

Pavlov's Saints

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I have, of late, pondered long and hard regarding the effects and influence of emotion on humans. There are times I would send my emotions to outer darkness never to be allowed back. Other times I cherish the feelings that come from close, loving relationships and vow to become more in tune with the Lord so that I may become more in tune with those I love. And by that attunement, then, bring spirits in close harmony and foster a feeling of oneness and charity. There is, however, a fundamental matter relating to spiritual issues and emotions that bears analysis because it is confusing to many. Be patient while I cover some back-story. Eventually, we will circle back to our task of becoming a Zion people.

It is no surprise to any of us that emotion plays a major role in our lives. That role can be comforting, creative, and supportive. Emotion can also be limiting when it becomes fear, sadness, melancholy, dejection, or depression. There has been much learning in this area over the modern era. Some of this learning is enabling and teaches us that we have control over our emotions and can channel them into productive endeavors and overcome its limiting effects. Some of this learning, however, has enabled less positive results. This latter learning is the subject of this treatise.

My grandmother noticed my tendencies toward extremes of emotion and would advise: “Michael, learn to take things in stride. When something good happens be grateful and happy but attenuate the emotion of the moment with humility. And, when something unpleasant happens, learn what lessons are available and grow from the lessons learned but always understand that good things will follow. Don’t allow yourself to fall into a hole of your own making.” In teaching my own children, I simplified the thought with, “Don’t let the highs of life take you too high or the lows take you too low.”

This advice has lingered and has been of great value as I have, at times, stumbled through my own life. As a young husband with a distinct lack of patience, (and the unpleasant realization of that fact), I read many books regarding various techniques of emotional control. A tangential by-product of this study became an awareness of when I was being emotionally manipulated by external influences. I have always especially disliked popular advertising, for instance, with its emphasis on envy. Why, I ask, should I care a hoot whether my neighbor has the latest model of the older version I own when the older version functions well and suits my needs? Especially when further study reveals that the newer model consists of largely cosmetic differences.

This obvious emotional conditioning by advertising professionals irks me in a way that is difficult to describe. I despise those who make such attempts at swaying my behavior using psychological techniques. If you want me to buy a product simply state your case with facts and get out of the way. I'll buy it or not based on research and objective reasoning. Don't attempt to couple the product with how good I'll feel about myself or how much others will like me if I buy it, or some such nonsense.

In like manner, education, politics, and even religion use similar techniques to sway emotion and convince followers to a certain mode of thought. The earth, it was once taught, was flat and any inference that it might be otherwise brought an abundance of emotional religious wrath upon the head of one who set forth such an idea. Ridicule is a powerful tool used to sway public opinion.

The history of modern emotional conditioning is rich and interesting. There is much of value to be learned. The value, mostly, comes as a defense against those who would plant emotional seeds to be harvested, by them, later. We may not notice the planting but later, when harvested, we might mistake the conditioned emotional response for objective reasoning, or even, revelation.

It all started with saliva. Just after the turn of the 20th century, a Russian physiologist, Ivan Pavlov, performed a series of experiments on dogs. He was studying their digestive systems and, in particular, the role of saliva in those systems. As food was brought to the dogs, they salivated and the volume of the saliva was measured for the experiment. Soon Pavlov noticed that even as his assistant entered the room without food, the dogs began to salivate. That was Pavlov's Eureka moment. He realized that a physiological response could be artificially created using artificial conditioning techniques.

Pavlov added the ringing of a bell when food was brought. Soon the dogs would salivate at the ringing of the bell. The dog's salivating at the sight and smell of food is an unconditioned response to an unconditioned stimulus. It requires no education. It is a natural response to a natural stimulus. The bell, however, is a conditioned stimulus which is not natural but is introduced specifically to create the response. The dog's salivating at the sound of the bell is a conditioned, and learned, response. And, so it is also with humans.

We may be raised by parents who support a particular political party and always refer to it in a positive way. They may also refer to the opposing party in a negative way. They have planted an artificial stimulus that conjures good feelings on the one hand and anxious, negative feelings on the other. We, then, venture out in the political marketplace and encounter a variety of ideas and react to them based on our artificial conditioning.

We think, however, that our judgments are based on objective reasoning when, in fact, they are simply conditioned unconscious responses.

I had such an upbringing. It came as a bit of a shock as I realized that my mother's father, who was a Democrat, was actually more conservative and believed more literally in the Constitution than did either my father or his father who were Republicans. This realization and subsequent analysis dissolved the artificial conditioning I had received at the hands of my father. It became apparent to me that the titles, Republican or Democrat, were largely meaningless. For me to understand a political idea I had to analyze it outside of those parameters. Other such realizations followed.

As I came to this realization about conditioned political opinions, I began forming my own opinions based on logic and moral reasoning. For instance, I was very much against the Viet Nam war but held very conservative ideas regarding the size and scope of the federal government, and its currency debasement. These were not opinions generally held by the same person. One being more "liberal" and the other more "conservative." But there I was, in the middle and, sometimes, all alone with my stances.

Back to our history for just a moment: John Watson continued the work in 1913 with an article in *Psychological Review*, (20, 158-177), entitled "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it." From that article:

"Psychology, as the behaviorist views it, is a purely objective, experimental branch of natural science which needs introspection as little as do the sciences of chemistry and physics. It is granted that the behavior of animals can be investigated without appeal to consciousness...The position is taken here that the behavior of man and the behavior of animals must be considered on the same plane; as being equally essential to a general understanding of behavior. It can dispense with consciousness in a psychological sense... Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior..." (Emphasis added.)

In other words, men and animals can be conditioned to respond to a conditioned stimulus which is not natural but manipulated to control behavior. Such manipulation is accomplished through the unconscious without conscious consent. Men have learned to use unconscious compulsion. Is this a violation of agency? I think so, but each of us can be aware of the conditioning if we become educated in its use. Such awareness arms the conscious against manipulation of the unconscious. These persuasive techniques are, in my view, a clear use of unrighteous dominion. But aren't we supposed to use persuasion rather than coercion? Yes, but when the persuasion is covert, and essentially against our will, does it not then, become coercion?

After many academic successes, Watson joined the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency to put what he had learned to a series of practical, real-world tests. Could consumers be subconsciously conditioned with a predisposition to purchase a certain brand or product? The answer is obvious in his advancement to a vice-presidency in less than two years. Ponds cold cream and Maxwell House coffee are but two of his successful campaigns. He is credited with popularizing the “coffee break” during the Maxwell House campaign. Watson used “sex appeal” and the promise of sexual attractiveness in another successful campaign to sell toothpaste. All worked as expected.

Near the same time, others such as Walter Lippmann recognized the value of these psychological techniques from a political perspective. In his first book on the subject, *Public Opinion* (1922), Lippmann said that mass man functioned as a "bewildered herd" who must be governed by "a specialized class whose interests reach beyond the locality." Shades of Plato's Golden People from his book *The Republic*. Unfortunately, Plato's dream "Republic" did not consider the Adversary's cunning for turning Golden People into Gadiantons.

In *Public Opinion*, Lippmann describes techniques of mass persuasion. “The pertinent facts are never provided completely and accurately* as a fraction of the whole, they are often arranged to portray a certain, subjective interpretation of an event.” This is reminiscent of Boyd Packer’s statement, “Some things that are true are not very useful.” (Elder Boyd K. Packer, *The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect*, CES Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History, 22 August 1981, Brigham Young University) The “manufacture of consent” then becomes a corrupted tool of persuasion and unrighteous dominion.

*(Why, for instance, are the very serious temple covenants not provided to members prior to their first temple experience? It appears to be a "cult-like" practice to wait until deep in the endowment ceremony to first present these covenants. Why not let members pray and ponder, beforehand, about the issues involved and receive confirmation from God that they were desired of Him? If the endowment is 10% Joseph Smith and 90% Brigham Young and Masonry, it would seem that spiritual inquiry would not be desired by the corporation.)

Others including Edward Bernays (known as the father of modern public relations) and, more recently, Philip Gould, Matthew Freud, (great-grandson of Sigmund Freud), and many others introduced the idea that products of all kinds could be unconsciously linked to emotional desires. These products would not only supply the stated benefits but also stroke the unconscious and, ostensibly, make you a happier, more successful, more sexually appealing, and a less fearful person.

These products include not only soap, automobiles, etc., but political ideas and candidates, societal mores and attitudes, and religious influence. For instance, without command, one group stands as the Catholic Pope enters the room while another stands at the entrance of most any LDS general authority. Each group has been conditioned to react in that way regardless of the fact that the Lord made very clear that He is “no respecter of persons” (D&C 1:35; D&C 38:16; Acts 10:34) and, by inference, neither ought we to be. Honor belongs to the Lord and our Father in Heaven, and none other.

I wonder if Moroni allowed people to stand when he entered a room? “Behold, I am Moroni, your chief captain. I seek not for power, but to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God...” (Alma 60:36) Joseph Smith surely understood. “And to God and the Lamb be glory, and honor, and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (D&C 76:119) It appears that many Mormons and Catholics remain emotionally and scripturally confused, or more accurately, emotionally conditioned. Slavery by any other name remains a Gadianton favorite.

The next step in persuasion technology was the introduction of polling and focus groups. Called by some the “father of modern polling,” Richard B. Wirthlin was the son of Joseph L. Wirthlin a former member of the LDS Presiding Bishopric, and the brother of Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

He started a survey and market-research company in 1969 in Los Angeles that eventually became Wirthlin Worldwide, one of the largest market-research firms in the world. Harris Interactive bought the company in 2004 and Wirthlin served on its board of directors. He pioneered many new polling techniques, including voter-precinct targeting, computer-assisted telephone interviews, values research, “people-meter” groups and Internet-based surveys.

Wirthlin also served as an adviser, strategist, and pollster to presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He was a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy from 1996 to 2001. Do you think he might have had a hand in initiating and refining polling and focus- group practices in the church?

As a professional pollster and opinion shaper Elder Wirthlin refined his theory that “you can persuade by reason, but if you want to motivate, you have to tap into emotions. That dimension comes from understanding what people value: self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, and religious values as well.”

So we come to the present day and an LDS organization that has incorporated modern polling and focus group techniques along with classical conditioning to its

public relations tool set. The effort to understand the thoughts and feelings of the members to shape programs begs one simple question: If the church, indeed, is led by a prophet, seer, and revelator, (and, in fact, 18 of them), why does it need focus groups? Why spend tithing funds on polling? If the Lord, in fact, runs the church through its prophet, why bother with focus groups and polling? Isn't the Lord's will what we really want for ourselves? Then why do the leaders of the church use public opinion to shape church policies rather than the Lord's will? Isn't that exactly backwards from what the Lord has taught?

Consider the following when weighing the value of polling and focus groups versus directly seeking and relying on the Lord's counsel and confirmation: "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." (Jeremiah 17:5)

Speaking of the Gentiles who would scatter his people in the last days, and through whom the Book of Mormon would come, in other words, the modern LDS people, Nephi wrote: "And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes and have stumbled because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless they put down the power and miracles of God and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor." (2 Ne 26:20)

The effect of focus groups and polling is to bring church policies and procedures into line with the current attitudes of the people. Is this how the Lord operates? As the Lord told Samuel when the people desired a king, "...for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." (1 Sam 8:7)

From the beginning days of the Correlation Program, the church began incorporating certain phrases in its PR efforts in order to bolster the influence of the leadership. During the presidency of David O. McKay, the church began writing stories for publication with the title, "the Prophet" preceding David O. McKay. President McKay became the Prophet David O. McKay. Prior to that time if you used the title "Prophet", you were understood to mean Joseph Smith.

Soon, members became used to the title and the PR folks added "prophet, seer, and revelator" to describe David O. McKay. That, then, became normal. Testimonies began to include how wonderful it was to have a true prophet in our midst, leading and guiding us and keeping us safe.

Safety became an oft heard theme. Follow the prophet soon was added and, in 1989 Duane E. Hiatt penned the children's hymn "Follow the Prophet." The minds of LDS children are imbued with the words of the chorus:

"Follow the prophet, follow the prophet,
Follow the prophet; don't go astray.
Follow the prophet, follow the prophet,
Follow the prophet; he knows the way."

There are nine verses in this hymn. When the children sing all nine verses they will have sung "Follow the prophet" a total of fifty-four times or six times per verse. That's a generous amount of classical conditioning. Each time the child sings "Follow the prophet" there is a good feeling that accompanies the words as the child sings with friends gathered around. Children like comfort; it makes them feel, naturally, comfortable and secure. After hearing testimonies about the comfort having a true and living prophet provides, the feelings of comfort are continually reinforced. After years of such conditioning the child's unconscious mind connects "following the prophet" and "true and living prophet" with feelings of comfort, safety, and security.

The mere suggestion that there is no evidence, either scriptural or otherwise, suggesting that the church president cannot lead the church astray brings discomfort and anxiety to someone so conditioned. This is called a type of cognitive dissonance. They cannot conceive that this suggestion might be true, not because of any empirical evidence, but simply because their conditioning won't allow it. The "traditions of their fathers" must be followed.

There can be no objective reasoning or judgment for one so emotionally conditioned. It is a simple fact that, after years of this classical Pavlovian conditioning, i.e., the feelings of comfort and safety felt while singing in a group is the natural response—like food—and the phrase "follow the prophet" is the conditioned stimulus. You hear "follow the prophet" and you feel safe and comfortable. You hear someone question the idea of following the prophet and you feel discomfort and anxiety. And, you can't objectively explain why. Even substituting "follow the Savior" does not meet the criteria. The conditioning is "follow the prophet." Nothing else will do.

At the risk of shattering fragile emotional conditioning, let's analyze a few ideas that are regularly heard from the pulpit in any LDS Sacrament Meeting. Following is a partial list of conditioned stimuli taught in the church from an early age:

Follow the prophet, he can't lead us astray
Feel the Spirit
All's well in Zion
The church is true
Sacrament renews baptismal covenants

What's so wrong with these things, anyway? Don't these and other, similar, phrases contain wonderful truths? Or is the veneer of emotion indicative of something else?

If we distill down the first one, we find a problem with following a man, any man, including Christ if we follow Him only as a great prophet, and not the Son of God:

“And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas.

“These are they who say they are some of one and some of another--some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch;" (D&C 76:99-100)

A Telestial glory may be had by those who follow a prophet but who wants to go to all the trouble of mortality only to wind up with a Telestial environment. That is, essentially, what we have now. Frankly, I would like to work a little harder at being obedient to the Lord's will for a better ending to the story.

But here's the real issue: If you have received the Gospel, you follow Christ. If you have the testimony of Jesus, you follow Christ. If you have received the testimony of the prophets, you follow Christ. If you have received the Everlasting Covenant, you follow Christ.

If you follow anyone or anything else but Christ, the true Messiah, you are numbered with those who are not able to withstand a Zion environment and will not “be gathered with the saints.” The song our children should sing is “Follow the Savior and Him only do we serve.”

As to leading the church astray, we find ample evidence that the leaders of the church have been doing that since the days of Brigham Young's presidency. Let's begin with the two major church policies of the modern LDS church: Polygamy and blacks and the priesthood. Even though Brigham denied that he was a prophet, the church says he is all over LDS.org. If the inerrancy principle applies then why would the church publish rebuttals of Brigham's doctrine that polygamy was required for a Celestial glory and his policy of withholding the Priesthood from worthy black men? Can a "prophet" lead the church astray or not?

Further considering the polygamy question, the church contends that Joseph Smith introduced polygamy to the church. In fact, they insist on it even though both Joseph and Hyrum openly preached against it, calling polygamy nothing less than adultery. Repeated appeals appear in the Times and Seasons. Marriage is between one man and

one woman according to Joseph and Hyrum. Such teaching, however, stood in Brigham's way (and others) to openly having his harem. Brigham and his cohorts did their best to discredit Joseph by saying that he married multiple women in secret. Good try, Brigham, but the historical record says something different.

Joseph Smith was sealed with a priesthood ordinance to various women for purposes of connecting them with the Fathers in Heaven through him. Mormon pornographers have characterized these relationships in the seediest ways possible. I suppose they desire to have a prophet whose mind is as darkened as are theirs. The most publicized is the "transaction" which was viewed by Emma Smith in a barn. The pornographers would have us believe that Emma caught Joseph and Fanny Alger in compromising activities.

The facts are, however, that Emma watched from the door of the barn either as lookout or witness or both, as Levi Hancock repeated the words told to him by Joseph to seal Joseph and Fanny. This was not a marriage for time or for purposes of procreation. It was a holy priesthood ordinance. If you remember the angel's words to Joseph years earlier in his room that referred to the spirit of Elijah, the prophet: "And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming." (JS His 1:39)

We will delve into this subject in more detail in other posts but suffice it to say that we probably ought to know something about these "promises made to the fathers" and also, just who are these fathers? Joseph gives us more clues: "The doctrine or sealing power of Elijah is as follows:—If you have power to seal on earth and in heaven, then we should be wise. The first thing you do, go and seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, and yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory..." (TPJS Pg. 340)

Both "sons and daughters" are included in this "adoption" ordinance, to seal us forward to the Fathers in Heaven, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are at the head of the family of the righteous, and are already exalted. God is trying to make a family here of His righteous children. This is exactly what Joseph was doing in being sealed to both men and women. These were sealing ordinances performed by a worthy priesthood holder who possessed the proper authority and was himself sealed to the Fathers.

Most decidedly, these were not marriages in the traditional sense. There was no intention or authority to create families, etc. Hence, when Joseph openly preached against adultery, he was not hiding some perverse activities behind the backs of the saints. Modern temple sealing connects us backward. If we care not connected, or sealed, forward to the Fathers in Heaven, then it does no good to be sealed backward, to our progenitors.

Then along comes Brigham Young who, after Joseph's murder and his efforts to get himself elected church president, takes women who are already married to other men and not divorced, seals them to himself with his purported keys, and then proceeds to father children with them. This opened the floodgates of polygamy and the rest is history. A holy and pure priesthood ordinance was corrupted by the highest church leadership into a base and condemned practice. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" was and is an eternal principle and revelation from God that has been in place from the beginning.

However, Brigham apparently had not read the Bible for he said, "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. Others attain

unto a glory and may even be permitted to come into the presence of the Father and the Son; but they cannot reign as kings in glory, because they had blessings offered unto them, and they refused to accept them." (Journal of Discourses, Vol.11, p.268 - p.269, Brigham Young, August 19, 1866)

Okay, so according to Brigham, this is an eternal principle that somehow squares with the seventh commandment. Why then was it conveniently rescinded at the turn of the century? Must not have been very eternal, I guess. By any rational account, this is as egregious a misuse of power and authority as could be imagined. The lustful nature of man was unleashed under the color of religious principle by a man who assumed authority. Families were and are affected in ways we may never know, including my own. The results were horrendous and heartbreaking. Oh, yeah, church leaders can't lead the church astray. Shall I continue?

The subject of black men and the priesthood is also heartbreaking. From the church's own website we read the following:

"During the first two decades of the Church's existence, a few black men were ordained to the priesthood. One of these men, Elijah Abel, also participated in temple ceremonies in Kirtland, Ohio, and was later baptized as proxy for deceased relatives in Nauvoo, Illinois. There is no reliable evidence that any black men were denied the priesthood during Joseph Smith's lifetime..."

"In 1852, President Brigham Young publicly announced that men of black African descent could no longer be ordained to the priesthood..."
(<https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>)

Well then there must have been a revelation or something that stopped the practice of ordaining black men to the priesthood. At least that's what David O. McKay thought.

According to Leonard J. Arrington, former church historian, “A special committee of the Twelve appointed by President McKay in 1954 to study the issue concluded that there was no sound scriptural basis for the policy...” (David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism, Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, Pg 80.)

So it was a policy. A POLICY! Brigham Young started a policy to keep worthy black men from the blessings of the priesthood. Again, so much for church leaders not leading the church astray.

Why was it then that every church president between Brigham Young and Spencer W. Kimball blamed the Lord for the ban? “We need a revelation from the Lord to change this policy”, they all complained. Since when? The church changes policies all the time. I don’t remember anyone talking about a revelation when the 3-hour block was instituted. Policies come and go. But this policy was such a hot potato that no church president wanted the responsibility of changing it—until Spencer W. Kimball.

I can imagine the conversation that must have taken place between the Lord and ol’ Spencer in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple.

Lord: “Well Spence, how ya doin’? I see you’ve got the whole gang here.

SWK: “Yeah, well, we’re not so good. Ya know we’ve got this problem down here with blacks and the priesthood.”

Lord: “Yep, I’m aware. You guys keep blaming me for not changing it. What’s the deal with that anyway? It’s just a policy.”

SWK: “Well I know that but it’s really a big deal down here and it’s going to cause some problems with some members.”

Lord: “Are you serious? Look, I’m just about at the end of my rope for getting blamed for your lack of willingness to put your big-boy panties on. Now go out there and get rid of this stupid policy or I may have to do something you won’t like. Got me?”

SWK: “Uh, sure. Okay...”

Then these guys make it sound like some huge revelation for getting their hind ends reamed by the Lord. Okay, they say it was a revelation, eh? Read it to me. Oh, you can’t? Why not? When the Lord gives a revelation to His revelator, He gives the exact words the revelator is to say to the people. He writes it down so there won’t be any mistake about the wording and to publish it and sustain it as a revelation. That’s how it worked with Joseph Smith. And that’s how the Lord commanded it to be handled.

"And for this purpose I have commanded you to organize yourselves, even to print my words, the fulness of my scriptures, the revelations which I have given unto you, and which I shall, hereafter, from time to time give unto you—" (D&C 104:58)

So if it was a revelation, where is it? Read it to me.

Oh. So it was a PERSONAL revelation but we're going to represent it as if it was the Lord speaking to the church. I see. Apparently, the guys didn't want the folks to know what the Lord really said.

So for 125-odd years the brethren led the church astray and untold numbers of worthy black men were denied the priesthood. For a policy. An easily rescinded policy. All it took was a church president with some, how shall I put this, huevos. I could have said cojones but I was trying to be as delicate as possible. But the Lord is "no respecter of persons" and neither am I. Perhaps I should have said, backbone. All are appropriate.

How many other policies have been instituted by our church leaders that have led us astray? We could mention the emasculating, (there's that theme, again), correlation program which has removed just about everything that is unique about Mormonism. We are a much more popular church now. I guess that counts for something. NOT! What are the two major stumbling blocks to exaltation? Well, let's see, something about "...there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men..." (D&C 121:34-35) So we can be popular among the world and wealthy, or follow the Lord and live "upon the principles of righteousness..." and rely on the Lord for our popularity and riches.

I could go on for many more pages but I hope you get the point. We are led by men who say on the one hand, "...regardless of your circumstances, your personal history, or the strength of your testimony, there is room for you in this Church. Come, join with us!" (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Oct Gen Conf, 2013) But then kick you out of the church because the strength of your testimony in their lofty opinion, doesn't measure up.

Make no mistake, I love the church. There is no more wonderful place than a local Mormon ward. Bishops are, largely, kind, loving, and forgiving shepherds of their flocks and the ward members are typically also kind, loving, and forgiving. At least that's been my experience in Southern California and Arizona. But head up the line to Salt Lake and you run into the seat of unbridled power, six-figure incomes, and people who expect you to stand when they walk in the room. I'll stay in Snowflake, thanks. I can't really think of

too many ways we haven't been led astray since Joseph's murder. Of course, we won't mention the church leaders who were complicit in that tragic event.

If you think that a mob killed Joseph and Hyrum, I will remind you that there were only four people in that fateful room at Carthage. They were Joseph and Hyrum, Willard Richards, and John Taylor. It's a good bet that neither Joseph nor Hyrum shot himself. Willard was Brigham's "Barney Fife" lieutenant, but John Taylor was made the next church president. So you figure it out. For some, I know, this will be hard bark to chew. But I side with Patrick Henry:

"...in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth...Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

"...For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it." (Patrick Henry, Second Virginia Convention, 1775)

Consider this informative video: [Who Killed Joseph Smith?](#)

And, of course, at this point someone would bring up the tired old example of "my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same." (D&C 1:38) Now make no mistake, it's only "tired" because it is used incorrectly, and much too often. By the time Joseph had received this revelation, (interesting Joseph thought to actually write it down), he had already received 70-odd others. This was not his first.

In His rehearsal of the calamities and all that would surely come to pass by His words given to Joseph and Hyrum, Oliver, Sidney, etc., or as He calls them, "my servants," the Lord is confirming to us that even though Joseph and the others may have been given His words, they are still His words and whether or not you hear them by a thundering voice from on high or through these men, they are His words.

The Lord is not referring to any other words at this time, His or otherwise. The Lord makes our understanding very clear that these specific revelations constitute His words and no others. As Rock Waterman correctly exclaims: "He is not giving carte blanc to any of these servants to speak for him any old time they feel like pontificating. Not even Joseph Smith presumed to have that privilege or ability. How could anyone possibly read this and assume it gives some kind of blanket authorization to random Church officeholders in the future?"

I recommend Rock Waterman's entire post for a much more in-depth view of this particular issue. It Isn't The Same

For an LDS general authority to claim that this revelation provides authentication for all his words being the same as the Lord's, there is only one way to answer: Phooey. It just ain't so. Again, from Brother Waterman: "What about Russell Ballard's claim? "When the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve speak with a united voice, it is the voice of the Lord for that time." (October, 2014, General Conference, "Stay in the Boat and Hold On!")

Rock Waterman continues: "I don't know how quick God is to take offense when people try to put words in his mouth he never said, but if it was me I'd be annoyed with that one. In ancient times 'taking the Lord's name in vain' meant representing God as saying something or taking a position on something which He never intended. Does Ballard even realize how arrogantly offensive his declaration is? Vox Populi, Vox Dei is the exact opposite of how God operates. The word of God must actually come from God, not from a committee of men." We'll end the discussion of whether or not the brethren can lead the church astray with that. My apologies for any acute cognitive dissonance.

Let's cover the rest of the list rather quickly. One does not, in fact, "feel the Spirit." There is no scripture which uses that phrase. While many incorrectly connect revelation with "feeling the Spirit." Joseph explains that process specifically: "A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas..." (JPJS Pg. 151) What, then, is intelligence? "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth." (D&C 93:36)

When the Spirit of the Lord speaks to us, according to Joseph, we actually become one with the mind of God. "And He being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fullness of the glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one.

This is an experience of gaining fresh knowledge or paradigm-shifting perception. The feelings about the experience, while valuable and even intense, are not the revelation. The knowledge gained from God, is the revelation. While I love gratitude, knowledge from God is more valuable. Knowledge gained is more valuable than a feeling felt.

You may wonder why I bother to make the distinction. I guess I've just grown tired of all the "Oh, it was such a good meeting. I really felt the Spirit!" If you asked that person what new knowledge or understanding was received in the meeting, you'll find the emphasis squarely on the feelings the meeting produced rather than actual revelation. It's a counterfeit and I bristle at that sort of thing.

“As the Son partakes of the fullness of the Father through the Spirit, so the saints are, by the same Spirit, to be partakers of the same fullness, to enjoy the same glory; for as the Father and the Son are one, so, in like manner, the saints are to be one in them.” (Lectures on Faith 5:2-3)

Our emotions operate on a fairly basic level. Does God have emotions? Of course. The difference is that His emotions operate on a much higher, and more refined level. As we have learned, human emotions tend to revolve around the “natural man” which is an “enemy to God.” We suffer envy, jealousy, greed, fear, vengeance, selfishness, etc., and these emotions can easily become a hindrance.

Even offense can be used as a weapon against an honest comment. We are crafty beings, after all, and use all the tools Satan provides. Offense is the easy way out for the weak. The wisdom is simple for the rational and intelligent: If someone gives perceived offense, don't take it. Or is it better to give control of your emotions over to someone else? God provided an amygdala for survival and the prefrontal cortex for control. It is wisdom to know the difference and use both to our advantage. A race car going faster than anyone else but crashes, never wins a race.

Sometimes, when we feel gratitude and love for God when He speaks to us, even our righteous tears and longing can easily get in the way of fully understanding truths our Lord provides. Patience is the key. Plowing through intense knowledge and attempting to understand it all at once can be difficult and confusing. Expressions of gratitude are a response or after-effect. Intelligence, or the light of truth, is pro-active and is the precursor of accomplishment. Faith is its fuel and driving force. Gratitude for God's condescension in providing further light and knowledge is cathartic and is the Heavenly frosting on the cake of revelation.

Communicating with God can be difficult, at times, precisely because of our emotions. “The God of heaven, understanding most perfectly the constitution of human nature, and the weakness of men, knew what was necessary to be revealed, and what ideas must be planted in their minds in order that they might be enabled to exercise faith in Him unto eternal life.” (Lectures on Faith 4:2)

Receiving light and truth from God by becoming one with His mind, which is the Holy Spirit, becomes the most efficient way to communicate with God. He can plant

words, ideas, pictures, dreams, visions, etc., in our minds in such a way that we understand completely. Sometimes understanding takes effort and is not so easy, but always worth the struggle.

So when the phrase “feel the Spirit” is presented we must answer that the Spirit, or the mind of God is a communicative medium and not one of feelings. We may “feel” good while communicating with God, and, hopefully we do, but “feelings” are not the primary issue—feelings are a result of the communication effort. Truth is what we want and truth comes in the form of mind-to-mind (or spirit-to-Spirit) communication.

What about this scripture? “Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.” (D&C 8:2) Isn’t that evidence of the involvement of feelings with revelation? Remember, this scripture was given to Oliver Cowdrey in his effort to translate, and this is what the Lord told him first: “...even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive a knowledge...” (D&C 8:1) Oliver and most of the rest of the saints were country people. They were not scholars and academics or sophisticated in learning. They were simple people used to working with their hands. The word pictures of “faith,” “an honest heart,” and “believing,” are emotional ones that would calm Oliver’s anxieties and put him in the correct mindset to receive the revelations of God as he acted as a scribe in translating.

Having an honest and believing heart is a great advantage when becoming one with the mind of God. One so blessed will not be filled with envy or be puffed up with pride. The Lord knows how each of us feels and he will bless us with comfort as we approach Him with attempts to connect with the Spirit. However, light and truth come from the Mind of God to our minds. So the term “feel the Spirit” does not come close to describing the effects of receiving revelation. We simply find it a convenient way to express our gratitude when we connect with the Mind of God.

I’d rather say something like “connect or bond with the Spirit.” That’s the best I can do for now. Perhaps someone else can do better. Suffice it to say that when children are taught to “feel the Spirit” we are not teaching them to use their mental capacities to reach out to God. It is good to cry unto the Lord as we find happens in the Book of Mormon and a yearning for truth and light is effective in attracting the Lord’s attention. However, children would be helped more, I think, if we focused on connecting with the Mind of God than simply having good feelings. The artificial conditioning we are implanting is not particularly profitable. It teaches them that feelings are enough.

The Adversary is very adept at manipulating our feelings as we have seen. If we focus on feelings rather than light and truth we could easily become focused more on ourselves than the Lord. Joseph said this:

“The work in which we are unitedly engaged is one of no ordinary kind. The enemies we have to contend against are subtle and well skilled in maneuvering; it behooves us to be on the alert to concentrate our energies, and that the best feelings should exist in our midst; and then, by the help of the Almighty, we shall go on from victory to victory, and from conquest to conquest; our evil passions will be subdued, our prejudices depart; we shall find no room in our bosoms for hatred; vice will hide its deformed head, and we shall stand approved in the sight of Heaven, and be acknowledged the sons of God.

“Let us realize that we are not to live to ourselves, but to God; by so doing the greatest blessings will rest upon us both in time and in eternity.” (TPJS Pg 179)

“All’s well in Zion” is a phrase used to calm anxious minds who may be uneasy about a variety of issues in the world. It, again, is an emotional stimulus designed to set aside the realities of the day. As we have pointed out, church leaders have led us astray and continue to do so. Hence the phrase “All’s well in Zion” redirects our attention away from truth.

The Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that He is coming, but only after He gathers Zion. When we use the phrase “All’s well in Zion” we use the term Zion to mean us, here, today. We are decidedly not Zion. Even though we have a bank with that name and also a department store, we are not Zion. So all, cannot be well in Zion. Zion does not yet exist. We are not one, or equal, there remain poor among us, there is contention and disputation, and, we do not deal justly one with another. We have a long way to go before the Lord can establish Zion among this people.

Because we do not teach that the Lord must gather Zion from a people who are prepared to live in a Zion environment, few pay the issue any attention. Another way the brethren lead us astray. When was the last time you heard a general conference talk discuss becoming prepared to be individually gathered, by the Lord, to Zion? Because the gathering is not an institutional one, the church has little interest in promoting it.

But saying the phrase, triggers emotional conditioning and makes those so conditioned feel lovely as they are led astray, unprepared.

What is meant by “the church is true?” Does it mean that the foundations of all the buildings are square? Or that the walls are plumb? Since the term “The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints” is simply a trade mark owned by Intellectual Reserve, Inc., which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are we discussing the paperwork making legal that trade mark?

Or, are we suggesting that the current LDS organization which is listed in the corporate documents of the Corporation of the President..., as a religious society, is the current iteration of the church Joseph Smith organized at the direction of the Lord on April 6, 1830? If that is the case, then most certainly the church, (or more accurately, the religious society known as the LDS church), is true enough. However, if you ask how much the current organization resembles the church Joseph organized in 1830 and beyond, then the answer is, not much. From the structure of the organization to what is taught and how it is administered, you would find little in common. Therefore, you might be more accurate in saying that the church is surviving, barely.

For instance, what were the requirements for baptism in 1830? “And again, by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism—All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church.” (D&C 20:37)

Today, on the other hand, one must comply with a catechism of questions regarding tithing, abstinence from certain food items, receipt of required missionary lessons, and most hideous of all, an oath must be taken that the current church president, for whom there is not the smallest shred of qualifying evidence, is a true prophet of God.

The obvious truth is that he is simply sustained with that title by the members. An organization has every legal right to provide titles to its leadership. However, only God can call a man out of society to be His prophet. And when He does, He always, unmistakably, announces that He has. There has been no such announcement since Joseph Smith.

Here are two additional beauties in the baptismal interview: “What does it mean to you to repent? Do you feel that you have repented of your past transgressions?”

Surely salient questions. But then:

“Have you ever committed a serious crime? If so, are you now on probation or parole? Have you ever participated in an abortion? A homosexual relationship?”

If you answer the first questions then what is the purpose of the second questions? If you’ve repented of your sins, which may include a serious crime, then you’ve repented and the sin should not be considered. An abortion may or may not be classified as a sin. If it was frivolous and you’ve repented of it, then you’re done. Since there are other questions about chastity and sexual relationships outside of marriage between a man and woman, why have this question also?

How can this be? This is a complete rewrite of scripture and another example of being led astray by unrighteous dominion. It is about control and legal liability.

But, again, the emotional trigger which makes us all feel good is simply to say, “the church is true” and go on your way with a smile on your face and a song in your heart. However much the truth differs from the trigger. Why don't we, instead, ask, "Has the church changed for the better?" If we could have an honest, objective discussion on that plane, we might get somewhere. I doubt the brethren would ever engage in such a discussion for fear someone might bring up King Benjamin and his unwillingness to live on the largess of the people. Of course King Ben didn't have to run a multi-national, multi-billion dollar corporation so I guess we ought to take that into consideration. (If you hadn't guessed, that was facetious.)

What covenants, if any, are renewed by taking the Sacrament every Sunday? The one thing baptism and the Sacrament have in common is the principle of taking the name of Jesus Christ upon those who participate. That is important. However, the Sacrament goes into much more detail.

We eat the bread in remembrance of the body of Christ. We commit to remember His tortured body and death and then resurrection as a willing sacrifice in our behalf and the conquering of death such that we will also be resurrected. This is an immense gift we could never have accomplished for ourselves but that is given by Him as an expression of His love for us. We witness unto Heavenly Father that we will always remember the Savior and keep his commandments in order that we may always have His Spirit with us. The consequences of this commitment is Salvation. This is a gift we also could never have accomplished for ourselves but this one requires something of us.

The wine (or water in the modern LDS church) represents the Savior’s blood which He shed, specifically, not by accident, for us, in order that we may witness unto the Father, as we remember Christ’s shed blood, that we will always remember the Savior and, as we do, have His Spirit attend us.

These are significant and unique to the Sacrament ordinance. They are similar to baptism promises but are not the same. If anything, we renew our Sacramental covenants each week, not our baptismal covenants. But, again, because baptism has been changed to a once-in-a-lifetime event for most, developing a conditional trigger based on baptism brings emotional feelings to the fore and causes us to feel gratitude to the church for baptizing us. All tends to revolve around the church. And don't forget to pay your tithing—the brethren need their paychecks.

In the early days, baptism was repeated when desired. Rebaptism was performed sometimes prior to going to the temple for the first time or when someone was very sick. And the sacrament used to be performed in homes and for special family occasions. Today getting rebaptized or having the Sacrament at home can get you excommunicated. The more centralized power becomes, the less we are allowed by that power to govern ourselves. I can't imagine that Joseph, or the Lord, is pleased.

I actually had a Gospel Doctrine teacher, during a lesson on church history, say the following: “Can you imagine if they let us have the Sacrament at home? Why would you ever come to church?” I love meeting with the members of my ward. They are kind and gracious people. They would not all fit in my home. I love to participate in the Sacrament with them. The Spirit attends such outpourings of gratitude and worship and will answer prayers and provide light and truth during those minutes of spiritual adoration. For that I must gather with others, and I look forward to it.

That Gospel Doctrine teacher was so wrapped up in the emotion of “following the prophet” that he couldn't see the simple answer. Having the Sacrament at home when the Spirit dictates does not, in any way, steer anyone away from attending church. It was just an ignorant, controlling, emotionally charged, statement meant to ratify a policy fueled by unrighteous dominion.

There are many more examples of the way we have been emotionally conditioned to unconsciously respond. It is necessary and warranted to be vigilant and constantly on guard for those who would plant unconscious seeds for later harvest to control our behavior to their advantage. The Adversary uses every tool he can to persuade us from following the Lord, and be offended at every turn. If he can use our emotional stirrings to his benefit, he will. Be warned and vigilant.

We have not touched on the “cult of personality” or the notion of “institutional awe” with regard to the celebrity we have afforded the general authorities of the church. These are subjects which could occupy another entire post, and might, on another occasion. For now we must simply concentrate on two things. The first is preparation. The Lord will gather those who are willing to sacrifice everything to enter Zion and eschew "the things of this world" and "the honors of men." If we commit to follow the

Lord and serve Him only, and plead with him to teach us what, exactly we must sacrifice, He will respond with knowledge and truth.

That knowledge and truth may be difficult and require leaving behind notions we have held dear. Don't let anyone ring a bell to make you respond as they would like. As the Lamanites of old, it is in our modern-day interest to leave behind the incorrect "traditions of our fathers." This is only necessary if we expect or, at least, desire, to be a Zion-worthy people.

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