

# Enemy of the People

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Michael S. Robinson Sr.



**President Russell M. Nelson** and his 12 apostles are still shaking their heads, tearing out their hair and wringing their hands. If you listen carefully, you can hear their late-night cries: "How can it be? Where have we failed?"

It seems that Mormondom's expertise in shepherding is not quite as good as the brethren had believed. After a blatant and unprecedented effort to suppress the free will of Utah voters, it appears that scissor-wielding Mormons have taken a successful swipe at Mama's apron strings. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has been such a remarkable model of indoctrination and control, must face the facts: Its power is not what it used to be.

Showing a healthy distrust in the previously well-accepted safety of flocking, Mormons have quietly defied their leaders and made a firm statement that the days of iron-fisted Brigham Young-type leadership are no longer welcome. The midterm elections, along with the passage of Proposition 2, have sent a discomfiting message to the church's hierarchy: Their grip on members' thinking is declining.

The elections were just a symptom of a much deeper problem. Mormon leadership has been troubled for years over the church's own statistics. There's been an alarming change in the retention of those who were raised in its ranks—down more than 25 percent since the '80s and '90s—and the success of its missionary program, by its own leaders' acknowledgement, is at an all-time low. In a nutshell, the sheep are coming of age, questioning not only the validity of the doctrines, but the role of the church in dictating all aspects of life, including political positions. This is certainly not an LDS exclusive; the power of almost all religions, worldwide, is ebbing.

Now, one would logically think that religion should be slowly disappearing from politics, but the theocracy, envisioned by Young so many years ago, is still a disturbing reality. It is difficult to overestimate the hold Mormonism has on Utah, or the dictatorial control it has over most of what happens in our state.

Medical cannabis, the would-be natural savior for thousands of Utahns who suffer intractable, chronic pain, has successfully mustered a decisive popular vote. Yet, even as the ink dries on the affirmative ballots for Prop 2, the LDS church is dead-set on undermining the compassionate availability of the plant. For even the most casual observers of our democracy, it is truly shocking to watch. The ongoing meetings—held almost entirely behind closed doors—threaten the very premise of government by the people, along with its constitutional mandates of a separation of church and state.

Sadly, many of our elected officials, including Gov. Gary Herbert, have been complicit in undermining those constitutional barriers. With all the cries of "enemy of the people," pouring from Washington, D.C., it is becoming clear, at least in Utah, just who those enemies are.

It was the church that engineered and insisted upon a special legislative session and the gutting of Prop 2. Like any spoiled brat—determined to prevail over the majority—its leaders determined to do their church's bidding, no matter what their constituents decided. Anticipating that Utahns would likely vote to ratify the initiative, church leaders launched into a subversive strategy. They used their power, quite contrary to the most sacred tenets of our nation, to draft a "compromise" bill that would essentially gut the mandate of the people. As an outright affront to our democracy, the LDS church has employed collusion with our elected government officials in compromising our democratic election. Did you vote for a special session; did you vote for a different law? Funny; neither did I.

I'm certainly not the only person who's noticed it. The suffering masses who most need the benefits of medical cannabis are up in arms, and the battle isn't over. The Epilepsy Association of Utah and Together for Responsible Use and Cannabis Education (TRUCE) have found an ally in attorney Rocky Anderson, who has issued a non-spoilation letter to preserve the evidence that the Mormon church has unconstitutionally meddled in Utah law.

The whole idea of democracy is to allow citizens to decide the greatest good without abridging the rights of others. Utah voters made Prop 2 the law, and now it's time to defend the law against those who oppose it on the basis of personal and group agendas.

Utahns should be really angry—angry that their legislators did not represent their interests. Some might argue that's what a representative democracy is all about, but what they've done might or might not be legal. One thing we all know is that what happened is morally reprehensible. The well-funded Mormon church sought to do exactly what it preaches against. Its doctrine relies heavily on the admonition that men should not be commanded in all things, and it embraces the concept that it is the Devil who wanted to disenfranchise mankind from

the prerogative of free will. With the church's all-out effort to defy the Utah vote, it leaves the glaring question: Who is the "Devil?" And the frightening reality that church leaders might be scared by their own reflections.

*The author is a former U.S. Army assistant public information officer who lives in Riverton with his wife, Carol, and one mongrel dog Send feedback to [comments@cityweekly.net](mailto:comments@cityweekly.net)*

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