



## Selling out zion for profit

dc 101.<sup>43-54</sup>

### Introduction

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In our last homily, based on Isaiah 56.<sup>10-12</sup>, we examined Isaiah's critique of ancient Judah's watchmen, or religious and political leaders. We found that Judah's political and religious leaders were derelict in their duties of watching for and warning about moral threats to the body politic. Their dereliction flowed from several causes: ineptitude, ignorance, unwillingness, self-interest, and contempt for the flock. Too often, Judah's religious and political leaders dehumanized their charges, viewing them only as tools: means to be used and abused to accomplish their own selfish ends.

As a reminder, here is the text of Isaiah 56.<sup>10-12</sup> as translated by the author.

“Those assigned to be on the look-out are blind;  
every last one of them are without understanding.  
All of them are mute watch-dogs,  
incapable of barking.  
Dreaming in their sleep,  
they prefer snoozing (to wakefulness).  
Dogs, with powerful appetites,  
they are never satisfied.

They are shepherds who know nothing,  
all of them only consider themselves.  
They mind only their own interests.  
Each, ultimately, turns to obtaining gain by unjust means.  
'I will become a collector of fine wine,  
and get drunk on the strongest of beers.  
Each day will be like the proceeding,  
or even better.'"

After examining the attitudes, actions, and dereliction of duty of ancient Jewish political and religious leaders, we compared those of modern day watchmen. We found that the two groups, ancient and modern, are, sadly, not so very different.

Before leaving the topic of "watchmen" and their role in society, I thought that another text reporting the doings of watchmen might be in order. This one comes from latter-day scripture. Doctrine and Covenants 101.<sup>44-62</sup> contains a long "parable" "concerning the redemption of Zion." Following is the entire parable as reformatted by the author.<sup>1</sup>

*"A certain nobleman had a spot of land, very choice; and he said unto his servants:*

*'Go ye unto my vineyard, even upon this very choice piece of land, and plant twelve olive-trees; and set watchmen round about them, and build a tower, that one may overlook the land round about, to be a watchman upon the tower, that mine olive-trees may not be broken down when the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard.'*

*Now, the servants of the nobleman went and did as their lord commanded them, and planted the olive-trees, and built a hedge round about, and set watchmen, and began to build a tower. And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves:*

*And what need hath my lord of this tower?*

*And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves:*

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<sup>1</sup> Hopefully, the reasons for this formatting will become apparent as we proceed.

*What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace? Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things.*

*And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord. And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive-trees.*

*Now, behold, the nobleman, the lord of the vineyard, called upon his servants, and said unto them,*

*‘Why! what is the cause of this great evil? Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you? And behold, the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer.’*

*And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants:*

*‘Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry; and go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; break down the a walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.’*

*And the servant said unto his lord: ‘When shall these things be?’*

*And he said unto his servant:*

*‘When I will; go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and*

*this shall be my seal and a blessing upon you—a faithful and wise steward in the midst of mine house, a ruler in my kingdom.’*

*And his servant went straightway, and did all things whatsoever his lord commanded him; and after many days all things were fulfilled.”*

The specific historical context for the parable is, of course, the saints’ expulsion from Missouri, or, put differently, the exile of Zion’s citizenry from Zion. The parable promises the exiled saints, citizens, that Zion will be “redeemed”—meaning, in this context, that the saints will return—and stipulates how that return will take place. A careful reading of this text, however, suggests to the author that it is, in fact, only verses 55-62 that contain the actual subject of Zion’s “redemption” and how it is to be achieved. Verses 44-54, on the other hand, tell the story of Zion’s loss; a loss that precipitated the need for “redemption.”

This homily will focus on the first eleven verses of the parable. These deal with Zion’s loss. In investigating them, we will ask *how* and *why* Zion was lost. Was it stolen by hostile forces, or was it “sold out” by its own citizenry? In addition, we will ask what, if any role the watchmen played in the loss, and what the loss meant for the effectiveness of future watchmen. Finally, while acknowledging that the parable has a specific historical context, we will also work on the assumption that principles can be drawn from the time-bound context so as to be applicable across other times and spaces. We will attempt to identify such helpful and guiding principles and applicaton.

### the “redemption” of “Zion”

Before turning our attention to the parable’s first eleven verses, we should have a look at the introduction provided in verse 43.

“And now, I will show unto you a parable, that you may know my will concerning the redemption of Zion.”

To my mind, this introduction cries out for the answer to two principle questions. First, what

is meant by the designation, “Zion”? Second, what is “redemption,” and what does it mean to be redeemed? We will examine these two questions in order.

In establishing what is meant by “Zion,” we begin with the classic statement concerning Zion, found just a few sections prior to 101.

“...This is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART...”<sup>2</sup>

From these seven words, so packed with meaning, we understand Zion to be that society, or that collection of individuals whose affections and interests are singular. Just a couple of points.

First, if we speak of a piece of gold as “pure,” we are speaking of its “singularity.” It is gold and only gold. There are no other elements present—no tin, no copper, no nickel, no anything—just gold. In like manner, Zion is that society that is “singular” in its affections and interests. Its affections and interests are undivided. There are no diversions of affection or interest to anyone or anything other than its intended purpose.

Second, we say that Zion is a “society” or “collection of individuals” rather than an “individual.” Now, it stands to reason that if a society is to be singularly committed, then the individuals that constitute the society must be, themselves, inclined to singleness. Nevertheless, when we speak of Zion, we are talking about a collective. An individual may be singular in their affections and interests, and thus “pure,” but that individual does not constitute Zion. “It takes a village” to make a Zion.

We will not take time now to review the numerous passages that speak of Zion as a “city,” but will limit ourselves to just one. All indications are that it is just this passage that set the prophet Joseph Smith to thinking about, longing for, and planning the establishment of this most remarkable singular collective.

“And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and

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<sup>2</sup> DC 97.<sup>21</sup>

dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.”<sup>3</sup>

This passage not only demonstrates the collective, societal nature of Zion, it also reinforces the singular nature of the collective that we found in the previous passage. The community is “singular,” in that it is “set apart” (the meaning of holiness) from all other communities. Unlike other communities, divided in affection and interests, this community has one love, i.e., it is “of *one* heart,” and has one purpose, i.e., it is of “*one* mind.”<sup>4</sup> Zion is “indivisible.” There is much more to draw out of this passage. We will want to come back to it in a moment. But, first, I find myself wondering: “Of what love is the heart of the community so full<sup>5</sup> that there is no room for any other love?” Secondly, I wonder: “To what purpose is the community so engaged that there is no room for any other purpose?”

The answer to the first question, it seems, is found pretty early on in scripture, though it be found in its negative form.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”<sup>6</sup>

It would not be long before Moses restated this direction more positively, in what Jesus would later call “the first and great commandment.”<sup>7</sup>

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Moses 7.<sup>18-19</sup>

<sup>4</sup> No need, here, to worry about becoming an automaton, a drone, or giving up one’s unique personality. While everyone loves the same object and is committed to the same objective, each individual will manifest that love and commitment in ways that are unique and singular to the character that God’s gift of agency allowed each to develop.

<sup>5</sup> One can think of “fulness” as a kind of “singularity.” A glass that is “full of milk” leaves no room for any other substance. One can’t have a glass *full* of milk, and then add, say, diet Coke.

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 20.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Matthew 22.<sup>37-38</sup> and Mark 12.<sup>29-30</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 6.<sup>4-5</sup>

Of what love is Zion so full that there is no room for any other love?

Answer: “The love of God.”

Zion, then, is that collective of individuals that commits itself to the one and only true God with the *entire* heart and the *entire* soul. It puts its entire effort into loving and serving God. A society that pours *the entirety* of its affections and commitment and purpose and actions into God would, apparently, have no room for any other affections, commitments, purposes, or actions. I mean, “all” is... well, “all”... right?

To what purpose is the community so engaged that there is no room for any other purpose?

Answer: “The purpose of God.”

Here, we are reminded of that passage perhaps most often quoted in LDS culture,

“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”

Zion is that society that—entirely devoted to God and only to God—labors single-mindedly with Him in His most vital interest and effort: that of advancing and growing each individual so that they might achieve their individual potential: that of becoming a child of God,<sup>9</sup> and a citizen of heaven.

Speaking of Zion, the Lord looks forward to

“Every man [and woman] seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Like John, the beloved, and the apostle Paul, I understand that being a child of God is not natural, inherited, or “cosmically genetic.” It is volitional. It requires faith. It requires our being “adopted.”

<sup>10</sup> DC 82.<sup>19</sup>

In this passage, we see an interesting and vital aspect of Zion. The “interest of one’s neighbor,” and “the glory of God” are interconnected. In fact, they are one and the same. God lives, if you will, for “the interest of his neighbor.” This is the labor in which He glories. Zion is that society that is so entirely in love with God that it devotes itself entirely to imitating God, and “seeking the interest of its neighbor.” Again, while an individual can be this type of neighbor to another, no individual can provide all, or a fulness of resources that may be needed. But a community... together it has every resource. In this, we see, again, the “singularity” of Zion and its societal nature.

Now, we want to be sure that we don’t get our heads stuck in the clouds, and think of “hieing off to Kolob.” While God’s work of progression looks into eternity, it begins with feet squarely planted in the dirt of this telestial world. Earth is a testing and developmental proving ground. Zion is very much involved in the things of this world. Let me explain. To do so, and for the limited purposes of this homily, we will return to Moses 7.<sup>18</sup>.

“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.

We have already seen and discussed the fact that Zion’s heart and mind are “single” to God and his purposes. From this passage, we also learn that this singleness produces “right action.” We learn further that Zion’s “right actions” produce a society in which “there are no poor.” These three—singleness, right actions, and economic equality—should not be viewed as three separate and distinct things. They are one and the same, each flowing into the other. They are central to what Zion is. Without all three present and active, there is no Zion.

There is no societal oneness of heart and mind where there are poor. There are no poor in a society with citizens that possess hearts and minds that are singularly committed to God’s glory. Where society engages in “right action,” there will be no poor. When there are no poor, it is the consequence of societal “right actions.” Conversely, when there *are* poor, it is the consequence of a divided society and an absence of societal “right thought,” “right



policies,” and “right action.”

This is vitally important. The hoped for “other-worldly” and eternal progression with which we most often associate God’s “work and glory,” begins with, indeed is founded upon progressions that are very much “this-worldly,” with a strong economic component.

“For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things [here and now] which I have commanded you and required of you.”<sup>11</sup>

There are many ways that one might “seek the interest of his neighbor,” but one of Zion’s principle focuses is on economic attitudes, policies, and actions that assure that “there are no poor among them.” “This-worldly” economic interest is at the very heart of Zion’s purpose. It is, in fact, in this world, Zion’s principle *raison d’être*. This is clear in Moses 7.<sup>18</sup> It will be apparent in the parable of DC 101. It is, in fact, evident anytime Zion is spoken of, particularly in the Doctrine and Covenants, where the establishment and administration of Zion is the dominant theme throughout at least the central third of the book.

Now, let’s recap what we have learned about the nature of Zion. Through love, Zion is fully, entirely, and only committed to God, and to working only toward His most cherished purpose: the advancement of the species of man. In eternity this advancement means the possession of a life without end that is like that of God. In time, this advancement means the existence of a human society that is one of complete equity, including economic equality. This equity, signified most obviously by the absence of poverty, is achieved as each individual, imitating God, catches fire with the divine revelation that the only way to live and survive in time or in eternity is by each “seeking the interest of his neighbor.”

All of this is, according to the parable, what was lost.

Before leaving our examination on the nature of Zion, I would like to highlight one more passage of scripture. It comes from that most challenging of discourses: the Savior’s ‘Sermon

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<sup>11</sup> DC 78.<sup>7</sup>

on the Mount.’

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”<sup>12</sup>

Here, Jesus brings together nearly all the elements that we have so far discussed regarding Zion. It asks that each individual adopt attitudes, and engage in behavior that are consistent with Zion’s purposes. We see, for example, the relationship between the heart and treasures. Purity of heart is found in loving and committing to God, the true master, rather than the false master, “Mammon,” or economy. Individuals who would partake of Zion’s glories, “eye,” or perceive only one truth: God and his purposes. All else is darkness. Individuals may acquire “treasures,” but those qualified to live in Zion never “lay up for themselves” those treasures or in any way set their affections upon them, thus avoiding the deadly trap of idolatry. Zion-worthy individuals will utilize their “treasures” only and singly to “advance the cause of their neighbor.”

Here, we should, perhaps, remember that there is another society that stands in opposition to this single-minded society. This other society possesses a love and purpose that is divided and diffused between God and mammon. In being so divided, Mammon becomes its true God. Therefore, it dwells in darkness. Scripture refers to this society often, and often by the name, “Babylon.” In its most extreme language, scripture calls this anti-Zion society

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 6.<sup>19-24</sup>

“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND  
ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”<sup>13</sup>

This society finds God and his interests hostile to its own. Lucifer, Babylon’s founder and king, finds those who are committed to something other than Mammon to be “molesters.” But this topic of Babylon, fascinating as it is, is a topic for another day.

Having explored what is meant by the designation, “Zion,” and thus what was lost with the saint’s expulsion from Jackson county, we now turn to the second question the parable’s introductory statement elicited: “What is ‘redemption,’ and what does it mean to be redeemed? This will be a briefer discussion than that exploring the nature of Zion.

To be “redeemed” is to be “bought back” or “re-purchased. Obviously, if we are under the necessity of buying something back, it means that that something was once in our possession but was somehow lost. A common use of this concept of “redemption” in the ancient world can be found in the institution of slavery. We can imagine an individual who is free. However, for some reason they lose their freedom and become a slave. In order to be free once more, they or someone else must pay the slave holder. They must re-purchase their lost freedom. This is redemption: the re-purchase of something lost.

In like manner, if Zion is under the necessity of being “redeemed”—bought back or re-purchased—then the implication is that some “transaction” has gone badly such that Zion has been lost. It is just such a loss that DC 101.<sup>44-54</sup> explores, and to which we now turn in earnest.

Selling out and selling off Zion

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As previously mentioned, we divide the parable found in DC 101.<sup>44-62</sup> into two parts. It is the second part, consisting of verses 55-62, that properly tells the story of Zion’s redemption, or how God intends to repurchase a lost Zion. The first part, verses 44-54, tells the story of why

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<sup>13</sup> Revelation 17.<sup>5</sup>

Zion needs to be redeemed, or how Zion was lost in the first place.

The structure of this first portion of the parable, verses 44-54, feels, loosely, chiasmic—if not exactly chiasmic, it certainly looks to be utilizing a framing or enveloping structure. The “opening frame” consists of verses 44-45, in which a nobleman speaks to his servants concerning his hopes for the future. In the “closing frame,” consisting of verses 52-54, the nobleman speaks to his servants once more, this time concerning his dashed hopes. In between these two speeches, the servants’ choices and actions are reported, along with the consequences of what turns out to be *tragic* choices and actions.

The structure of that portion of the parable that tells the how and why of Zion’s loss, then, looks something like this.

- 44-45 A nobleman’s hopes
- 46 Servants act (faithfully)
- 47 The servants’ question (what need?)
- 48-49a How the servants get from question to conclusion (what is the need?)
- 49b The servants’ conclusion to the question (no need)
- 50 Servants act (unfaithfully)
- 51-54 A nobleman’s hopes shattered

It is certainly true that most proposed literary structures are subjective. The one I propose is no exception. Nevertheless, it has the advantage of focusing our attention on that which seems most central to the question concerning how and why Zion’s loss came about.

*a nobleman’s hopes*

The parable begins with a nobleman’s hopes for a vineyard, and the directions he provides his servants in order to achieve those hopes (verses 44-45). He directs that his servants labor in his “vineyard” on a parcel of land that is “very choice.” They are to “plant twelve olive trees” in this vineyard. Watchmen are to be assigned as lookouts. To maximize the effectiveness of these lookouts, the nobleman is particularly concerned that his servants build a tower. This will permit the watchmen to “overlook the land round about, to be a watchman

upon the tower, that mine olive-trees may not be broken down when the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard.” This entire first portion of the parable—the portion concerned with how and why Zion was lost—revolves around this assignment of tower building. The success of the entire vineyard venture depends upon the construction, maintenance, and manning of the tower.

This ends the nobleman’s hopes for the vineyard and his directions to achieve it. The next verse, verse 46, begins to tell of the servants’ efforts to do as directed. But, before turning to the servants’ efforts, we should say a few words about the nobleman, his hopes, and his directions, and the interpretation thereof.

Obviously, the nobleman is God. The vineyard is the world. Elsewhere, we hear the Lord’s concern about the state of the vineyard.

“And my vineyard has become corrupted every whit; and there is none which doeth good save it be a few; and they err in many instances because of priestcrafts, all having corrupt minds.”<sup>14</sup>

We should probably understand the planting of the twelve olive trees as part of a reclamation project, conducted in hopes of saving a devastated vineyard. The “very choice” parcel of ground on which the twelve olive trees are to be planted is the city of Zion. Zion, then, becomes a means the Lord uses to save his vineyard from complete devastation. The servants represent Zion’s citizenry. This much seems clear and straightforward. However, we should say a bit more about the twelve olive trees. The symbolism is rich with meaning. We cannot explore it all. But we can share a few thoughts concerning this symbolism as it specifically relates to the parable.

The olive tree is often used as a symbol of peace and friendship. When we wish to express our sincere desire to be friendly and at peace with another with whom, perhaps, there has been some tension, we sometimes speak of “offering an olive branch.” Noah realized that the flood was over, that the boisterous and destructive storm was past, that peace and quiet were

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<sup>14</sup> DC 33.<sup>4</sup>

returning to nature when the dove presented him with an olive branch. In the heading to DC 88, we read that the section “was designated by the Prophet as the ‘olive leaf . . . plucked from the Tree of Paradise, *the Lord’s message of peace to us.*”<sup>15</sup>

We could go on. But this seems sufficient to justify our understanding of the olive trees as a representation of perpetual peace—a peace lived in Zion, and into which the world is invited to enter. Twelve is the number of months in the year, and thus indicates a complete cycle, something extending in perpetuity: “round and round and round it goes and where it ends nobody knows.”

Though it does not mention “olive trees” specifically, it is difficult not to think of Revelation’s description of the city of God—the heavenly Zion.

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life,<sup>16</sup> which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”<sup>17</sup>

Here, we have twelve fruits rather than twelve olive trees. We have ‘months’ representing perpetuity. We have “the healing of the nations,” which, among other things, certainly signifies God’s intentions of doing away with enmity and establishing everlasting peace, both between himself and humanity, and between all peoples. Isaiah speaks of this Divine peaceful intent in 2.<sup>4</sup>

“Then will He mediate between nations;  
He will reconcile many peoples,  
so that they will retool their swords into plow blades  
and their spears into pruning instruments.

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<sup>15</sup> Emphasis added

<sup>16</sup> Obviously, Nephi learned that the “tree of life” was the “love of God,” or the gift of Jesus, the ultimate manifestation of God’s love. He is, truly, the Father’s greatest ambassador, proclaiming God’s love for and friendly, peaceful feelings toward us.

<sup>17</sup> Revelation 22.<sup>2</sup>

One nation will no longer lift the sword against another,  
nor will they any longer train for warfare.”<sup>18</sup>

This is no pipedream. God intends the earth to be so. This was his intent for his creation from the very beginning. Speaking to Enoch, the Lord lamented,

“Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency; and unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, *that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood...*”<sup>19</sup>

“There is no peace on earth,” laments the poet.<sup>20</sup> The peace, represented by the twelve olive trees, is not one that Zion is to experience and hoard for itself. Zion is to share, and proclaim the peace to a divided world. Zion is the instrument that God intends to use in order to accomplish the peace for which mankind was created. Just as Isaiah hopes that Zion will be an ambassador of God’s planned peace, the Doctrine and Covenants makes known God’s expectation that his latter-day saints, or Zion’s citizenry be ambassadors of peace.

“Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy.... Therefore, *renounce war and proclaim peace...*”<sup>21</sup>

Indeed,

“And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword

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<sup>18</sup> Author’s translation

<sup>19</sup> Moses 7.<sup>32-33</sup>. It was with an eye to human love and oneness—a love and oneness like that of God, Himself—that God created man. Surely this is at least as significant a meaning behind our being created in the likeness of God as the notion that we somehow look physically like Him.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”

<sup>21</sup> DC 98.<sup>14, 16</sup>; emphasis added. Unfortunately, the LDS footnote lets all the air out of this balloon, and invites Zion to make accommodations such that will make it more acceptable in the eyes of Babylon.

against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another.”<sup>22</sup>

Though Zion serves as ambassador of God’s peace, God understands that the world, in its habitual madness, will have none of it. Therefore, the parable informs us, the nobleman stipulates that a tower be built in preparation for that time “when [not if] the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard.” The nations of this world have a long and stubborn history of spoiling in order to get gain. Cain, very early on discovered one of this telestial world’s great secrets: “I may murder and get gain.”<sup>23</sup> The nations of this world have been zealous and ingenious in taking these spoils and “buying up armies and navies and reigning with blood and horror upon the earth.”

Zion’s proclamation of God’s peace is a nuisance—or, as Satan has it, a molestation! Zion must, then, be eliminated. The watchtower is crucial in God’s plan to protect Zion from the, sometimes subtle, sometimes brutal, attacks of a hostile world, and in assisting Zion to accomplish its divinely appointed purpose of proclaiming peace and bringing oneness to a fractured world.

So, the nobleman is God. The vineyard is the world. The choice parcel of land with its olive trees is the city of Zion. The servants are the citizenry of Zion. The twelve olive trees represent Zion’s purpose: to be ambassadors proclaiming God’s intended peace. We have now only to consider the watchtower. As we have suggested, the building of the watchtower is the central hub around which this portion of the parable revolves. Zion’s success or failure will hinge on the presence and proper utilization of the watchtower.

Now, in explicating the meaning of the watchtower, let us first say that the historical context

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<sup>22</sup> DC 45.<sup>68-69</sup>. Note, please, that Zion constitutes people “out of every nation under heaven.” Zion has no “zero tolerance” immigration policies. All are welcome here. “Zion, tear down those borders!” Even the poor, arriving destitute, we be cared for such that they will no longer be poor, but as rich as their next-door neighbor who is more interested in advancing the new arrival than in advancing themselves.

There are so many maddening things about supposed saints following that vile Caligula. One cannot open scripture without hearing him condemned in the clearest manner as anti-Christ and anti-Zion.

<sup>23</sup> Moses 5.<sup>31</sup>



is crucial. Zion was to be redeemed because it had been lost. We will find as we proceed that according to the parable, Zion was lost because it did not build the stipulated watchtower. So, we must ask, “Historically, what did the saints in their Jackson County Zion not do?” The watchtower, then, will represent in parable whatever it is that the citizens of Zion failed to do in real time.

We do not need go far to discover the nature of Zion’s failure. The Lord, Himself, offers the following explanation for the saint’s expulsion from Zion. Section 101 begins with this summary:

“Verily I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance—I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions... Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances.”<sup>24</sup>

Make no mistake about it. They weren’t contending and jarring about the neighbor’s dog pooping on the lawn, whether the gold plates were real or a metaphor, whether individuals with same sex attraction were born that way or a product of environment, or which way the pearly gates swing—in or out. The jarrings and contentions and strife flowed from “lustful and covetous desires.” These “lustful and covetous desires” focused on materialistic and economic matters—property and possessions. The historical record is clear on this. The citizens of Zion were not “everyman looking after the interest of his neighbor,” but after their own interests. Everyone was worried about how much property and money they had, how much someone else had, how others obtained what they had, whether they deserved it, and whether what others had was more or less than what they possessed.

The Lord returns to his critique of Zion a few sections after that of 101.

“Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking

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<sup>24</sup> Verse 1, 2, and 6

concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now. But behold, 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.”<sup>25</sup>

Zion was lost because it did not abide by “the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom.” Truly, there are many principles related to the celestial kingdom, but Zion’s principle breach of covenant came in the form of “lustful and covetous desires” and “not impart[ing] their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them.” There is a name for this foundational celestial principle. It is called “consecration.”

Zion must abide by celestial principles. These are, of course, the principles by which celestial beings govern themselves. God is a celestial being. God is governed by celestial principles. We have already discovered the core Divine, and thus celestial principle: “This is my work and glory....” God is governed, singularly, by the will to “seek the interest of his neighbor.” Or, put differently, God lives a consecrated life. He gives his all for the advancement of man. He demonstrated this, above all, by his divine sacrifice, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

“Greater love [and self-sacrificing consecration] hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”<sup>26</sup>

But the Zion of the parable is not so pure. It is not united according to the celestial law. It is not consecrated.

George Q. Cannon, a 19<sup>th</sup> century member of the First Presidency, bears the following witness concerning Zion, its loss, and the reason for its loss—failure to comply with consecration as it related to economic practices.

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<sup>25</sup> DC 105.<sup>3-5</sup>

<sup>26</sup> John 15.<sup>13</sup>

“One of the first teaching or revelations that was given to this church after its organization, was to the effect that we should dwell together as one family: that there should be an identity of interests among us; that we should approximate to some extent at least, and as far as practicable to that identity of interest which we understood, by the revelations of Jesus Christ, to exist in the eternal worlds. This revelation is one of the earliest given to this people, and its practice was entered upon in early days. We have been told by those who are old enough to know, and who had experience at that time, that *to the disobedience or failure of the people in carrying out this revelation was due the expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from Jackson county in the State of Missouri... God suffering the enemies of his kingdom and people to have power over them because of their disobedience to respond to the call which he made upon, and to the commandments which he gave unto them.*”<sup>27</sup>

Here is the testimony of Orson Pratt, President of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

“...the hearts of the people had been so accustomed to holding property individually, that it was a very difficult matter to get them to comply with this law of the Lord....

“They did not repent, that is all of them, but continued in their disobedience, neglecting to consecrate their properties, according to the requirements of the law of the Lord; and hence, when they had been there about two years and five months from the time of their first settlement or location, they were literally plucked up and cast away out of the land.”<sup>28</sup>

We could add dozens and dozens of quotes from early Church leaders to this effect. In the real life, 19<sup>th</sup> century history of Zion, Zion was lost because its citizenry would not live by the celestial law of consecration. They yielded to “lustful and covetous desires” and would “not impart their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them.”

In the parable, Zion was lost, as we shall see in greater depth in just a moment, because its

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<sup>27</sup> *Journal of Discourses* Vol. 17, page 232; emphasis added

<sup>28</sup> Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 17, page 108-109

citizenry would not build the stipulated watchtower.

Obviously, a watchtower represents “higher ground.” From this higher ground, a watchman can observe a wider expanse. Such increased sight distance permits the watchman to see approaching danger faster, allows him to sound the saving warning earlier, and gives the community additional time to prepare for the inevitable attack. This is the role that consecration, especially economic, plays. It increases the watchman’s sight distance. It permits the watchman to see approaching dangers soon and clearer. It provides for Zion’s safety from outside dangers. It serves as a means by which Zion proclaims God’s peace to a hyper-covetous and violently contentious world.

We have already referred to Isaiah’s look into the future when God creates peace by “reconciling” the nations through His own personal “mediation.” Heeding this divine mediation, those same nations no longer “train for war.” Isaiah had, in the previous verses, identified what form God’s mediation would take.

“In days to come  
the Mountain on which stands Yahweh’s temple  
will be fixed above any other Mountain;  
lifted above any other height.  
All nations will come streaming to it.  
Many peoples will come, saying:  
‘Come! Let’s go up to Yahweh’s mountain;  
to the temple of the God of Ya‘qōb.  
He will teach us his ways,  
and we shall walk in his paths.’  
For Torah will come out of Şîyôn,  
and the word of Yahweh from Y<sup>e</sup>rûšālāyim.”<sup>29</sup>

Peace comes to the nations through the “Torah” that God proclaims from the temple. We understand the tower, then, to be “Torah,” “the word of Yahweh,” the “higher instruction”

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<sup>29</sup> Isaiah 2.2-3

that emanates from the temple, from the very mouth of God, or from the very presence of God. Tempting as it is, now is not the time for an in-depth examination of that most misunderstood of all gospel principles—the temple.<sup>30</sup> Many principles are taught there. But central to it all is the principle of “consecration.” None of the blessings promised in the temple—individual or familiar—can be acquired without the central Zionist principle of consecration. It, not celestial marriage, should be seen as the highest instruction offered in the temple. There will be no celestial marriage or other celestial anything without consecration.

We take the tower, then, to be the principle of consecration. As justification for this interpretation, we have reminded the reader that, historically speaking, the saints were expelled from Jackson county, the seat of Zion as Joseph imagined it, because of their rejection of the law of consecration—a rejected reflected in their economic practices and policies. In addition, we have quoted from 19<sup>th</sup> century Church leaders, who were much closer—both temporally and emotionally—to the events than we.

This was no Torah-directed Zion. As we turn our attention to the parable’s symbolic representation of Zion’s failure, we will see further evidence that the tower represents the principle of consecration—especially economic. Before moving on, though, let’s just review what we have learned so far.

A nobleman, God, had high hopes for Zion. Zion was to be his ambassador of peace to the world. Key to Zion’s safety and success in accomplishing this mission, was the building of a watchtower, from which its watchmen could see and warn of outside dangers. Zion’s citizenry was to live by God’s “Torah,” the law of Celestial Kingdom, or the law of consecration—the central principle and teaching of the temple.<sup>31</sup> Consecration would provide the protection Zion needed to fend off the many dangers a fallen world presents, and thus accomplish its mission. Without the watchtower, Zion’s watchmen would be hampered in their ability to see and warn concerning the many dangers. More tragically, Zion would

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<sup>30</sup> We will take up the subject of the temple, consecration, and Zion in a future homily.

<sup>31</sup> The entire temple bears witness not only to the human need for consecration in order to survive—in time and in eternity—but of the consecrated character of God, Himself.

become an ineffective ambassador of peace.

*servants act (faithfully)*

Having informed us of the nobleman's hopes and directions, the parable turns its attention to the servants' execution of the plan. Things start off well enough.

Now, the servants of the nobleman went and did as their lord commanded them, and planted the olive-trees, and built a hedge round about, and set watchmen, and began to build a tower.

*from question to conclusion*

But things quickly go awry. "While they were yet laying the foundation" for the vital watchtower, a conversation ensues—"they began to say among themselves..." The conversation turns to consultation as they "consulted for a long time, saying among themselves..." After some time, the consultation takes an ugly, argumentative turn—"they were at variance one with another."

This Zion is not so pure. It is, as it turns out, no Zion at all. It is not singular in its commitment to God. It is a house divided. But division can take many forms. In this case, Zion's division takes a very specific form. With the revelation of Zion's division, we come to the center of the first part of the parable. We come to the hub, the nub of the matter. From the introductory verse's notice of Zion's "buy-back," we already knew that Zion would be lost. We now find out how and why. The parable supplies the how and why by means of a tripartite repetition.

Someone starts the conversation: "*What need* hath my lord of this tower?"

This conversation concerning "need" is then debated: "*What need* hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?"

Finally, during the debate, someone, or someones stridently assert: "there is *no need* of these things."

This question of “need” is placed right in the center—both structurally and meaningfully—of the parable’s report on how Zion was lost. The nature of that “need” revolves around the building of the watchtower. Now, we might be tempted to conclude that the error was in the fact that the servants were “disobedient.” “If they had just been obedient, they would not have lost their precious Zion. Or, we might consider that the error was in questioning God; thinking that they knew better than He.

Now, the servants certainly were disobedient.

“They became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord.”

And, clearly, they did question God’s understanding of what was needful. But such explanations do not get to the heart of the matter. The parable is much more clever than this. God is much more perceptive and specific about the human condition. There is a yet more specific insight into the human condition, human society, and the radical departure from human norms that Zion represents.

The reader might have noted that in quoting the tripartite discussion of what was *needful*—a discussion that we asserted was at the center, structurally and meaningfully, of the first half of the parable—we left out one line. It is this line, in fact, that is at the structural and meaningful center of the parable’s explanation for the loss of Zion. It is related to the whole issue of “consecration.” Here is the line. It gets little press. Perhaps we humans, about whom God is so perceptive, skip right past it out of some deep and unconscious need for self-justification and preservation.

“Might not this money be given to the exchangers?”

In the final analysis, the question that faces—or tempts—the servants is not “to build or not to build” the tower. The question is, “*What do we do with our money? Do we consecrate it, or invest it in some for-profit scheme?*” The whole issue is one of money, Mammon.

*“Isn’t the need for profit more urgent than the need for a watchtower? Wouldn’t we rather have money than worry about God’s interests?”*

Perhaps, on a really good day they might reason, *“Why don’t we invest so that we can give God more money”*—as if the master of the universe needs anything from us or is dependent upon us for his support!

These are the opposing positions: “Use our money to build the tower, or use our money to earn a profit.” This, again, demonstrates the “economic” nature of Zion’s rebellion. It adds credence to our contention that the tower represents some active Zionist economic principle that stands in conflict with the citizenry’s ultimate rebellious choice of profit over God. That “economic principle” is consecration. Everything points in this direction.

I have always felt that, already, right there in the Bible’s first few pages, Cain’s obstinate reply to Yahweh’s query concerning the status of Abel—an obstinacy representative of mankind’s twisted perspective concerning responsibility for others—was one of the Bible’s most inspired insights into human nature and the sordid history of our planet. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”<sup>32</sup> As I have said elsewhere, this was not a sincere question. It was a belligerent assertion: “I AM NOT and WILL NOT BE my brother’s keeper.”

Similarly, I find this parable’s explanation for the failure and loss of Zion to be astonishingly insightful, accurate, and universal—and, perhaps, just a tad offensive. Without this passage, we might be forgiven for thinking that the loss of Zion was a consequence of theft—“the enemy is responsible; the saints’ enemies stole Zion from them.” But the text, nay, the Lord will have nothing to do with such false accusation.

Zion was not lost by the theft of the enemy. No! So how was it lost? Wait for it. Wait for it. Zion was lost because its citizenry sold it off!

You see how very precise the Lord is in this parable? Zion’s citizenry was faced with two

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<sup>32</sup> Genesis 4.<sup>9</sup>



choices: invest or consecrate (build the tower). They chose the former, to their loss.

“Thus we see,” again, that it is money, materialism, the drive to acquire that is the principle reason for Zion’s past demise, and, very likely, its continued tardiness today. Money—the stuff itself, not just the “love of it”—truly is the “root of all evil,”<sup>33</sup> including the evil of Zion’s “pollution.” It is the first temptation— “You can have anything in this world for money”—and it is the last, as evidenced by the fact that even Zion, with its potential to abide in the bosom of God, struggles to resist its lure.

The parable’s servants failed the test. They chose filthy lucre, Mammon, over God, his purposes, and his plan of consecration to bring about the peace for which God so longed. With its controversial proposal, “Might not this money be given to the exchangers?” placed at the center of the parable’s discussion on how Zion was lost (and thus in need of redemption), this conclusion seems clear. Again, an enemy did not steal Zion. Zion was sold off by its citizenry for that which cannot profit, an impotent idol.

*a nobleman’s hopes shattered*

Having established this sad reality, the parable now reminds us that such idolatrous “pollution”<sup>34</sup> has consequences.

And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive-trees.”

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<sup>33</sup> 1 Timothy 6.<sup>10</sup>. As I have so often said, I have as yet to find anyone, myself included, who does not love money. I still haven’t hear anyone say, “Money! How I hate the stuff?” “The great mass of the human family has sought for ages past, and are still seeking, to accumulate dollars and dimes, houses and lands for themselves, to bequeath to their heirs or to whomsoever they see proper. *This individualism that has existed all over the world has been one of the principal means of introducing almost all the crimes that exist among men*, for as the Apostle Paul has said—“*The love of money is the root of all evil*” (Orson Pratt, President of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 15, page 356).

<sup>34</sup> We do not use this world to be offensive or sensationalistic. We use it because God, Himself, used it. “Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances” (DC 101.<sup>6</sup>).

Paradise lost. Zion sold out for a pot of porridge.

Now, to be sure, the tormentors, the enemies of the latter-day Zion were not guiltless. Like ancient Israel's tormentor, Assyrian, that God wielded as a "rod of anger" "against an hypocritical nation," the enemy was motivated only by ungodly motives. It gave no thought to God or his purposes, but thoroughly misunderstood its "success."

"O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger,  
and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.  
I will send him against an hypocritical nation,  
and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge,  
to take the spoil, and to take the prey,  
and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.  
Howbeit he meaneth not so,  
neither doth his heart think so;  
but it is in his heart to destroy  
and cut off nations not a few."<sup>35</sup>

Like Zion, it too would pay a heavy price. But Zion's enemies were not guilty of the first, or most serious offence. Like Nephite enemies in the Book of Mormon, Zion's latter-day enemies were only responding, like sharks smelling blood in the water, to Zion's initial self-inflicted wound. If it had not been for this self-inflicted wound, the enemy would have had no power over it.

"For were it not for the wickedness which first commenced at our head, we could have withstood our enemies that they could have gained no power over us."<sup>36</sup>

"Now this great loss of the Nephites, and the great slaughter which was among them, would not have happened had it not been for their wickedness and their abomination which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who professed to belong to the church of God. And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding

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<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 10.<sup>5-7</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Alma 60.<sup>15</sup>

riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions, and deserting away into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites—and because of this their great wickedness, and their boastings in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten....”<sup>37</sup>

Yes, Zion was sold off, not stolen.

The parable’s exploration of the causes for Zion’s loss ends as it began: with the nobleman speaking to his servants. Whereas the nobleman’s initial speech spoke of his hopes for the future, this “post-apocalyptic” speech speaks to his disappointments and his understanding of how Zion went wrong and sold itself out.

“Now, behold, the nobleman, the lord of the vineyard, called upon his servants, and said unto them,

‘Why! what is the cause of this great evil? Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you? And behold, the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer.’

We see, again, that Zion’s downfall was found in its refusal to build the watchtower. This meant that though there were watchmen at ground level, and even “upon the walls,” the lack of “higher ground” from which watchmen could have watched, hampered the watchmen in

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<sup>37</sup> Helaman 4.<sup>11-13</sup>

their duties, and kept them from being as effective as they might have been had the tower been built.

The fact is, the ways that “consecration,” especially economic, serves as a protection are innumerable. We likely cannot appreciate all of them because of our unwillingness to live the law.

“I look upon this principle as one of the greatest principles to save people from avaricious and sordid feelings that God has ever revealed. It will have a tendency to check dishonesty and remove want. It will have a tendency to stop stealing and to cure the evils under which mankind have groaned from the beginning until now....

“Will this plan—this glorious Order which God has revealed—correct the other evils with which the world is afflicted? Yes, when that Order is universally established there will no longer be any temptation to steal, defraud one’s neighbor or to commit any wrongs of this kind, for it is said, and truly, that the love of money is the root of all evil. The Order of which I speak will correct these evils.”<sup>38</sup>

It seems that a society/church that does not build upon the higher ground of consecration cannot be protected from all the evils that invade its boundaries, because, in part, it’s watchmen, disadvantaged by their lack of “long-sight” are hampered in seeing, appreciating, and warning of those very evils. The rejection of “Torah,” the word of the Lord, and a clear and precise understanding and application of the principle of consecration causes debilitating blind spots in the watchmen’s vision. Thus, evils inevitably enter the “body politic.” Chief among them, it becomes easier to see the benefits of immediate profits from investment, however transient they may be, than the long term, even eternal benefits of consecration.

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<sup>38</sup> George Q. Cannon (of the First Presidency), *Journal of Discourses*. Vol. 13, p. 102).

İf not now, when? if not us, who?

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Now, before concluding our discussion, I would like to address a common objection to the relevancy of consecration as related to current financial and economic matters. One of the most common objections goes something like this:

“Even if I grant your claims that Zion is to be an ambassador of peace, and that consecration, or having societal economic equality is a necessary instrument toward achieving that peace, the Church, that is to say Church leaders, do not currently ask its members to observe economic consecration.

“Even more damning, it is for sure that, given the nature of our culture, there is no expectation that our greater American political system should attempt to abide by such “utopian” principles—certainly not by means of taxing the wealthy, granting unearned benefits to the poor, or any other economic policy that has been attempted in the past (social security, welfare, for example), or is being contemplated by leftist in the future (universal healthcare, universal college education, guaranteed housing, living wage, etc.).”

“Are you,” I ask, “so sure”?

Of course, what I really want to say is, “Well, you’ve just proven how utterly unprepared we are to live the celestial principle and thus enter celestial glory.”

But I don’t.

Now, then. I am not so arrogant as to think I can change such closed minds and hard hearts. Still, I can share a thought and feeling or two.

I wonder that we do not, at the very least, “exercise a particle of faith... even if [we] can no more than desire to believe”? <sup>39</sup> It seems that we do not wish to believe, whether it is true or not, that consecration is a celestial principle; that compliance with the principle is a necessary

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<sup>39</sup> Alma 32.<sup>27</sup>

prerequisite for entrance into the celestial kingdom. The need to observe the principle is not due to the need to “obey law.” It is much more profound and fundamental than this. The need to observe and live the principle is due to the inescapable reality that this is the principle by which celestial beings live, by course. It is the central principle that makes eternal survival possible. There is not eternal “linkage” of any kind, without it.

I marvel, too, that we seem not to understand or acknowledge the evil of the non-consecrated society in which we live? It is so blatant, so obvious. How can we not see it? Can we not see the evil of a society that allows its poor to suffer and encourages its wealthy to enter into “many and foolish lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition”?<sup>40</sup> Can we not see the clear and present evil of economic inequality?

“It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.”<sup>41</sup>

Such blindness can only be willful.

“Wo unto the blind that will not [not “can not”] see; for they shall perish also.”<sup>42</sup>

And, speaking of the poor and economic inequality, I marvel, too, that we too often seem not to even avoid the one sin that we are simply not permitted to commit in relation to the poor?

“Perhaps thou shalt say: ‘The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and 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’— But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and *hath no interest in the kingdom of God*.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See 1 Timothy 6.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>41</sup> DC 49.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 2 Nephi 9.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Mosiah 4.<sup>17-18</sup>

“They have no interest in the kingdom of God,” nor the king of God in them.

If we cannot do at least this much, then we can just stop right here and now. We can just go right on devouring each other. Playing the Babylonian cannibal, “hating our own blood.”

But if we can see the beauty and value of the consecrated society, especially when set side by side with Babylon, can we not appreciate, desire, rejoice in, pray for, and work toward the establishment of a consecrated society: the right thinking, right acting, right governing society?

Zion is, as we have repeatedly asserted, a community, a collective. Consecration is most effective at the group level, with everyone buying in—pun intended. I grant all of that. That said, who is going to get it started, at least a little bit, if not you and I? What are we waiting for? A commandment? A new Church policy. We have procrastinators a-plenty already? Are we really satisfied to be of those who must be commanded in all things?

“For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward. But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.”<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps Orson Pratt’s words, spoken a century and a half ago, are still worthy of our consideration.

“Now, why is it, Latter-day Saints, that we have been tossed to and fro and smitten and persecuted for these many years? It is because we have disobeyed the law of heaven, we have not kept the commandments of the Most High God, we have not fulfilled his law;

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<sup>44</sup> DC 58.<sup>26-29</sup>

we have disobeyed the word which he gave through his servant Joseph, and hence the Lord has suffered us to be smitten and afflicted under the hands of our enemies.

“Shall we ever return to the law of God? Yes. When? Why, when we will. We are agents; we can abide his law or reject it, just as long as we please, for God has not taken away your agency nor mine....

“But will they [the Saints] return [to Zion] after the old order of things that exists among the Gentiles—every man for himself, this individualism in regard to property? No, never, never while the world stands.”<sup>45</sup>

No, we do not need to wait for “the Brethren” to issue a command. Nor do we need to wait for government to legislate. Waiting for such simply indicts us as unprepared for Zion, and thus for celestial glory. Rather, we can move, individually. We can demand that institutions fall in line with our consecrated hearts. This is a very different view than, say, that of many orthodox Jews and fundamentalist “Christians,” who passively await the Messiah. They believe that God will do all the heavy lifting; that when he appears, they will just fall in line. God will remake the world in his image. I don’t think so. I think that it is on us, with his help, to remake our world in his image. I don’t think he is coming until we have fallen in line; until we have created a place in which he will feel comfortable and at home—a consecrated place.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, there’s nothing wrong with, and everything to gain by working toward approximations. And we can appreciate the beauty of the concepts, rather than denigrate them, as we so often do. This means that we do not begrudge the poor our assistance. It means that we do not sit on our hands waiting for God to act. Nor do we wait for our federal, state, or local governments to act. We do not wait for them to propose the legislation that does away with poverty, as a Zion people demands. We demand the legislation. We are the boss of them, not they of us.

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<sup>45</sup> Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*. Vol. 17, p. 110-111

<sup>46</sup> “As a people we are expecting the day to come when Jesus will descend in the clouds of Heaven; but before this day comes we must be prepared to receive him. The organization of society that exists in the heavens must exist on the earth; the same condition of society, so far as it is applicable to mortal beings, must exist here” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 13, p. 99)



To remain where we are is to be thoroughly trapped in the same worn out conversation that takes place in the parable:

“And what need hath my lord of this tower?

“Might not this money be given to the exchangers?

“For there is no need of these things.”

God’s people, as represented by Zionistic principles, are to be ambassadors for peace. They cannot accomplish this mission without the watchtower and the longer-site distances, the higher revelations that it provides. They cannot, in other words, accomplish their mission without full compliance and allegiance to the celestial principle of consecration. Without this, Zion is a failure, in and of itself, and is a failure in its role as a light to the world. Such failure leaves the world defenseless against every evil—from the most mundane to the very vilest. We fondly, and without much sense of hypocrisy, quote Jesus’ call, as found in the Sermon on the Mount.

“Ye are the salt of the earth:

but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world.

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,

but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men,

that they may see your good works,

and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”<sup>47</sup>

This same Lord alludes to this same passage and principle in relation to Zion’s 19<sup>th</sup> century citizenry, and their unwillingness to live a consecrated life.

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<sup>47</sup> Matthew 5.<sup>13-16</sup>

“Inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of the world shall prevail against them. For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men; and inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.”<sup>48</sup>

By Zion’s failure to consecrate itself, it leaves the world with a far less effective ambassador of peace. Without a viable alternative, it allows the world to comfortably justify and maintain its false, idolatrous, and Babylonian ways without any substantial resistance. In addition, the failure exposes Zion itself to internal harms and dangers that might otherwise be avoided. It exposes Zion to charges of hypocrisy. Finally, it exposes Zionistic principles to ridicule and avoidance, thus deepening collaboration with false and destructive principles, policies, and practices.

## Conclusion

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A mere eleven verses sure can pack a punch. It shouldn’t surprise us, for

“The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”<sup>49</sup>

There is a good deal of “discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart” taking place in the first portion of a parable that purports to concern itself with “the redemption of Zion.” Before it addresses the question of Zion’s redemption, the parable first explores the cause for Zion’s loss, and why it is under necessity of being re-purchased.

Zion does not need bought back because of the theft of an enemy. Zion has been sold out by its own citizenry.

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<sup>48</sup> DC 103.<sup>8-10</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Hebrews 4.<sup>12</sup>

“I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them... in consequence of their transgressions.”

God planted Zion to be an ambassador of peace. In order to accomplish this high and holy calling, its citizenry is to live a life of consecration. They are to set their affections firmly and solely on God. They are to have the single interest of doing God’s work and glory. This means consecrating, as God Himself does, all efforts to advancing the interest of others above themselves.

“Every man [and woman] seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.”<sup>50</sup>

This is the only right path for Zion and its citizenry. It is not some pie-in-the-sky project. It is very practical and earthy. It includes as a central and necessary ingredient the consecration of material and economic benefits. Such consecration is intended to and will indeed produce a society where there are no poor, temporal or spiritual.

“Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld.”<sup>51</sup>

By the Lord’s own testimony, the principle of consecration intends—happily for the righteous, offensively for the wicked—“that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low.”<sup>52</sup> This may sound unappealing to some, but this “humbling the rich and the proud,”<sup>53</sup> serves as a great and protective boon to them. It allows them to avoid “falling into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>50</sup> DC 82.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>51</sup> DC 70.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>52</sup> DC 104.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>53</sup> DC 84.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>54</sup> 1 Timothy 6.<sup>9</sup>

“The earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.”<sup>55</sup>

Only such consecration can bring the peace for which Zion was made to live and proclaim. But Zion’s citizenry has not found it agreeable to abide this celestial requirement. They... we have traded bondage for freedom and peace. When presented with the choice between the benefits of obvious, but temporary profit, and the benefits of less clear and long-range benefits of consecration, Zion’s potential citizens choose profit. Thus, to this day, they... we continue to sell off our God-given inheritance.

As a result of this sell-off, Zion’s watchmen, without the benefit of the tower, or the strengths presented by consecration, are blind to many dangers that might otherwise be detected and avoided. Unknown evils enter the body due to this absence. Principle among these dangers is the very one that started the sell-off in the first place: the unrelenting search for profit and the cheap and unsatisfying materialism it engenders.

“We brought nothing into this world, and *it is certain* we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.... For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things....”<sup>56</sup>

Once Zion yielded to economic self-gratification, it became easy prey for every other form of self-gratification. It became vulnerable to, comfortable with, and even supportive of societal economic attitudes and policies that harm the poor—attitudes and policies that are incompatible with celestial principles and the attitudes and practices of celestial beings.

Worse still, Zion’s betrayal of celestial principles has left the world with a less effective,

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<sup>55</sup> DC 104.<sup>17-18</sup>

<sup>56</sup> 1 Timothy 6.<sup>7-8, 10-11</sup>

robust, and credible ambassador. It is salt that has lost some of its savor. It leaves the world vulnerable to ever more numerous and ever more evil attitudes and practices. As the world observes “God’s people” happily participating in the orgy, the world justifies and glories in its hedonistic rebellion against God.

Zion is, to this very day, still in exile; the church that survived it, still very much enamored with and skilled in the dark arts of Babylon. Its watchmen, however well-meaning, are disadvantaged, often in unknown ways, by the absence of the watchtower that provides unobstructed and far-sighted view of the many and subtle damnable doctrines of Babylon. They do not see and so cannot warn of all these hostile and harmful influences that infiltrated the body.

Nothing that we have seen or learned in this homily is to be viewed as deep and profound doctrine and practice. These principles and practices are part and parcel with first principles. They are principles and practices of basic human decency. They are true to God’s most basic desire:

“And unto thy brethren have I said... they should love one another,”

Truly, he would that each be their brother’s keeper.

City and church will remain in the wilderness until they make the conscious choice to build the tower. The Lord will not come and create such a people. He will come because a people, a church, a society have already chosen for themselves to be such a people; a people who, having prepared a place for his coming, invite him with these final New Testament words.

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”<sup>57</sup>

Only so, can we avoid the threat of the Old Testament’s final words,

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<sup>57</sup> Revelation 22.<sup>20</sup>

“Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”<sup>58</sup>

The choice is ours.

“In the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be exalted,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low:  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough places plain:  
And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together:  
for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Malachi 4.<sup>6</sup>. Our understanding of this passage, and Elijah’s work is entirely too pinched. We have quoted DC 98.<sup>16</sup> before. “Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children.” Zion’s proclamation of peace is necessary to the world’s survival—in time and eternity. Consecration is central to the proclamation and realization of this peace.

<sup>59</sup> Isaiah 40.<sup>3-5</sup>