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James W. Lucas and Warner P. Woodworth,
*Working toward Zion: Principles of the United Order for
the Modern World*

Lindon J. Robison

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Author(s) Lindon J. Robison

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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 Lindon J. Robison

Lucas and Woodworth's *Working toward Zion* is a thoughtful analysis of united order principles and how we might apply them in the modern world. To begin, Lucas and Woodworth note important demographic changes occurring in the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If church membership in the past could be characterized as white, middle-class, English-speaking, in the future we may characterize them as non-English speaking, tan- or dark-skinned, and urban poor. The average incomes of new converts, especially in developing countries, stand in stark contrast to the incomes of members living in North America.

As we confront the very real gap between living conditions along the Wasatch Front with those of the new converts in the Philippines, Peru, and Paraguay, Lucas and Woodworth ask us to consider a significant issue facing our worldwide church. How do we respond to the Lord's challenge to be equal in material and spiritual goods? Answering this question is a mighty task. I applaud Lucas and Woodworth for their honest effort to focus our attention on the trailhead if not the path to Zion, where "there are no poor among us."

The scope of Lucas and Woodworth's challenging theme requires them to paint with a broad brush. The wide range of topics they address includes the writings of Adam Smith, the Industrial Revolution, finance in today's world, social Darwinian concepts, contrasts between capitalism, socialism, the united order, and the Mondragon cooperative. Such a breadth of topics comes at some sacrifice of depth. This tradeoff is inevitable, but I think a proper one for the task Lucas and Woodworth set out for themselves to accomplish.

Lucas and Woodworth compensate for their tradeoff between breadth and depth of coverage by selecting specific examples to illustrate the challenges of working toward Zion in a modern age. One of their case studies is a returned Philippine missionary forced by circumstances to face opportunities significantly different from those available to his white, English-speaking companions. Another of Lucas and Woodworth's examples is a successful corporate executive who chooses Zion principles over the corporate bottom line and loses his employment as a result. These two examples and others describe the terrain likely to be traveled as we work our way to Zion.

The collection of topics contained in chapters 1 through 9 of *Working toward Zion* at first appears disconnected from those in chapters 10 through 21. In the first three chapters, Lucas and Woodworth set the stage for what follows. They review the changing demographics of the church and remind us of the challenge to build a Zion characterized by love, harmony, and peace in which the Lord's children are one. In chapters 4 through 9, Lucas and Woodworth outline the economic history of ideas and choices that have produced our current economic conditions. Included in these chapters is a review of early experiences with united orders, the vehicle for implementing the law of consecration. In these early chapters Lucas and Woodworth pay particular attention to the patron saint of modern economics and capitalist economies, Adam Smith. They give evidence that Adam Smith never intended what is promoted in his name, an economy in which the unbridled pursuit of selfishness is encouraged without regard for the slow and the weak.

Lucas and Woodworth are careful to explain united order principles and contrast these with the principles of other economic systems. United order principles include care for the poor, equality, consecration, stewardship, storehouses, and moral motivation. These principles are clearly different from those that guide modern capitalism with its emphasis on efficiency, and principles of socialism that limit agency to promote equality.

Lucas and Woodworth point out that property is privately owned in the united order. Property is publicly held in socialism. Membership in united orders is voluntary, while, in socialism, the state can mandate. United orders are organized from the bottom

up with no conflict between workers and owners because they are the same. Socialism functions from the top down with the focus on the goals of the organization rather than the elevation of the individual. Finally, Lucas and Woodworth point out that neither socialism nor capitalism is based entirely on united order principles—but if a choice is mandatory, capitalism is preferred because it preserves the principle of stewardship.

Lucas and Woodworth's extensive list of endnotes gives evidence of their careful preparation. In these endnotes are hidden some gems. For example, note 26 of chapter 18 provides a helpful summary of literature on the topic of worker motivation when workers are stimulated by opportunities to participate in decision-making and shared ownership.

I agree with an earlier reviewer of *Working toward Zion* that the heart of Lucas and Woodworth's book is chapters 11 through 21.¹ In these chapters the authors suggest ways we individually might practice united order principles and they provide examples of the efforts of some who have already begun working toward Zion. Lucas and Woodworth ask us to consider if there are not some ways we could practice united order principles though we have not been formally called to do so.

Lucas and Woodworth could improve their text by including chapter summaries. In addition, there was some repetition in the text and sometimes I felt the book did not hang together as well as it might with more polishing. These concerns, however, are minor when compared to the overall contributions of *Working toward Zion* and should not discourage readers from examining this important work.

Working toward Zion is an uncomfortable book to read. There must be a spiritual law of inertia that suggests we are resistant to change if our current conditions are comfortable. So one's first response to Lucas and Woodworth's book is likely to be: aren't the payments of tithes and fast offerings enough? The answer I read in *Working toward Zion* is, not if you can do more.

¹ See T. Allen Lambert, "Zion Building: Writing about It and Doing It," *FARMS Review of Books* 9/2 (1997): 74–84.