

Zion-building: Pondering a Paradigm

Working Toward Zion: Principles of the United Order for the Modern World. By James W. Lucas and Warner P. Woodworth (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1996).

Reviewed by T. Allen Lambert, Ithaca, New York.

ZION-BUILDING AS THE FORMATION of social institutions based on principles purportedly underlying Mormon United Orders has repeatedly captured the attention of scholars, reformers, practitioners, and church leaders over the past 150 years. The variety of interpretations seems to exceed the diversity of implementation. In some ways the debate over the nature of and relationships between Consecration and Stewardship, United Order, capitalism, and modern economy resembles that of Book of Mormon geography: there are more proposed "mappings" than plausible ones. Part of the problem is paradigm, and the Lucas-Woodworth book epitomizes how good intent can go astray when perception is based on faulty assumptions, ideologically dominated analysis, uncritical self-consciousness, etc.

What Mormon Zionist would not be attracted to *Working Toward Zion* by building on Hugh Nibley's *Approaching Zion* (as the authors assert and as Nibley himself implies in his foreword)? What great expectations are raised at the prospect of nearly 500 pages devoted to "Principles of the

United Order for the Modern World"? Indeed, what greater goal than to "seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" (D&C 6:6) through more fully implementing our temple covenant of Consecration and Stewardship? This review aims to analyze the degree to which achievement approaches aspiration.

In preparation for illustrating various principles and practices which they consider Zion-like in our modern economy, the authors wander through lengthy stage setting ("Zion and ..., Saints in ..., Challenge of ..., Restoration ... in the Modern World"); world history ("From Adam's Fall to Adam Smith" and "The Industrial Revolution ..."); contemporary conditions of productivity and labor ("Wealth and Poverty ..., Ownership, Management, and Labor ..., Finance ..., Capitalism, Socialism, and the United Order ... in the Modern World"); some principles of the United Order and practices for individuals, families, other groups and nations, and church ("Celestial Inheritance," "Upright Citizens in an Ideal Society," "More Nations than One,"); and management consulting ("Talent of Men of Business," "Stewardship Management in Modern Business," "True Energetic Life-giving Principle," "Cooperatives"). Finally the book "ends" with twelve pages of appendix, sixty-five pages of notes, twenty-nine pages of bibliography,

and an index, which, together with the main text of twenty-one chapters, table of contents, foreword, and acknowledgements, add up to about 497 total pages.

I

The main message and principal contribution of the book are found in the second half, beginning with chapter 10, and will be considered first. The first half of the book, which has little relevance to the theme, will be considered second.

Appendix B is a useful and lengthy but incomplete list of LDS and non-LDS "charitable organizations" which are engaged in one or another form of aid to peoples in distress around the world. Addresses, phone numbers, and brief descriptions are included for those who may be interested. A second edition of the book might modernize this list by including e-mail addresses and web sites. And the authors could establish a web site to list these and others, together with examples of successes and failures.

Parts of chapters 12-14 offer summaries of numerous types of efforts from around the world as examples of how individuals can contribute more to Zion-building through church service, personal initiatives, group involvements, institution formation (e.g., producer, consumer, and credit cooperatives), etc., at home or abroad. (But let us not forget that development efforts and interventions often do more harm than good despite the best of intentions.)

Chapter 17 emphasizes cooperatives and worker/employee ownership, with illustrations ranging from Israeli kibbutzim to Moroni Feed in

Utah with some European retailers in between. There is a brief review and reminder of the roots of LDS cooperatives begun in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 19 provides the most elaborate description of the development and operation of a more Christian form of modern economic organization. This story of the Mondragon cooperatives among the Basques of northern Spain has sufficient detail and relevance to be especially worthy of study, analysis, and emulation in certain settings.

Less clearly useful are a few inadequately detailed examples of corporate contributions and outreach identified in chapter 15. Being familiar with more of the story of some of these than offered in the book, I wonder about their portrayal and whether the authors are not sometimes stretching to find more goodness and hope than reality warrants. Suffice it to say that in most of the corporate cases there are competing descriptions and interpretations. Superficial allusions to alleged (but uncertain) good deeds can lead to myth-making and cynicism.

Chapter 10 provides a simple summary of what Lucas-Woodworth call "The Principles of the United Order" which presumably served as a screen for selection of examples and filter for relevance of material in other chapters. These are: "care of the poor," "work and self-reliance," "equality," "consecration," "stewardship," "storehouse," and "moral motivation." There is also some discussion of the questions of whether the nineteenth-century LDS United Order was a failure as well as of its future. None of this is elaborated, and alternative formulations are not considered. For example, there is no discussion of

"justice" as a principle of Consecration and Stewardship. Nor is there consideration of the arguments that many individual United Orders did not "fail," but rather were sold and privatized in order to escape federal government confiscation/expropriation and that much "failure" was a function of larger capitalist, political, economic forces, including government interference.

Chapter 18 is perplexing with its grandiose but undeveloped concept of "united order principles inspired enterprises" as the "True Energetic Life-giving Principle." Nor could I discover much sense in such sub-headings as "Cults and Accounting" and "Stewardship, Self-reliance, and Alienation." And under "Morality and Enterprise," we get treated to the platitude "In the end it is human motivation that makes an economy operate," and to the following unexplained astonishing assertion: "It can be fairly argued that much of Nevada's prosperity in recent years can be attributed to the adoption of a Utah-like family orientation to its economy, and the influence of its large LDS communities." Does not Nevada's prosperity depend primarily on gambling which is mostly an offspring of organized crime and non-Mormon corporate greed in a degrading form of exploitation of human weakness? Does Mormonism desire credit for that evil enterprise, and do Lucas and Woodworth really mean to hold that up as an "ensign" to Zion-building?

Is this what they mean by "LDS Corporate Cultures" in chapter 16? While it is hard to disagree with such ideas as "fair pay," "valuing human resources," "employee dignity," "family-friendly policies," and "industrial democracy," they were not devel-

oped by LDS-led corporations and are not especially common in modern Mormon economy. Such Utah businesses as Novell, WordPerfect, and several older industrial and financial institutions are no longer owned and managed by Mormons or even locally based. Nu-Skin as an example of righteous business ownership and organization? Not many Utah-born enterprises would be farther from some of the principles preached by Nibley in *Approaching Zion*.

Chapter 20 poses a fundamental and vitally important question: "Could an economy or economic sector which was based on the principles of the United Order be made to work in the modern world?" But no real answer is entertained. Nor does critical analysis of whether we ought to try to apply United Order principles within or to the modern world economy occur. However, the authors do assume the centrality of financial capital in the modern economy and suggest an alternative banking system in the form of a "storehouse treasury," which is essentially communally owned and governed, and they explore how such might operate and be managed in a manner more consistent with principles of Consecration and Stewardship.

The final chapter meanders through ideas about "Zion and the New Millennium" with references to (alleged benefits of) NAFTA (about which controversies are ignored), to Andrew Carnegie as "one of the great heroes of the free enterprise system" (despite his mistreatment of labor), to Friedrich Hayek, Karl Marx, and many others, and to socialism, capitalism, and zionism, but without any clear goal, theme, or conclusion.

II

Because *Working Toward Zion* promotes Zion-building and does so with practical examples for here and now, I recommend perusal of the second half for inspiration and ideas. But the first half presents barriers to getting to the meat. Chapters 1-9 were, for me, an obstacle both because the length and irrelevance got in the way and because there was so much which I found annoying and open to criticism. But let me start this more scholarly-oriented critique at the end.

The twenty-nine-page bibliography is both excessive and incomplete, and it seems indiscriminate. Selectivity would have been helpful to most readers unfamiliar with the debates and who might be seeking guidance for a little additional reading. Also helpful in a second edition would be an annotated bibliography. As for scholars, there is much dross and some significant lacunae.

For example, Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrines of the Kingdom* (Bookcraft, 1973) is missing despite its being the most systematically developed theology and principles of Mormon economics and which no serious discussion of the matter ought to ignore. How could they omit the official 1939 Melchizedek priesthood study course, *Priesthood and Church Welfare*, issued in hardback by the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve? Or the MIA General Board's 1935-36 senior manual, *The Community High-Road to Better Things*? Or the 1886 Logan temple lectures on "Political Economy" by Presiding Bishop Charles Nibley? Or B. H. Roberts's "Economics of the New Age" and "The Doctrine of Consecration and Stewardship in the Light of the Modern World's Eco-

nomic and Industrial Breakdown" in *Last Seven Discourses* (Deseret Book, 1948)? How about Dale Mouritsen, *A Defense and a Refuge: Priesthood Correlation and the Establishment of Zion* (BYU, 1972); William Dyer, *Catching the Vision: Working Together to Create a Millennial Ward* (Bookcraft, 1993); Genevieve DeHoyos, *Stewardship—The Divine Order* (Horizon, 1982); Alma Burton, *Toward the New Jerusalem* (Deseret Book, 1985)? Should Ogden Kraut's *The United Order* (Pioneer Press, 1983) be ignored? Neither is any reference made to Ruth and Reginald Wright Kauffman's *The Latter Day Saints: A Study of the Mormons in the Light of Economic Conditions* (University of Illinois Press, 1994 [1912]), especially in discussing the (larger political economic context of) failure of United Orders in Utah, nor to A. Maass and R. Anderson, "...Desert Shall Rejoice": *Conflict, Growth, and Justice in Arid Environments*, (MIT, 1978).

And while Gordon Wagner's paper given at the 1990 "Plotting Zion" conference is listed (but without including any of his principles and models of success), none of the papers by others—e.g., Orson Scott Card, "Living in Zion," or by Gordon Thomasson and myself given there and elsewhere (and copies of which the authors had)—are listed. Here are just a few examples of more than a dozen relevant papers and presentations over the past twenty years which they ignore: Gordon C. Thomasson, "Zion as a Refuge and the Refugee in Zion" and "Unique Potential Strengths, Roles, and Contributions of the Contemporary Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Development in Poor Nations and Communities"; T. Allen Lambert,

"Consecration and Stewardship: Concepts, Principles, Institutions," "Preparedness for and Principles of Zion-building," "Philosophy and Planning for Relief and Development by the Mormon Church," and "Capitalism vs Christianity: A Critique and Counter-Proposal"; also T. Allen Lambert, Gordon C. Thomasson, and Gordon E. Wagner, "Mormon Economics: A Socially Efficient System of Justice." (These and other papers are available through me.)

This leads to questions about Lucas and Woodworth's notes. Once again the authors' references are lengthy but sometimes of questionable relevance, accuracy, worth, or completeness. For example, even though they refer to Gordon Wagner's exceptional work in Africa, they do not provide description or details of any of his successes as examples or models alongside others they describe. And while they list Wagner's Cornell Ph.D. dissertation in economics ("Consecration and Stewardship: A Socially Efficient System of Justice" [1977]), they do not actually discuss this very important work in any of the relevant places in their book. And in their longest note (chap. 7, n20), in which they discuss issues of organization, leadership, and management, there is no reference to the most systematic treatment of those issues in this context: T. Allen Lambert, "Priesthood Leadership vs Organizational Administration" (Willard Richards Education Week, 1971, lengthy paper in 1972, and summarized in 1985 as "Principles vs. Practice in Church Organization" at a Sunstone Symposium [and copies widely distributed]) and "Bureaucracy, Development, and Mormonism" (Cornell Industrial & Labor Relations presentation, 1977).

These omissions are curious given numerous interactions, exchanges of papers, and my critiques of Lucas's ideas at various Sunstone symposia.

More important are some of the problems with the first nine chapters of the book which are offered as stage setting (world population, condition, and history, modern economy, rise of states and bureaucracy, emergence of capitalism from feudalism, stories of individuals, Adam Smith's views, Andrew Carnegie's entrepreneurial success, equality, Marxism, Socialism, Social Darwinism, the wonders of industrial production, changing nature of work, the Restoration, stewardship, and numerous other topics as well as endless name-dropping). The quantity and quality of this discussion tend to get in the way of the main message found in the second half of the book; I fear that many readers may simply not get through the first half and so will not benefit from the useful stuff. As one fairly familiar with the material covered in those chapters, I failed to get a good sense of relevance and judicious selection. And some of the underlying assumptions and attitudes are quite problematic.

For example, I found it gratuitous and wrong-headed to have the book essentially worship Adam Smith and repeatedly link him to Joseph Smith as if they were of the same mind and teaching. On several occasions the book confronts the reader with unsupported or false comparisons similar to: "Joseph Smith, like Adam Smith, ..." (131). The book devotes more words to Adam Smith than any other person and treats him as some kind of True Prophet from beginning to end. At one point the book gushes, "This is the ideal of Adam Smith, a man whose name so curiously com-

bines the names of two of the mightiest men of God ..." (100).

The authors' representation of Adam Smith is highly selective and misleading. Thus their focus on free market was a very minor aspect of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and does not really correspond closely to what is called a free market today. Smith's main theory had to do with the productive benefits of specialization, division of labor, and other aspects of social organization, labor theory of value, role and use of money, etc. And if they sanctify Smith, they also demonize Marx and Engels with ad hominem comments which resemble more partisan political rhetoric than serious analysis.

In general, their review of history leaves much to be desired and contributes little, if anything, to the book; such is also my reaction to too much of their portrayal of our modern economy and society.

Curiously, Lucas and Woodworth avoid using the term "capitalism" most of the time, preferring such phrases as free enterprise, free market economy, industrial economy, and variants. Why this particular delicacy? It was not, contrary to the authors, "industrial economy" that Marx and others criticized, but capitalism as a specific political economic mode of organizing production, labor, trade/exchange, and distribution of benefits. Their failure to understand and properly use technical terms weakens their effort and argument. Despite popular ideology, capitalism is not reducible or equivalent to free enterprise or free markets, and freedom of exchange is not unique to modern capitalism, etc.

This lack of conceptual clarity helps explain the weakness of their

analysis of United Order principles and how they are unique, particularly in solving what is for many a dilemma: the problem of markets and equality. As Wagner, Thomasson, and I have argued, it is possible to separate market operation in determining demand and price for common consummables from valuing fundamental (and essentially non-renewable or use-rate limited) resources like soil, air, water, and oil in which cost to future generations cannot be fairly reflected in current pricing based on production costs, etc. Furthermore, stewardships can be disaggregated into consumption and production so that all may have a common standard of living (equality in consumption stewardship based on grace) but great differences in productive responsibility (inequality in production stewardships based on talent and performance); likewise production stewardships may be separated from distribution of profits/surplus, especially if the community owns and allocates capital through, for example, a bishop's storehouse or treasury (community-owned and -operated banking system). Finally, such personal property as clothing, furniture, books, tools, transportation, etc., may be treated differently from land and other common resources for which one may be assigned either consumption or production stewardship but not ownership with the ability to privately sell/exchange title.

In sum, I think that *Working Toward Zion* makes a modest contribution to understanding possibilities for living a more Consecrated life in this world. But it is not persuasive in demonstrating the relevance of Consecration and Stewardship to, or that it can

influence, the dominant forces of our modern economy (transnational corporate capitalism). While the book

provides some useful instruction on how to do better, it may not inspire as many to do so as the authors hope.