

To All Covenant Brothers and Sisters:

INTRODUCTION

In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told to let one person speak at a time and “let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken, that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege.” (LE D&C 88:122). I respectfully ask that you allow me the privilege of sharing a few thoughts regarding recent developments in our assignment to produce a *Guide and Standard*.

I believe that every one of us desires that which is right to the best of our understanding. We’ve struggled together with what to put in the *Guide and Standard* (G&S), have not reached consensus, and are still grappling with the matter. Voices still feeling unheard or disregarded.

Most disagreement centers upon *what* should or should not be included as content, as well as the *language* used to express that content. Most of these matters don’t actually require us to choose between right and wrong, or truth and error. The essence of the content is to be His words, but the reality is that most of our disagreements are rooted in mere *personal preferences* regarding *which of His words* to use.

This paper is *not* about persuading anyone regarding *what* should be included. I suggest only that we consider changing our paradigm on *voluntary flexibility*, rather than holding firm to an opinion or preference because we think our eternal salvation depends upon showing God our willingness to defend the position we believe He wants us to defend. We ought to consider applying the following words shared by Denver:

“I would rather submit to the decision of the group than insist that my view be followed. For me, harmony between brethren is more important than getting what I think best to be followed.”

I believe this to be sound counsel on matters not violating eternal laws, not because of who said it, but because it is true. Is this right here perhaps a display of what is necessary for individuals to become of one heart? I believe in part this is so. We’ve all experienced having opinion and perspectives we once held firm to, change with the reception of greater understanding. The truth is, we are all capable of wrongly defending a position today that we may wish to repent of later. We ought to be careful about those matters that we determine to be so important that we will symbolically pick up our sword and go to battle against our fellow brothers and sisters to defend.

WHY I AM SPEAKING UP NOW

Continued dispute over whether we have already accomplished the work continues to create discord. A request was made for more light to be bestowed upon us to complete this work (totheremnant.com). That light is *already found in His word*. We’ve neglected to harvest what’s before us. I intend to use His word to share what I believe is a solution to our discord.

WE HAVE FAILED TO START RIGHT

Joseph taught in the King Follett Discourse, “If we start right it is very easy for us to go right all the time. But if we start wrong, we may go wrong, and it will be a hard matter to get right.” While in the

original statement Joseph was attempting to draw the minds of the saints to reflect upon the necessity of a correct understanding of God from the beginning, the principle conveyed is universally correct and can be applied to our current situation. We want to be sure we are not doing *anything* in error – pertaining to the methods used in our attempt to achieve mutual agreement – that may inadvertently establish us upon incorrect principles or eternal laws, which could set us on a course that is completely opposite of the one we are trying to achieve. We must be sure that we *start* right. For a noble end (mutual agreement) does not justify employing the wrong means.

AGENCY MUST NOT EVER BE VIOLATED

The scriptures show us that agency was given to man by God in the beginning (Moses 7:32; D&C 29:36), and “unless a person is free to choose for themselves, then there is no existence. If you remove the right to choose, it is not only agency that is obliterated, but it is existence itself.” (DS blog, *Accuser of the Brethren*, Aug. 16, 2010) Note that the agency to choose is for *oneself*, and not for those around you. This becomes important later in the paper.

We see God’s absolute fidelity to the law of agency, even over the holy aspirations and conditions of peace, unity, and mutual agreement. Consider the Council of the Gods and the ensuing war in Heaven that resulted when Lucifer declared he could no longer support a plan which required a Savior to be sacrificed in order to atone for the sins of the people. He desired to instigate progression without the challenges and sacrifices resulting from agency. But so essential is agency for progression and the existence of all beings, that *the slightest compromise* to this law cannot *ever* be broached by God. Those seeking to be like Him must also always remember and practice this above all else, as it is the basis of ever connecting to Him and becoming like him. (D&C 121: 34-46).

If we are truly seeking to know God, be gathered to Zion, dwell in peace and equality, and receive the Power of Heaven, we must take extraordinary care that we do not cross a line that offends the agency of any one among us, even when we are trying to do something for the right reason. The Great Dragon now seeks to devour us; if we start wrong, we give him an advantage in his many machinations to destroy us. *I will attempt to show how I believe agency is actually jeopardized in the current proposal because it inadvertently destroys equality as defined by God in scripture.*

TURN OUR MINDS FIRST TOWARD OUR COVENANT

I laud Adrian Larsen’s and Jeff Savage’s efforts to try to move this work forward, They, like all of us, want a mutually agreed upon document that satisfies what the Lord has requested of us. The day their proposal was posted on *scriptures.info*, I signed up immediately. Like most, I desire to be a team player, and wanted to roll up my sleeves in helping this succeed.

Though I had a few concerns when I read the proposal, like many of you, my desires to be a peacemaker and exhibit love and cooperation induced me to keep my observations private. Then I pulled out the covenant to look at it again and, to my surprise, realized that perhaps I was missing the point of what I just covenanted to do.

When we entered the covenant, we specifically covenanted:

“2. Do you have faith in these things and *receive the scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern you in your daily walk in life, to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant and to use the scriptures to correct yourselves and to guide your words, thoughts and deeds?*

“3. Do you agree *to assist all others who covenant to likewise accept this standard to govern their lives to keep the Lord’s will...*”

We have an obligation to not only conduct our own lives according to the standard established in scripture, but to assist one another to reach that standard as well, through persuasion, but without compulsion. Thus, *we have promised God we will gauge the correctness of our individual and collective efforts and desires by what He has already given us in the scriptures, particularly by the things found within the Book of Mormon.*

No people has ever risen up to actually *do* what it teaches. However, we just promised the Lord that *we would be the people* who finally took what it teaches seriously: To say, think, and do *as it literally teaches*. This may be more difficult than we realize because we may have taken or currently hold positions, which cannot be supported when we closely examine what the book teaches us. It requires us to set aside our pride at times, confront the root beliefs of our thinking and doing, and carefully scrutinize whether our positions are actually supported by the teachings found in the book. If we are found to be in error, rather than defend and justify ourselves, we will all need to show God our humility and meekness and allow ourselves to be corrected by His word. I’m personally anticipating needing to do this a lot.

To keep our covenant, we must reflect upon the process now being proposed and make sure that it is *actually* meeting the standard we covenanted to help each other reach. That standard should, at a minimum, conform to the teachings of the Book of Mormon. It is the test whereby the Lord will see if we are ready and worthy to be given more of His word in Zion. We are *not* in Zion yet and do not have any higher principles or laws whereby to determine matters in our current situation. Personal conjecture of what may be a law in the future is *not* the standard we are currently given to determine our course. It was the Book of Mormon that was *specifically* given to prepare a people – if willing to abide its precepts – to be able to establish Zion.

When we ignore what it teaches and come up with our own theories, then we risk looking beyond the mark. Therefore, we must examine everything we do in our effort to accomplish the task to see if it is being done in accordance with the Book of Mormon’s teachings. Here are two observations about the new proposal that we may want to reconsider in light of such an examination.

MY FIRST OBSERVATION

The proposal laid out a very logical and well-articulated position that the Answer’s use of the term “adopted by mutual agreement” meant that this could *not* mean “majority,” “unanimity,” or “common consent.” Diagrams were used to explain the defects of majority rule and unanimity and the superiority of what the authors perceived mutual agreement to look like.

It was a convincing presentation, but close scrutiny revealed some concerns for me. The teachings of the Book of Mormon regarding “majority rule” were ignored and contradicted in order to get the

reader to reach the conclusion that the proposal was our best and only option to fulfill our required assignment.

Every negative aspect of majority consensus was laid out as if this approach to governing a people originated through an evil entity. The post made it appear as a matter of fact that such an approach to governing emerges from people who care for nothing but numbers and who have no real substance to their position. Repression was stated to be the “inevitable result.” People in the majority were accused of abusing the minority, who were portrayed as victims. Then this leading statement concerning majority rule was made: “*Though this is the world’s way, it is not the Lord’s.*”

Several paragraphs later, another statement about majority rule was made: “If you look at the illustrations again, you’ll see that’s the *lowest* level, representing *gentile competitiveness and repression of the minority*. It is the *expected result* obtained among a people whose hearts are not right.” (Emphasis added)

These statements imply the following about governing by the voice of the majority:

1. It is evil in its intent.
2. It does *not* come from the Lord.
3. He won’t work through that means.
4. *Only* Babylon (the world) conducts its affairs this way.
5. It is equated with gentile competitiveness, as if the order of governing was contrived by the gentiles for an opportunity to guarantee a repression of any found in the minority.
6. Only people with impure hearts would really ever resort to such a method.

These statements caused me real consternation in light of recorded scripture. While it is true that as a society degrades into wickedness, as America clearly now has, such offenses do occur; but this is because we have polluted the system bequeathed to us. In reality, the Book of Mormon extols the practice of ruling by the majority, and the above criticisms align more fully to the fruits experienced in allowing the minority voice to make controlling decisions, according to the Book of Mormon.

I do not think this disparagement of what is in scripture was intentional, particularly when we live in a world that has degenerated to reflect many of the points made, and we see these defects around us daily. But if we are going to try to determine the merits of the method by which we will proceed as a people of God, we must take care that we inform ourselves with what the Lord has *actually taught* concerning the matter at hand, so that we judge correctly.

THE BOOK OF MORMON ORIGIN OF MAJORITY RULE

The Book of Mormon shows us that it was a righteous king who transitioned his people from being governed by kings, where final decision making authority rests in the hands of one individual, into using the voice of the people through a majority rule vote (Mosiah 29). Thus, first and foremost, contrary to what was stated in the new proposal, majority rule by the people *was inspired by God and not the world*. Let yourself absorb that for a moment, before being critical of the method. Second, it was given by God through a man who was the literal seed of Lehi and was taught to the people who were a remnant of Jacob. Thus, in the Book of Mormon, it is *not* a concept originating with the gentiles at all.

Mosiah teaches his people *why* it is so critical that they switch from kings to governing by a majority rule, which he calls “the voice of the people”: it “**will make for the peace of this people.**” (v. 10, 40) This sounds like what we are seeking to achieve.

How does something that doesn’t demand everyone choose the same way end up establishing peace? The reason it achieves peace is because it establishes *equality* among the people. That may sound counter-intuitive to some because we don’t usually think equality means you have a result wherein everyone didn’t get as they wanted, or arrive at the same decision. But God’s word clearly states that Mosiah transitioned the people into this system so that “**inequality should be no more,**” so that *every* individual would be able to enjoy their rights and privileges to the *same degree* and be accountable for their own decisions, *thus preserving agency*. (v. 32, 38) They did not see this system as repressive or abusive, and we should be careful not to declare it such either, particularly when practiced by people seeking to be righteous. This opportunity to be governed by the voice of the people (majority rule) caused the seed of Lehi to *rejoice exceedingly* because of the liberty it gave them. (v. 39) They rejoiced because they had prior experience that gave them the perspective to understand what a great gift they were actually being given, rather than viewing it as oppression.

You see, perspective depends upon how you decide to allow your heart and mind to be informed by the facts. You can be “Lance from Tarwater,” or you can be “James from Hope” when you look at the forest (Parable 7). Majority rule can be viewed by how it *can* degenerate under a wicked people, or it can be looked at as a wondrous blessing, particularly for the righteous. If one studies the Book of Mormon to inform their perspective, then they are given the light to see that such a system is actually offered as a great gift from God, that grants unto men and women their equality. And if lived by people who determine by mutual agreement to abide by the system, then great *peace* can exist, while affording man complete agency. Anyone that can prove to abide in peace under such a system, just may prove worthy to be invited to participate in a future higher system of dwelling.

According to Mosiah, if the laws by which a people are living are based *in truth*, such as those that descended from their righteous fathers at that time “which were correct,” then the system works (v. 25). America has failed in part because we altered the correct principles that were given by our founding fathers in the Constitution, and we lost an important element required to allow this process to continue to work properly for us. But we are a separate people now established, and we have covenanted to live according to the laws found within the word of God, “which are correct.” Therefore, we, like Mosiah’s people, have the necessary truth and correct laws whereby we, too, can reap the benefits of such a system. In fact, they were partly included for just such a day as this.

Living by the voice of the people means that decisions are made by casting votes. The majority vote decides the matter. The new proposal stated this to be a clearly *inferior* method of conducting affairs, as it was claimed to victimize the minority at the hands of an unprincipled majority. The case was made that in such a system, abuse by the majority is the rule, rather than the exception. This appealed to our sense of compassion and empathy. How could any of us – animated by love – desire such a system to be had among us as we seek for Zion? Obviously we would conclude, through what was presented in the proposal, that majority rule has to be the least valued of all the options we could employ. *Yet king Mosiah taught quite the opposite.* He extolled the virtues and decency of the majority and their ability to come to correct conclusions.

“Now it is *not* common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right;” (v. 26). Though America *has* descended to a point where we have crossed such a threshold, *this is not the norm for us, as people who have given our lives over to God in a covenant.*

“...but it *is* common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right;” (v. 26). While the proposal focuses on degenerate society that often uses a majority to abuse the minority, if we take the Book of Mormon as our guide to inform us, the majority of the people attempting to obey God *will* choose right and it is just a small minority that would choose that which is incorrect.

In pointing this out, I want to make it very clear that if you have been among those that have felt they are in the minority on this G&S voting issue, this is not being stated to accuse you of choosing incorrectly, or to cast a bad light upon you or your current opinions. As I said previously, I believe that within the G&S issue, we have been dealing with *opinions and preferences*, and *not* matters of morality where there is a clear right or wrong. My only application here is that the opinion or perspective happened to be held *by fewer of the group*, and therefore, in order to make a decision and move forward as a group – knowing it is unrighteous dominion and a violation of agency to force a person to have the same opinion as others – the opinion held by the few would have to give sway to the larger body as part of a previously agreed upon process of governing ourselves by majority. That states nothing about the morality of the one who held the minority view, or the accuracy of their view. I am only trying to show that the Book of Mormon teaches us that using a majority rule method of governing is not to be feared or avoided because the majority are wicked and waiting to tear to pieces the minority.

Mosiah exhorts, “...therefore, this shall ye observe and make it your law – to do your business by the voice of the people.” (v. 26)

Mosiah then tells us to do these things in the fear of the Lord. (v. 30) Proverbs 8:13 teaches us that it is wisdom to have “fear of the Lord,” which is to hate evil, pride and arrogance. If each one of us will live according to our covenant, turning from evil, shedding our pride, and replacing arrogance with meekness and humility, then functioning under such a system will bring the equality, peace and rejoicing that Mosiah describes as a byproduct of people abiding this law, even if you occasionally end up on the minority end of a vote! That is because you will rejoice to live with your brothers and sisters in a manner in which you know you are all on equal footing, not being forced to choose or be the same, and you can have mutual love, trust and respect for the process and the terms you have voluntarily agreed to live under.

You see, if we can be like Mosiah’s people, and we can “mutually agree” that this *is* the method we desire to be governed by until the Lord restores righteous kingship to this land, then our mutual agreement to accept, appreciate and respect the process as a blessing from the Lord, will allow us, like them, to actually reside in peace. If people know the principle is afforded them by God to advance their liberty, agency, equality, and peace, *there need not be the bitter fruits conveyed in the blog post.* We can choose our response when we don’t get our preferred outcome. A people who are attempting to be right with God and desiring their hearts to become pure should have no problem abiding under the conditions of “the voice of the people.” Those who end up in the minority position on occasion, if they appreciate the gift of equality God has given to *everyone* through this method, will not resent the results, but respect them. They will set aside their pride upon having lost on an issue, just as Pacumeni did when he lost. He chose to respect the process. When he lost, he did not

rebel. He valued and honored the process as legitimate and not oppressive, and he united himself with the voice of the people after his loss, not considering himself to be a victim of other people's agency, but appreciative of a system which respects all men's agency. (Helaman 1:6) Of course, a person can also choose to respond as the King-men, too. And create dissention when their opinion is not upheld. These stories and examples are given to teach us, not to be ignored.

We have made a covenant with God to finally "do" as the Book of Mormon teaches. Even though we've had it all our lives, we still haven't proven we *understand* its teachings, nor *apply* them as required. Perhaps this is our first test as a covenant people: to see if we will set aside our personal prejudices upon such topics as this and really honor God's word as we said we would. The ideas and theories now being proposed to attain mutual agreement, whether intentional or unintentional, relied upon belittling a primary teaching in the Book of Mormon. If we promote something contrary to what the Book of Mormon teaches, we must be confident that God is not offended in any way from that deviation to His word. I do not have that confidence in what has been proposed.

If the Lord had defined what He meant by "adopted by mutual agreement" within His word, then we could take confidence in whatever that was. But to my knowledge, I don't see the words "mutual agreement" used in the scriptures anywhere other than the Answer. The Lord did not define it for us. It is *unclear* through His word just *how* He intended that terminology. Without His revealed word on the matter, when we create models to define "adopting by mutual agreement" to mean something that cannot be clearly found in scripture, and is in fact contrary to what we have at our disposal, we are only making our best human guess and conjecture and we risk "starting wrong."

The Book of Mormon is the *one* record I know with certainty contains specific instructions for anyone dwelling upon this continent who wants to claim His blessings. We ought follow it precisely.

MY SECOND OBSERVATION

A diagram was exhibited showing adoption by mutual agreement to consist of *every* person in the covenant agreeing with *every* other person in the covenant. It was ultimately conveyed that in applying this definition throughout the process of developing a new *Guide and Standard*, a system of voting would be required wherein *one opposing vote* against the inclusion of any single principle could be used to determine the final results. If 100% agreement among every single voter was *not* achieved after two rounds of voting and editing, then due to the fact that just *one person* did *not* agree, that element would be removed from the document.

Additionally, in presenting their definition of "adopted by mutual agreement," several statements were made that I had difficulty accepting as accurate:

1. With this new definition of mutual agreement "nobody is coerced or marginalized."
2. There is "no compromise by anybody."
3. It was also stated, "This is how we become of one heart."
4. We were again told that the majority rule method was the *lowest* method to approach things, while their explanation of "mutual agreement" was the *highest* method.
5. A final criticism was levied against the "majority" method with a statement declaring that the August 5th majority vote was a failure because, "Even this low level of buy-in was only achieved by compromise, surrender, and in a few cases, apathy."

I admit, this proposed system sounds very loving, very kind, and initially appears to be a workable solution to our dilemma and able to satisfy everyone. Hallelujah! It seems as if those of the minority view, that previously felt marginalized, can finally feel they have equality and influence. It seems perfectly well to move forward in this manner. Yet, within the process and desired outcome are flaws that I hope you will seriously consider before we adopt this course.

First, the proposed approach presents becoming of one mind under the guise of becoming of one heart. They encourage *forcing a mental agreement* through *submitting to one person's perspective*, and declare such a course will mold our hearts as one. *"My experience with others leads me to conclude that if we can have one heart first, eventually we can likewise come to have one mind. But if we insist on having one mind at the outset, we may never obtain one heart together."* (DS quoted in the *Official Announcement* of the scriptures project) I view the proposal as insisting on one mind first, though appearing to advocate being of one heart.

Being of one heart is achieved through a process of "becoming," as each individual under covenant seeks a personal relationship with Christ and turns their focus toward doing, saying, and thinking as He has asked of His followers as detailed particularly in His written word. "...the path to becoming God's people...is to be found *in living the commandments of Christ* among brother and sisters who grow to have one heart and one mind." (DS blog, *Covenant People*, July 21, 2017) As individuals turn the desires of their hearts to focus on Christ and keeping His commandments, they become filled with a greater portion of His light and intelligence until all of their hearts have become woven together as one and they find their minds *eventually* animated fully by the same mind and will of God. It is His written word that initially provides the foundation and ability to become of one heart.

It takes time and persistent and consistent application of the Lord's instructions in our daily walk to become of one heart and mind. It is not achieved through employing a method of conducting our affairs which results in an end that appears to produce 100% agreement ---falsely convincing us we made the grade--- but in reality compromises agency and equality and can be identified as false through close scriptural examination.

The new proposal requires me to focus my attention on attempting to align my thoughts according to what every single person may be thinking and feeling, and adjusting to accommodate everyone, rather than getting us all to look upward toward Christ as He helps bring us into alignment with Him, inspiring us to *voluntarily* accommodate the perspectives of others on a case by case situation, when no eternal laws are being violated. The proposed model prioritizes and emphasizes seeking for 100% agreement as the highest priority by allowing any *one* person among us to determine the course of the entire group and for everyone to feel like they now share the same heart. I agree that if there is ever a topic wherein an eternal principle or law is not in question, then we can do our best to try and give up our position to allow unity and peace. This is using your *own agency* to exhibit kindness and love, and we need more of it in creating the G&S for certain! But that is to be done by an individual *deciding* they want to manifest that love and cooperation toward their brothers and sisters because of their love, not by creating a method of conducting our affairs where we topple equality by extending control into the hands of *any one* among us.

POWER GIVEN TO ONE IS NOT THE HIGHEST METHOD

One of the additional problems with putting this type of power into any individual is we have yet to rise up. We have a covenant, but we haven't proven that we'll keep it, and we do not have Zion. We were clearly told in Boise that although anyone is welcome to enter into the covenant, there is further purging yet to be done. There are yet tares among us, people who are quarrelsome and proud, and further pruning will be needed, as the lofty branches must be cut off so they do not overcome the roots. We were also told in the *Answer* that just *one* individual can stir up contentions and divisions and destroy the peace of the people. Now, just weeks after this warning, we are asked to be persuaded to allow "final decision making authority" to be placed into the hands of one person (it could be any one among us) because we are led to believe that the goal of 100% mutual agreement means 100% have to agree upon the exact same ideas or the principle is removed. We are told this is actually the *highest method* of approaching this assignment.

Again, the scriptural record, when examined, shows why the reasoning behind this is flawed.

The Council of Gods consisted of beings with far more advanced understanding of the highest orders of celestial law than are we. The methods employed there reflect the highest methods we know of and stay within eternal law. *We should ask ourselves if the proposal we are now considering using would have been allowed there.* If the answer is no, then that should convince us to stop walking down this path. If the method of attaining mutual agreement proposed to us had been carried out in the heavenly council, you and I would find ourselves captive to the devil at this very moment. No agency would exist because Lucifer would have refused to accept the principle of agency. According to our current proposal, the gods could not have moved forward in the plan *because one individual among them disagreed, and they would be required to concede to the views of the one.* Therefore, agency would have had to give, and we would have ceased to exist. The gods did not take the position that 100% mutual agreement was the end-all goal, even if it is an ideal, because contriving a method wherein you ensure 100%, robs people of their agency to choose for themselves. The gods did not accept a decision making standard where *one* among them could dominate and control the direction of the council through veto power that compelled everyone else to accept his views. Lucifer would have loved the ability to control 100% of the entire group of gods by his mere opposition to them. That should make us wonder if perhaps we are being tested to see if we can recognize when infringement upon agency is rearing its head among us. *Good intent does not mean that we are on the road we should travel.* It's easy to fall into the trap of violating agency without even realizing you've done it. No one need suppose that I'm accusing anyone of being like Lucifer. The point is, none of us is above taking an individual position that could lead the entire group off course. It is not wisdom to place such power into one individual. In fact, it's so easy to go wrong in this, that it's the disposition and nature of almost all men, when they get a little authority as they suppose, to exercise unrighteous dominion and compulsion upon the souls of others.

The proposal, as written, literally places veto power into every single person's hand. Veto power is the power to control outcome and prohibit or manipulate according to personal desires. It gives power to destroy. It's the strongman model gone awry. It's the power to dictate despite the agency of others having been manifest through proper methods of persuasion and logic. One man's vote carrying weight above everyone else's, making null and void the power of everyone's united personal votes. While on the surface it sounds like a brilliant plan to grant everyone equality because they all have the power to say they don't want a principle included that bothers them, it

actually puts everyone on *unequal* footing. No longer does 1 person = 1 vote. But potentially 1 person = 100% power. Power is given to any person among us to exercise power over every other person. It may shock you, but when someone has complete power over others, we call him a KING!

We typically think of being subject to a king as being ruled from the top-down. It escapes us that the reality is we can create a king from the bottom-up. We have been explicitly told that we are to have no kings on this land. Not only does the Book of Mormon confirm this, but in the Zion talk we were warned, "Those who establish Zion must reject even the *idea* of a king." This means top-down, bottom-up, inside-out or upside-down. If the resulting power given to any person allows them to have controlling power and the final say in any matter, THAT IS A KING. Protecting against this monopoly of power is the reason that King Mosiah told us to do our business by majority rule – the voice of the people. It is the way the Lord gave us to protect against any encroachment upon our agency by *any one person* and to *establish equality among us by requiring any individual to persuade the majority of the people before they can enact or undo anything*. In order for the current proposal to conform to scripture and gain my acceptance, it would need to restore equality through majority vote.

ANOTHER FINAL CLARIFICATION

Many individuals who have previously been on the minority end of the voting have clearly stated that they could *never* concede to the majority concerning their views, as they could never appease someone if it meant they were betraying what they believed was the truth. I agree that when it comes to certain laws being held inviolate, we must take such a stand. [Which is precisely why I'm speaking up now. Agency, equality, and our covenant to obey the Book of Mormon are at risk.]

But ironically, to appease the few who hold this perception and are unable to compromise opinion for the sake of the body, and in order to gain their willingness to continue working together in this effort, we have created a proposed method which *inverts the model* they previously opposed. This new proposal requires every single person in the covenant to relinquish their personal truths or views, and surrender them to accommodate even just one person among the entire body. The irony is the majority are now being asked to do by the minority, precisely what those in the previous voting minority declared they would never *be willing to do for the majority*.

A person may question, "Well, weren't you, in fact, asking the minority to have to submit to the majority? How is that fair either?" The difference in the two scenarios is that *the majority model is supported in scripture and is a concept originating from God*. This is *because* it actually affords every single person the right to make a determination for themselves as to *how* they will vote (agency), gives them an *equal right* to vote (equality), allows their vote to *carry the same weight* as every other vote (equality), and allows every single person the same right to use their power of persuasion to convince others that their perspective is correct (equality). Yes, in the end, with majority rule, some small group of people does not end up with what they had hoped for, but they had *equal* access to the process, *equal* power in their vote, and the right to use their agency in making a choice and expressing their view; And if they, of their own free will, mutually agree to enter into such a system of governing, they've utilized their agency in a way that prevents it from being infringed upon by a majority that disagrees with them, as they've already mutually agreed to concede a minority position. I personally trust God when He declares that this *does establish equality*. If you promote the inverse of His model, you promote the opposite principles.

Finally, in using majority rule as a means of making decisions among us: there is no punishment, exclusion or castigation associated with being in the minority. It is never expected that everyone is going to agree on every issue, on every occasion, and people ought to feel safe about voting their conscience. God notices how we vote and we can take comfort in that. Among covenant people trying to become of one heart, the size of the divide and the number of disagreements *will* lessen over time. Confidence and trust in one another will increase as we work together and seek greater understanding. No one should criticize someone for taking a minority view, nor should those taking a minority position feel guilt, anger or resentment for others not seeing something the same way.

WE HAVE HIT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN THIS MOVEMENT

And it's not about *what* is going to be *in* the *Guide and Standard*. It's about *how* we are going to function moving forward whenever the Lord asks us to make decisions that have to be made by the voice of the entire body of covenant holders. If we do not stop now, and try to first resolve *how* we will "start," then we will continually open ourselves up to internal contentions, not just on this matter, but on anything else the Lord may instruct us through his servant that requires us to agree as a covenant body while still in our un-gathered state, outside of Zion.

If we can take a breath, pause, and first agree as a people to use the Book of Mormon as our covenant, and therefore follow the direction it has outlined, trusting its divine wisdom and counsel in how to proceed as an entire group when large decisions are required of us by the Lord, we can avoid much of what we are currently experiencing moving forward. I believe it would please the Lord if we would show such great respect for that which He has already given us.

"If the destiny is *equality*, then the journey must begin with that held paramount. We cannot pursue abusive and controlling means to achieve freedom and equality. *The path taken matters as much as the destination*. Struggling with the inefficient and cumbersome tools of persuasion, love, patience and pure knowledge will require a lot of changes to be *made voluntarily*. That is of course the goal: Voluntarily changing hearts. (DS blog, *Equality*, Sept 22, 2016) (emphasis added)

Majority rule among a righteous people, though not always producing a unanimous agreement (*though it could*), has proven to:

1. Be from God,
2. Establish Equality,
3. Protects against inequality by not allowing any form of a king to be established on the land,
4. Protects Agency,
5. Establishes Peace,
6. Allows righteous people a setting wherein they all have at their disposal the right to convince another through persuasion only,
7. and all you have to offer your brother or sister is your voluntary willingness to consider their words with love in your heart. And hopefully, a willingness to exercise agency to agree to concede a minority position to the majority.

This sounds like great prepping ground for Zion if we will receive it as such and I believe it allows us to "start right." All contention could potentially end because we would begin with the

understanding that we have *mutually agreed* to do our business according to the instructions of the Book of Mormon, our covenant.

MY PROPOSAL

I recommend that we take time to really ponder, study the Book of Mormon, and ask the Lord if He would be pleased if we did our business by the voice of the people as outlined in scripture, while in this un-gathered condition. Then I suggest we take a vote of the entire covenant body of believers to see if we will agree to do our business by the voice of the people.

If agreed upon, we can then establish a window of time for proposals to be put up on the new blog site that the scripture committee has set up. People can submit proposals for *a method* whereby they would like to see the *Guide and Standard* written. Because we want to allow *everyone the opportunity to persuade each other, comments would need to be allowed on the site regarding each and every proposal*. This provides fair access and comment to be given to all covenant holders. After the designated time has ended, a vote then needs to be taken to determine which proposal will be used.

Just to give an example of what I'm talking about, proposals could include things that I've heard floating around already, such as:

1. The current proposal by Adrian and Jeff. [hopefully tweaked to be majority rule based]
2. Re-voting to just accept the August 5th document.
3. Re-voting on the Aug 5th document after first ensuring that current LDS-centric language is removed and altered to better comply with the Answer's requirement to bless, benefit and inform anyone who does not know anything about Christianity.
4. Returning the assignment to the scripture committee to write it and present it to us for a vote.
5. Have anyone desiring to participate in writing it, submit their names to the scripture committee. Then have the scripture committee, in the presence of impartial witnesses, *draw lots* out of the pool of interested parties – say 8-10 people who submitted their names – and have those individuals work together to write a G&S. That is then presented to the body for improvement suggestions, re-worked accordingly, then presented for a vote.

The methods of how we could accomplish this G&S are open, and would be up to people in the covenant to propose for consideration. The requirement for the final G&S to be “adopted by mutual agreement” would be met because the entire *process*, from start to finish, had the mutual agreement of the people that it would be done by the voice of the people, encapsulating it. Therefore, on any matter for the general covenant body to consider in the future, the majority would carry and the minority would follow Pacumeni's example on conceding and offering willing support, making each measure ultimately 100%. Having mutually agreed “at the start” that we would do such business by the voice of the people as explained by Mosiah, we would show respect to God's wisdom as given in the Book of Mormon and honor our covenant. We could move forward peacefully, even if being among those who had a minority vote, because we would have agreed beforehand that we valued the agency and equality provided through this process. We will have avoided the coercion and inequality that results when we interpret “adopted by mutual agreement” to mean we have to reach a 100% agreement to every single facet.

Nobody is going to command us and tell we have to proceed in this way. It's up to us to decide as a people if we are persuaded by what the Book of Mormon says or not. But I believe this establishes a manner in which we can agree to do our business without organizing in a way that establishes any sort of institution, governing body or hierarchy; and that preserves equality, agency and peace if we will allow it. No permanent body is created to oversee matters, and oversight of voting would be the responsibility of whatever committee has been appointed as stewards over a given matter. Every fellowship and individual is free to conduct their business as they see fit, but as general agreement is *required by the Lord* from time to time, we will have an established and mutually agreed upon, scripturally verified method which will eliminate the confusion and dissension that arises when the "starting point" has not been agreed upon first.

With Deepest Sincerity,

Karen Strong

In Counsel with Kirk Strong