

AN ADDRESS TO THE SAINTS

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The quorums of the First Presidency, the Twelve, and the Bishopric met in joint council at Lamoni, Iowa, May 1, 1903, and after careful consideration adopted the following address and provided for its publication in the *Saints Herald, Ensign*, and in tract form. There were present, Joseph Smith, F.M. Smith, and R.C. Evans of the First Presidency; W.H. Kelly, Heman C. Smith, Joseph Luff, G.T. Griffiths, I.N. White, F.A. Smith, F.M. Sheehy, and U.W. Greene of the Twelve; and E.L. Kelley and G.H. Hilliard of the Bishopric.

Joseph Smith, President of Council
Fred M. Smith, Secretary
Heman C. Smith, Secretary

The Presidency, Twelve, and Bishopric in joint council send greeting to the Saints of the progress and conditions of church work, and particularly that part relating to temporalities, trusting to encourage the faithful helpers everywhere and to stimulate all to efforts of diligence in fulfilling the law of Christ.

1. Necessity of Fulfilling the Law

As a people we expect to find acceptance with God only so far as we are willing to do his will and keep his commandments. Jesus taught:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15

The inspired Psalmist sung of the mercies and blessings of the Lord that followed those and their families who failed not to obey him:

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." Psalms 103:17, 18

These promised favors and benefits, as a people, we desire and seek; but it must not be forgotten that their realization depends upon our readiness to do. It is by faithful performance of duty that we are made heirs of promise and entitled to a place among those who love God.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."
1 John 2:3

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his

commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3

We are not only promised acceptance with God by these citations through obedience to all of his laws, but are assured to begin with, that he does not demand more than we shall be able to perform.

"His commandments **are not** grievous." But God requires an effort on our part to fulfill his law. This should be made in meekness, but with courage; everyone moving to his or her task with cheerfulness, and a fervent desire to accomplish through the love of God, all that he has asked.

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments." Psalms 112:1

Forty-two years ago the Reorganized Church was instructed to comply with the laws relating to temporalities, and potent reasons mentioned for so doing.

"In order to place the church in a position to carry on the promulgation of the gospel, and as a means of fulfilling the law, the Twelve will take measures in connection with the Bishop, to execute the law of tithing."

Doctrine & Covenants 114:1

The law then is **binding upon the church** and should be administered; put in force, fulfilled, as any and all others relating to the body - the church. The officers mentioned are required to perform this work as a duty. And the fact must not be overlooked in this connection, that if these officers are charged with the administration of the law and are to be held responsible for making a proper effort to carry out their part of the work, that each and every member is under equal obligation to obey, or comply with the same, and that responsibility for a disregard or disobedience, can not be escaped.

Entire, full, and complete obedience is demanded for this law as any other; and a failure to keep, must now as in the past bring the church under condemnation.

"Behold, I say unto you, Were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now; but, behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I require at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them, and are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; and Zion can not be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, otherwise I can not receive her unto myself; and my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it needs be, by the things which they suffer." Doctrine & Covenants 102:2

2. Manner of Administration

To obtain the benefit for which any gospel law or usage has been instituted, the administration must be by a voluntary acceptance, or willingness, on the part of the one complying. People can not be assessed, or deprived of their properties by the church against their will. Christ promised an eternal reward to those who fulfilled his laws here. Then the act of the observer must be a voluntary one. To lay up "treasures in heaven" requires that act to be with a free heart, willingly. There is no chance for compulsion in carrying out the law relating to temporalities any more than that touching spiritual things. To baptize a person who does not understand the object and benefits of baptism against his will, would be an act in violation of the law of Christ. To force a person to give of his means, or deceive him as the object and purpose, would be a violation of the law on the part of the administrator. The gospel rule is stated by the apostle:

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

"Behold the Lord requireth the heart, and a willing mind." Doctrine & Covenants 64:7

On the other hand, a person who accepts the law, and desires to obey the commandments of God must not fail to perform because it will inconvenience him, or be a sacrifice for him to do so. No great reward can be expected by an individual who defers doing anything for the cause of Christ until he gets something that he can do without, just as well as not, and then turn that over to the Lord. Christ gave all for us, why should we hesitate to sacrifice for him or his work? Many in accepting the gospel are called upon to part with friends, relatives, and loved ones; indeed all must deny themselves of many things for Christ's sake; but do we waver because of this? Neither should we hesitate to sacrifice of our substance to promote the welfare of his work.

"Behold, now it is called today (until the coming of the Son of Man), and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned (at his coming)." Doctrine & Covenants 64:5; see Malachi 4:1

In keeping this, as well as other commandments, we prove our worthiness before the Lord. Jesus referring to this law of duty in temporal matters, says:

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

Luke 16:10,11

Can anything be plainer upon the question of rendering a faithful and true account than the foregoing? And stop and consider that it is the Son of God talking; a fact in itself sufficient to disclose the great importance of each and everyone setting him or herself right, in complying with the law.

3. What is Required by it?

1. A recognition on our part of the beneficence and supremacy of God over every good thing in this world. As he declares:

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalms 24:1

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."
Psalms 50:10

2. The stewardship, rather than the ownership, of man, and that it is his duty and reasonable service to render an account of this stewardship to God in time, as well as eternity,

"It is expedient in me for a bishop to be appointed unto you, or of you unto the church, in this part of the Lord's vineyard; and verily in this thing ye have done wisely, for it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and eternity. For he who is faithful and wise in time is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for them of my Father." Doctrine & Covenants 72:1

The principle of rendering tithes to the Lord has been recognized and followed in every age wherein we have an account of a people who were accepted of him.

Abraham, the father of all the faithful in Christ, kept the law. To the High Priest, Melchizedek,

"Abraham gave a tenth part of all." Hebrews 7:2

Jacob promised:

"And of all thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."
Genesis 28:22

The Lord charged Malachi to say to the people:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house."
Malachi 3:10

This injunction is made applicable in the gospel economy by the instruction of Christ to the Nephites after his resurrection. (3Nephi 11:1-3) He also said to the Jews:

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye have done, and not to leave the other undone." Luke 11:42

The word **tithe**, means **tenth**; and the rendition of a tithe referred to in the Bible, is turning into the hands of the bishop appointed to receive the same, the tenth part of what a man has, over and above his indebtedness; or a "tenth of the increase." Everyone should render an account in this, for whatever we are blessed with we are indebted to God for, and it is but reasonable and just that we honor him in the tithe. The principle is: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." Proverbs 3:9.

It must not be forgotten that the tithe is a part of what a person has been blessed with; God first bestows upon us, and then asks a return according to our several abilities. The widow and her mite may do this and receive reward therefor. The rich cannot be rewarded if they withhold. "For there is no respect of persons with God." Romans 2:11.

Under special conditions of the church, other portions of giving, than the tenth, are also referred to as tithes, but the word occurs as an adjective, or verb, and not as a noun, and denotes the act of giving or taking, rather than the specific amount required under the law.

"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 . . . And this shall be an ensample unto all the stakes of Zion." Doctrine & Covenants 106:2.

The surplus may be a hundredth part, or a half; no definite sum is indicated here by the word, but the idea of paying or giving is expressed.

Direction is also given to the Saints to consecrate of their properties for the use and benefit of the church in providing for the poor, and carrying out the work of promulgating the gospel. To consecrate is to set apart for these special church, or sacred uses. The amount of the consecration is to be determined by the person giving in agreement with the Bishop and is referred to as "that which thou hast to impart," there being provision also for a first, and subsequent consecrations.

"If thou lovest me, thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments. And, behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support, that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken; . . . And again, if there shall be properties in the hands of the church, or any individuals of it, more than is necessary for their support, after this first consecration, which is a residue, to be consecrated unto the bishop, it shall be kept to administer unto those who have not, from time to time, that every man who has need may be amply supplied, and receive according to his wants. Therefore, the residue shall be kept in my storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy, as shall be appointed by the high council of the church, and the bishop and his council, and for the purpose of purchasing lands for the public benefit of the church, and building houses of worship, and building up of the New Jerusalem which is hereafter to be revealed, that my covenant people may be

gathered in one, in that day when I shall come to my temple. And this I do for the salvation of my people." Doctrine & Covenants 42:8,10

To consecrate is to set apart for a special purpose, or use, and in the consecration referred to here, a portion is set aside for the purposes mentioned in the law to be put into the hands of the Bishop of the church. The remainder is designated or set apart to the one making the consecration as his own; for it appears that the "testimonies concerning the consecration" are taken at the time. Herein a complete consecration may be had and persons entering therein receive their certificates from the Bishop.

The consecration of the "remainder" or "residue" herein referred to, is more particularly set out under the term of surplus property, and may be better comprehended under this head.

4. Surplus Property

Whatever amount or kind of property can be spared by any person without injury to his business, or impairing his stewardship, is under the law properly termed surplus. In other words, it is that part of a man's properties which he has more than he has need. Individual efforts and interests are not jeopardized in the administration of this part of the law, but respected and conserved. For while a person carries on his work and properly answers to the Lord in his stewardship, he aids the church to perform its work by setting aside for its use that which he can do without, that it may perform its work, and he in turn is blessed and benefited in developing and establishing of the church work. The plan is cooperative, aiding the needy and leveling distinctions, and largely enters into the solution of the question of bringing about harmony in the social life of the people. The direct application of the order of surplus is in Zion and her stakes. (Doctrine & Covenants 106), but the privileged administration is coextensive with the residences of the Saints and proper officers to administer, thus making the children of Zion one in their works.

"He that sendeth up treasures unto the land of Zion, shall receive an inheritance in this world, and his works shall follow him." Doctrine & Covenants 63:13

"A few words in addition of the laws of the kingdom, respecting the members of the church; they that are appointed by the Holy Spirit to go up unto Zion, and they who are privileged to go up unto Zion. Let them carry up unto the bishop a certificate from three elders of the church, or a certificate from the bishop, otherwise he who shall go up unto the land of Zion shall not be accounted as a wise steward. This is also an ensample. Amen." Doctrine & Covenants 72:5

5. Testimonies To Be Taken

To insure justice and equity in the administration of this principle of surplus, the Bishop must be

made acquainted with the holdings of each one. He can neither confirm, as just and equitable, the amounts set aside by the rich to fill the measure of the law, nor know the needs and wants of the poor who must be aided, without this. It is right and proper then, that all should file their inventories, with the Bishop; and make a full and complete showing without reservation, as a solemn and sacred act in their stewardship before the Lord, so that the law may be administered in equity and righteousness. This act is referred to in the law as laying "all things before the Bishop in Zion," a term fairly disclosing the object, extent, and manner of execution of the law.

". . . for according to the law every man that cometh up to Zion must lay all things before the bishop in Zion. . . . a certificate from the judge or bishop in this part of the vineyard, unto the bishop in Zion, rendereth every man acceptable, and answereth all things, for an inheritance, and to be received as a wise steward and as a faithful laborer; otherwise he shall not be accepted of the bishop in Zion."
Doctrine & Covenants 72:3,4

The Bishop in Zion referred to herein is the general Bishop, or Presiding Bishop in contradistinction to local bishops. Zion is particularly defined in the law as, "The Pure in Heart." - Doctrine & Covenants 94:5. But, there are references made in terms of "the place for the city of Zion;" "the land of Zion;" "the waste places of Zion;" and Zion, the "ensign of the people."

Offerings for the purpose of helping along worthy undertakings, benevolent enterprises, special educational efforts, incidental expenses to a traveling elder, and church buildings, should be made by all who can do so. In this way we may do much to build up and establish the kingdom of God. Men can do much of their own selves; as they voluntarily do this, they are made stronger instead of weaker, the Lord giving them ability to bring forth more fruit, proving the fact held out

"Verily I say, Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good, they shall in nowise lose their reward. But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned." Doctrine & Covenants 58:6

6. Concluding Statement

It is the duty, and should be regarded as the privilege, of every person to consecrate everything he has and is to the service of God, to be used for the advancement of his work as he may direct. The church being an organization ordained of God for the developing and promulgating of his purposes it follows that through its authorized representatives we can more effectually accomplish these purposes than in any other way. The Bishop being under the law the authorized custodian of church funds, he should be recognized and his cooperation secured in the consecration of money or property to the uses provided for in the law.

The church has no right to take of any man's property without his consent being first obtained; nor in making the consecration referred to, has the person the exclusive right to determine how means shall be used which is thus set apart for church purposes. We therefore believe that each person should make a faithful inventory of all he possess, and lay it before the Bishop; and by mutual agreement between himself and the Bishop determine what portion he shall retain for his own needs and what portion shall be placed in the treasury for other purposes. That portion set apart for his own needs and that for other purposes to be regarded as alike consecrated to the service of God, thus making a complete consecration. When such agreement and adjustment are made, the party consecrating receives an inheritance, or a certificate entitling him to an inheritance at such time as he may need, and the church be in condition to comply.

This consecration when complied with does not release the party complying, from the obligation of paying tithes on increase accumulated after consecration; nor from making a second consecration according to the first, should the individual find himself in a position to do so.

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