

## Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 78

The main theme of this section is the Law of Consecration and its application to the early saints in the form of the United Order. For related references see D&C 42:30-42, D&C 49:20, D&C 51:3, D&C 104:11-17.

The revelation is presented as one lengthy quote attributed to the Lord.

Based upon the subject, the text can be arranged as a simple series of A-B parallels where the A's present the principle of the order, and the B's present the purpose behind the principle. Note the A's are presented as being preparatory of, or types of, the inheriting of exaltation as discussed in the B's.

Summons (v. 1)

Introduction (v. 2)

A - (v.2a-b) In your ears, the words of wisdom...

B - (v. 2c-d) that salvation may be unto you.

Body (v. 3-16)

A - (v. 3-4) The storehouse for the poor...

B - (v. 5-7) so you are equal in earthly and heavenly things.

A - (v. 8-12) Organize yourselves by an everlasting covenant...

B - (v. 13-16) so you may obtain a crown.

Conclusion (v. 17-22)

C - (v. 17-18c) Little children, I will lead you

D - (v. 18d-e) The Kingdom and riches of eternity are yours

E - (v. 19) Things of earth added hundred fold unto you

C - (v. 20) Do things I command you, and prepare for you

D - (v. 21) You are the Church of the Firstborn

E - (v. 22) The faithful will inherit all things

1 THE Lord spake unto Joseph Smith, Jun., saying: Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, who are ordained unto the high priesthood of my church, who have assembled yourselves together;  
2 And listen to the counsel of him who has ordained you from on high, who shall speak in your ears the words of wisdom, that salvation may be unto you in that thing which you have presented before me, saith the Lord God.

v1 Those ordained to the "high priesthood" are summoned to hear the word of the Lord.

v2 The revelation is introduced as wisdom in their ears, and following it will lead to salvation.

3 For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion-- 4 For a permanent and everlasting

establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which ye have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven;

v3-4 The establishment of the storehouse for the poor is announced. Note the way v. 4 connects temporal and material welfare with spiritual matters.

5 That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. 6 For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; 7 For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

v5-7 Equality in temporal things in mortality is equated with equality in spiritual things with the Father in eternity. Verse 7 emphasizes the necessity of obeying the Lord's commands in order to obtain celestial glory.

The natures of human character obviously being addressed are selfishness, greed, envy, and mammon worship. All of these things are contrary to the celestial order. If we are not voluntarily equal in temporal things, then there exists selfishness, greed, envy and mammon worship among us. We need to rid ourselves of these things individually, and create institutions and a society which will not foster them.

8 And now, verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient that all things be done unto my glory, by you who are joined together in this order; 9 Or, in other words, let my servant Newel K. Whitney and my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and my servant Sidney Rigdon sit in council with the saints which are in Zion; 10 Otherwise Satan seeketh to turn their hearts away from the truth, that they become blinded and understand not the things which are prepared for them. 11 Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, to prepare and organize yourselves by a bond or everlasting covenant that cannot be broken. 12 And he who breaketh it shall lose his office and standing in the church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

v8-12 They are commanded to join together into the order by a covenant (v. 8). Smith, Whitney and Rigdon are to council with the Saints so they will not be led astray by the adversary (v. 9-10). The covenant is one that cannot be broken (v. 11), or one that has no legal loopholes (cp. D&C 82:11), and its violation results in excommunication (v. 12).

13 Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the foundation, and the ensample which I give unto you, whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you; 14 That

through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world; 15 That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion, who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman; 16 who hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high, and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life.

v13-16 The order is an example designed to help them in keep His commandments (v. 13), a means of the Lord providing for His people (v. 14), a preparation for exaltation v. 15-16).

17 Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you; 18 And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours. 19 And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more.

20 wherefore, do the things which I have commanded you, saith your Redeemer, even the Son Ahman, who prepareth all things before he taketh you; 21 For ye are the church of the Firstborn, and he will take you up in a cloud, and appoint every man his portion. 22 And he that is a faithful and wise steward shall inherit all things. Amen.

v17-22 The section concludes with the Lord informing them He will lead them along, so they should keep His commandments (v. 17-18b, 20). The blessings of eternal life and exaltation are offered to them (v. 19, 21). The thankful, faithful and wise steward shall inherit the riches of the earth an hundred fold and even all things (v. 20, 22, cp. D&C 82:24).

v19 "things of this earth shall be added", compare Jacob 2:19.

v20 "the Son Ahman", i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ. Orson Pratt (Journal of Discourses, volume 2, page 342) says this title is the name of the Lord in "the pure language", presumably meaning the Adamic tongue.

v21 "church of the Firstborn", the exalted, those resurrected who receive eternal life, cp. D&C 76:50-54.

## **Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 78**

In the 1835 edition of the D&C the text contained obscure names instead of the actual names present in v. 9 of the present text. The real names were present in the Knewel K. Whitney version and the Kirtland Revelation Book. The Orson Pratt quote from Journal of Discourses below explains why the obscure names were substituted. The 1835 edition also contained the addition of:

Zion, who hath established the foundations of  
Adam-ondi-Ahman; 16 Who hath appointed Michael your  
prince, and established his feet, and set him upon  
high, and given unto him the keys of salvation under  
the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is  
without beginning of days or end of life.

which was not present in the Whitney version or the Kirtland Revelation Book, which had only "Israel" in place of the leading "Zion" above. The addition was presumably to provide an example of one who was exalted, and therefore whom they may be placed on par with if they are faithful, as well as reference the head of the exalted human family. There were some additional minor changes in the 1835 edition too insignificant to comment on.

### **Excerpt from History of the Church**

Besides the work of translating, previous to the 20th of March, I received the four following revelations:

[text of D&C 78, 79, 80, 81 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 255)

### **Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith**

Section 78 was received by Joseph Smith while he was visiting the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio. The revelation calls for an "order" to be established according to a "bond" or "covenant" that cannot be broken. This order, variously known as the "United Order," the "Order of Enoch," and the "United Firm," was created at this time.

The United Firm was a business partnership consisting of about a dozen Church leaders. Members of the firm were either landowners or merchants whose purpose was to work in concert, using the financial means at their disposal, to generate profits. Inasmuch as the members of the partnership were also presiding Church leaders, it is difficult to determine which of their financial transactions were purely personal and which were Church-related. This dual relationship has led some writers to

erroneously conclude that the United Firm administered the law of consecration. Specifically, the Church bishop administered the program of consecration. The United Order was essentially a private business concern.

The nucleus from which the United Firm grew was the Gilbert-Whitney mercantile establishment in Kirtland, Ohio. The Gilbert-Whitney store, as it was called, expanded to two branches (one in Kirtland and one in Independence) after Newel K. Whitney and Sidney Gilbert joined the Church and Gilbert was called by revelation to reside in Missouri. Other Church brethren who had financial means, namely Martin Harris, Frederick G. Williams, and John Johnson, were called by revelation to be part of this order.

Section 78 directed that the order be formed and commanded that Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney "sit in council with the Saints...in Zion," to regulate the affairs of the poor. Obeying the command, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Jesse Gause, and Newel K. Whitney left Ohio on 1 April 1832 and traveled to Independence, Missouri, arriving 24 April. During their visit in Missouri, a meeting of the United Firm essentially incorporated the Missouri branch of the Gilbert-Whitney Store into the firm.

William E. McLellan stated on more than one occasion that there were nine members of the United Firm, but there may have been more. The following are known to have been members in 1832: Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Jesse Gause, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, A. Sidney Gilbert, Newel K. Whitney; undoubtedly Edward Partridge, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer were also members in that year. Frederick G. Williams and John Johnson became members of the order in 1833.

The members of the United Firm were consecrated in their respective responsibilities, and although they were to benefit personally from the profits of the firm, the surplus profits were to be used for the operation and blessing of the whole Church.

The United Firm was short-lived. On 10 April 1834 members of the firm met and decided that the order should be dissolved, and on 23 April 1834 a revelation (section 104), commanded that the two branches of the firm become separate entities and that the members discontinue operating jointly. (Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*).

### **Excerpt from Journal of Discourses**

The names that were incorporated when it [Doctrine and Covenants] was printed, did not exist there when the manuscript revelations were given, for I saw them myself. Some of them I copied. And when the Lord was about to have the Book of Covenants given to the world it was through wisdom, in consequence of the persecutions of our enemies in Kirtland and some of the regions

around, that some of the names should be changed and Joseph was called Baurak Ale, which was a Hebrew word; meaning God bless you. [D&C 103:21-22, 35; 105:16, 17.] He was also called Gazelam, being a person to whom the Lord had given the Urim and Thummim. He was also called Enoch." (Orson Pratt, Journal of Discourses, volume 16, page 156)

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