

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 119

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church in Zion, 2 For the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church. 3 And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. 4 And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord. 5 Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass that all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed of their surplus properties, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you.

6 And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you. 7 And this shall be an ensample unto all the stakes of Zion. Even so. Amen.

v1-5 The ancient (cf. Gen. 14:17-20, Lev. 27:30-32, Hebr. 7) Law of Tithing as a tenth of all increase is re-instituted, but the initial dedication of all surplus properties is attached to the Law as well. The latter requirement is a remnant of the Law of Consecration instituted in D&C 42:32-35, which has since been dropped.

v6-7 These verses state a spirit of selfishness and materialism precludes the existence of Zion. Thus, the ancient OT Zion versus Babylon antithesis, or the equivalent NT mammon versus God.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 119

This section was first published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 15, page 618, dated August 15, 1844. It was published in Deseret News, volume 3, number 10, page 37, dated April 2, 1853. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 16, number 12, page 183, dated March 25, 1854. It was first printed in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1844, pages 430-431.

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

On 8 July 1838 Joseph Smith and others inquired of the Lord, saying, "O Lord, show unto thy servants how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a tithing." The language of this revelation makes it clear that "tithing" did not simply connote ten per cent, but contribution. The proposed tithing of 1837, the language of section 119, and the history of the period affirm that this revelation was establishing the requirements of the law of consecration as it was then understood. To "be tithed" was to comply with the requirements of the law of consecration a one-time donation of one's "surplus" properties (i.e., real and personal properties that could be reasonably sacrificed), and subsequently, ten per cent of one's "interest" (i.e., profits).

The 1833-1838 phase of the law of consecration (essentially devoid of deeded stewardships) was characterized by a contribution of surplus (real and personal) property. Because times were meager and members could exercise discretion in assessing their "surplus," the collection of an absolute ten per cent of one's profits was seen as necessary for the economic survival of the Church.

Concerning section 119 and the consecration of surplus properties, Brigham Young later stated, When the revelation [was] given in 1838, I was present, and recollect the feelings of the brethren. A number of revelations were given on the same day. The brethren wished me to go among the Churches, and find out what surplus property the people had, with which to forward the building of the Temple we were commencing at Far West. I accordingly went from place to place through the country. Before I started, I asked brother Joseph, "Who shall be the judge of what is surplus property?" Said he, "Let them be the judges themselves.... [I found] upon asking them about their surplus property, most of the men who owned land and cattle would say, "I have got so many hundred acres of land, and I have got so

many boys, and I want each one of them to have eighty acres, therefore this is not surplus property. [Journal of Discourses, 2:306] (Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

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