

# Chapter 1

## THE GOSPEL AND SOCIETY

The following article shows briefly how the gospel of Jesus Christ provides the only true foundation for a true social order where the ideals of freedom, authority and brotherhood are properly combined. It is upon this foundation that Latter-day Saints must build the society of Zion in preparation for the peaceful millennial era of the future, when, by obedience to the higher laws of this superior system, free men will live in love and union with each other, and truth and justice will prevail throughout the earth.

Ordinarily, individual freedom and social union are opposing ideals that cannot be reconciled in a social relationship. This is also true of individual freedom and social authority. They are antithetical. They stand in opposite corners of society and make war on each other. To foster one is to destroy the other. And yet, in their proper expression, they are all worthy ideals; and they must all be given their rightful expression in a true society.

While men continually debate the many surface issues that confront society, the final and ideal solution of such issues and problems rests largely upon the reconciliation of the above ideals. The solution of the problems that generally confront society can best be achieved where free men cooperate in the spirit of true brotherhood and act unitedly under intelligent authority. But to do this, they must seek the aid of divine truth and power, for only in this way can the above ideals be achieved without one ideal infringing upon the lawful expression of another. The pure gospel of Jesus Christ therefore provides the only foundation upon which a true society can be built. True freedom, union and authority can only be reconciled in society through the gospel, in which men are taught correct principles by which to govern themselves.

To organize and regulate a free society so as to establish peace and prosperity and social justice, Joseph Smith said, requires “the wisdom of God, the intelligence of God, and the power of God.”<sup>1</sup> Only by the influence of divine truth and power can man be regenerated, sanctified, and raised to a spiritual plane that makes possible the establishment of true brotherhood and social authority, without infringing upon individual freedom. When members of a true Christian society respond intelligently to the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, they are motivated by its enlightening powers to live outside themselves in service to others and to sustain willingly and eagerly the authority that ministers truth and light to the system. Only in such a society can individual freedom and union be combined properly with social authority. The influence of the Holy Spirit can thus change the whole order of society and make possible social relationships that cannot otherwise be attained.

To illustrate this point it may be noted that social scientists generally assert that the balance of power is a component of every social process. Again, they hold that authority can neither arise nor be preserved without the establishment and maintenance of distance between those who direct and those who obey. But in a Christian society, where

men are actually motivated and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, union may prevail in place of the division that makes necessary the balancing of power between contending factions. And on the issue of distance between those who lead and those who follow, the Prophet instructed by way of contrast: "There should exist the greatest freedom and familiarity among the rulers of Zion."<sup>2</sup>

The mission of the Latter-day Saints is to establish freedom, develop brotherhood and maintain social authority under the gospel plan, so as to raise the society of Zion to be an ensign of religious, social, economic, and political truth to the world. This they must do to fulfil the responsibility that God has placed upon them to build up Zion in these latter days.

To accomplish these purposes they must first hold fast to the fundamental principles of freedom that are guaranteed to us in the Constitution of the United States. Second, within this framework of freedom and justice they must build up the free, united, and inspired social and economic order of Zion. Finally, they must gather all known truth to Zion and integrate it into the core of gospel truth and power. In pursuing the latter effort, they should not merely gather some of the truths of the gospel into a given man-made discipline or field of thought without changing the assumptions upon which it rests, for this is the reverse of that which is intended by the divine plan. The building of Zion requires, instead, the establishment of a new synthesis; and that synthesis must be the revealed truths of the restored gospel.

The integration of other areas of truth into the divine principles and powers of the gospel will then elevate all things to a higher spiritual plane and make possible new arrangements of thought more consistent with eternal reality, as well as new social relationships that are otherwise unattainable among men. Only then will all things yield free obedience to the truth and the authority of Jesus Christ. This is social authority in its highest ideal.

In the writer's opinion, modern liberalism militates against the achievement of this ideal, because it is almost wholly intellectual in its approach to the problem of achieving social justice, instead of being first spiritual and then intellectual in its approach. It proposes, for example, that man-made devices, including the welfare state, be the essential means of achieving social justice. Such a course lays the foundation for defeat instead of success in the quest for social justice, for man must first be elevated to the proper spiritual plane before he can achieve this objective. Without the needed regeneration, a society that endeavors to bind men together in union and equality must do so at the expense of their freedom and dignity. Said President John Taylor of such systems: "All these things have failed, and they will fail, because, however philanthropic, humanitarian, benevolent, or cosmopolitan our ideas, it is impossible to produce a true and correct union without the Spirit of the living God, and this Spirit can only be imparted through the ordinances of the Gospel."<sup>3</sup>

Without divine powers of truth and light to activate each cell and organ in the body the social system must be like a puppet, manipulated by artificial devices that

destroy freedom and allow authority to degenerate to compulsory levels. By proposing that men enter into such social dependencies to achieve the justice and equality that the gospel alone can make possible, modern liberalism therefore largely denies freedom and human dignity.

It follows that modern liberalism is either blind to the Holy Spirit as an intelligent and enlightening power capable of regenerating the human soul and developing within man that spontaneity that is necessary to attain true social union, justice, and authority, or it wilfully rejects the need for the Spirit in other than limited and prescribed religious functions.

For those who are not acquainted with the true gospel of Jesus Christ, these may in some respects be excusable deficiencies, as they rise out of the quest for social justice and union. But for Latter-day Saints they constitute an actual denial of the basic foundations—spiritual, social, economic, upon which this dispensation and its program rests. And the hard and blunt fact of the matter is that Lucifer and his hosts followed a similar path in the pre-mortal conflict known scripturally as the war in heaven. In the shortcut they proposed for achieving security, they denied both the principle of freedom and the enlightening spiritual powers that existed in the presence of God. Consequently, they became fallen beings devoid of power to live in true peace, union, and justice with each other. As Latter-day Saints, these same alternatives still confront us.

### **Chapter Endnotes**

1. *DHC*, V, 64.
2. *Ibid.*, I, 368.
3. *JD*, XVII, 137.