

# *A Vision and a Hope for the Youth of Zion*

EZRA TAFT BENSON

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My beloved brethren and sisters, humbly and gratefully I stand before you this morning and seek an interest in your faith and prayers that the message that I have may be accompanied by the Spirit. It is a wonderful sight that I view here this morning. It is good to be with you, my beloved young friends, distinguished members of the faculty, and special guests.

My wife and I have just returned from a glorious weekend at St. George, where I had the privilege of addressing three overflow audiences, two in the largest auditorium they have at Dixie College and made up largely of young people, and one on the fourth floor of the temple in a Solemn Assembly. We were honoring the centennial of the dedication of the St. George Temple, the first one to be erected in the western part of the country. We are still basking in the aftermath of another great general conference of the Church. Never in my memory have we had more explicit warnings from prophets of God; and nowhere in the world are there men better prepared or more obligated to issue such warnings.

## **The Celestial Kingdom**

Today I want to discuss some principles and laws of the celestial kingdom, and some of the fallacies of their perverted counterfeits in the world. I share with you a vision of your eternal possibilities. The celestial kingdom, residence of God, our Eternal Father, is comprised of men and women who have complied with divine law and who were not deceived by the craftiness of men or the doctrines of devils. They are just men made perfect through the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ (see D&C 76:69). They are obedient to celestial law; for, as the Lord has said, he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory (D&C 88:22).

Celestial laws, embodied in certain ordinances belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, are complied with by voluntary covenants. The laws are spiritual. Thus, our Father in Heaven has ordained certain holy sanctuaries, called temples, in which these laws may be fully explained, the laws include the law of obedience and sacrifice, the law of the gospel, the law of chastity, and the law of consecration.

I want to speak more particularly this morning about this one law--the law of consecration. It is that one's time, talents, strength, property, and money are given up to the Lord for the express purpose of building up the

kingdom of God and establishing Zion on the earth. Or, as we read in Doctrine and Covenants 105:5, "Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom."

Much has been written about this law and its attempted implementations in the early history of the Church; and much deception has taken root, even among some of our members, because of misinformed opinion or misguided interpretations. Some view it as merely an economic alternative to capitalism or the free enterprise system, others as an outgrowth of early communal experiments in America. Such a view is not only shortsighted but tends to diminish in importance a binding requirement for entrance into the celestial kingdom. The law of consecration is a celestial law, not an economic experiment.

The vehicle for implementing the law of consecration is the united order. The basic principle underlying the united order is that everything we have belongs to the Lord; and, therefore, the Lord may call upon us for any and all of our property, because it belongs to him. The united order was entered by "a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken" (D&C 42:30), according to the scriptures. In other words, an individual conveys his titles to all his property to the Church through the bishop. The property becomes the property of the Church. You read about this in the forty-second section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The bishop then deeds back to the consecrator by legal instrument the amount of personal property required by the individual for the support of himself and his family, as the Lord declares, "according to his circumstances and his wants and needs" (D&C 51:3). This becomes the private, personal property of the individual to develop as he sees fit. It is his stewardship. When an individual produces a profit or surplus more than is needful for the support of himself and his family, the surplus is then placed in the bishops storehouse to administer to the poor and the needy. Under the united order, idleness has no place, and greed, selfishness, and covetousness are condemned. The united order may therefore operate with only a righteous people.

It has been erroneously concluded by some that the united order is both communal and communistic in theory and practice because the revelations speak of equality. Equality under the united order is not economic and social leveling as advocated by some today. Equality, as described by the Lord, is "equal[ity] according to [a man's] family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs" (D&C 51:3).

Is the united order a communal system? Emphatically not. It never has been and never will be. It is "intensely individualistic." Does the united order eliminate private ownership of property? No. "The fundamental principle of this system [is] the private ownership of property" (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Conference Report*, October 1942, p. 57).

Two separate groups of saints have fully implemented this divine law. The first was the united order under Enoch, wherein the Lord designated this people Zion, "because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them." We read of this in the seventh chapter, eighteenth verse, of Moses, in the Pearl of Great Price. A second instance was the Nephite civilization following the visit of the Savior to the Western Hemisphere after his resurrection. This is recorded in 4 Nephi, the third verse particularly. The failure of the early Saints in this dispensation to live according to the fulness of the law is explained by the Lord in revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, sections 101 and 105.

I repeat and emphasize that the law of consecration is a law for an inheritance in the celestial kingdom. God, the Eternal Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and all holy beings abide by this law. It is an eternal law. It is a revelation by God to his Church in this dispensation. Though not in full operation today, it will be mandatory for all Saints to live the law in its fulness to receive celestial inheritance. You young people today abide a portion of this higher law as you tithe, pay a generous fast offering, go on missions, and make other contributions of money, service, and time.

### **Satan's Counterfeit System**

But whenever the God of heaven establishes by revelation his design, Satan always comes among men to pervert the doctrine, saying, "Believe it not." He often establishes a counterfeit system, designed to deceive the children of men. His aim, as it was before the foundation of this earth was laid, is to thwart the agency of man and to subjugate him. Throughout all ages of mankind, the adversary has used human agents and despotic governments to establish his purpose. Satan is determined to destroy all that is dear, all that will ennoble and exalt man to a celestial kingdom.

Isaiah foresaw the time when a marvelous work and a wonder would come forth among men (see Isaiah 29:14). Isaiah also predicted that there would be those that "seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they [shall] say, Who seeth us?" (Isaiah 29:15). He saw the time when the work, man, shall say of him that made him, "He made me not," denying his creation (see Isaiah 29:16). It is well to ask what self-proclaimed atheists came on the human scene following the restoration of the gospel, who established secret works of darkness to overthrow nations by violent revolution and who blasphemously proclaimed the atheistic doctrine that God made us not. Yes, Satan works through human agents. We need only look to some of the ignoble figures in human history who were contemporary to the restoration of the gospel to discover fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. I refer to the infamous founders of communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Today, if we are alert, we can see further fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies.

### **Communism--a System Antithetical to the Gospel of Christ**

Through the instigation of Marx and Engels, a most successful counterfeit to the united order was introduced into the world. The declaration of principles found in their Manifesto to the World advocated the overthrow of capitalism and free enterprise, the abolition of private property, the elimination of the family as a social unit, the abolition of all classes, the overthrow of all governments, and the establishment of communal ownership of property in a classless, stateless society. All this was to be accomplished by revolution.

On July 3, 1936, the First Presidency published this warning to Church members. I quote it in part; I hope you will get a copy of the full statement for your files. In part, the statement reads:

*. . . Communism is not a political party, nor a political plan under the Constitution; it is a system of government that is the opposite of our Constitutional government. . . .*

*Since Communism, established, would destroy our American Constitutional government, to support Communism is treasonable to our free institutions, and no patriotic American citizen may become either a Communist or supporter of Communism.*

*To our Church members we say, Communism is not the United Order, and bears only the most superficial resemblance thereto. Communism is based upon intolerance and force, the United Order upon love and freedom of conscience and action. . . .*

*Communists cannot establish the United Order, nor will Communism bring it about. . . .*

*Communism being thus hostile to loyal American citizenship and incompatible with true Church membership, of necessity no loyal American citizen and no faithful Church member can be a Communist.*

*We call upon all Church members completely to eschew [and shun] Communism. The safety of our divinely inspired Constitutional government and the welfare of our Church imperatively demand that Communism shall have no place in America.*

*Signed,*

*President Heber J. Grant*

*J. Reuben Clark, Jr.*

*David O. McKay*

*The First Presidency*

You students have only to read some of the speeches and writings of the exiled Russian Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to appreciate this farsighted warning of the First Presidency.

I have been on both sides of the Iron Curtain several times. I have talked to these godless leaders face to face. I say to you with all the sincerity of my soul that since 1933 this godless counterfeit to the gospel has made tremendous progress towards its objective of world domination, for over one-third of the human family are now under totalitarian subjugation.

Today we are in a battle for the bodies and souls of men. It is a battle between two opposite systems: freedom and slavery, Christ and anti-Christ. The struggle today is more momentous than a decade ago, yet today the conventional wisdom, so called, is that we have got to learn to live with communism, to give up our ideas about national sovereignty. You hear that repeated today. Tell that to the millions--yes, the scores of millions--who have met death or imprisonment under the tyranny of communism. Learn to live with communism? Such would be the death knell of freedom and all we hold dear.

The gospel of Jesus Christ can prosper only in an atmosphere of freedom. As members of his Church, we have a major responsibility to do all in our power to see that freedom is preserved and safeguarded. I pray that God will bless you to see communism for what it really is: the greatest system of human slavery that the world has ever known. May you not be deceived into believing that the communists have moderated their goal toward world domination. I say to you that so-called detente is a fraud. Time will prove it to be such.

There is no excuse for any BYU instructor to grant a forum to an avowed communist for the purpose of teaching communism on this campus. It may be done on other campuses in the United States, but it will not be done here.

### **Socialism--a Philosophy Incompatible with Man's Liberty**

Another notable counterfeit system to the Lord's plan is collectivized socialism. Socialism derives its philosophy from the founders of communism, Marx and Engels. Communism in practice is socialism. Its purpose is world socialism, which the communists seek to achieve by revolution, and which the socialists seek to achieve by evolution. Both communism and socialism have the same effect upon the individual--a loss of personal liberty. As was said so well by President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "The two are as two peas in a pod in their ultimate effect upon our liberties."

Why is socialism incompatible with man's liberty? Socialism cannot work except through an all-powerful state. The state has to be supreme in everything. When individuals begin to exert their God-given rights, the state has to suppress that freedom. So belief in God must be suppressed, and with that gone freedom of conscience and religion must also go. Those are the first of our liberties mentioned in the Bill of Rights.

There are some among us who would confuse the united order with socialism. That is a serious misunderstanding. It is significant to me that the Prophet Joseph Smith, after attending lectures on socialism in

his day, made this official entry in the Church history: "I said I did not believe the doctrine" (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* 6:33).

### **Socialism Disguised under Welfare State Measures**

As citizens of this noble land, we have marched a long way down the soul-destroying road of socialism. If you question that statement, consider the recent testimonial from the Nobel prize-winning economist, Milton Friedman. He indicated that government spending in the United States at all levels amounts to over forty percent of today's total national income. If we continue to follow the trend in which we are heading today, two things will inevitably result: first, a loss of our personal freedom, and second, financial bankruptcy. This is the price we pay when we turn away from God and the principles which he has taught and turn to government to do everything for us. It is the formula by which nations become enslaved.

This nation was established by the God of heaven as a citadel of liberty. A constitution guaranteeing those liberties was designed under the superintending influence of heaven. I have recounted here before what took place in the St. George Temple when the Founding Fathers of this nation visited President Wilford Woodruff, who was then a member of the Twelve and not president of the Church. The republic which was established was the most nearly perfect system which could have been devised to lead men toward celestial principles. We may liken our system to the law of Moses which leads men to the higher law of Christ.

Today, two hundred years later, we must sadly observe that we have significantly departed from the principles established by the founders of our country. James Madison opposed the proposal to put Congress in the role of promoting the general welfare according to its whims in these words:

*If Congress can employ money indefinitely to the general welfare, they may take the care of religion into their own hands; they may appoint teachers in every state, county and parish and pay them out of their public treasure; they may take into their own hands the education of children, establishing in like manner schools throughout the Union; they may assume the provision of the poor. . . . Were the power of Congress to be established in the latitude contended for [and it was an issue then], it would subvert the very foundations, and transmute the very nature of the limited Government established by the people of America. [quoted in Donald L. Newquist, *Prophets, Principles, and National Survival*, p. 342]*

That statement, given as a warning, has proved prophetic. Today Congress is doing what Madison warned about. Many are now advocating that which has become a general practice since the early 1930s: a redistribution of wealth through the federal tax system. That, by definition, is socialism!

Americans have always been committed to taking care of the poor, aged, and unemployed. We have done this on the basis of Judaic-Christian beliefs and humanitarian principles. It has been fundamental to our way of life that charity must be voluntary if it is to be charity. Compulsory benevolence is not charity. Today's socialists--who call themselves egalitarians--are using the federal government to redistribute wealth in our society, not as a matter of voluntary charity, but as a so-called matter of right. One HEW official said recently, "In this country, welfare is no longer charity, it is a right. More and more Americans feel that their government owes them something" (*U.S. News and World Report*, April 21, 1975, p. 49). President Grover Cleveland said--and we believe as a people--that though the people support the government the government should not support the people.

The chief weapon used by the federal government to achieve this "equality" is the system of transfer payments. This means that the federal government collects from one income group and transfer payments to another by the tax system. These payments are made in the form of social security benefits, Medicare and Medicaid, and food stamps, to name a few. Today the cost of such programs has been going in the hole at the rate of 12 billion dollars a year; and, with increased benefits and greater numbers of recipients, even though the tax base has been increased we will have larger deficits in the future.

Today the party now in power is advocating and has support, apparently in both major parties, for a comprehensive national health insurance program--a euphemism for socialized medicine. Our major danger is that we are currently (and have been for forty years) transferring responsibility from the individual, local, and state governments to the federal government--precisely the same course that led to the economic collapse in Great Britain and New York City. We cannot long pursue the present trend without its bringing us to national insolvency.

Edmund Burke, the great British political philosopher, warned of the threat of economic equality. He said,

*A perfect equality will indeed be produced--that is to say, equal wretchedness, equal beggary, and on the part of the petitioners, a woeful, helpless, and desperate disappointment. Such is the event of all compulsory equalizations. They pull down what is above; they never raise what is below; and they depress high and low together beneath the level of what was originally the lowest.*

Are we part of the problem or part of the solution?

Recently a letter came to my office, accompanied by an article from your *Daily Universe*, on the matter of BYU students taking food stamps. The query of the letter was: "What is the attitude of the Church on taking food stamps?" The Church's view on this is well known. We stand for independence, thrift, and abolition of the dole. This was emphasized in the Saturday morning welfare meeting of general conference. "The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership" (Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report*, October 1936, p. 3).

When you accept food stamps, you accept an unearned handout that other working people are paying for. You do not earn food stamps or welfare payments. Every individual who accepts an unearned government gratuity is just as morally culpable as the individual who takes a handout from taxpayers' money to pay his heat, electricity, or rent. There is no difference in principle between them. You did not come to this University to become a welfare recipient. You came here to be a light to the world, a light to society--to save society and to help to save this nation, the Lord's base of operations in these latter days, to ameliorate man's social conditions. You are not here to be a parasite or freeloader. The price you pay for "something for nothing" may be more than you can afford. Do not rationalize your acceptance of government gratuities by saying, "I am a contributing taxpayer too." By doing this you contribute to the problem which is leading this nation to financial insolvency.

Society may rationalize immorality, but God cannot condone it. Society sponsors Sabbathbreaking, but the Church counsels otherwise. Society profanes the name of Deity, but Latter-day Saints cannot countenance it. Because society condones a dole, which demoralizes man and weakens his God-given initiative and character, can we?

I know what it is, as many of your faculty members do, to work my way through school, taking classes only during winter quarters. If you don't have the finances to complete your education, drop out a semester and go to work and save. You'll be a better man or woman for so doing. You will have preserved your self-respect and initiative. Wisdom comes with experience and struggle, not just with going through a university matriculation. I hope you will not be deceived by current philosophies which will rob you of your godly dignity, self-respect, and initiative, those attributes that make a celestial inheritance possible. It is in that interest, and that only, that I have spoken so plainly to you.

**My Hope for You, the Youth of Zion**

In opening my remarks to you, beloved youth of the Church, I attempted to share with you a vision of your eternal possibilities. In closing my remarks, I share with you my hope for you:

I hope that you learn through your struggles the joy of achievement.

I hope that you recognize in the gospel of Jesus Christ a solution to our problems, temporal and spiritual.

I hope that you marry well, live together in love, rear a family in righteousness, and have joy and rejoicing in your posterity.

I hope that you follow the example and counsel of him whom the Lord has appointed as prophet, seer, and revelator.

I hope that you learn the joy of work, the ability to postpone wants, and the economic independence not to be a slave to any man.

I hope that you keep yourselves clean morally and spiritually, that your confidence will wax strong in the presence of God, as the scriptures say, and the Holy Ghost will be your constant companion (see D&C 121:45–46).

I hope that you will be united in philosophy, purpose, and action to the laws of the celestial kingdom.

I pray God's choicest blessings on you, my beloved brethren and sisters. May I say to you that there isn't anything in this world that's right that the leadership of this Church wouldn't do for the youth of the Church; and so I hope and pray that you realize the hope of those who love you and serve you and the possibilities of your potential as sons and daughters of God. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.