

Sustainable Societies

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If enough of us and enough of our neighbors strive to guide our lives by the truth of God, the moral virtues needed in every society will abound.

In 2015 the United Nations adopted what was called “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” It was described as “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.” The Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 goals to be achieved by the year 2030, such as no poverty, zero hunger, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, and decent work.¹

If people aren't familiar with the 2030 Agenda may I suggest checking out a YouTuber named Dave Cullen on his channel “Computing Forever” and do a search for it (his latest video as of December 2020 was once again specifically on this subject). Another person who has talked about this in great depth that I would personally recommend (there are a lot of people that go over this, these are just the two that I would suggest) is Glenn Beck (who is a member of the Church, and who I believe is a good member of the Church). You can find him on The Blaze or the Glenn Beck YouTube channel; once again, do a search for this subject.

I posted in my community tab links dealing with “The Great Reset” of which this 2030 Agenda is a part. Anybody with the spirit of discernment and the spirit of prophecy and the Holy Ghost will be able to see the 2030 Agenda, the Great Reset, etc for what they truly are. See my *Understanding Isaiah* papers and then ask yourself how perfectly the Assyrian(s) or scourge aligns.

The concept of sustainable development is an interesting and important one. Even more urgent, however, is the broader question of sustainable societies. What are the fundamentals that sustain a flourishing society, one that promotes happiness, progress, peace, and well-being among its members?

There has been a raging debate in the Church among its members for the last 20 years on this very subject. My last paper, *El Fin*, I showcase how the doctrine was clear in 1950's, how the doctrine was being murkied in the 1970's, and the warning that the choices that we were making, the “disintegration of the family”, would bring about the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets in 1995. Such a debate in the Church did not rage in the 1950's. The groundwork for the debate, the seedlings, the warning from President Kimball that such things were taking root in the Saints, occurred in the 1970's. Around the same time, Ezra Taft Benson warned that as the wheat and the tares grew together this debate would get wider and broader and would not be limited to “non-leaders of the Church”. By 1995 the debate had begun and thus the prophets warned in the Family Proclamation to the World that this would bring about the end. And for 20 years we had this debate until in 2015 the United States of America legalized homosexual marriage, essentially ending the debate between members in the Church (driving the

faithful Saints underground or compelling them to be silent on these subjects as they were being “modernized”) and sealing the fate of the USA. We have spent 20 years “trying to save the planet” instead of trying to save our society.

As President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observed to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her. But if she observed not to do whatsoever I have commanded her I will visit her according to all her works... This way of escape, insuring the protection of the Lord, is a very simple one. Unfortunately, many of the people of Zion have refused to take advantage of this promise. As I observe conditions among the people I cannot see how we are going to escape when the judgments are to pass over the nations, which are promised in this revelation and in others which I cannot take time to read. Because of our disobedience and our failure to keep the commandments of the Lord, the *righteous*, as in times past, *may be called upon to suffer with the unrighteous among us.*” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, Volume 3, Chapter 1, p.32)

We have scriptural record of at least two such thriving societies. What can we learn from them?

The concept of “sustainability” is interesting and possibly important but the doctrine which is the Word, which is logos, which is the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, cannot and does not change. And when we do not keep the commandments of the Lord we are subject unto justice and the consequences. The Lord laid out such consequences in Sodom and Gomorrah, Jerusalem, and in ancient America at least three times that we know of. Enoch and his city as well as Nephi and his people after the Lord visited the Americas are two societies that thrived and succeeded because they kept the commandments. Elder D. Todd Christofferson then explains both such examples.

Anciently, the great patriarch and prophet Enoch preached righteousness and “built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.”² It is reported that “the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.”³

“And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.”⁴

The first- and second-century peoples in the Western Hemisphere known as Nephites and Lamanites provide another outstanding example of a flourishing society. Following the resurrected Savior’s remarkable ministry among them, “they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord. ...

“And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.”⁵

The societies in these two examples were sustained by the blessings of heaven growing out of their exemplary devotion to the two great commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁶ They were obedient to God in their personal lives, and they looked after one another’s physical and spiritual welfare. In the words of the Doctrine and Covenants, these were societies with “every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.”⁷

Unfortunately, as Elder Quentin L. Cook noted this morning, the ideal society described in 4 Nephi of the Book of Mormon did not endure beyond its second century. Sustainability is not guaranteed, and a thriving society can fail in time if it abandons the cardinal virtues that uphold its peace and prosperity.

As I have clearly documented in multiple papers and in this paper as well, we were warned specifically in the 1950’s-1970’s what would happen if we “abandoned the cardinal virtues”. In 1995 we were warned that such a choice would bring about the destruction foretold by ancient and modern prophets and in 2015 the USA abandoned what was left of its cardinal virtues. Elder Christofferson then gives us a crucial bit of spiritual understanding if we will receive it.

In this case, yielding to the temptations of the devil, the people “began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.”⁸

There are those that blame the division in the USA on President Donald Trump. There are others that blame the division on the mainstream media. And there are yet others who blame the division on other things. But the Lord is clear- such divisions will come when a nation abandons its cardinal virtues. The reason why there is division? Because we allow homosexual marriage. Why is there division? Because we allow LGBT+ to not only exist, we force it on our children. Period.

The second bit of what he says here is equally interesting- that there will be a rise of vainglory and priestcraft. If you combined all of the vainglory and priestcraft that existed in the USA and the Church from its restoration in the 1800s to the year 2015 it would be less than the combined amount of vainglory and priestcraft in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the USA in the years between 2015 to today. And why? Because we as a country and we as members of the Church gave up our cardinal values. We no longer take stands openly on things like homosexual marriage and will even allow homosexuals into our homes to eat as couples and set that example for our children, some going as far as to claim that this abandonment of cardinal values is Christlike. This is repulsive to anyone who has a firm grasp of who the Savior from Galilee is. You can blame the division on Trump all you want, you can blame the contention on “intolerance” and “messengers from God speaking too abrasively” and defend your priestcrafts in the same breath all you want, it doesn’t change the fact that the divisions, the priestcrafts, the contention, etc are caused by the people’s wickedness, abandonment, and outright rebellion against the Word of God; the ones holding up the Word and desperately trying to get the huddled masses under the Word are literally the only people A. making things better, B. the only ones actually trying to save people and thus C. are the only ones with any charity because nothing else will fix the problem, let alone save people.

A steamboat gets hit with a missile, causes a breach in the hull, but the missile appears to be a dud or at the very least hasn't gone off yet, and the ship is taking on water. One person bakes cookies for the crew; another person picks up the missile, hugs it, and says it is just misunderstood and brings it into the mess hall and serves it food. Another person gets a bucket and starts singing "we are all enlisted till the conflict is over" and "called to serve" over and over again as they take single buckets of water and dump it over the side. A lone crewman who was asleep, wakes up and comes out of his bunk and sees the ship taking on water at a rate that will cause everyone to perish shortly, and a crewman named Beth having tea with a missile. The crewman shrieks and says that the missile needs to go overboard or everyone is going to die, to which Beth replies, "Stop judging the missile and being contentious and stirring up anxiety. That's not very Christlike." To which the crewman replies, "You are sitting with a missile and it is going to get you and everyone around you killed!" To which Beth replies, "Soldier, I don't like your tone or attitude, I don't think you are a good fit for me or this crew." In disbelief the crewman shakes his head and runs to the breach and yells for the crew to repair the hull before they all drown. To which the crew replied, "This is just how the Lord wants us to work now," to which the man replied, "But you aren't putting out as much water as you are taking in", to which they replied, "Oh, you are only interested in the numbers, the Lord cares about the heart." Shortly after the ship went down and all hands on the ship were lost save for the man who gave up trying to save the crew and jumped overboard. It was said that Joseph Smith was standing on the shore watching the event and said "if the members don't understand the spirit of prophecy they would be apt to be lost." Joseph Smith watched the steamboat go down shortly after making the comment.

"And it came to pass that when three hundred years had passed away, both the people of Nephi and the Lamanites had become exceedingly wicked one like unto another."⁹

By the end of another century, millions had died in internecine warfare, and their once harmonious nation had been reduced to warring tribes.

This is the state of the world today and soon "the day shall come that the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulation shall be among the children of men" but the Lord's people can take solace in the Lord's promise that "my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven." (Moses 7:61-62, Joseph Smith's The Steamboat Dream)

Reflecting on this and other examples of once flourishing societies that later foundered, I think it safe to say that when people turn from a sense of accountability to God and begin to trust instead in the "arm of flesh," disaster lurks. Trusting in the arm of flesh is to ignore the divine Author of human rights and human dignity and to give highest priority to riches, power, and the praise of the world (while often mocking and persecuting those who follow a different standard). Meanwhile, those in sustainable societies are seeking, as King Benjamin said, to "grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created [them], or in the knowledge of that which is just and true."¹⁰

This is a very good talk and I feel like it is very similar to a Hyrum Andrus talk. Brother Andrus and Elder Christofferson throw out idea after idea with very little definition, very little clarification because there is a lot of assumption of knowledge on the listener's end. Here he brings up the arm of flesh and gives a very good basic definition but fails to expand on it and I believe he does this because of time constraints, just like Hyrum Andrus. Trusting in the arm of flesh is another one of those topics that is taught even in the Church by its members incorrectly more times than it is taught correctly. I go over this topic specifically in my paper *The Arm of Flesh* and I also go over it in passing in my papers *The Prepared Need Not Fear* and *Temporal Salvation: Food and Water*. There are those who mistake the arm of flesh with anything of material nature and then say that they don't need or are required to do anything in that sphere. For example, "I don't need to lock my doors, the Lord will protect me" or "I don't need to get a gun or any form of self defense, the Lord will protect me" or "I don't need to get a food storage, the Lord will just rain down manna from heaven." Much like with other terminology, definitions and doctrines of the Kingdom, Satan has done such a good job confusing the people that even members are teaching humility as pride and pride as humility, Christlike attributes as the natural man and the natural man as Christlike attributes, trusting in the arm of flesh as trusting in the Lord and trusting in the Lord as though it is trusting in the arm of flesh etc etc. Members today who say "I don't need to get a food storage, the Lord will feed me with manna from heaven"- it would be like if they were members in Egypt when Joseph told them to store food for seven years because there was going to be famine for seven years and they said "that's trusting in the arm of flesh, the Lord is going to rain manna down from heaven for me during those seven years." You are literally teaching the opposite of the definition, literally the opposite of the truth. To trust in the Lord would be to keep His commandments; to trust in the arm of flesh is to not obey the commandments and expect mercy. Members who say "I don't need to get out of debt" or "debt is not a problem, the Lord will just wash it away when He comes when He raptures me away"- it would be like if they were members in Noah's time and Noah told them to build an ark and the members said "Noah, you are trusting in the arm of flesh, what need has God of something as simple as a boat? Do you not remember Enoch? If there are floods God can just raise up islands out of the deep and preserve us on them." We are saved by grace after all we can do. For a more in depth breakdown of what I was doing here, see those above-mentioned papers.

The institutions of family and religion have been crucial for endowing both individuals and communities with the virtues that sustain an enduring society. These virtues, rooted in scripture, include integrity, responsibility and accountability, compassion, marriage and fidelity in marriage, respect for others and the property of others, service, and the necessity and dignity of work, among others.

I have already gone in great depth on this subject specifically in this paper, let alone my paper *El Fin*. This is THE cardinal virtue that we abandoned and went into open rebellion over. President Kimball in that talk (for reference see *El Fin*) said that such nations such as Sodom and Gomorrah all meet the same fate, or as Isaiah put it the consequences of their sin fell "upon them" (brimstone).

Editor-at-large Gerard Baker wrote a column earlier this year in the *Wall Street Journal* honoring his father, Frederick Baker, on the occasion of his father's 100th birthday. Baker speculated about the reasons for his father's longevity but then added these thoughts:

“While we may all want to know the secret to a long life, I often feel we’d be better off devoting more time to figuring out what makes a good life, whatever span we’re allotted. Here, I’m confident I know my father’s secret.

“He is from an era when life was defined primarily by duty, not by entitlement; by social responsibilities, not personal privileges. The primary animating principle throughout his century has been a sense of obligation—to family, God, country.

“In an era dominated by the detritus of broken families, my father was a devoted husband to his wife of 46 years, a dutiful father to six children. He was never more present and vital than when my parents suffered the unthinkable tragedy of losing a child. ...

“And in an era when religion is increasingly a curiosity, my father has lived as a true, faithful Catholic, with an unshakable belief in the promises of Christ. Indeed, I sometimes think he has lived so long because he is better prepared than anyone I have ever met to die.

“I have been a fortunate man—blessed by a good education, my own wonderful family, some worldly success I didn’t deserve. But however proud and grateful I feel, it’s eclipsed by the pride and gratitude I have for the man who, without fuss or drama, without expectation of reward or even acknowledgment, has got on—for a century now—with the simple duties, obligations and, ultimately, joys of living a virtuous life.”¹¹

I know that I’m going to upset some people here who think I’m a little too tough on the Boomers, but this has to be said because members are only being fed half the equation, they are only hearing half of the story, because only one of the sides is getting a microphone. This story was very #OkBoomer. “Back in my day we had duty and responsibility and honor and these youngens with their entitlements and smartphones etc don’t hold a candle!” President McKay taught the Boomers in 1964 (or rather re-emphasized), “no other success can compensate for failure in the home.” What are successes outside the home? Duty to country, social responsibilities, obligation to country, worldly education, worldly success, etc. If the “youngens” are entitled (see my paper *The Generation*, hint: they are not) then where does the failure arrive? If we can point to the stripling warriors and give the majority of the credit to their parents for goodness, virtue, etc, if you point to the Millennials, as a Boomer, your children, and you verbally wreck them and class the entire generation as entitled, spoiled etc, whose fault is it? The primary weight of that failure rests squarely on the shoulders of those parents. Period. And now that the fruits of their failed parenting are being made manifest, the Boomers are asking the younger generation to “judge us not by our failures in the home, but by our massive successes in the world” while at the same time critiquing the younger generation for “not being ambitious enough, not wanting more worldly success”, and in the process deflating the value of success in the home, mostly in an attempt to protect their own image and justify their actions/choices. I get it- the Boomers did a lot of things right, and the Millennials are doing a lot of things wrong. But the Boomers had the Greatest Generation as their parents, and the Millennials had the Boomers. Enough said.

And for those of you who are saying right now, “I don’t understand why Micah feels he needs to take shots at the Boomers”, I want you to take a moment, look in the mirror and ask yourself

“Did I have any problem with Elder Christofferson quoting this which throws today’s era (or generation) collectively under the bus?” If you had no problem with Elder Christofferson’s quote but your feathers were ruffled with what I correctly pointed out, pat yourself on the back as you look in the mirror and repeat after me, “I’m a flaming hypocrite.” If you think that the older era, the older generation, can critique and throw the younger era or generation under the bus but it can’t be held responsible, or shouldn’t be held responsible or the act of holding them responsible for their failures etc. are wrong/inappropriate, you by very definition are a hypocrite; “I can tell you what’s wrong with your generation but you better not judge my generation.”

The perceived importance of religion and religious faith has declined in many nations in recent years.

I find it refreshing that the leaders of the Church are now openly admitting this. Within the last couple decades members who pointed out falling birth rates (and thus child of record baptisms), declining convert baptisms and overall membership plateauing and beginning to fall (primarily in white western countries), members who pointed out such things were treated with hostility. I find it refreshing that now we can at least admit that in “many nations” there has been a decline. If the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was only in white western countries, we might have seen the total number of active members decline for two decades straight. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints like to pretend they are immune to this, like this is only a problem with the Catholics or the Baptists. “Missionary work among white western countries is still exploding!” COVID has compounded the problem with members proclaiming “All is well in Zion! Missionary work is just changing and going online!” as the total number of converts plummets into obscurity. For example, the Canada Winnipeg Mission has seen their baptisms this year drop 75% from where they were in 2010 and most missions have seen similar falls. There isn’t a single recorded case of a mission in COVID lockdowns (ie. missionary work only online) that have seen their numbers remain the same, let alone improve. Some people might be saying “well you just have to give it time to work” to which I would respond, “you have never owned a business.” Even if online working is more successful, how much “more successful” would it be? You would be lucky if you saw a 10-25% increase, and nobody would sacrifice 75-90% of their profit in order for a chance in a few years to be making slightly more. COVID and our response to it has been disastrous for missionary work on top of an already bleak situation for white western countries. All is not well in Zion, and those that look at the baptismal numbers and yet still have the gall to say “all is well in Zion” and “this is the future” are not familiar with the Father and the Son or “their work” (Moses 1:39). If this is the future the Church is in a lot of trouble.

A growing number of people consider that belief in and allegiance to God are not needed for moral uprightness in either individuals or societies in today’s world.¹² I think we would all agree that those who profess no religious belief can be, and often are, good, moral people. We would not agree, however, that this happens without divine influence. I am referring to the Light of Christ. The Savior declared, “I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”¹³ Whether aware of it or not, every man, woman, and child of every belief, place, and time is imbued with the Light of Christ and therefore possesses the sense of right and wrong we often call conscience.¹⁴

Once again, the similarities between this talk and a Brother Hyrum Andrus lecture are seen here. This one paragraph could take up an hour long talk (and did in my paper *The Light of Christ, the Holy Ghost, the Second Comforter*). Members conflating the Holy Ghost with the effects of the Light of Christ and not knowing the difference between them is one of the greatest tragedies of our day. Joseph Smith taught that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift that God gave to man besides that of his Son, ergo, not understanding the Holy Ghost, that gift, is a tragedy on a biblical scale. The assumption of knowledge here is once again due to time constraints. If you are confused on the difference read Joseph Smith's Lectures on Faith or my paper listed above.

Nevertheless, when secularization separates personal and civic virtue from a sense of accountability to God, it cuts the plant from its roots. Reliance on culture and tradition alone will not be sufficient to sustain virtue in society. When one has no higher god than himself and seeks no greater good than satisfying his own appetites and preferences, the effects will be manifest in due course.

A society, for example, in which individual consent is the only constraint on sexual activity is a society in decay. Adultery, promiscuity, out-of-wedlock births,¹⁵ and elective abortions are but some of the bitter fruits that grow out of the ongoing sexual revolution.

This is the age old debate between atheists and religionists, and much like with Alma the atheists and moral relativists “only have their own word” (Alma 30:40) to prove their point (I could write an entire paper on how members do this same thing with their “spirit-o-meters” and “their lying spirits” Alma 30:42), but I have all the words of the prophets (Alma 30:44).

The thing that the Saints have on their side is history. Every society that has “neglected or abandoned their cardinal virtues” has collapsed and collapsed in spectacular and bloody fashion. Camille Paglia has a book written on this very subject that I find fascinating because she is a liberal lesbian and yet knows because of history that if a society goes down this road it will lead to its collapse because that is what history teaches.

Follow-on consequences that work against sustainability of a healthy society include growing numbers of children raised in poverty and without the positive influence of fathers, sometimes through multiple generations; women bearing alone what should be shared responsibilities; and seriously deficient education as schools, like other institutions, are tasked to compensate for failure in the home.¹⁶ Added to these social pathologies are the incalculable instances of individual heartbreak and despair—mental and emotional destruction visited upon both the guilty and the innocent.

What Elder Christofferson brings up here sounds as though it was ripped directly from my *Understanding Isaiah*- this is a sign of the times, this is the sign of El Fin. Those who are familiar of my work know that I speak often about the positive influences of fathers, as well as understanding the voice of the Father. The confusion of members not understanding the voice of the Father (which are the scriptures, scriptures that are written under the influence of the Holy Ghost) gives rise to the following contradiction:

Nephi proclaims:

“Wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost! ...

“... Wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God!”¹⁷

There are many members who claim to have felt the Holy Ghost listening to lies and who tremble and are angry when presented with the word of God. This contrast is what is lost on a lot of members. They hear the word of God which causes them to tremble and get angry and because of these “negative feelings” and “the Spirit leaving them” they then blame the person reading the scriptures or teaching the word of God. The false understanding that the truth of God always makes one feel good is a most pernicious lie. Sometimes, maybe even most of the time, the truth will make people uncomfortable, but the righteous seek after that discomfort because it is through that discomfort that we become like the Savior.

In contrast, our joyous message to our children and to all humanity is that “the truth of God” points a better way, or as Paul said, “a more excellent way,”¹⁸ a way to personal happiness and community well-being now and to everlasting peace and joy hereafter.

In here lies another key to understanding. “A better way” in its very essence means “your way is worse”; “my way leads to personal happiness” in its very essence means “your way leads to less happiness.” Are not these behaviors and statements in their very essence “combative” by nature? If I know a better way of doing something and I’m trying to teach my neighbor that, how would I do it without showing him or convincing him that his way was worse? Now, if the individual accepts the correction with gladness of heart and improves, they are a humble individual that hearkens to the Holy Ghost. Whereas, an individual who becomes hostile and rejects the further light does not hearken to the Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ taught us how we could judge and that was off of the fruit. Meaning, an individual who hears his neighbor teach him a better way but then the individual gets angry and hostile while making no attempt to prove him has no grounds via the doctrine of Christ to determine whether it was of God or not; he has not explored the fruit and “chemical responses in your body” (ie. your “feelings”) are not the provable fruits.

The truth of God refers to the core truths that underlie His plan of happiness for His children. These truths are that God lives; that He is the Heavenly Father of our spirits; that as a manifestation of His love, He has given us commandments that lead to a fulness of joy with Him; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Redeemer; that He suffered and died to atone for sins on condition of our repentance; that He rose from the dead, bringing to pass the Resurrection of all humankind; and that we will all stand before Him to be judged, that is, to account for our lives.¹⁹

Elder Christofferson gives you two more contrasts that are commonly misunderstood in the Church, and that is the connection between God’s love and God’s commandments and Christ’s love and atonement and our repentance. Once again, “the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth”, the Lord shows his love by his commands. There are many who falsely teach that we show our love by a lack of commandments or another one that is commonly said that we show our love to our

children by giving them freedom. Agency is a part of God's plan but it is God's commandments that show his love. Likewise, your children's autonomy, their agency and freedom, are not signs of your love for them, they simply are; it is your commandments, your rules, your "don't touch the stove" etc that show your love or lack of love thereof. "If God loved me He would let me do whatever I want and still accept me back" versus the reality that God wants you to come back but you can only come back on the grounds of His commandments and thus those teachings, those commandments, are the manifestation of His love to His children.

This feeds into the second misconception, "Christ loves me and His atonement applies to me unconditionally, I don't have to do a thing." This could not be further from the truth; it shares many similarities to the doctrine taught by Nehor, doctrines that have been referred to as "anti-Christ doctrines". And why are they anti-Christ doctrines? Because they teach a version of Christ that is completely different from reality. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever thing I command you" (John 15:14), "we believe that we are saved by grace after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23), Christ's love and Christ's atonement are tapped into only on the condition of our repentance, and repentance is yet another experience that can be uncomfortable for a lot of people. Change. That does not mean that these uncomfortable situations won't become easier or less uncomfortable, for they will the more we do them. Or as I heard an elder in my mission say, "Get comfortable being uncomfortable elders!" Get comfortable with people screaming at you over the phone for 15 minutes, get comfortable with people slandering you, lying about you, for they did the same things to Jesus Christ and if you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ expect the same treatment from the world. President Grant often taught this concept, "that which we persist in doing becomes easier to do, not that the nature of the thing has changed but that our power to do has increased."

Nine years into what was called "the reign of the judges" in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Alma resigned his position as chief judge to give full time to his leadership of the Church. His purpose was to address the pride, persecution, and greed that were growing among the people and particularly among members of the Church.²⁰ As Elder Stephen D. Naudal once observed, "[Alma's] inspired decision was not to spend more time trying to make and enforce more rules to correct the behavior of his people, but to speak to them of the word of God, to teach the doctrine and have their understanding of the plan of redemption lead them to change their behavior."²¹

Once again, here is a tiny paragraph that could be an hour lecture. *Tribalism, Covenants, Honesty* is a paper in which I go over this. There are many noticeable differences in the fruit of a practitioner of priestcraft versus a man or woman of God. Two are mentioned here, the first being the word of God. A man or woman who is of God is grounded in doctrine, is grounded in the word of God; what is right, what is wrong. While those steeped in priestcraft care only for their own opinions, and instead of focusing on the word of God, they focus on behaviors ie. "what that man is saying might be true but I don't like his tone, I don't like his sass, I don't like his sarcasm, he's a jerk, he's mean etc." They did the same thing to all the prophets and to Jesus Christ as well, saying that "John hath a devil, and the Son of Man is gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners"- the Savior's next line is the crucial line "but wisdom is justified of her children" (Matthew 11:18-19). This is attacking the individual (which we all know every individual is flawed, so we can all find, if we look hard enough, a flaw in the individual to then justify our behavior towards them) versus judging the merits of what they are

saying, ie. “their wisdom.” This is also known as *ad hominem*, you don’t attack the doctrine, you don’t attack the word of God, you attack the individual personally. Followers of Christ, the elect, judge according to the word of God, whereas the followers of Satan (and this is not hyperbole, we know there are save only two churches) judge based on subjective behaviors which they and only they get to determine the rules for (how fast you talk, how slow you talk, how loud you talk, how soft you talk, what type of humor you use, what level of sharpness you use, what level of boldness you use, etc etc). They judge you based off of these behaviors and there is no metric in the word of God to determine what is right and what is wrong on any of those, therefore it is left up to the individual themselves to make up whatever standards they desire, and in most cases with confirmation bias these individuals have already made up their mind before you have said a single word, so the standards they set up in their head are literally impossible to fulfill, they themselves wouldn’t be able to live up to these standards. And as soon as the messenger from God “fail to live up to these impossible standards” the individual listening with their confirmation bias and pre-set impossible standards now feels justified to remain in their own sins and ignorance. Jesus said of such “But whereunto shall I liken [these people]? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.” (Matthew 11:16-17)

The second thing that we learn of a key difference between the followers of God and the followers of Satan is that the followers of God, those that teach the word of God, their teaching is designed to lead to action. It will cause repentance, it will create change in the individual. Whereas the practitioners of Satan teach that you are acceptable exactly the way you are, you don’t even have to join the Church. You can be a Jew, you can be a Catholic, the Lord will still use you and accept you back into His Kingdom exactly the way you are. Such teaching leads to no change, such teaching leads to no incline (see the talk *Becoming Like Him*), such teaching will not create sufficient strength and faith to pass through tribulation, such teaching actually purports a pre-tribulation rapture or in the words of Elder Holland, that you will “float on a cloud past all the problems and still end up parking yourself next to men like Peter, James and John etc.” Such individuals who do not belong to the Church of Christ spiritually will not be saved in the kingdom of God physically; aligning yourself with priestcraft is a damnable offense. Members should take it just as seriously, if not more seriously, than whoredoms, for the Lord does.

Elder Christofferson gives you two such keys to understand priestcraft here and I have expounded on both to such an extent that all those who have listened to it will be held accountable to God for it. Judge wisely, Saints.

There is much we can do as neighbors and fellow citizens to contribute to the sustainability and success of the societies we live in, and surely our most fundamental and enduring service will be to teach and live by the truths inherent in God’s great plan of redemption.

There isn’t actually a lot we can do right now with COVID, but there are still some things we can do. I’ve worked with the missionaries and baptized individuals from the day I got off my mission to the day COVID hit. COVID was a large part of the reason why I started teaching the truths inherent in God’s great plan of redemption online; without it I never would have asked God the questions I did and thus I never would have received the answers I did and thus I never would

have done what I did, I was eternally content with finding, teaching and baptizing in my own personal vineyard. A lot of members ask me “should I start my own YouTube channel?” or “should I share the gospel more?” or “how do I share the gospel more/what would be your suggestions?” The answer to all of them is roughly the same- “seek first to obtain my word and then shall your mouth be filled”. A huge part of compiling these scriptures and these doctrines and providing them for free is so that you as members can have the doctrine, have the word of God, at your fingertips so that you can teach the doctrines yourself. Yes, you should start YouTube channels, yes you should share what you have learned with your family at Family Home Evening, yes you should share what you have learned with your brother at a barbeque etc etc. I know that if you spend all of your efforts and countless thousands of hours and bring save it be one soul unto repentance, unto Christ, (not unto yourself or your opinions), your joy with that individual will be incalculable and you will forget the perceived cost as the benefit will far outweigh anything you could have given.

Elder Christofferson ends his talk with a similar call to action from the members, a similar commitment, and as always I will end this breakdown with his own conclusions and make his words my own.

As expressed in the words of the hymn:

Faith of our fathers, we will love

Both friend and foe in all our strife,

And preach thee, too, as love knows how,

By kindly words and virtuous life.²²

If enough of us and enough of our neighbors strive to make our decisions and guide our lives by the truth of God, the moral virtues needed in every society will abound.

In His love, our Heavenly Father gave His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that we might have everlasting life.²³

“[Jesus Christ] doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation.

“Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.”²⁴

This we declare “in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness,”²⁵ and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.