

October 16, 2014

The [REDACTED] Stake Presidency and Stake High Council  
In Care of [REDACTED], President of the [REDACTED] Stake

Dear President [REDACTED], and members of the Stake Presidency and High Council:

In an effort to remain honest in my dealings with my fellow men, and in fulfilling the obligation devolving upon those who have been instructed in the truth, I am writing this letter to communicate to my local leaders, whom I sustain, my present views regarding prominent teachings of some of the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

At the time of this writing, I am a faithful member of the church in good standing, and have always been so since my baptism nearly 18 years ago. I've always accepted callings and have sought diligently to magnify each office in which I have been called to labor. I currently serve as first counselor in the [REDACTED] elders quorum presidency. I consider myself worthy to hold a temple recommend.

I understand that a letter of this nature will cause those who claim the right to determine worthiness of the church's members to question mine. However, if the present teachings continue to grow in popularity, unchecked, then I fear that members of the church will be blinded, forever unable to understand the truth of these things, and will be lulled "away into carnal security" as has been warned about in the Book of Mormon (2 Ne. 28:21).

We have reached a point in the history of the church when it is no longer acceptable for men who have been taught the truth by the Spirit of God, and who understand the scriptures, to stand idly by while vain and foolish doctrines are taught to the members of the church – though this has commonly been our practice. I will stand on the side of truth even if I stand alone; though I am not alone.

Some of the teachings presented by church leaders in the October 2014 general conference are unscriptural, and damaging to the souls of men. In relating the truth of these matters, I will rely upon the words of scripture and of the prophet Joseph Smith.

In writing, I want to quote from three talks that were given in the Sunday sessions of conference because they illustrate well the teachings that are problematic. The three talks to which I will refer were delivered by Elder Russell M. Nelson, Sister Carol F. McConkie, and Elder M. Russell Ballard. Subsequent to quoting from each of their talks, I will summarize the underlying premise of their teachings.

Elder Nelson taught:

**"Trust me! These 15 men – prophets, seers, and revelators – know what the will of the Lord is when unanimity is reached!"** Also, **"The Church today has been organized by the**

Lord Himself. He has put in place a remarkable system of governance that provides redundancy and backup...Counterbalances and safeguards abound *so that no one can ever lead the Church astray*" (Conference Report, October 2014).

Elder Nelson's talk has an overarching theme that church members should trust him and the other leaders of the church, and that if they do so they cannot be led astray.

Sister McConkie taught:

"Concerning the living prophet, the Lord commands the people of His church:

*"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, in all patience and faith. For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you"* (D&C 21:4-6).

The revelation from which she quoted is talking about Joseph Smith, period.

From the beginning of the revelation until the end, God vouched for his servant Joseph. We've taken too much liberty applying the words of Christ about His servant to others. The church was commanded by the Lord to:

"give heed unto all *his* (meaning Joseph's) words and commandments which *he* (Joseph) shall give unto you as *he* (Joseph) receiveth them...For *his* (Joseph's) word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth...For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you."

Sister McConkie later said, "We need never be deceived about *where to look for answers* to our questions or uncertain about *which voice to follow*." A few minutes later she taught, "*following the prophet is always right*" (Conference Report, October 2014).

Her teaching that we ought not be "deceived about where to look" and "about which voice to follow" is ironic, because she does not finish her thought by saying that we are to look to and follow Christ. She instead says we are to look to and follow men.

Elder Ballard taught:

"Recently, I spoke at the new mission presidents' seminar and counseled these leaders: 'Keep the eyes of the mission on the leaders of the Church...*We will not and ...cannot lead [you] astray.*' He again repeated, "...teach your missionaries to *focus their eyes on us...*" (Conference Report, October 2014).

Once again, the premise of his talk is that members of the church should focus their attention on the leaders of the church; that our eyes should be on the leaders, and that they will not and cannot lead us astray.

These teachings, which were clearly and unequivocally taught in general conference, are unscriptural, are opposed to the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith, and will lead the souls of men into carnal security “carefully down to hell” (2 Ne. 28:21). They point to men instead of Christ. They are anti-Christ. To preach these ideas in the name of Christ, is to take the name of the Lord in vain.

The First Presidency recently said “Members are always free to ask...questions and earnestly seek greater understanding” (First Presidency Statement, June 28, 2014). They also said they “feel special concern, however, for members who distance themselves from Church doctrine or practice and, by advocacy, encourage others to follow them” (ibid.). My present view concerning these matters has come as a result of “freely asking questions,” and “seeking greater understanding.” My decision to “distance myself from this doctrine” was arrived at through much prayer and study over many years.

I’ve concluded that I cannot, in good conscience, remain silent concerning these teachings. If false doctrines can be taught in the church uncontested, it will prove damaging to the church and its members both in the short and long-term. Truth must increase in the church, not decrease. Truth must be defended, not hidden (Matt. 5:14-16). It doesn’t matter who teaches the false precepts, the truth must be defended; even if it is the members of the church who are willing to stand up for and defend the truth. When opportunities arise, therefore, I will teach publicly the words of scripture concerning the matter, and denounce as false the church’s current teachings to which I’ve cited above. To do otherwise would be dishonest, and offend the Spirit of God.

The idea that we could not be led astray by our leaders was emphatically taught by President Wilford Woodruff in 1890 (see Official Declaration-1). I’m fully aware of the circumstances surrounding his statement, having read his journals, minutes of meetings of the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve, and other journals of prominent church leaders of that day. The details of the circumstances leading to his statement are beyond the scope of this letter. Suffice it to say, President Woodruff didn’t have in his heart and mind what we desire to attribute to him today, nor did his contemporaries view his remarks the way we do today.

In February 1980, Ezra Taft Benson delivered a talk at BYU entitled “Fourteen Fundamentals of Following the Prophet.” Following his talk, Elder Benson was summoned by President Spencer W. Kimball to appear before his brethren of the Quorum of Twelve and to apologize for what he had said. President Kimball denounced the talk, and Elder Benson apologized to his brethren. Curiously, however, the talk appeared as the First Presidency message in the June 1981 Ensign. It has been repeated in general conference messages by general authorities since then. It seems there are those who are eager to preserve that message.

The idea that you should put your trust in men, and follow them, is contradicted in all the Holy Scriptures.

The prophet Nephi taught:

"Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man" (2 ne. 4:34; 28:31). He wrote that Christ said, "wherefore, *follow me*, and do the things which ye have seen me do" (2 Ne. 31:12). He warned that in the last days men would "deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; *and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept*; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and *he hath given his power unto men*; Behold, *hearken ye unto my precept...*" (2 Ne. 28:5-6).

The prophet Jacob preached:

The "*vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness*" of man. (2 Ne. 9:23-24, 28). He taught his listeners to "*come unto the Lord, the Holy One*" (2 ne. 9:41). He said the "keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there" (ibid.).

The prophet King Benjamin taught:

"Salvation cometh to none...except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 3:12). This humble king said he *didn't desire his people to "fear him,"* because he was *only "a mortal man"* (Mosiah 2:10). He proclaimed his "infirmities in body and mind" (Mosiah 2:11). He diverted adoration and attention from himself to the King of heaven (Mosiah 2:19). He taught that salvation comes to him who puts his "trust in the Lord" (Mosiah 4:6). He taught them to remember "*the greatness of God, and your own nothingness*" (Mosiah 4:11).

King Noah and his priests preached:

"*Flattering,*" and "*lying and vain words*" unto the people (Mosiah 11:7, 11). He made them to believe there was no error in his precepts (Mosiah 12:13-14). The Lord sent the prophet Abinadi to declare repentance and turn them "to the Lord their God" (Mosiah 11:21). The people were "blinded," however, and "hardened their hearts against the words of Abinadi" (Mosiah 11:29).

Like the Pharisees' reaction to the Lord, Noah and his people were surprised "that we should be condemned of God or judged of this man (Mosiah 12:13-14). They were surprised that somebody would challenge their righteousness. The wicked priestly class of Christ's day was surprised at His message of admonition and repentance. In their view, they were the only people actually keeping all of the commandments. To them, even Christ and his disciples transgressed "the tradition of the elders" (Matt.15:1-3). Christ taught them that it was *precisely by way of their tradition* that *they* "transgressed the commandment of God" (ibid.). Their pride had blinded them.

Christ taught:

A large group of people that those who "repent," and "believe in me," and are "baptized, the same shall be saved" (3 Ne. 11:33, 37). Those who refuse to repent, believe, and hearken to the Lord's command for baptism "shall be damned" (3 Ne. 11:34). He went

on to say, *"whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock"* (3 Ne. 11:40). Christ commanded his disciples to "go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken" (3 Ne. 11:41). They were not to "declare more or less than" what Christ had spoken. If they did, it came of evil.

The prophet Moroni wrote:

Speaking to his latter-day readers: "Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing" (Morm. 8:35). "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...*O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God?"* (Morm. 8:36, 38).

The polluting was necessarily an inside job, since there can only be but one "holy church of God" in the last days about whom he is speaking. He continued,

*"For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?"* (Morm. 9:9).

Why would God, in whom "there is no variableness" and who "is the same yesterday, today, and forever," establish one pattern that he followed in all the holy prophets since the beginning, only to change that pattern in our day? Why would the message of the prophets be "repentance and faith on the Lord" in one generation, and "stay in the boat" and "trust in your leaders" in another?

If it is so easy for us to sail our way to heaven on "the Old Ship Zion," then why didn't our unchanging Lord give that same promise to any of his children who lived upon the earth prior to our day? Why didn't he give the Nephites the guarantee that they could not be led astray? Why didn't Christ's meridian-day apostles teach the saints they could not be led astray? Why didn't Joseph Smith teach this doctrine? It is because God has never taught this doctrine, and He has not and will never inspire His prophets to teach it.

In addition to the scriptures, the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith are also opposed to the idea that we should place our trust in men. First, consider this statement from President Heber J. Grant. It will help frame the importance of Joseph Smith's teachings.

President Grant once said to Marion G. Romney, *"My boy, you always keep your eye on the President of the Church, and if he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it"* (Conference Report, October 1960, p. 78).

However, Joseph Smith said, *"We have heard men who hold the priesthood remark that they would do anything they were told to do by those who preside over them even if they knew it was wrong; but such obedience is worse than folly to us; it is slavery in the*

extreme; and the man who would thus willingly degrade himself, should not claim a rank among intelligent beings, until he turns from his folly. *A man of God would despise the idea.* Others, in the extreme exercise of their almighty authority have taught that such obedience was necessary, and that no matter what the saints were told to do by their presidents, they should do it without any questions. When Elders of Israel will so far indulge in these extreme notions of obedience as to teach them to the people, it is generally because they have it in their hearts to do wrong themselves" (Millennial Star, Volume 14, No. 38, Pages 593-595).

On another occasion, as recorded in *Teachings*:

"President Joseph Smith read the 14th chapter of Ezekiel - said the Lord had declared by the Prophet, that the people should each one stand for himself, and depend on no man or men in that state of corruption of the Jewish church - that righteous persons could only deliver their own souls - *applied it to the present state of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - said if the people departed from the Lord, they must fall - that they were depending on the prophet, hence were darkened in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves...*" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Five 1842-43, p. 237-38).

In April 1844 Joseph wrote to "the elders and individuals abroad":

"If any man writes to you *or preaches to you, doctrines contrary to the Bible, the Book of Mormon, or the Doctrine and Covenants, set him down as an imposter*" (Times and Seasons, Vol. 5, No. 7, p. 490).

Years later, in 1874, Brigham Young taught a similar principle:

"I have often said to the Latter-day Saints - 'Live so that you will know whether I teach you the truth or not.' Suppose you are careless and unconcerned, and give way to the spirit of the world, and I am led, likewise, to preach the things of this world and to accept things that are NOT of God, *how easy it would be for me to lead you astray!* But I say to you, *live so that you will know for yourselves whether I tell the truth or not.* That is the way we want all Saints to live" (Brigham Young, JD 18:248).

It is only Christ who is worthy of reverence. I do not believe I must follow a man to be able to follow Christ. I do not believe I should "keep my eyes upon" men, in order to be able to see Christ. Those who worship the Lord will not teach others to trust in man for salvation. Those who know Him would find it repugnant to divert attention from their Lord, and instead have others look to them. I believe the Lord is not pleased with this teaching. He has commanded, "let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God" (D&C 76:61). I believe if Joseph Smith were here today he would denounce these teachings. He has said that "a man of God would despise" these ideas.

The idea that you must accept what the leaders of the church teach because "they will not," indeed "cannot" lead you astray, abrogates the agency of man. It is therefore

**satanic.** It implies that if you obtain any knowledge from the Lord that is contrary to that which is taught, then you have been deceived. It implies that the Lord “will not,” indeed “cannot” teach you something that is contrary to what is currently said by the leaders of the church; a real problem for latter-day saints, since their leaders’ teachings have changed over time. Now, everything that is taught is necessarily inspired. Everything that happens is because *the prophet is guiding the church*. These teachings compel you to accept the conclusion that “**all is well in Zion,**” which conclusion Nephi warned against (2 Ne. 28:21). Those who question that conclusion are regarded as misled. The time will soon be upon us that those who choose to believe in these false teachings will be disappointed and lose their faith.

I hope my letter will not be wrongly interpreted as a refutation of the gospel restored through the prophet Joseph Smith, or of the Book of Mormon. It is neither. I testify of the divinity of both. My letter should be interpreted rather as a public affirmation of the truth, and an attempt to explain my views concerning these matters using the scriptures and the teachings of Joseph Smith, in spite of the current teachings of the church, which are false. We must repent.

I am happy and willing to discuss my views as outlined herein if you wish to do so. My prayer is that these false teachings might be destroyed, and that we might come to a unity of faith and to the knowledge of the truth, which is the glory of God (D&C 93:36).

**I testify that God will vindicate my words because I speak the truth according to the Spirit of God, the scriptures and all the holy prophets.**

Sincerely, your brother;

Matthew Lohmeier