

*In prison I saw him next, condemned  
To meet a traitor's doom at morn;  
The tide of lying tongues I stemmed,  
And honored him 'mid shame and scorn.  
My friendship's utmost zeal to try,  
He asked if I for him would die;  
The flesh was weak; my blood ran chill;  
But the free spirit cried, "I will!"*

*Then in a moment to my view  
The stranger started from disguise;  
The tokens in his hands I knew;  
The Savior stood before mine eyes.  
He spake, and my poor name he named,  
"Of me thou hast not been ashamed;  
These deeds shall thy memorial be,  
Fear not, thou didst them unto me."*

(Hymns, no. 153.)

### **Blessing**

God bless you, brothers and sisters.

It's been a wonderful conference and a joy to mingle with you these days. Peace be with you; and may his joy and peace continue with you. We know it is true. I know the Lord lives and I know that he's revealing his mind and will to us daily, so that we can be inspired as to the direction to go.

We ask this all, with our affection for you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The Tabernacle Choir sang the hymn, "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me."

The benediction was pronounced by Elder George P. Lee of the First Quorum of the Seventy and President of the Arizona Holbrook Mission.

The Conference was adjourned for six months.

## WELFARE SERVICES SESSION

A Welfare Services Session was held in connection with General Conference on Saturday morning, April 2, 1977, at 7 o'clock. Invited to attend this meeting were General Authorities, Regional Representatives, stake presidencies, high councilors involved in welfare work, bishoprics, and stake and ward Relief Society presidencies and others responsible for operating welfare production projects. President Spencer W. Kimball was present and presided at this session.

Presiding Bishop Victor L. Brown conducted the meeting. Speakers at this meeting included Bishop Victor L. Brown and Bishop J. Richard Clarke of the Presiding Bishopric, President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve, and Sister Barbara B. Smith, President of the Relief Society.

President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency then gave the following address:

### President Marion G. Romney

My beloved brothers and sisters, I ask you to join with me in a prayer that the Lord will be with the talks given here this morning, and I hope my re-

marks will be in harmony with them. I hope that every one of you bishops and branch presidents has a clear understanding of the many resources avail-

able to assist you in administering Church welfare services. I urge you to actively use these many resources. I hope we *all* understand how our consecrations to the Lord—whether in time, work, or money—unite to relieve suffering while *sanctifying both the giver and the receiver*. I have been pleased with the explanation of the role of the Lord's storehouse and how production projects serve to fill it with both "meat and money."

### Law of consecration and stewardship

Since we have so far in this meeting concentrated on *how* we should minister in the Lord's own way, I shall center my remarks on *why* we are engaged in this great program. Almost from the beginning of my services in Church welfare I have had the conviction that *what we are doing in this welfare work is preliminary to the reestablishment of the law of consecration and stewardship as required under the united order*. If we could always remember the goal toward which we are working, we would never lose our bearings in this great work. What we are about is not new. It is as old as the gospel itself. Whenever the Lord has had a people who would accept and live the gospel, He has established the united order. He established it among the people of Enoch, of whom the record says:

"The Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.

"And 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." (Moses 7:17-18.)

If we will do the things the Lord has asked us to do, we too will continue to be blessed and will grow in righteousness. In the revelation that the Prophet specified as "embracing the law

of the Church" (D&C 42, chapter heading), the Lord said:

"Behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them. . . .

"And inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me; and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church and his counselors. . . .

"And it shall come to pass, that after they are laid before the bishop of my church, . . . it shall be kept to administer to those who have not, from time to time, that every man who has need may be amply supplied and receive according to his wants.

"Therefore, the residue shall be kept in my storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy." (D&C 42:30-34.)

"And this I do," said the Lord, "for the *salvation* of my people." (D&C 42:36; italics added.)

In this revelation, which the Prophet designated the "law of the Church," the Lord revealed the essentials of the united order, which was His program for eliminating the inequalities among men. It is based upon the underlying concept that the earth and all things therein belong to the Lord, and that men hold earthly possessions as stewards accountable to Him.

"I, the Lord," He said, "stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, . . . and all things therein are mine.

"And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine.

"But it must needs be done in mine own way." (D&C 104:14-16.)

In *His way*, there are two cardinal principles: (1) consecration, and (2) stewardship.

To enter the united order, one consecrated all his possessions to the Church by a "covenant and a deed which [could not] be broken." That is, he completely divested himself of all his property by conveying it to the Church.

## The united order

Having done so, the consecrator received from the Church a stewardship by a like conveyance. This stewardship could be more or less than the original consecration, the object being to make "every man equal according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs." (D&C 51:3.)

This procedure preserved in every man the right of private ownership and management of his property. Indeed, the fundamental principle of the system was the private ownership of property. Each man owned his portion, or inheritance, or stewardship, with an absolute title, which, at his option, he could alienate, keep and operate, or otherwise treat as his own. The Church did not own all of the property, and life under the united order was not, and never will be, a communal life, as the Prophet Joseph himself said.

The intent was, however, for him to so operate his property as to produce a living for himself and his dependents. So long as he remained in the order, he consecrated to the Church the *surplus* he produced above the needs and wants of his own family. This surplus went into a storehouse, from which stewardships were given to others, and from which the needs of the poor were supplied.

These divine principles are very simple and easily understood. However, there are a number of concepts which must prevail in order for this ideal to be realized. Chief among these concepts are the following:

1. *A belief in God* and acceptance of Him as Lord of the earth and the author of the united order. Through it we seek righteousness and spiritual development. "For," declared the Lord, "if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things;

"For if you will," he continued, "that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare

yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you. . . .

"That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion." (D&C 78:6-7, 15; italics added.)

2. The united order is implemented by the *voluntary freewill actions of men*, evidenced by a consecration of all their property to the Church of God. No force of any kind is ever involved.

3. As to property, in harmony with Church belief as set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, "no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, [and] the right and control of property." (D&C 134:2.) The united order is operated upon the principle of *private ownership and individual management*. Thus, in both ownership and management of property, the united order preserved to men their God-given agency. In this way, He holds each steward accountable for his own work and productivity. Indeed, He said:

"For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures." (D&C 104:13.)

## Not a communal society

You can see from this the truth of President Clark's statement when he said:

"The Church never was, and under existing commandments never will be, a communal society, under the directions thus far given by the Lord. The United Order was not communal nor communistic. It was completely and intensely individualistic, with a consecration of unneeded surpluses for the support of the Church and the poor." (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "The United Order and Law of Consecration As Set Out in

the Revelations of the Lord," from a pamphlet of articles reprinted from the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, 1942, pp. 26-27.)

4. *The united order is nonpolitical.*

It is therefore totally unlike the various forms of socialism, which are political, both in theory and in practice. They are thus exposed to, and riddled by, the corruption which plagues and finally destroys all political governments which undertake to abridge man's agency.

5. *A righteous people is a prerequisite to the united order.*

6. *The united order exalts the poor and humbles the rich.* In the process both are sanctified. The poor, released from the bondage and humiliating limitations of poverty, are enabled as free men to rise to their full potential, both temporally and spiritually. The rich, by consecration and by imparting of their surplus for the benefit of the poor, not by constraint, but willingly as an act of free will, evidence that charity for their fellowmen characterized by Mormon as "the pure love of Christ." (Moro. 7:47.) In this way they qualify to "become the sons of God." (Moro. 7:48.)

### Full implementation of united order must wait

With these concepts in mind, we are better prepared to understand how our present Welfare Services efforts relate to the united order and the full ideal of Zion which the Lord has in mind to bring about. Because the people were not then fully ready to live the united order, the Lord suspended it, because, as He said:

"They have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

"And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

"And 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 105:3-5.)

He further indicated that:

"It is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—

"That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands." (D&C 105:9-10.)

Full implementation of the united order must, according to the revelation, await the redemption of Zion. (See D&C 105:34.) In the meantime—while we are being more perfectly taught and are gaining experience—we should be strictly living the principles of the united order insofar as they are embodied in present Church requirements, such as tithing, fast offerings, welfare projects, storehouses, and other principles and practices. Through these programs we should, as individuals, implement in our own lives the bases of the united order.

### Tithing and donations

The law of tithing, for example, gives us a great opportunity to implement the principle of consecration and stewardship. When it was instituted, four years after the united order experiment was suspended, the Lord required the people to put "all their surplus property . . . into the hands of the bishop"; thereafter they were to "pay one-tenth of all their interest annually." (D&C 119:1, 4.) This law, still in force, implements to a degree at least the united order principle of stewardship. It leaves in the hands of each person the ownership and management of the property from which he produces the needs of himself and family. To use again the words of President Clark:

"In lieu of residues and surpluses which were accumulated and built up

under the United Order, we, today, have our fast offerings, our Welfare donations, and our tithing, all of which may be devoted to the care of the poor, as well as the carrying on of the activities and business of the Church. . . .

"Furthermore, we had under the United Order a bishop's storehouse in which were collected the materials from which to supply the needs and the wants of the poor. We have a bishop's storehouse under the Welfare Plan, used for the same purpose. . . .

"We have now under the Welfare Plan all over the church, . . . projects . . . farmed [or managed] for the benefit of the poor. . . .

"Thus . . . in many of its great essentials, we have, [in] the Welfare Plan . . . the broad essentials of the United Order." (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1942, pp. 57-58.)

It is thus apparent that when the principles of tithing and the fast are properly observed and the welfare plan gets fully developed and wholly into operation, "we shall not be so very far from carrying out the great fundamentals of the United Order." (*Ibid.*, p. 57.) The only limitation on you and me is within ourselves.

### Three areas of concern

And now in line with these remarks, for three things I pray:

1. That the Lord will quicken our understanding of the covenant of consecration which we who are endowed have all made. President Kimball, in a landmark article published in the June 1976 *ENSIGN*, has encouraged us to review what our righteous needs and desires are as compared to what our surplus or residue might be:

"Many people spend most of their time working in the service of a self-image that includes sufficient money, stocks, bonds, investment portfolios, property, credit cards, furnishings, automobiles, and the like to *guarantee* carnal security throughout, it is hoped, a long and happy life. Forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources in our families and quorums to build up the kingdom of God—to further the missionary effort and the genealogical and temple work; to raise our children up as fruitful servants unto the Lord; to bless others in every way, that they may also be fruitful. Instead, we expend these blessings on our own desires, and as Moroni said, 'Ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not.' (Morm. 8:39.)

"As the Lord himself said in our day, 'They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and *whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.*' (D&C 1:16; italics added.)" (*ENSIGN*, June 1976, pp. 4-5.)

2. That we will study the talks of this session carefully and implement according to the dictates of the Spirit each facet of the welfare effort, *particularly the establishment of the Lord's storehouses.*

3. That through faithful observance of the principles of tithing, the fast, and the welfare program, we will prepare ourselves to redeem Zion and ultimately live the united order is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.