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# ONE HUNDREDS & FIFTY YEARS

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## How Firm A Foundation! What Makes It So.

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by Hugh Nibley

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## How Firm a Foundation! What Makes It So

(With Some Afterthoughts)

This talk is supposed to have some reference to the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Restoration of the Church.

150 years is not as long as you think--the Lord has not delayed his coming. I well remember my great-grandfather, who was 20 years old when Joseph Smith was still leading the Church--and the Prophet died as a young man.

Also I remember very well indeed attending the Centennial celebrations in Salt Lake in 1930. It was just after my mission on one of my rare visits to Utah. I stayed at my grandfather's house on the corner of North Temple directly across from Temple Square, and we had some long talks together. The theme of the Centennial pageant was the Gospel through the Ages. In the years since then I have come to see that I had no idea at that time how vast and solid the foundations of the Church really are.

At that time I was going to UCLA and majoring in, of all things, sociology. For my year's research project I was making a study of the churches in Glendale, California, gathering statistics (such as, that church attendance dropped sharply on rainy Sundays and increased proportionately at the movies) and having interviews, sometimes quite frank and revealing, with the pastors. With every one the strength of the LDS position became more apparent to me. Here are some of the things on which the foundation rests secure.

1. Joseph Smith came before the world with a "scenario," arresting, original, satisfying. Because of that alone he couldn't lose. Consider: he had nothing going for him, and his enemies had everything going for them: they moved against him with all the wealth, education, authority, prestige, complete command of the media, tradition, culture, the books, the universities, the appointments, the renown, etc. etc. on their side. And they ganged up against him with dedicated fury. Why was he able to survive the first onslaught? If they had had anything at all to put up against his story he could not have lasted a week--but they had nothing. "Question them," said Brigham Young, "and they cannot answer the simplest questions concerning the character of the Deity, heaven, or hell, this or that . . ." (JD 1:39:52), and it had been so ever since Origen wrote his work on the First Principles. "Outside of the religion we have embraced, there is nothing but death, hell, and the grave," (10:352:64) he said. If they had anything to offer they could have produced it any time. Those who embraced the gospel were those who had been seeking long and hard--and not finding. In the eloquent words of Brigham Young: "The secret feeling of my heart was that I would be willing to crawl around the earth on my hands and knees, to see such a man as was Peter, Jeremiah, Moses,

or any man that could tell me anything about God and heaven. But to talk with the priests was no more satisfactory to me than it is now to talk with lawyers." (8:228:60).

2. It was a choice between nothing or something--and what a something! The staggering prodigality of the gifts brought to mankind by Joseph is just beginning to appear as the Scriptures he gave us are held up for comparison with the newly discovered or re-discovered documents of the ancients purporting to come from the times and places he describes in those revelations. He has placed in our hands fragments of writings from the leaders of all the major dispensations; and now, only in very recent times, has the world come into possession of whole libraries of ancient texts against which his purported scriptures can be tested.

3. One thing that impressed me in talking to the ministers was that our Gospel is not culturally conditioned. I had just been spreading the Gospel in four countries, and everywhere the reception was exactly the same. My son recently wrote an arresting comment on that phenomenon from his mission in Japan: "One thing I've really come to be sure of is that the Gospel applies to all people. East is East and West is West, but wherever they are the sheep know the Shepherd's voice. The Japanese see Christianity in somewhat the same way Americans see Buddhism, as a strange, complex and exotic philosophy that would take years of research to understand at all. When I go into a house to teach I always tell the people that my knowledge is very limited and therefore I will not teach them from my knowledge, but I simply come as a witness of spiritual truths that I have myself experienced. I tell them that if they will surrender their prejudice they will themselves have the experience of the Holy Ghost . . . . I've never had anyone say that they weren't feeling the Spirit. Of course, getting them to follow it and give up their sins is different."

If the Gospel is not culturally conditioned neither is it nationally conditioned. Which nation do you prefer as a Latter-day Saint? Answer, "Whichever gives me the inalienable right to practice my religion; and for years there was only one nation which met that qualification, the United States under its Constitution. It was the glorious principles of the Bill of Rights that opened the door to the Gospel in this dispensation; that was the indispensable implementation of the Gospel, without however being part or portion of that plan which transcends all earthly disciplines.

4. Nothing was more offensive in the teachings of Joseph Smith than the ideas of revelation and restoration. The Protestant doctrine was sola scriptura; the Catholic claim was that the only source of revelation was 1) scripture and 2) tradition. But in our own generation both revelation and restoration have ceased to be naughty words, and Catholics and Protestants are exploiting them in a way that makes us forget how recently and how vigorously they were condemned as a peculiarly wild aberration in Joseph Smith.

5. Here is a recent newspaper headline announcing that the churches are now for the first time and in a big way beginning to cultivate the charismatic gifts, not in the revivalist manner, but as a necessary part

of the sober Christian life. Years ago I wrote a series of articles called "Mixed Voices" in which I surveyed most of the available anti-Mormon writings in the Historian's Office since the beginning. The claims to heavenly visitations and miraculous gifts, especially healing and tongues, were treated as nothing short of the most heinous crimes by Joseph Smith's critics. We are apt to forget that too, today.

6. The ideas of priesthood and authority were revolutionary. For generations after Joseph Smith the learned divines were to debate the tension between "Office" and "Spirit." But nothing is more wonderful than the way in which the Spirit operates through the priesthood; especially firm was its foundation in a principle by which true priesthood cannot be abused or misused; its power cannot be applied to further private or party interests, or to impose, coerce, or intimidate--the moment it is directed to such ends it automatically becomes inoperative.

The priesthood is further more invulnerable because it is indivisible. As long as one true holder of the higher priesthood is on the earth the potentiality of the church is there. It suggests the idea of cloning, that from one cell one can produce a whole organism; also it suggests present-day ideas of manifestations of energy at various levels: "And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the Priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh (84:21f). As in physics, the reality of particles and forces is only apparent after certain very specific conditions have been met.

7. Which brings us to another unshakable foundation-stone--the ordinances. Protestant authorities admit that one of the weakest parts of their position is the meagerness of their liturgy. The Reformation abolished a lot of pomp, ceremony and ritual, but put nothing in its place. And now it becomes clear that the ancient Christians made much of certain rites and ordinances that had indeed been lost. But what could the Reformation do but get rid of things that were plainly late and unauthorized intrusions from patently pagan sources? In the 19th Century, Roman Catholic researchers, beginning at Solesmes began to discover from the study of old manuscripts that the rites of their Mass were indeed later innovations, differing markedly from the earliest practices. And today we have seen the Ecumenical movement largely devoted to correcting and restoring (they actually use the word) rites and ordinances which had been lost.

8. Ritual is in the nature of a public and social thing, but the rites of the Temple were something else. Here again, Joseph Smith has given us something solid and substantial that invites a world of comparative study, which will show from the very outset that this was no mere theatrical gesture. The whole concept of the "Hierocentric Point" around which all the sacral civilizations were built is presented here in its fulness. It is at the Temple that all things are bound together. The ancient word for the Temple was "The Binding Point of Heaven and Earth." This is no time to go into the inexhaustibly rich symbolism and indispensable reality of the ordinances and the significance of the Temple in binding the human family together. The point here is that Joseph Smith gave us the whole thing, and it is a marvel beyond description.

9. With his "scenario" of "protology" and eschatology, the Prophet has brought the indispensable third dimension to the Gospel. This is a manner of speaking, but an instructive one. The teachings of men are two-dimensional unless they have actually experienced the third. We live in a flat two-dimensional world with no depth or extension beyond our present experience either into time or space: "When the man dies, that is the end thereof." Religion is supposed to go beyond that, it wants to, but lacks confidence and so uses all the devices or art and eloquence to fake that third dimension--as we look up into the soaring vaults of St. Peters, we marvel at the skill with which the architect and painters, in a setting of bells, music and a splendid pageantry of robes, lights and incense, (not without some narcotic effect) seem to give us the illusion of passing into a third dimension of reality. Why bother if they have the real thing? The futility of such contrivance appears in almost any attempt of the Latter-day Saints to achieve spiritual uplift through music, poetry, painting, drama, or special effects, all of which invariably fall short; to those to whom the third dimension is real any attempt to enhance it by two-dimensional materials are bound to appear pitifully inadequate.

10. If the Church has any first foundation it is the unimpeachable testimony of the individual. Since this is non-transmissible one might dismiss it as irrelevant, an absolute beyond discussion, criticism, or demonstration. Even for the individual the testimony comes and goes in accordance with faith and behavior. If it is real, then it is indeed unassailable and imponderable. I cannot force my testimony on you, but there are certain indications to which I might call your attention. People who lose their testimonies and renounce the Church or drop out of it, if they are convinced of their position, should be totally indifferent to the folly of their deluded one-time brethren and sisters: if they want to make fools of themselves, that is up to them, but we are intellectually and socially above all that. Well and good, that is how it is in other churches; but here it does not work that way.

Apostates usually become sometimes feverishly active, determined to prove to the world and themselves that it is a fraud after all. What is that to them? Apparently it is everything--it will not let them alone. At the other end of the scale are those who hold no rancour and even retain a sentimental affection for the Church--they just don't believe the Gospel. I know quite a few of them. But how many of them can leave it alone? It haunts them all the days of their life. No one who has ever had a testimony ever forgets or denies that he once did have it--that it was something that really happened to him. Even for such people who do not have it any more, a testimony cannot be reduced to an illusion.

11. Ten points should be enough, but we cannot pass by the word of prophecy without notice. It is just becoming apparent today that the Scriptures that have come to us by modern revelation are replete with prophecy--there is far more prophecy in them than anyone suspected. It is the fulfillment of things that never seemed possible which is bringing this out. We rightly cite the Prophecy on War, D&C 87, as clear evidence for the prophetic guidance of the Church--without ever bothering to take to heart its message for us--it still comes through loud and clear with a prophetic message; the consummation of the whole thing is to be "a full

end of all nations," (87:6) not a full end of some or a partial end of all, but a full end of all; and that by WAR, not as a possibility or contingency but as a "consumption decreed"--it must happen. "Wherefore" the special instructions with which it ends: "stand ye in HOLY places, and be not moved." I have been re-reading The Life of Wilford Woodruff, who often marvels at the vast and unshakable foundation laid by Joseph Smith, and at the same time wonders if the Saints have continued to build on it. He has some doubts about that: What about the superstructure?

I had thought to go on adding yet more building blocks, and to discuss the changes in the Church which I have personally observed between the Centennial and Sesquicentennial--another of those pageants, so to speak. But that word HOLY has stopped me in my tracks. Naturally I would have talked about the growth of the Church. But is there a critical size or number upon reaching which a state of holiness is obtained, or is there a set period of time, a term at the completion of which one routinely rises a step in holiness? I remember that as the Ancient Church grew in numbers it diminished in holiness. If it is numbers God wants, there is no problem: "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham," said the Lord (Mt. 3:9).

To be instructed from on high you must "sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be endowed with power . . ." (43:16) " . . . and thus ye shall become instructed in the law of my church and be sanctified by that which ye have received, and shall bind yourselves to act in all holiness before me" (43:9). After all, we are stuck with the title of Latter-day Saints, people sanctified, literally "set apart" in the Last Days, when "the adversary spreadeth his dominions, and darkness reigneth; and the anger of God kindleth against the inhabitants of the earth; and none doeth good, and all have gone out of the way" (82:5-6). This is the world in which Joseph Smith was "inspired of the Holy Gost to lay the foundation of the church, and to build it up into the most HOLY faith" (21:2). This is not just another institution.

The greatest change I have noticed in the 50 years since I used to make the three-day bus trip from Los Angeles to Salt Lake is the absence of that thrill I felt when the golden words would begin to appear on the buildings of every little town: HOLINESS TO THE LORD, overarching the all-seeing eye that monitors the deeds of men. That inscription was the central adornment of every important building including each town's main store--the Co-op, as committed as any other institution to the plan of holiness. Next to that what moved me most was the sight of the St. George Temple in its beautiful oasis. What became of "HOLINESS," did it pass away with all the noble pioneer monuments all along the highway, wiped out by the relentless demands of a bottom-line economy? Those delightful old stake-houses, bishop's store-houses, schools, ward-houses, homes and even barns have been steadily replaced by service stations, chain restaurants, shopping malls, motels, and prefabricated functional church and school buildings right from the assembly line: admittedly more practical, but must every house and tree and monument be destroyed because it does not at present pay for itself in cold cash? The St. George Temple is now lost in a neon jungle and suburban tidal-wash of brash ticky-tacky commercialism. One can only assume that it bespeaks the spirit of our times. God has said that the Saints must build Zion with an eye to two things, holiness and beauty: "For Zion must increase in beauty and holiness"

(D.C 82:14)--with no qualifying provision, "Insofar as an adequate return on the investment will allow."

Everything in Zion is to be holy, for God has called it "My Holy Land," and that with a dire warning: "shall the children of Zion pollute my holy land?" (84:5). Apparently it is possible. Holy things are not for traffic, they are not negotiable: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20). Things which we hold sacred we do not sell for money. Consequently to become commodities of trade the land of Zion and what is in it must be de-sanctified. Here we meet with an interesting and ancient precedent in Israel recorded both in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Book of Mormon. When the people were in mortal danger from their enemies they could carry the battle to them and wage destruction on the land; but that was only permitted after the High Priest had stood boldly between the ranks of the armies and in a loud voice formally pronounced the enemy land to be "Desolation:--Horma, Horeb (the Moslem Dar-al-Harb and the ager hosticus of the Romans), while their own land under God's protection was holy land, Bountiful, Dar-al-Islam, ager pacatus."

Even so the land of Zion must become un-holy (what was con-secrated must be de-secrated) before it can be used for gain. "The soil, the air, the water are all pure and healthy," said Brigham Young to the Saints arriving in the Valley, "do not suffer them to become polluted with wickedness. Strive to preserve the elements from becoming contaminated . . ." (JD 8:79:60). "Keep your valley pure, keep your towns pure . . ." (JD 6:80:60). "The Lord blesses the land, the air and the water where the Saints are permitted to live" (JD 10:222:63). "Our enemies . . . would like to see society in Utah polluted and their civilization introduced; but it would be a woeful day for the Israel of God, if such efforts were to be successful" (MS 27:205f:65). We have shown elsewhere that they were successful in Kirtland, in Far West, in Nauvoo, and finally in Utah. Time and again the Saints have made a bungle of the superstructure, unwilling to conform to the foundation laid down in the beginning.

When I first came to Utah in the 40's it was a fresh new world, a joy and a delight to explore far and wide with my boys and girls. But now my friends no longer come on visits as they once did, to escape the grim commercialism and ugly litter of the East and the West Coast. We can watch that now on the Wasatch front. The Saints no longer speak of making the land blossom as the rose, but of making a quick buck in rapid-turnover real estate. All the students I have talked with at the beginning of this semester intend eventually to go into law or business, the BYU is no longer a liberal arts college; they are not interested in improving their talents but in trafficking in them.

Come with me to the places I used to visit in happier times, taking the four distinct zones that run north and south parallel with the Wasatch.

Zone I. First the mountains, the impregnable retreat of God's creatures, whom he has commanded to multiply and be happy in their proper sphere and element--and this is certainly it. The loggers, miners, cattle and sheepmen have grabbed all they can get and are still on the prowl for anything left over. But now, wondrous to relate, even where

the resources are skimpy indeed the "Developers" invade en masse, determined to make a marketable commodity of the only remaining value--solitude. They are selling that, and of course destroying it in the process. And we must not forget those who kill for pleasure, the hunters whose campers will soon line the freeways bumper to bumper.

Zone II. Come with me next down into the valley where the Saints once converted the plain into a garden, blossoming as the rose with the stately trees and running waters I remember so well--they had in mind preparing a place fit for Deity to visit and for Angels to dwell in; fertile, bounteous, unspoiled by those who planted and dressed their gardens, taking good care of the land and being happy in it. Then a long tentacle started reaching down South State Street, which was then the main highway, with its brash commercial clutter and its vulgar procession of arrogant bill-boards designed to distract the eye and the mind with their insolent message: "Never mind that, look what I'm selling!" It was the blare and vulgarity of petty promotion and massive corporeal presence, which even then was rendering the whole land of America a monotonous desert of regimented, uniform, assembly-lines and places where things were sold.

Quickly this spread out all over the valley as freeways connected one shopping center with the next, while subdivisions wiped out the only available orchard-lands within 500 miles, and on all sides the farms, and their way of life melted away before the relentless inroads of real estate promoters from all over the land. I see Joseph Smith standing on the framework of a school-house under construction in Far West, whither he had led the Saints to establish a new Zion, an advance company to prepare the ground for the great influx of immigrants to follow. What were they doing? Grabbing up everything in sight for a quick re-sale to the newcomers at inflationary prices. The Church was afflicted with the real estate fever from the beginning, with tragic results. This is that the Prophet said:

Brethren, we are gathered to this beautiful land to build up Zion . . . . But since I have been here I have perceived the spirit of selfishness. Covetousness exists in the hearts of the Saints . . . . Here are those beginning to spread out, buying up all the land they were able to . . . thinking to lay a foundation for themselves, only looking to their individual families . . . . Now I want to tell you that Zion cannot be built up in such a way. I see signs put out, beer signs, speculative schemes are being introduced. This is the way of the world, Babylon indeed, and I tell you in the Name of the God of Israel, if there is not repentance . . . you will be broken and scattered from this land.

But they continued to build this ambitious superstructure until presently the whole enterprise was swept away in the worst mobbings the people ever knew. This same sermon was recalled, and its lesson repeated to the Saints by Brigham Young immediately after the arrival of the pioneers in the valley, as recorded by Wilford Woodruff, who in turn repeats the lesson for our generation.



Zone III. We move into another zone, to the highly mineralized mountains that line the west side of the valley. They are called the Oquirrh, the "forest mountains," by the Indians. Not any more! Under a canopy of deadly smelter-fumes the forests have long since departed. All along their length the mountains are being torn up on an enormous scale--the local people once boasted of the largest open-pit mine in the world. But not the people who lived there: as in other copper kingdoms, century-old towns have been bulldozed away against the protest of their inhabitants; to dig out the last morsels of metal-bearing ore, no stone is left unturned that might yield a little profit. Here for over a century hard-pressed and poorly-paid miners toiled away. When I was small my father, whose father had worked as a child in the horrible mines of Scotland, and my mother, whose father had been a supervisor in Park City when she was growing up, would tell about the heroic and laborious lives of the brave miners who transferred the treasures of the earth to the coffers of the rich and in return received nothing but abuse. The mining operations naturally extended down into the valley to the smelters, refineries, and mills that still go on impudently pouring the foul industrial wastes into the limited air-space of the valleys--mostly by night--obscuring the "Mountains high and the clear blue sky" with foul, choking, miasmatic fumes, and claiming immunity from all restraints on the grounds that attempts to limit the pollution cut into profits. The ideal condition toward which promoters, developers, and senators seem to be striving is that of the blessed state of Kuwait, where the people sit on unlimited amounts of money in the midst of industrial desolation, a technological waste-land of super-highways and high-rises, of a bleakness and monotony that render all their riches futile and forlorn. What good is all the wealth in the world if one must live in a sewer to get and keep it?

Zone IV. As we once thought the mountains in their remote majesty to be immune to the invasion of a defiling civilization, so we thought that the desert at least would be left alone as of little cash value to anyone. One of my favorite haunts was the Sand Dunes near Lindel: Utter solitude, and the dramatically haunting beauty of the place were wonderfully soothing, refreshing and inspiring to body and mind. Then suddenly the ORV market was discovered, and overnight it became a Walpurgis of noise, brawling, drinking, drugs, fights, vandalism, theft, and sex, where mindless youth could run riot with their costly mechanical toys.

But this was nothing. Already vast tracts of the desert had been set aside for the practice of various ways in which life may be taken most effectively and on the largest possible scale. First it was bombing ranges, systematically developing the most efficient and thorough ways of demolishing man and his works. But this was the age of innocence compared with the next step, the deadlier, nastier, meaner, more insidious and depraved arts of chemical warfare, where nature is drafted to war against nature. This culminates in the deadly nerve gases, including the futile and horrible wet-eye bombs which some have been eager to bring in because of the business that might come with them. But experience has shown that even these

devices can miss. There must be something more absolutely destructive of life. Well, there is. Southern Utah has always been known for its peculiarly pure air and its "kodachrome-blue" skies, which seem to prevail no matter what is going on in the rest of the world. Almost a hundred atom bombs exploded in that chaste atmosphere converted it into a strange new element whose gift was the most dreaded of all diseases--cancer. Professor Teller was brought to the BYU, more than once, to tell us that the testing in the air was utterly harmless, salubrious in fact, and absolutely essential to our position as No. 1 nation.

And as the culmination abomination of desolation we find that corner of "Zion" which to me always recalls that moving phrase, "Holiness to the Lord," has now been set apart, "consecrated" as it were, for the fantastic MX game, the ultimate in waste, futility and desecration of the land. As they welcome the wet-eye bombs abhorred in Colorado, so the Saints now welcome the MX after New Mexico has spurned it with loathing. Why? Because it brings money: 50 billion spent on a trick that just might fool the Russians, and if it works will certainly destroy us--what life will be possible after a dozen H-bombs (the minimum that the mighty installation will attract) have done their work within our borders? And if we count on divine protection, let us recall our very limited immunity to the Nevada testing.

Such considerations admonish me to ask whether all is well in Zion, and I find the answer in myself alone. Have I taken the message seriously? No. I have been quite half-hearted about it, and much too easily drawn into what I call the Gentile Dilemma. That is when I find myself called upon to stand up and be counted, to declare myself on one side or the other--which do I prefer, gin or rum, cigarettes or cigars, tea or coffee, heroin or LSD, the Red Rose or the White, Shiz or Coriantumr, wicked Nephites or wicked Lamanites, Whigs or Tories, Catholic or Protestant, Republican or Democrat, black power or white power, land pirates or sea pirates, commissars or corporations, capitalism or communism, etc., etc. The devilish neatness and simplicity of the thing is the easy illusion that I am choosing between good and evil, instead of between two or more evils which by their rivalry distract my attention from the real issue. The oldest trick in the book for those who wish to perpetuate a great crime unnoticed is to set up a diversion, such as a fight in the street or a cry of fire in the hall, that sends everyone rushing to the spot while the criminal as an inconspicuous and highly respectable citizen quietly walks off with the loot.

Now, it can be shown that in each of the choices just named one of the pair may well be preferable to the other, but that is not the question. There is no point in arguing which other system comes closest to the Law of Consecration, since I excluded all other systems when I opted for the real thing. The relative merits of various economies is a problem for the Gentiles to worry about, a Devil's dilemma which does not concern me in the least. For it so happens that I have presently covenanted and promised to observe most strictly certain instructions set forth with great clarity and simplicity in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, and designated as the Law of Consecration, absolutely essential for the building up of the Kingdom on earth and the ultimate establishment of Zion. "Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the founda-

tion and the ensample which I give unto you, whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you. That through MY providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent of all other creatures beneath the celestial world." (D.C 78:3-14). It is all there, this Law of Consecration, by which alone the Saints can implement God's plans for Zion in spite of the persecution it will bring on them; this is the foundation on which they must build (Cf 48:6). The alternative is to be dependent on baser things, for "Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom: otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself" (D&C 105:5).

But should I ask for tribulation? I live in the real world, don't I? Yes, and I have been commanded to "come out of her . . . lest ye partake of her plagues." It is not given unto you to live after the manner of the world" (95:13). Well, then, you must be "in the world but not of the world." That happens to be a convenient para-scripture (we have quite a few of them today), invented by a third-century Sophist (Diognetos), to the great satisfaction of the church-members who were rapidly becoming very worldly. The passage as it appears in the scriptures says quite the opposite: "For whatsoever is in the world is . . . not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). The Lord has repeatedly commanded and forced his people to flee out of the world into the wilderness, quite literally; there is only one way to avoid becoming involved in the neighborhood brawls, and that is to move out of the neighborhood. There is nothing in the Constitution which forbids me doing certain things which I have covenanted and promised to do; if the neighbors don't like it, they have no legal grounds against me, but there are ways of getting me to move; "the tribulation . . . shall descend upon you," said the Lord, but do things my way and "my providence" will see you through. This inescapable conflict is part of our human heritage, as we learn from dramatic passages of Scripture.

The story begins, according to many ancient writings, unknown to the prophet Joseph Smith, with Satan seeking to promote himself even in the pre-existence, and being cast out of heaven in his pride, and dedicating himself upon his fall to the destruction of this earth, "for he knew not the mind of God" (Mos. 4:6). Lying in wait for Adam in the Garden, he fails in a direct attack, repelled from his prey by a natural enmity between the two; whereupon in a fit of rage and frustration (such as he also displayed in dealing with Moses (Moses 1:19f) he boasts just how he plans to put the world under his bloody and horrible misrule: He will control the world economy by claiming possession of the earth's resources, and by manipulation of its currency--gold and silver--he will buy up the political, military, and ecclesiastical complex and run everything his way. We see him putting his plan into operation when he lays legal claim to the whole earth as his estate, accusing others of trespass, but putting everything up for sale to anyone who has the money. And how will they get the money? By going to work for him. He not only offers employment but a course of instruction in how the whole thing works, teaching the ultimate secret, "this great secret" of converting life into property. Cain got the degree of Master Mahan, and tried the system out on his brother, and gloried in its brilliant success, declaring that at last he could be free, as only property makes free, and that Abel had been a loser in a free competition.

The discipline was handed down through Lamech and finally became the pattern of the world's economy (Mos. 5:55-56). We may detect "the Mahan Principle" vigorously operative in each of the four zones we talked about: As the animals are being wiped out in Zone I, so all forms of vegetation are yielding to asphalt in Zone II, and human life is made short and miserable in Zone III; while the total destruction of every form of life is guaranteed by the macabre exercises in the desert zone. And all for the same purpose: "Cain slew his brother Abel for the sake of getting gain," (Mos. 5:50); not in a fit of pique but by careful business planning, "by a conspiracy" (D&C 84:16). The great secret he learned from Satan was the art of converting life into property--all life, even eternal life! The exchange of eternal life for worldly success is in fact the essence of the classic Pact with the Devil, in which the hero (Faust, Jabez Stone, even Jesus) is offered everything that the wealth of the earth can buy in return for subjection to Satan hereafter. There is no question of having some of both, "You CANNOT serve two masters," the one being Mammon; if you try to have it both ways by putting off the final settlement, says Alma, "the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and has NO place in you, and the devil hath ALL power over you . . ." (Al. 34:35). One may see Mahan at work all around, from the Mafia, whose adherence to the principle needs no argument, down to the drug pusher, the arms dealer, the manufacturer and seller of defective products, or those who poison the air and water as a short-cut to gain and thus shorten and sicken the lives of all their fellow creatures. Is Geneva worth emphysema? At last we come to the lowly snail-darter. Last week Congress pronounced the doom of that species, which stands in the way of construction of a dam. It seems like a fantastic disproportion--between a two-inch fish and a big dam--and it is, with the overwhelming weight of the argument all on the side of the fish. What is the cash value of living things who have been commanded by God to multiply in their proper sphere and element? There is none. Yet there are those who are offended, outraged, at the suggestion that some little finny, furry or feathered species should dare to stand in the way of a mightily bulldozer and the mightier corporate interest behind it. In the snail-darter debate the ultimate expression of contempt for life came from a senator from Utah who with heavy sarcasm asked, Why not declare the smallpox virus an endangered species? Where business interests are concerned small living things are to be esteemed as no more than viruses. "He who has done it to the least of these . . ." applies in the bad sense as well as the good: "He who despises the least of these my creatures despises me!" "Wo unto him who offends one of these little ones!"

But how about the Law of Consecration which is the foundation of Zion? It is, as I said, contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, explained there not once but many times, so that there is no excuse for not understanding it. The three basic principles are (as so plainly set forth by Wilford Woodruff) 1) Everyone gets what he really needs, his wants being met from a common fund which belongs entirely to the Lord and is administered through the Bishop of the Church, 2) nobody keeps more than he really needs, his surplus all going to that fund. Dickering and controversy over the amounts involved is forestalled by the clear statement of the intent and purpose of the law, which is 3) that all may be EQUAL in temporal as in spiritual things. One man's needs may be greater than another's, e.g. because his family is larger; but once those needs are met for each, then

all are equal, satisfied, at peace, each free to develop his own talents and do the Lord's work, for that is the purpose of the law. There is plenty to do to satisfy the work ethic without a profit motive, "But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money, they shall perish" (2 Ne. 26:31). Failure to observe this law places one man above another, abominable in the sight of the Lord, and for that reason, we are told, "the world lieth in sin" (D&C 49:20), in Satan's power indeed.

This law, the consummation of the laws of obedience and sacrifice, is the threshold of the celestial kingdom, the last and hardest requirement made of men in this life: much harder to keep than the rules of chastity and sobriety, for those temptations subside with advancing age, while desire for the security and status of wealth only increase and grow through the years. Yet none may escape the Law of Consecration, none are exempt from it in the Church (D&C 70:10; 42:70ff); none may outlive it, as it is "a permanent and everlasting" law (72:3; 78:4), a "deed and covenant which cannot be broken" (42:30), even by transgression--there is no escaping it (78:10). It cannot be put off until more favorable circumstances offer (70:16), it was given to the Saints because the time was ripe for them, one cannot move into it gradually to ease the shock (78:2); or observe it partially (42:78), or even grudgingly (70:14). It is so fundamental that the early leaders of the Church (Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, etc.) declare that their first impulse after being baptized was to give away all their property to the poor and trust the hand of God to supply their wants in the mission field, for in any case they could take no money with them. Was that a hard choice? Let us recall the case of the righteous young man who had kept every point of the Law and asked to become a disciple of Christ; "one thing thou lackest" the Lord told him (Mt. 10:31; Lk. 18:22), "If thou wouldst be perfect" (Mt. 19:24) there was yet this one thing--the Law of Consecration which crowns all the others. But the young man could not take that one step, because he was very rich, and for that the Lord turned him away sorrowing: he did not call him back to suggest easier terms, but turned to his Disciples and pointed out to them by this example how hard it is for a rich man to heaven--only a special miracle could do it, he explains; it is as impossible to enter the celestial kingdom without accepting the celestial law as it is for a camel to get through the eye of a needle. The disciples marvelled greatly at this, for they had never heard of that convenient postern gate, invented by an obliging Nineteenth-century minister for the comfort of his well-heeled congregation--the ancient sources knew nothing of that gate, and neither did the baffled Apostles. (That is another "para-scripture".) If I keep all the other commandments, says Alma, and ease up on this one, my prayers are vain and I am a hypocrite (Al. 34:28). Tithing is merely a substitute--a very different thing; once we start making concessions and explanation the whole thing becomes a farce. If business expenses and necessities are deducted from tithable income nothing is left. God takes a serious view of any attempt to cut corners: He struck Ananias and his wife dead not for failure to pay anything, but for "holding back" part of what they should have paid (Acts 5:1). The free-wheeling interpretation of "stewardship" offers no way out, e.g. piously announcing that the stuff is only mine during this lifetime (a generous concession indeed!), or admission that I must dispose of it in a responsible way (as if others had no such responsibility). One

is "a steward over his own property," namely "that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family" (D&C 42:32). That is "his own property" to which he has exclusive right, and that is the limit of his stewardship--and it is all consecrated, whether given or received. One does not begin by holding back what he thinks he will need, but by consecrating EVERYTHING which the Lord has given him so far to the Church; then he in return receives back from the Bishop by consecration whatever he needs.

To "consecrate," says the Dictionary, means "To make or declare HOLY; to set apart for sacred uses only." God is going "to organize the kingdom upon the consecrated land," (103:35), "the land which I have consecrated to be the land of Zion," (103:24), for a consecrated people. ". . . let the city, Far West be HOLY and CONSECRATED land unto me; and it shall be called HOLY, for the GROUND upon which thou standest is HOLY." (115:7). The word appears more than 140 times in the Doctrine and Covenants. It was when some of the brethren began trading in this holy land that the Prophet denounced them, telling them in the name of Israel's God that Zion could never be built up in such a way. The Foundation of the Holy City was to be nothing other than the Law of Consecration (48:6).

Is the law unrealistic, impractical? It is much too late for me to worry about that now, for I have already accepted it and repeated my acceptance at least once every month. (At the last conference Brother Mark Petersen spoke of the importance of keeping ALL the covenants we have made--and none is more important, more specific, more sacred than this one). What about Brother So-and-So or President So-and-So? He is free to do as he pleases, I did not covenant with him! I knew quite well what I was promising to do and when and where I was to do it, and why--now it is up to me! This is not like plural marriage which was suspended by a formal decree because the whole of American society and Government had thrown their weight against it with dedicated and unrelenting fury that disrupted the whole course of life in the Church and even the nation. When the United Order was dissolved in 1834 it was through no pressure from outside, but because of greed and hypocrisy ("Covetousness and feigned words" D&C 104:4, 52) within the Church. Brigham Young revived it again--the Brigham Young Academy at Provo was founded for the explicit purpose, in his words, of countering "the theories of Huxley, of Darwin, or of Mill and the false political economy which contends against co-operation and the United Order." But after him the old covetousness and feigned words triumphed again as rich men quietly bought up controlling shares of the cooperatives without changing the name. To quote a recent study, ". . . astute businessmen gradually gained control of the cooperatives . . . completely changed the character of the companies; though they often kept the company name the same, in order to take advantage of the local appeal that cooperatives still held. By the mid-eighties, most of the stock of the cooperatives had been sold to a few businessmen who now controlled the entire operation . . . whose main concern became profit-making." Moreover, by "operating under the name of the now defunct cooperatives," these businessmen enjoyed a monopoly in the land. In 1882 President John Taylor sent out a letter declaring, "If people would be governed by correct principles laying aside covetousness and eschewing chicanery and fraud, dealing honestly and conscientiously with others . . . there would be no objection" to their free enterprise--that was

appealing to them to do away with covetousness and feigned words, the very things that had put them in control of the economy.

But while attempts to implement it come and go, the covenant remains, and those who have entered it must live by it or be cursed (D&C 104:3-5), for in this matter God is not to be mocked (v. 6). I am in a perfectly viable position at this moment to observe and keep it, as I have promised, independently of any other party. I do not have to wait for permission from any other person or group to act; I do not have to join any body of protesters who feel that others are not on the right track before I can keep the rules of chastity or sobriety, nor do I have to join a club or splinter-group in order to keep the Ten Commandments. The essence of the Law of Consecration is Charity, without which, as Paul and Moroni tell us, all the other laws and observances become null and void. Love is not selective and charity knows no bounds--"For if you love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" (Mt. 5:44ff). How do you keep the most important commandments? the Apostles asked, and in reply the Lord told them of a man who was neither priest, nor a Levite nor even of Israel--a mere Samaritan, who did not wait for clearance before yielding to a generous impulse to help one in distress who was completely unknown to him: "Go thou and do likewise!" was the advice--you are on your own. "It is not meet that I command in all things" (D&C 58:26). I made my covenants and promises personally with God, in the first person singular. "I want you to understand," said Heber C. Kimball, "that you make covenants with God, not with us. We were present and committed those covenants to you, and you made them with God, and we were witnesses" (D&C 6:127f). Paul recognizes this in his lucid statements about the law of consecration in his letters to Timothy, which should be studied carefully. And he is talking about the foundation of the Church, which rests on the personal contract between God and the individual: ". . . nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having THIS SEAL: the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). The Lord alone knows who are the true Church, he alone stands at the gate, "and he employeth no servant there" as he takes each one by the hand and speaks each name. Even the Prophet does not know who are in the covenant and who are not ". . . as you cannot always judge the righteous, or as you cannot always tell the wicked from the righteous, therefore I say unto you, hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known" (D&C 10:37).

What is there to stop me from observing and keeping the law of consecration at this very day as I have already covenanted and promised to do without reservation? Is the foundation too broad for us to build on? We are in the position of one who has inherited a number of fabulously rich and varied franchises. Only two or three of the enterprises really appeal to him, and so he devotes all his attention to them and neglects all the others. How often have we heard--even from outsiders--if the Latter-day Saints only realized what riches they possess! Well, there is a clause in the will stating that if the heir neglects ANY of the franchises he will forfeit them all. What am I doing with genealogy, temple-work, Sunday-school, priesthood, home teaching, scripture study, and all my meetings? I simply can't do them all; I cannot begin to do justice to them. Why not? Because I am, as my grandfather used to say, and not entirely

in jest, too taken up with the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, by which he meant business. But must you spend so much time at it? Don't you know that if you lived by the Law of Consecration you would have time enough for all of it? But that is out of the question, our way of life demands the other. Which is exactly why God has always commanded his people to give up that way of life, come out of the world, and follow his special instructions. The main purpose of the Doctrine and Covenants, you will find, is to implement the Law of Consecration.

N.B. This brings us to the Question-period which followed. The questions were in the nature of practical objections--very sensible and reasonable. For example: "People now moving into Utah Valley must have somewhere to live: therefore the orchards must go." What could be more sensible and to the point? In such a spirit a friend says to me, "I MUST have my two cups of coffee every morning; otherwise I cannot get through the day." Perfectly sensible; what is the answer? "What do you mean by getting through the day?" Well, I have to go the office--the old rat-race, you know, a real strain." Must you go to the office? Is there no other way? Who tells you there is no other way? The more completely committed you are to a prescribed way of doing things the fewer options you enjoy, until you end up a helpless prisoner to your precious "way of life." If you are resigned or dedicated to a regime that you do not really like, or that wastes your talents, then you are a prisoner indeed--in Satan's power. In short, when you say "There is no other way" the game is lost and he has won. The number of possible solutions to any problem is legion, limited only by our own mental resources, and God is anxious to give us all the light and guidance we are WILLING to receive in solving our problems (D&C 88:32f). The mental paralysis of our times strongly suggests that God has withdrawn his spirit from among men, as he said he would. Quite recently the newspapers and journals have been full of the alarming decline in mental capacity and learning among the rising generation, in which, I sorrow to say, Utah leads the parade with its appalling 26 percent drop in Scholarly Aptitude scores and the lowest rating in all the land in mathematics--the one subject that requires some real discipline. Can such people ever be independent? We lamely submit to atom-bomb tests, wet-eyes, and the MX maze, we inhale the dust of Vitrio tailings for years on end and rally to the support of the nation's Number One polluter in our midst as we surrender that last wilderness heritage on earth, in the name of "unlocking" it, to private land-grabbers. Satan has us where he wants us--helpless, scared to death: "If we leave his employment, what will become of us?" For he has us convinced that there is no other way, nothing to do but go along. Ah, but there IS another way. If you and the rest of Adam's children will only listen to the Gospel, you will soon learn that ample provision has been made in the providence of God through his Law of Consecration.



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