WORK WE MUST

BUT THE LUNCH IS FREE

By Hugh Nibley

According to the gospel of evolution, lunch is the meaning of life. Everything is lunching on everything else, all the time, and that is what makes us what we are: that is the key to progress. And when the beasts are not lunching, they are hunting for lunch. They all have to work for it: there is no free lunch in the world of nature, the real world.

"Nature red in tooth and claw," was Tennyson's happy phrase. Of course, he got the idea from Darwin, as Spencer did his even happier phrase, "Survival of the fittest."

The *Origin of Species* put the unimpeachable seal of Science on the lunch-grab as the Supreme Law of life and progress. Basically, Darwin gave the blessing of science to men who had been hoping and praying for holy sanction to an otherwise immoral way of life. Malthus had shown that there will never be enough lunch for everybody, and therefore people would have to fight for it; and Ricardo had shown by his Iron Law of wages, that those left behind and gobbled up in the struggle for lunch had no just cause for complaint. Darwin showed that this was an inexorable law of nature by which the race was actually improved—Mill and Spencer made it the cornerstone of the Gospel of Free Enterprise—the weaker MUST fall by the way if the stock is to be improved. This was movingly expressed in J. D. Rockefeller's discourse on the American Beauty Rose, which, he said, "can only be produced by sacrificing the

Illustration by Brent D. Burch

early buds that grow up around it . . . This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working out of a law of Nature and a law of God."

In this divinely appointed game of grabs, to share the lunch-prize would be futile, counter-productive, nay, immoral. Since there is not enough to go around, whoever gets his fill must be taking it from others—that is the way the game is played.

It was expressly to refute that philosophy that Brigham Young founded Brigham Young University in 1875: "We have enough and to spare at present in these mountains of schools where . . . the teachers . . . dare not mention the principles of the gospel to their pupils, but have no hesitancy in introducing into the classroom the theories of Huxley, or Darwin, or of Mill and the false political economy which contends against co-operation and the United Order. This course I am resolutely and uncompromisingly opposed to . . . As a beginning in this direction I have endowed the Brigham Young Academy at Provo." With his usual unfailing insight, President Young saw it was the economic and political rather than the scientific and biological implications of natural selection that were the real danger and most counter to the gospel.

We can put the situation in terms of two employers who are competing for the services of mankind. The first employer offers us lunch, and since lunch is something everybody must have, he is in a powerful position to bargain. He explains that this glorious earth is his private estate, that it all belongs to him. In particular, he owns the mineral rights and the media of exchange, and by controlling these he enjoys the willing cooperation of the military, ecclesiastical, and political establishments.

All who are not working for him on his estate he charges with trespassing, but he is willing to make a deal, if they have money. Because money is the only thing that will get them lunch—mere work is not enough—and since everybody must have lunch, he has them under control. If anyone gets out of line, he simply asks, "If you leave my employ, what will become of you?" That scares the daylights out of them—from the man on the dreary assembly line to the Chairman of the Board, they are all scared stiff.

After all, what would happen if lunch was always provided free for them? Would they not lose their most immediate incentive to work—the need for lunch-money? And since money, as we learn in Economy 101, is "the power to command goods and services," who would ever do any work again? How can you command somebody to work for you if he doesn't need your lunch? That, the shrewd employer explains, is why he must never cease reminding one and all in his domain that there is no free lunch. It is that great teaching which keeps his establishment going.

So let us now go across the road for an interview with the Other Employer. To our surprise, he answers our first question with an emphatic: "Forget about lunch! Don't even give it a thought! Take no thought of what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink or wherewith ye shall be clothed . . .!"

According to His gospel, lunch should be the least of our concerns. This generous patron permits us to come here to go to school, to acquire certain knowledge and take certain tests to prepare us for greater things hereafter. While we are at school, he provides us with all the necessities of life.

Imagine that at the end of the first school year, our kind benefactor pays you a visit. He meets you and asks how you are doing.

"I am doing very well," you say, "thanks to your bounty."

"Are you learning a lot?"

"Yes, I am making good progress."

"What subjects are you taking?"

"I'm studying courses in how to get more lunch."

"You study that? All the time?"

"Yes, I thought of studying some other subjects, indeed, I would love to study them—some of them are so fascinating! But it's the bread-and-butter courses that count. This is the real world, you know. There is no free lunch."

"But, my boy, I am providing you with that right now."

"Yes, for the time being, and I'm grateful. But my purpose in life is to get more and better lunches. I want to go right to the top, the executive suite."

"But that is not the work I wanted you to do here," says the disappointed patron.

"The question in our minds ought to be," says Brigham Young, "what will advance the general interest. . . and increase intelligence in the minds of the people. To do this should be (your) constant study in preference to how shall we secure that farm or that garden."

Lunch can easily become the one thing the whole office looks forward to all morning; a distraction, a decoy—like sex, it is a passing need that can only too easily become an engrossing obsession.

And about work? I once had a University Fellowship for which I had to agree *not* to accept any gainful employment for the period of a year at least—all living necessities were supplied: I was actually forbidden to work for lunch. Was it free lunch? I never worked so hard in my life—but I never gave lunch a thought. I wasn't supposed to. I was eating only so that I could do my work; I was not working only so that I could eat. And that is what the Lord asks us: to forget about lunch, and do his work, and the lunch will be taken care of.

In the scriptures, we find a succinct and lucid statement of the lunch situation, that is, of God's economic precepts for Israel. I turn first to Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy, then to King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon, next to Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and finally to modern prophets.

Moses. After Moses had led the Children of Israel for 40 years, he summed up all the rules by which they were to live in a great Farewell Address. He told them that all prosperity and life itself in the new Promised Land would depend on strict observance of the law . . . for it is recognition of divine law that both sanctions and requires the Free Lunch for everybody. Without a sincere religious awareness, the Free Lunch corrupts rich and poor alike.

Let us remember that Israel had been living for 40 years on a free lunch—manna from heaven. They did not have to work for it, indeed they were effectively prevented from taking any advantage of such a bonanza—it was simply their daily bread to which everyone had a right and of which no one could take more than he needed for himself on one day. If you ate more it would make you sick; if with farsighted business sense you stocked up on it, you would find yourself properly rebuked. Every attempt to make the manna an object of free enterprise was ruled out—this was the ultimate Free Lunch. On the day the people entered the Promised Land, Moses told them that from then on there would be no more manna—but the Free Lunch would continue without a break. For in this hill country, he explained, they

Condensed from his address in April to the Cannon- Hinckley Club.

would be just as dependent on the rain of heaven as they ever were on manna from heaven for their sustenance, and God alone would provide it.

And he further told them:

- However impractical and unrealistic these rules and precepts may seem to the world, you are not of the world, but wholly withdrawn from it, a people chosen, set apart, removed, "peculiar," sanctified under a special Covenant with God which has nothing to do with the normal economy of men;
- The legal aspects of the thing are not what counts—the business of lawyers is to get around the law, but you must have it written in your hearts;
- Remember that everything you have is a free gift from God: You had nothing and he gave you everything;
- Never get the idea that you have earned what you have; beware "lest when ye have eaten and are full" . . . then your hearts be lifted up and you will forget the Lord thy God, and you say to yourself: "My ability and hard work have made for me this fortune." But you must bear in mind that God alone has given it all to you, and that it is not for any merit of yours, but for the sake of confirming promises made to your fathers that he has done it;
- The gifts of God have come to you not because of your righteousness, because you are not righteous, and have in no wise deserved what you have received, nor are you worthy of it.

In all the Law of Moses with its perpetual concern for giving and receiving there is never any mention whatever of who deserves what, whether rich or poor, or who is worthy to receive what he needs—"God lets his sun shine over the just and the unjust alike." *Need* is the only criterion where lunch is concerned. Those who basely set themselves to scrupulously calculating the exact point at which they can open or close their hand to their brother, with meticulous definitions of "the truly needy," should consider how much of what they are giving is "truly private property."

Under the Mosaic Law everyone was constantly being tested for his generosity quotient; for as Brigham Young often reminded the saints, God has placed whatever we have in our hands only to see what we would do with it—whether we would waste, hoard or bestow it freely.

King Benjamin. For his great Farewell Address, King Benjamin summoned all the people to gather by families around the temple. There he set the keynote of absolute equality, which follows naturally from the proposition that we owe everything to God, to whom we are perpetually and inescapably in debt beyond our means of repayment. The discourse was devoted to the rule that whoever has more than he can eat must share to the limit of his resources with those who do not have enough.

In his address, Benjamin stresses two things: need and dependence. As to need, not a word is said about hard work, thrift, enterprise or farsightedness. The usual pious appeal to the work ethic is absent, for God is not pleased with those who rebuff his offer of free lunch with pious sermons about the work ethic.

"Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I . . . will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just"—I worked for mine! Indolent and unworthy the beggar may be—but that is not your concern: It is better, said Joseph Smith, to feed 10 imposters than to run the risk of turning away one honest petition. Anyone who explains why he denies help to another who needs it, says Benjamin: "hath great cause to repent . . . and hath no interest in the Kingdom of God," which Kingdom is built upon the Law of Consecration, "For behold, are we not all beggars?" That is no mere rhetoric—it is literally true, we are all praying for what we have not earned. No one is independent.

This issue of independence is charged with special emotion for Americans. The word, moreover, has become a fetish for the LDS, and led them into endless speculations and plans, the "temptations and snares of those who would be rich," says Paul—all of which the Lord has strictly forbidden. In the Scriptures the word "independent" occurs only once, describing the Church with no reference to any individual: "the church may stand independent above all other creatures," because it is entirely dependent on "my providence." It is dependence that is important for Benjamin, total dependence on God; and if you serve him "with your whole heart and with your whole soul" you are free from dependence on any other being. In the Law of Moses the Lord's Release cancels all indebtedness of man, while God transfers his claims on our indebtedness to the poor; it is through them that he asks us to pay our debt to him.

Of course, the poor may not hold back either, for everyone should have enough but not wish for more; hence the poor who want to be rich, who "covet that which ye have not received," are also guilty. In giving, the poor may keep what is sufficient for their needs, and food, clothing, and shelter covers it.

Let us refer to Satan's promise of independence. When, following Satan's instructions, "Cain murdered his brother Abel for the sake of getting gain," he declared his independence, "and he gloried in that which, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands!" Recently this gospel was proclaimed by one of the richest Americans addressing the student body of Ohio State University: "There is nothing that gives freedom," he said, "like bucks in the bank." This seems to be the policy we are following today, and there is no doubt whose policy it is.

Benjamin ends with the wise remark that no list of prohibitions would be sufficient to keep the people from sin; instead of telling them what they should not do, he told them what they absolutely must do, the minimum if they would expect God's blessings. If one who has more than he really needs withholds it from those who do not have enough, he is stealing, holding on to that "which doth not belong to you, but to God," who wants to see it distributed equally.

Jesus Christ. With the coming of the Lord in the Meridian of Time, feasts of thanksgiving, meals of real food, were shared whenever the saints came together for a meeting, and when the Lord visited them after the Resurrection he routinely shared a real meal with them, in which he provided the food, looking forward to the time when they would all share in the new wine of the world to come.

The Lord gave lunch to the people in the first place simply because they were hungry, they needed it and he "was moved with compassion." He both fed them and taught them, but the knowledge was worth far more than the food—he told them not to labor for that. When he miraculously produced the lunch, they wanted to accept him as their prophet and king, even as the Nephites, who when they had eaten and were filled all burst out in one joyful chorus of praise and thanksgiving. Why the excitement? Hadn't they ever eaten dinner before? That had nothing to do

with it; what thrilled them was seeing clearly and unmistakably the Hand of the Giver, and knowing for themselves exactly where it all comes from and that it can never fail.

If we ask who at these feasts got the biggest share or ate the most, we at once betray the poverty and absurdity of our own precious work ethic. Such questions would be nothing short of blasphemous to all present, as if one were to interrupt the ordinances and stop the feast by announcing: "Hold it right there, you people! Don't you know that there is NO FREE LUNCH?"

The Free Lunch looms large in the Sermon on the Mount, wherein the Lord makes it clear that the same rule holds for dress and appearance as for lunch—sufficient covering is necessary, but don't go beyond that. If you cannot add a cubit to your stature, don't try to add other splendors to your person which it does not possess: forget the obsession with an impressive appearance that goes with aspiring to the executive lunch ("dressing for success"); simply appear as what you are, and don't fuss so much about it. "Therefore," he says again, "take no thought, saying what shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The injunction "take no thought" must be taken seriously, since it is one of the most oft-repeated in the Scriptures, occurring in all the Gospels, in the Book of Mormon, and in the Doctrine and Covenants. It applies specifically to what we must eat, drink, and wear. We are told that while "the Gentiles seek after all these things," we are definitely NOT to seek after them. We are to be busy seeking after something else, "the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." But what about the other things? Won't we need food and clothing, too? Of course, they are very important, and you can rest assured that "your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," and he will provide them. If you have enough faith to trust him, and spend your days seeking what *he* wants you to seek, he will provide "all these things" as you need them.

The command to "take no thought" applies not only to the Apostles but to the entire Church. The Lord illustrates the principle of taking no thought for the morrow by the story of a man big in agri-business. When with foresight and planning this man had completed his arrangements for a splendid retirement, he congratulated himself, saying, "My soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry"—the de luxe lunch assured forever, complete independence with no humiliating necessity of praying for daily bread. "But God said unto him: FOOL! This night shall thy soul be required of thee. . . ." Shouldn't he have worked for lunch at all, then? Answer: He should neither have made it the goal of his labors, nor got it by manipulating others.

The Parables of the Lord are particularly rich in matters relevant to the free lunch, and in them Jesus appeals before all things against meanness of spirit, which offends God more than anything else. We have no laws ordering men to be charitable and open-handed, or penalizing that meanness of spirit which so often means an enhanced profit, for the obvious reason that no one can know what is in the heart of another. But God knows, and meanness of spirit is the one thing He will not tolerate.

To make merchandise of another's need is an offense to human dignity, though it is the basic principle of present-day employment practice. It is not sound business sense, obedience to orders, compliance with custom or recognition of duty, however, that is being tested, but the feelings of the heart, the capacity for compassion. Only by such a sweeping and uncompromising order as "the Lord's release" can men break the insidious network of indebtedness by which Satan holds all mankind in his power.

Modern Prophets. For the Last Days everyone has been invited to work for the Kingdom with singleness of purpose and to enjoy the free lunch of the saints. The first words of the Lord to the youthful Joseph after he had introduced himself in the grove, were, "Behold, the world at this time lieth in sin, and there is none that doeth good, no not one! And mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to their ungodliness." That being the present situation, we may well ask, "What is it that renders the present world so depraved?" The answer is loud and clear: "Behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man, for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance." Malthus was wrong: there is no need for grabbing, "for the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare." And what is wrong just now? "But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin." So that is where the offense lies; some are taking more than they should and using the power it gives them over others to make them do their bidding.

"Our real wants are very limited," says Brigham. "When you have what you wish to eat and sufficient clothing to make you comfortable you have all that you need; I have all that I need." How many people need to eat two lunches a day? "We all eat too much, wear too much, and work too much," says Brigham; "If we all ate less, wore less, and worked less, we would be a better, happier and a wiser people."

Brigham Young also noted, however, that if the wealth were equally distributed one fine day, it would not be long before it would be as unequal as ever, the lion's share going to the most dedicated and competent seekers for it. True enough. But wealth is not lunch, and to make it such is an offense against nature. Say the lunch is equally distributed one day and soon one man because of his hustle is sitting daily on 70,000 lunches while that many people are going without. He generously offers them the chance to work for him and get their lunches back—but they must work all day, just for him and just for lunch. Lunch and the satisfaction of helping their generous employer to get hold of yet more lunches (for that is the object of their work) is all they get out of it.

God wants all his children to enjoy his bounty, with never a mention of who is worthy or deserving—as ever, the only principle of distribution is that of need: "You are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties . . . for your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just."

That limitation on wants is important, since one often wants what one should not have; a want is "justified" only when it is a true need, and as we have seen our real needs are few—"food and raiment," mansions and yachts not included. In introducing this particular revelation, the Lord repeats for the third time what he has said in the grove: ". . . the anger of God kindleth against the inhabitants of the earth, and none doeth good, for all have gone out of the way." And always the same reason is given for that anger, that men withhold God's gifts from each other in a power game, and that this is the prevailing evil of the age.

The essence of evil being thus clearly exposed, the rationalizing, theorizing, and legalizing of the dialectical materialists on either side of the Iron Curtain is irrelevant to the issue, which is, that anyone who can argue that it is permissible to deny food to the hungry when we have food "shall with the wicked lift up his eyes in hell."

A common objection to the economic equality on which the Scriptures insist is that it would produce a drab, monotonous sameness among us. But that sameness already exists—we all have about the same number of eyes, ears, arms, legs, etc.; few people are twice as tall or twice as short as the average, and Binet was unable to come up with an IQ double the average. Also, few of us need two lunches a day. We might as well face it, we are all very much alike, in such things, though the thought mortally offends some people. It is in the endless reaches of the mind, expanding forever in all directions, that infinite variety invites us, with endless space for all so that none need be jealous of another. It is those who seek distinction in costly apparel, living quarters, diversions, meals, cars and estates who become the slaves of fashion and the most stereotyped people on earth.

And it is because communism is a "dialectical materialism" that it is the drabbest show of all, though our rival Establishment is not far behind. The communists are even more insistent than we are on having a world in which everybody must work, work, work for lunch, with no other expectation in time or eternity than a booming economy here and now. Their periodic slumps and collapses are as predictable as our own, but that will not correct their fanatical obsession with a single way of doing things.

Modern revelation has some interesting things to say about idlers: "Let every man be diligent in all things. And the idler shall not have place in the church." We are all to work in the kingdom and for the kingdom. An idler in the Lord's book is one who is not working for the building up of the kingdom of God on earth and the establishment of Zion, no matter how hard he may be working to satisfy his own greed. Latter-day Saints prefer to ignore that distinction as they repeat a favorite maxim of their own invention, that the idler shall not eat the bread or wear the clothing of the laborer. But the ancient teaching that the idler shall not eat the bread of the laborer has always meant that the idle rich shall not eat the bread of the laboring poor, as they always have.

The reason things have not changed lies in the basic nature of those principles, of necessity stern and inflexible. But can we do no better than to dedicate all our time and energy to solving just that one problem, as if our whole object in life were simply lunch? "What is a man," asks Shakespeare, "if the chief good and market of his time be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more. Sure he that made us with such large discourse, looking before and after, gave us not such capability and godlike reason to fust in us unused."

If we use our capabilities solely to feed, we are much less than the beasts. For many a documentary will show you the beasts of the field spending their days not in perpetually seeking out and consuming each other for lunch, as we have been taught by evolutionists, but in pleasant relaxation, play, family fun, bathing, exploring (for many of them have lively curiosity), grooming, sparring, and much happy napping, etc. Even the most efficient killers hunt only every few days when they are really hungry, kill only weaker members of the herds, thus strengthening the stock, and never take more than they need, usually sharing it with others. Between meals we see leopards, lions and tigers calmly loping through herds of exotic ungulates, who hardly bother to look up from their grazing at the passing visitors.

It is only the human predator who keeps a 24-hour lookout for victims in the manner prescribed in the flourishing contemporary Success literature. Those very popular how-to-get-rich books, which are the Guides to the Perplexed of the present generation, say we should keep our minds fixed at all times on just one objective; that the person who lets his thoughts wander away from anything but business even for a moment does not deserve the wealth he seeks. Such is the high ethic of the youth today. And such an ethic places us not on the level of the beast, but below it.

A thing is either free or it is not; a free lunch would have to be for everybody, and that would never do in the "real world" in which we live; therefore, we are wasting our time talking about Free Lunch in the world as we know it.

But the world as we know it is the very antithesis of Zion, in which we should all be living at this very moment. I have cited a few passages from scripture to show that, whether we like it or not, in all Dispensations of the Gospel the free lunch was prescribed for all living under the Covenant, and at the same time very special kinds of work were assigned to each and all of them, the object of which was not Lunch but the building up of the Kingdom and the establishment of Zion. And yet, even now, the gulf steadily widens between the Zion of God and those babylonian institutions in our midst that brazenly bear the fair name of Zion as a gimmick to promote local business. No one is more completely "of the world" than one who lives by the world's economy, whatever his display of open piety.

"No free lunch" easily directs our concern to "nothing but lunch." The Adversary keeps us to that principle, making lunch our full-time concern either by paying workers so little that they must toil day and night just to afford lunch (his favorite trick), or by expanding the lunch-need to include all the luxury and splendor that goes with the super-executive lunch.

"You may say," says Brigham, "If we live we must eat, drink and wear clothing, and He that provideth not for his own household, hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel, [By 'providing' the same writer means 'food and raiment . . . and therewith content']; numberless arguments of this kind will present themselves to the minds of the people, to call them away from the line of their duty." It is Satan's clever decoy to that fervid consumerism (Veblen's conspicuous consumption) which is a confession of mental, moral, and spiritual bankruptcy.

We are being asked, even at this moment, to choose between the peculiar economy which God has prescribed for us and what we have always considered the more realistic, convenient and expedient economy by which the world lives and in which at the moment it is convulsively gasping and struggling to survive. The difference between the two orders is never more apparent than at lunch-time, in the homely perennial ordinance that was meant to unite us all for a happy hour but which instead divides God's children with the awful authority and finality of the Last Judgment—in which, by the way, the Lord assures us that the seating order is going to be completely reversed.