’s statue on BYU’s campus. All of which went viral and made international news.<sup>13</sup> The Church shortly thereafter withdrew its permission for such behavior.

29) The “revelation” was received to allow children of gay couples to be baptized (which has been highly criticized since it was Elder Nelson who said he was in the room when President Monson received the other revelation only a couple years earlier to NOT allow children to be baptized if their parents were gay).

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<sup>10</sup> <http://ldsstatistics.com/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2021/11/30/lds-church-withholds/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.deseret.com/faith/2020/2/19/21144529/byu-honor-code-mormon-church-lds-updates-honor-code-homosexual-behavior-lgbtq>

<sup>13</sup> [towleroad.com/2020/02/students-celebrate-with-gay-kiss-after-byu-removes-homosexual-behavior-ban-from-honor-code/](http://towleroad.com/2020/02/students-celebrate-with-gay-kiss-after-byu-removes-homosexual-behavior-ban-from-honor-code/)

30) President Nelson and LDS Church leaders broke a longstanding tradition by meeting in Rome at the Vatican with the Pope for the first time in world history, and referred to him as “His Holiness.”<sup>14</sup>

31) The Church is also now rebranding the Church President as the “Global Faith Leader.”

32) The Church has changed its logo, adding the Christus statue to it, and issued a Bi-centennial Proclamation to the World.<sup>15</sup>

There are many other things we could mention, but this list gives us a good foundation for our topic today.

Looking back, President Nelson did warn us of his plan already underway to make so many changes when he told us: “If you think the Church has been fully restored, you’re just seeing the beginning. There is much more to come. ... Wait till next year. And then the next year. Eat your vitamin pills. Get your rest. It’s going to be exciting.”<sup>16</sup>

While some of these changes may be great ones, and may even be long overdue such as allowing ANY child to be baptized who has the permission of their parents (whether the parents be gay, straight, or polygamist), **many are deeply concerned about the process whereby these changes are now coming about.**

### **Is the Church still obeying the Law of Common Consent?**

What is Common Consent? In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

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<sup>14</sup><https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders-and-ministry/2019-03-09/president-nelson-becomes-the-first-church-leader-to-have-a-formal-audience-with-the-pope-4183>

<sup>15</sup> <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/multimedia/file/restoration-proclamation-2020-april.pdf>

<sup>16</sup><https://latterdaysaintmag.com/president-nelson-on-the-future-of-the-church-eat-your-vitamin-pills-get-your-rest-its-going-to-be-exciting/>

**...And all things shall be done by common consent in the church**, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith. Amen. (D&C 26:2 LE. See also T&C 6:1) (emphasis added).

Common consent is exactly what it sounds like. It's well defined in the Restoration Edition of the Glossary:

A principle of decision-making where all participants in a particular group (e.g., a fellowship or conference) are eligible to either affirm or reject an action or proposal; such action can be sought after with either a majority or a unanimous vote. The word consent is used "in cases where power, rights, and claims are concerned. We give consent when we yield that which we have a right to withhold; but we do not give consent to a mere opinion, or abstract proposition."<sup>1</sup> The early church (established in 1830) governed themselves by common consent, with no man dictating to them. Equality prevailed, and authority was disbursed into equal and independent groups that prevented autocratic rule and guarded against apostasy of the whole body.<sup>2</sup> They conducted all of their business in conferences. Someone would be elected (by common consent) to preside at the conference and to conduct the business. If Joseph Smith was present, it was common for the saints to elect him, but they could have elected anyone. Business could be introduced by anyone, which could include complaints, suggestions, and discipline. The purpose of conferences was to take care of the business and to make sure that the community was cohesive and that issues were dealt with.<sup>3</sup> Although both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had the priesthood conferred on them by the voice of God, they only obtained an

office in the church by common consent from the body of the church.<sup>4</sup> Even when the founding prophet was in direct communication with the Lord, the church body still retained the final control through common consent: And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith (T&C 6:1).<sup>5</sup> Today, the right of internal governance within fellowships belongs to the members through their common consent. Because the right to govern arises from this common consent, with no internal hierarchy, the decisions of fellowships can be varied. Their decisions may change from time to time, based on experiences. But each fellowship has the right to decide, as well as the right to decide to change.<sup>6</sup> Believers are allowed to “organize themselves” in any manner they choose. The right to organize stems from “common consent” given by both men and women. **This right is so fundamental that it holds greater right than a first presidency, a twelve, a seventy, or a high council. All authorities derive their institutional right to preside solely from the consent of the governed. It is through “common consent” that any right to government is established in the church** (see T&C 6:1; 10:4).<sup>7</sup> See also SUSTAIN. (Emphasis added).

All things being done by common consent in the church is the standard from the Lord for how the power to change things in the Church is to be wielded. “I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves,”<sup>17</sup> said Joseph. People having a voice and their agency to self-govern and to express their opinions without reprisal and to be a part of the decisions being made FOR them, is a fundamental eternal principle, the opposite of which is the adversary’s plan to control everyone’s actions and outcomes.

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<sup>17</sup> Journal of Discourses, 24:158-159

During Joseph's day and even many years thereafter, important church decisions regarding buildings, callings, missionary work, worthiness, the gathering, organizing stakes, resolutions, land purchases, public officers, bills of incorporations, etc. were ALL conducted at Conferences through the voting of the members in attendance, with the majority, or the voice of the people,(FN) determining the decisions.

On one occasion Joseph Smith actually called upon the Church to voice any complaints or concerns about him continuing as the Church's president. After an open discussion Brigham Young eventually "arose and nominated Joseph Smith to continue as the President of the Church." Orson Hyde seconded the motion and then it was put to a vote. The Joseph Smith Papers reveal that "Such a show of hands was **never seen before in the church**. Joseph returned his thanks to the assembly and said he would serve them according to the best of his ability."<sup>18</sup> (emphasis added). The other counselors were then presented "**for trial**" and were sustained. Joseph then concluded, "I don't know anything against the twelve, **if I did I would present them for trial**."<sup>19</sup> (emphasis added). We see in this example, that the voting was real and authentic and that all Church members had a legitimate say and vote in the affairs of the Church and NO ONE was above the law of Common Consent, the Prophet and First Presidency included. And we also see that dissent was far more common than unanimity and that this in no way reflected poorly on those dissenting.

Another great example of the Church doing all things by common consent is when Joseph Smith himself asked the Church during a General Conference to release

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Smith, Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843, p. 55, The Joseph Smith Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Smith, Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843, p. 55, The Joseph Smith Papers.

Sidney Rigdon from the First Presidency. Effectively Joseph raised his hand in opposition to his own counselor in front of the entire Church. Joseph had concerns with Sidney Rigdon and the matter was brought before the Conference of saints in October of 1843 and later published in the Times and Seasons. Listen to how matters of great importance were decided back then:

President Joseph Smith was called to the chair, and Gustavus Hills chosen clerk.

Opened with singing by the choir and prayer by Elder Almon Babbitt.

The president stated the items of business to be brought before the Conference to be, 1st. The case and standing of Elder Sidney Rigdon, counselor to the First Presidency. 2d. The further progress of the Temple; after which, any miscellaneous business. Elder Sidney Rigdon addressed the conference on the subject of his situation and circumstances among the saints. President Joseph Smith addressed the conference, inviting an expression of any charges or complaints which the Conference had to make. He stated his dissatisfaction with Elder Sidney Rigdon as a counselor, not having received any material benefit from his labors or counsels since their escape from Missouri. Several complaints were then brought forward in reference to his management in the Post Office; a supposed correspondence and connection with John C. Bennett, with Ex-Governor Carlin, and with the Missourians, of a treacherous character: also his leaguings with dishonest persons in endeavoring to defraud the innocent.

President Joseph Smith related to the Conference the detention of documents from J. Butterfield, Esq., which were designed for the benefit of himself, (President Smith,) but was not handed over for some three or four weeks, greatly

to his disadvantage. Also, an indirect testimony from Missouri, through the mother of Orin P. Rockwell, that said Rigdon and others had given information, by letter, of President Smiths' visit to Dixon, advising them to proceed to that place and arrest him there. He stated that in consequence of those, and other circumstances and his unprofitableness to him as a counselor, he did not wish to retain him in that station, unless those difficulties could be removed; but desired his salvation, and expressed his willingness that he should retain a place among the saints. Elder Almon Babbitt suggested the propriety of limiting the complaints and proofs to circumstances that had transpired since the last Conference. President Joseph Smith replied, and showed the legality and propriety of a thorough investigation, without such limitation. Elder Sidney Rigdon plead, concerning the documents from J. Butterfield, Esq., that he received it in answer to some inquiries which he had transmitted to him—that he received it at a time when he was sick, and unable to examine it—did not know that it was designed for the perusal and benefit of President Joseph Smith—that he had, consequently, ordered it to be laid aside, where it remained until inquired for by Joseph Smith. He had never written to Missouri concerning the visit of Joseph Smith to Dixon, and knew of no other person having done so. That, concerning certain rumors of belligerent operations under Governor Carlin's administration, he had related them, not to alarm or disturb any one, but that he had the rumors from good authorities, and supposed them well founded. That he had never received but one communication from John C. Bennett, and that of a business character, except one addressed to him conjointly with Elder Orson Pratt, which

he handed over to President Smith—that he had never written any letters to John C. Bennett. The weather becoming inclement, Conference adjourned until Sunday 10 o'clock A. M. Sunday, 8th inst., 10 o'clock, A. M. Conference assembled agreeably to adjournment, and opened with singing by the choir, and prayer by Elder William W. Phelps. Elder Sidney Rigdon resumed his plea of defence. He related the circumstance of his reception in the city of Quincy, after his escape from Missouri—the cause of his delay in not going to the city of Washington, on an express to which he had been appointed—and closed with a moving appeal to President Joseph Smith concerning their former friendship, associations and sufferings, and expressed his willingness to resign his place, though with sorrowful and indescribable feelings. **During this address, the sympathies of the congregation were highly excited.** Elder Almon Babbitt related a conversation he had had with Esq. Johnson, in which he exonerated Elder Sidney Rigdon from the charge or suspicion of having had a treacherous correspondence with Ex-Governor Carlin. President Joseph Smith arose and satisfactorily explained to the congregation the supposed treacherous correspondence with Ex-Governor Carlin, which wholly removed suspicion from Elder Sidney Rigdon, and from every other person. He expressed entire willingness to have Elder Sidney Rigdon retain his station, provided he would magnify his office, and walk and conduct himself in all honesty, righteousness, and integrity; but signified his lack of confidence in his integrity and steadfastness, judging from their past intercourse. President Hyrum Smith followed with appropriate and expressive remarks **on the attribute of mercy in**



**God, as that by which He influences, controls, and conquers**—and the propriety and importance of the saint's exercising the same attribute towards their fellows; and especially towards their aged companion and fellow servant in the cause of truth and righteousness. Elder Almon Babbit and Pres't Wm. Law followed with remarks in defense of Elder Sidney Rigdon. On motion by President William Marks, and seconded by President Hyrum Smith. Conference voted that Elder Sidney Rigdon be permitted to retain his station as Counselor to the First Presidency.<sup>20</sup>

We see in this example that Joseph did not unilaterally decide to remove a counselor in the First Presidency, although it was his preference and HE was President of the Church. He apparently felt like the decision needed to include the entire membership of the Church. The concerns he had were aired and addressed in front of everyone. It's also interesting to remember that Sidney Rigdon by this time in 1843, **had been in the presence of Christ and had his calling and election made sure** as we see recorded in LDS D&C 76. But, NONE of this exempted Elder Rigdon or anyone else from the Law of Common Consent and the laws of righteousness and justice.

### **But ALL that has now changed**

Over time, however, we can see that this process of member involvement and true common consent in making decisions has changed. The power to change things no longer resides with those consenting to be governed as it did in the early days of the Church. Gone are the days where anyone at the local level in the Church actually votes... on really anything and most real decisions are not made at the local level.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://historicalgeneralconferences.weebly.com/1843-october.html>

In fact, just the other day a dear friend sent me a news story from the Salt Lake Tribune stating that local leaders would now be able to decide whether masks are required at their local meetinghouses or not, which unfortunately will fall to stake presidents who will consult with area presidencies and not to the bishop and relief society president and most importantly, the local members themselves. And then in the same article it reports that “face coverings WILL remain a must in temples!”<sup>21</sup> Again, no vote, no opportunity or ability for local temple patrons or matrons or temple presidents and their counselors to prayerfully decide what is best for them and their unique circumstances. And let’s not forget that even the many scientists in whom we are told to now trust, state that masks and lockdowns have done little to nothing to slow the spread of the CoronaVirus.<sup>22</sup> And IF masks DO work, and vaccines ARE safe and effective, then why not let people decide for themselves whether THEY want to wear a mask or not?

Sadly, the people who are governed have been conditioned to just do as they’re told and to do so is to sustain the Brethren and thus not be on the high road to apostasy. If you think that’s an exaggeration, try standing up in the next stake or general conference meeting and say, “NO” to any proposal being “voted” upon.

### **Recent history of Unanimity. Is this changing too?**

Now with all the changes taking place so rapidly at the Brethren level, and seemingly without the resistance that Elder Nelson would have bumped into during his 34 years as an apostle, **it’s a reasonable question to now ask IF the Quorum of the**

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2022/02/18/locals-decide-whether/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/fauci-said-masks-were-not-really-effective-at-blocking-virus-emails-reveal/ar-AAKDKsP>

**Twelve and First Presidency are also starting to abandon common consent in their quorums.**

We often hear from the Brethren about their “unity” and the love that exists in their quorums. Richard G. Scott told a story at a fireside I attended many years ago when he first participated in a meeting with the Quorum of the Twelve as a brand new apostle. He said that during the long meeting things became very tense and that a very heavy debate ensued. At least one other senior apostle could tell that the newly called Elder Scott was both surprised and uncomfortable with the tone of the discussions. So he passed a note to Elder Scott that read: “Welcome to the Quorum Richard.” This story demonstrates what we would all be able to assume, the idea that the Twelve and First Presidency are made up of extremely strong and competent, success-driven, leadership-type personalities. Elder Scott also related that on another occasion, still while new, he was chastised for being too quiet in one of the meetings and was told by a senior apostle that he was expected to share his opinion especially when he may have had information that would have been helpful to the discussion.

President Eyring has described his first experience while participating with the Brethren, in what he calls “the revelatory process.” He states:

“When I first came as the president of Ricks college, I attended my first meeting that I’d ever been in watching the General Authorities of the church, the First Presidency and others, running a meeting. I had been studying for the ten years I was a professor at Stanford how you make decisions in meetings in groups, so I got a chance...to see the way the Lord’s servants do it (of which I now am one). I looked at it with my Harvard and Stanford eyes and I thought. This is the

strangest conversation I've [heard]. I mean, here are the prophets of God and they're disagreeing in an openness that I had never seen in business. In business you're careful when you're with the bosses, you know. Here they were just — and I watched this process of them disagreeing and I thought, "Good Heavens, I thought revelation would come to them all and they'd all see things the same way, in some sort of..., you know." It was more open than anything I had ever seen in all the groups I had ever studied in business. I was just dumbfounded. But then after a while the conversation cycled around. And they began to agree and I saw the most incredible thing. Here are these very strong, very bright people all with different opinions. Suddenly the opinions began to just line up and I thought, "I've seen a miracle. I've seen unity come out of this wonderful open kind of exchange that I'd never seen in all my studies of government or business or anywhere else." And so I thought, "Oh, what a miracle!" It was President Harold B. Lee who was chairing the meeting. It was a board of education meeting. I thought, now he's going to announce the decision, because I've seen this miracle, and he said, "Wait a minute, I think we'll bring this matter up again some other time. I sense there is someone in the room who is not yet settled." And they went on to the next item. And I thought: that is strange. And then I watched somebody, one of the brethren, I think one of the Twelve, walk past President Lee and say, "Thank you, there's something I didn't have a chance to say." So I want you to know.... This is what it claims to be. This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. Revelation is real, even in what you call the business kinds of settings."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> <https://latterdaysaintmag.com/empower-your-ward-council/>

The scriptures reinforce the principle that people's ideas and opinions matter and that we need to be able to speak openly, without reprisal for common consent to exist. This is the method by which we have been told, the Brethren govern THEIR meetings.

### **What's Changed? The Death of Common Consent among the Brethren**

Sister Wendy Nelson shares an interesting statement that maybe the process by which things are discussed and decided among the Fifteen has also changed. This is what she said a few years back when her husband had recently become the Church's new president:

"I have seen him changing in the last ten months," said Sister Nelson. **"It is as though he's been unleashed. He's free to finally do what he came to earth to do. ... And also, he's free to follow through with things he's been concerned about but could never do. Now that he's president of [the Church], he can do those things."**<sup>24</sup> (emphasis added).

What does this statement reveal about common consent among the Brethren? If this statement from Sister Nelson is correct, then we must assume that Elder Nelson, over the course of 34 years, even while serving as the president of the Quorum of the Twelve under President Monson, shared his opinions openly and unabashedly as has been demonstrated in the examples I gave and apparently was UNSUCCESSFUL in persuading everyone else to do what he felt inspired to do. Until he became the Church's president. Does common consent no longer apply to the Brethren? Where real

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<sup>24</sup><https://latterdaysaintmag.com/president-nelson-on-the-future-of-the-church-eat-your-vitamin-pills-get-your-rest-its-going-to-be-exciting/>

opinions and concerns are aired and where stalemate and compromise occur unless they become unanimous, no matter who it is who is proposing.

Perhaps a glaring example is President Nelson's presumed failed efforts to get the Church and the world to call the Church by its full name. His first talk in General Conference about this topic was given in April of 1990.<sup>25</sup> Although he would have petitioned his brethren and the Church to follow his "inspired prompting," he obviously did not prevail in persuading everyone. Then in 2018, as the Church's president, Nelson seemingly made a unilateral decision that everyone conform to his preferences on this matter, and called the topic now "not negotiable."<sup>26</sup> He ended the debate that even President Hinckley had said was not a big deal. "They could call us worse" (FN) he lovingly teased as the audience laughed – then went on to say that "Mormon," according to Joseph Smith, means "more good" and that we should rejoice that we are known by such a wonderful nickname. Joseph F. Smith would be wrong by this new strict rule from President Nelson to reply to the angry mob of men who asked him if he was a Mormon when he bravely replied! "Yes siree; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through."<sup>27</sup> I suppose he could have said, "uh Mormon, nope, no Mormons here... but I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Or the "I'm a Mormon" campaign just a few years back that the Church spent millions on? According to President Nelson, all the efforts of 188 years worth of prophets, seers, and revelators

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<sup>25</sup> <https://rationalfaiths.com/are-we-mormon-i-am-confused-gordon-b-hinkley-russell-m-nelson/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.deseret.com/2018/10/7/20655806/christ-s-name-is-not-negotiable-as-center-of-church-s-name-president-nelson-says#president-russell-m-nelson-of-the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints-center-and-his-counselors-president-dallin-h-oaks-first-counselor-in-the-first-presidency-left-and-president-henry-b-eyring-second-counselor-in-the-first-presidency-right-sing-a-congregational-hymn-during-the-188th-semiannual-general-conference-of-the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints-in-salt-lake-city-on-sunday-oct-7-2018>

<sup>27</sup> [https://ldsblogs.com/991/joseph\\_f\\_smith\\_true\\_blue\\_through\\_and\\_thr](https://ldsblogs.com/991/joseph_f_smith_true_blue_through_and_thr)

who encouraged or allowed the word Mormon to be used in referring to the Church WAS deeply offensive to our Lord.

How did President Nelson go about getting the unanimity of his brethren, who in years' past did NOT unanimously agree with him on this topic? Were the Brethren consulted? Did they re-debate the issue? Or did President Nelson just demand this "course correction?"(FN) In his own words he said, "**I did this** because the Lord impressed upon my mind (I assume he's referring to 1990) the name He decreed for His Church... and He is offended when we use those nicknames ourselves..."<sup>28</sup> (emphasis added). A nickname I might add that Joseph Smith used, as well as every other Church leader since him, all the way up through President Monson... They ALL agreed upon return came up with the following names: The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Mormon Doctrine, The Mormon Church, Mormon News, Mormon Radio, Mormon Pioneers, LDS Newsroom, LDS.org, Mormon Dialogue, Fair Latter Day Saints, Mormon Day at the Ballpark with Paul Dunn and the Oakland A's, etc. More recently, the "I am a Mormon campaign," Mormonsandgays.com, Mormonandgay.com and the movie *Meet the Mormons*. Did ALL these prophets lead us astray by not only allowing us to be called by this nickname, but who also encouraged it?

Do the Brethren give some higher priority to ideas advanced by the President and/or a "united" First Presidency than they did in years' past? Perhaps this is why President Nelson replaced President Uchdorf with Elder Oaks. Someone who he has known for many years and who may be more in line with his ideas than President Uchdorf was. Is it possible that the Twelve Apostles no longer feel able to vote down a proposal brought forth by a "united" First Presidency without their own fears of merging

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<sup>28</sup> <https://rationalfaiths.com/are-we-mormon-i-am-confused-gordon-b-hinkley-russell-m-nelson/>

onto the high road towards apostasy? Based on what Sister Nelson reports, I can only assume this may be the case.

## Conclusion

None of this really matters, however, when we talk about the Law of Common Consent. Here's an interesting quote from Orson F. Whitney:

“What!—exclaims one. After these men had communed with heavenly beings and received from them commandments for their guidance; after receiving divine authority to preach the Gospel, administer its ordinances, and establish once more on earth the long absent Church of Christ! **After all this must they go before the people and ask their consent to organize them and preside over them as a religious body?** Yes, that was precisely the situation.

Notwithstanding all those glorious manifestations, they were not yet fully qualified to hold the high positions unto which they had been divinely called. One element was lacking—**the consent of the people**. Until that consent was given, there could be no church with these people as its members and those men as its presiding authorities. **The Great Ruler of all never did and never will foist upon any of his people, in branch, ward, stake or Church capacity, a presiding officer whom they are not willing to accept and hold.**” (emphasis added).

LDS D&C Section 107 describes how to remove a President or any High Priest or any person who “foists” his will upon others or otherwise abuses his authority. This section clarifies that local stakes are to be equal in power and authority to the First



Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve and describes this system of checks and balances as integral to the Law of Common Consent:

The standing <sup>a</sup>high councils, at the stakes of Zion, form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church, in all their decisions, to the quorum of the presidency, or to the traveling high council. And inasmuch as a President of the High Priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the <sup>a</sup>common council of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counselors of the High Priesthood; And their decision upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him. **Thus, none shall be exempted from the <sup>a</sup>justice and the <sup>b</sup>laws of God, that all things may be done in <sup>c</sup>order and in solemnity before him, according to truth and righteousness.** (D&C 107) (emphasis added).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson has noted, “the objective is not simply consensus among council members but revelation from God... This administrative process, which is followed scrupulously in the Lord’s Church, **ensures that established doctrines and policies do not simply reflect the opinions or agendas of specific individuals.**” And that includes the President of the Church.

In TPJS, section 4 we read:

...If a High Priest should be remiss in his duty, and should lead, or suffer the Church to be led astray, depart from the ordinances of the Lord, then it is the duty of one of the Seventies, acting under the special direction of the Twelve, being duly commissioned by them with their delegated authority, to go to the Church,

and if agreeable to a majority of the members of said Church, to proceed to regulate and put in order the same; otherwise, he can have no authority to act.<sup>29</sup>

Joseph Smith further declared:

"If any man writes to you, or preaches to you, doctrines contrary to the Bible, Book of Mormon, or Book of Doctrine and Covenants, **set him down** as an impostor."<sup>30</sup> (emphasis added).

In short, if and when a Church leader rules unrighteously, by decree, it becomes the duty to remove him from office. If we fail to do so, we too become complicit in abandoning the laws upon which the Church is founded.

### **The Brethren May Now Be Voting the Same Way the Members Do**

I can tell you that in my discussions with a General Authority that I know, he told me after his first week or so on the job as a newly called member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, just how surprised he was at how much they voted on and how no one was given time to actually learn about or discuss the proposals. Much like we experience at the ward level and now seem to be seeing with the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency. **The vain perfunctory raising of the right arm to the square in the affirmative, and letting ONE man or ONE Quorum dictate both big and small changes in the Church IS NOT true common consent.**

What is the cost of losing Common Consent in the Church? What are the implications if any newly called Church president becomes “unleashed” and is “able to

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<sup>29</sup> Documentary History of the Church 4:128-129.

<sup>30</sup> JOSEPH SMITH, JUN. T&C 141:50

do all the things they've ever wanted to do?" That will have to be a question for another day.

## **Final Thoughts**

The net effect of all the changes, so many of which have come by one man or one quorum, has literally transfigured the Church of Jesus Christ. The idea that correct principles are taught and people govern themselves is generally no longer applicable in the Church. It has become, as Elder McConkine warned, their "Province to teach to the Church what doctrine is. It is your province to echo what they say or to remain silent."<sup>31</sup> Denver Snuffer is correct when he says, there is "only one doctrine left: we follow a man whom we call a prophet."<sup>32</sup> That is the last doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-days Saints.

O ye wicked, and perverse, and stiffnecked people, why have you built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God, for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled. Behold, the Lord hath shewn unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come at that day when these things shall come forth among you. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shewn you unto me, and I know your doing, and I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts. And there are none, save a few only, who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts,

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<sup>31</sup><http://www.eugeneengland.org/a-professor-and-apostle-correspond-eugene-england-and-bruce-r-mcconkie-on-the-nature-of-god>

<sup>32</sup> <https://denversnuffer.com/2014/07/only-one-doctrine-left/>

unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquity. And your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies? Because of the praise of the world? Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick, and the afflicted to pass by you and notice them not? Yea, why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain? And cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground for vengeance upon your heads? Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you, and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer. (RE Mormon 4:5)

I testify that there is good news. The Restoration is still underway. God has been rescuing it and the institution that claimed to have a copyright on it, has allowed it to expire. In order to escape the fast approaching destruction, we must be willing to see things as they are, be able to discern, be able to self-govern, be willing to sacrifice our traditions and false beliefs, and be willing to repent and come unto Him to be saved. I

am eternally grateful to have found fellowship among so many who love the Restoration and seek to be equal as we endeavor to be true to what the Lord gave Joseph and to be worthy of the coming Zion. The current hierarchy has created such an inequality in the which Zion could never exist. The Power to Change is within our reach, the Heavens are open again!