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Abstract Review of *Working toward Zion: Principles of the United Order for the Modern World* (1996), by James W. Lucas and Warner P. Woodworth.

James W. Lucas and Warner P. Woodworth. *Working toward Zion: Principles of the United Order for the Modern World*. Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1996. xi +484 pp., with bibliography and index. $19.95.

Reviewed by Don Norton

Any comments on the uses and abuses of wealth will stir controversy. Hugh Nibley, whose *Approaching Zion* stimulated *Working toward Zion*, says he was quite overwhelmed by responses to his Zion book, especially by people who had spent their lives deliberately, and hence foolishly, trying to accumulate wealth (Brigham Young's counsel was simply to "keep your dish right side up"; don't try to fill it yourself—let the Lord so do, should he see fit). Likewise, the Lucas-Woodworth book has evoked mixed reactions—no surprise to the eighty-seven-year-old widow who commented recently that the *only* friction she had to deal with when she supervised a group of townswomen parachute workers in Manti in the 1940s was equity in pay for work accomplished. Money is a sore subject.

Working toward Zion is a thoughtful and extensive overview of the issues of wealth in the perspective of the Zion society as revealed to Joseph Smith and implemented in various forms, from the first revelations on the subject in 1831 (D&C 42) to the present. Lucas and Woodworth are not amateurs in this arena: Lucas is a corporate attorney practicing in New York City, Woodworth a professor of organizational behavior at BYU, with background in economic systems and development. Woodworth's work abroad, especially in Third-World countries, has enabled him to compose the final chapters of the book (15 through 20), in which he describes examples of "employee-owned companies and cooperatives where united order principles are being put into practical business application today" (p. 244).

The problem of a materialistic outlook on life is that it produces a false sense of security—as if humans have things under control. (Some critics lay similar blame on another sacrosanct

feature of our modern world—technology.) If the Book of Mormon has one great message, it is the danger of the love and inequitable distribution of material things. In every case, the Nephite slide into corruption begins with the words "costly apparel" (or as we would say today, "designer clothes"). The charge is clear: "But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish" (2 Nephi 26:31). "It is the love of money and the love of those things which money can buy which destroys us. The love of [money] . . . warps our values . . . and fosters selfishness and greed," President Gordon B. Hinckley warned priesthood bearers as recently as the April 1997 General Conference.[1]

The problem is institutional as well as personal. Ivan Illich used to say that the institutionalization of any human services[2] inevitably leads to a contradiction of the stated intent of those services: institutions come to serve their own ends, rather than the ends for which they were purportedly founded. Thus schools thwart learning, doctors cause more disease than they cure, ministers foster guilt, lawyers impede justice, politicians precipitate disorder in the body politic, etc.[3] The Book of Mormon has a term for this kind of inevitability: priestcraft—"that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion" (2 Nephi 26:29). The key words here are *gain* and *Zion*. No human institutions are more self-serving than financial systems (money turns out to be at the bottom of so many human endeavors); few groups are more frequently indicted by the prophets than moneymongers. And the money-minded unrighteous in turn consistently attribute mercenary motives to the prophets—Korihor's clincher was that Alma and the priests were "glutting on the labors of the people" (Alma 30:31). Note also the spate of

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1 Gordon B. Hinckley, "Converts and Young Men," *Ensign* (May 1997): 49.

2 Evident in what Ivan Illich calls our "Disabling Professions," in *Toward a History of Needs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 16.

3 Physicians become "biocrats," teachers "gnosocrats," morticians "thanacrats," etc. Two brief volumes capture Illich's basic views: *Toward a History of Needs*, and *In the Mirror of the Past* (New York: Boyars, 1992).

twentieth-century criticism leveled against the presumed financial empire of the Mormons.

Radical approaches to the distribution of wealth are common enough, and most fail. For many reasons, even Latter-day Saint efforts at united-order living failed. United-order principles nevertheless remain valid, and *Working toward Zion* is a refreshing review of those principles and their applications. The church is very serious about looking after the temporal welfare of the Saints. Lucas and Woodworth point out that of the 112 revelations that Joseph Smith received, "some 88 deal at least partially with financial matters" (p. 17). And church leaders never cease to comment on this sacred subject. *Working toward Zion* sets forth the principles of the "social economy of Zion" and explores these at length in the context of the evolution of the various economic systems of the modern world—socialism, communism, capitalism, the modern conglomerates—and finally the unique "gospel economic revolution." A key word here is *principles*. Lucas and Woodworth are careful not to prescribe any type of narrow "church socialism"; rather they emphasize principles of economic equity that are flexible and can be implemented individually or within a variety of economic settings.

Perhaps the most valuable part of the book is a description of numerous contemporary successes in the equal distribution of wealth—from instances of individual and family commitment to consecration, to community sharing (at the local and international levels), to stewardship management of businesses, and to charitable institutions. An entire chapter is devoted to the remarkable Mondragon cooperative complex in Spain.

Working toward Zion is a book to reread. It assembles a large body of scripture (canonical and other) on the uses of wealth; it gives perspective on how to think about the great contrasts in affluence and poverty in a world all but obsessed with economic issues; it obliges us to deal individually with the temptation of covetousness, and counsels us on how to view and use personal and collective assets. In a world in which economics has become a fetish, *Working toward Zion* invites us to reconsider our economic behavior: to assume both individual and collective responsibility for our own and others' "real needs."