

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 83

This section deals with the care of widows and orphans, as well as the children of the poor. Taking care of widows and orphans has always been of particular concern to the Lord, because of their vulnerable status in society, cp. Lev. 19:9-10, Deut. 10:16-20, Isa. 1:15-18, Zech. 7:9-10, James 1:27.

General admonitions about caring for one's own family can be found in 1 Peter 3:7, 1 Tim. 5:8.

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord, in addition to the laws of the church concerning women and children, those who belong to the church, who have lost their husbands or fathers: 2 Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken; and if they are not found transgressors they shall have fellowship in the church. 3 And if they are not faithful they shall not have fellowship in the church; yet they may remain upon their inheritances according to the laws of the land.

4 All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age. 5 And after that, they have claim upon the church, or in other words upon the Lord's storehouse, if their parents have not wherewith to give them inheritances.

6 And the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor. Amen.

v1 Regarding widows and orphans in the Church (v. 1), women have claim on the Church for their support after their husbands die so long as they remain faithful (v. 2). If they are not faithful, then they do not have claim on the Church, but can remain on the land inherited from the deceased husband (v. 3).

Children have claim on the Church (v. 4, cp. D&C 42:42) in the event their parents cannot provide means (v. 5).

The Bishop's Storehouse is to be kept for widows, orphans, and the poor (v. 6).

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 83

This section was first published in the Evening and Morning Star, volume 1, number 8, page 62, dated January, 1833. It was then published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 222-223. It was published in the Evening and Morning Star reprint at Kirtland, volume 1, number 8, page 126, dated April, 1836. It was published in the Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 16, page 625, dated September 2, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 11, pages 163, dated May 8, 1852.

Excerpt from History of the Church

On the 27th, we transacted considerable business for the salvation of the Saints, who were settling among a ferocious set of mobbers, like lambs among wolves. It was my endeavor to so organize the Church, that the brethren might eventually be independent of every incumbrance beneath the celestial kingdom, by bonds and covenants of mutual friendship, and mutual love.

On the 28th and 29th, I visited the brethren above Big Blue river, in Kaw township, a few miles west of Independence, and received a welcome only known by brethren and sisters united as one in the same faith, and by the same baptism, and supported by the same Lord. The Colesville branch, in particular, rejoiced as the ancient Saints did with Paul. It is good to rejoice with the people of God. On the 30th, I returned to Independence, and again sat in council with the brethren, and received the following:

[text of D&C 83 quoted]
(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 269)

Excerpt from Collected Discourses

I will now read the words of the Prophet Joseph in relation to the establishment of the United Order in Jackson County:

And now I will proceed to tell you my views concerning consecration, property, giving inheritances, &c. The law of the Lord binds you to receive whatsoever property is consecrated, by deed. The consecrated property is considered the residue kept for the Lord's storehouse, and it is given for this consideration, for to purchase inheritances for the poor; this any

man has a right to do, agreeable to all laws of our country, to donate, give or consecrate all that he feels disposed to give. And it is your duty to see that whatsoever is given, is given legally; therefore it must be given for the consideration of the poor Saints, and in this way no man can take any advantage of you in law. Again, concerning inheritances, you are bound by the law of the Lord, to give a deed, securing to him who receives inheritances, his inheritance for an everlasting inheritance, or in other words to be his individual property, his private stewardship, and if he is found a transgressor and should be cut off, out of the Church, his inheritance is his still, and he is delivered over to the buffetings of Satan till the day of redemption. But the property which he consecrated to the poor, for their benefit and inheritance and stewardship, he cannot obtain again by the law of the Lord. Thus you see the propriety of this law, that rich men cannot have power to disinherit the poor by obtaining again that which they have consecrated, which is the residue signified in the law that you will find in the second paragraph of the extract from the law, in the second number.

This then was the plan of the united order. It would make a lecture in itself, if I were to dwell upon it as the subject deserves. Suffice it that it was a general consecration of all properties to the Church, after which each person received a separate inheritance, such as a farm, a blacksmith's forge, a carpenter's bench and tools, a shoe-shop, or whatever was most appropriate to his vocation in life. And "the laborer in Zion" was to labor "for Zion," and all their earnings were to go into one common fund, upon which they were to draw for their support, all drawing equally according to their just needs, under the supervision of the Bishop and presiding authorities, and each man having his private stewardship. Under such a beneficent system fraud and selfishness would be doomed, for no man would be tempted, as now, to take advantage of or defraud his neighbor, since by so doing he would simply be defrauding himself. There could be but little pride and disunion, since all would be equal, class distinctions would perish, and many of the causes for disunion would be done away. Thus you see this order was to be a grand lever towards bringing the people of God into

that happy and blessed condition so desirable. And Zion, I believe, will never be redeemed until this people practice the principles of the united order. I have heard some say that we would not have the united order until Zion is redeemed. But this, to me, seems like putting the cart before the horse, the cause before the effect. This people can never be fully united until pride and selfishness are done away, until dishonesty and corruption disappears; until men love their neighbor as themselves, seeking his interest as they would their own, dealing justly with all men, and in all things laboring with an eye single to the glory of God. Until we cease to wear upon our helmet crests, as we go forth in the battle of life, that narrow and contemptible motto: "Me and Mine," and replace it by that sentiment as broad and true as it is grand and beautiful: "God and My Fellow-man," we will not see the redemption of Zion. (Collected Discourses, volume 1, Orson F. Whitney, September 22, 1889)

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