

THE LAW OF TEMPORALITIES

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For a number of years two statements in the Doctrine & Covenants have occasionally engaged my attention, because until recently I was unable to identify what was referred to in them.

One is found in Section 126:10 adopted at the general conference of 1902, from which I quote:

"In regard to the gathering and the work of the Bishopric in regard to the law of tithing and consecration, I made inquiry what should be the attitude of the church in regard thereto. To this question I was answered, that the Book of Doctrine and Covenants as accepted by the church was to guide the advice and action of the Bishopric, taken as a whole, each revelation contained therein having its appropriate bearing upon each of the others and their relation thereto; and unless the liberties of the people of the church should be in jeopardy, the application of the law as stated by the bishopric should be acceded to."

It is interesting to note that a long treatise of the law, titled "The Church: and Duties of the Saints in Temporal Things" by the Bishopric (G.H. Blakeslee and E.L. Kelley), had been published in the Saints Herald for March 1, 1884. And the Presiding Bishopric as constituted in 1901 (E.L. Kelley, G.H. Hilliard, and E.A. Blakeslee) had prepared and published in the Saints Herald for January 1, 1902, "Duties, Responsibilities, and Faith of the Saints," and I believe the reference in Section 126 was either to both or most likely to the latter as the application of the law."

The other statement, in Section 129:8f, is as follows:

"The church has been directed to accede to the rendition of the Bishopric with respect to the temporal law."

It must be conceded by any student of law that the two documents referred to as the "application" and the "rendition" are as much law, as binding and valid, as other statements in these two revelations. It only remains for us to identify them with certainty.

While there may be speculation as to what was meant by the "application" in Section 126, there can be no doubt as to the "rendition" in Section 129.

This "voice of inspiration, in warning and instruction," was the result of the joint labors of a Joint Council of Presidency, Council of Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric which was assembled in 1903, and which on May 2 brought forth "An Address to the Saints" on the law of tithing, etc. Since the revelation credits this document as the work or "rendition of the bishopric," I assume

the document initially was prepared by the Bishopric and concurred in by the other two councils represented.

But that is not our only proof. At the General Conference of 1905, the First Quorum of Seventy presented this "Address" to the Conference and recommended its approval. The "Address" in full was incorporated in the minutes of the Conference and, after discussion, was approved by a vote of 248 to 37.

Thus this "Address" and its interpretations became as much the law of the church as the section itself.

Here is further history. At the General Conference of 1910 members of the Presiding Bishopric were directed to compile the temporal law in a booklet. This was entitled "The Law of Christ and its Fulfillment." It was printed in book form (December 15, 1911) and many copies are still in use.

The Bishopric, we note, incorporated in this book in its entirety the address of December 23, 1901 (published in the *Saints Herald* of January 1, 1902, and referred to in Section 126), in my opinion as I have said, as the "application of the law," as also the other address of 1903 in its entirety (which was approved by the General Conference, referred to in Section 129) as the "rendition of the law."

We assume there is harmony between the "application" and the "rendition," both receiving divine sanction, the latter being approved not only by reference but by specific General Conference enactment.

Here are further considerations: On page 48 of "The Law of Christ and its Fulfillment" members of the Presiding Bishopric, in introducing their *Saints Herald* article on "Duties, Responsibilities, and Faith of the Saints," which Section 126 refers as "the application of the law," said:

"At the General Conference the following paper was taken up and discussed by a number of the quorums, and the positions duly and critically examined, as was proper to do, and finally reference was had to the joint council of the Presidency, the Twelve, and the Bishopric. This council reported and the report was printed in tract form and circulated under the title of "An Address to the Saints."

They then made this original paper (published in the *Saints Herald* on January 1, 1902) a part of their booklet, followed by this statement (page 62):

"The article is resubmitted that upon the question of consecrations it just now turns in the light needed, and which all may well walk by and do much good. It was upon questions raised in the examination of this article and another which will appear in this series, that brought out the instruction touching "the

gathering," the "work of the bishopric in regard to the law of tithing and consecration."

Thus members of the Presiding Bishopric (Bishops Kelley, Hilliard, and Blakeslee) definitely committed themselves to the theory that their article dated December 23, 1901, and appearing in the *Saints Herald* on January 1, 1902, was the application referred to approvingly in Section 126.

Later in this book, they referred to the "Address to the Saints," to which they had made reference (on page 62), in a separate chapter beginning on page 92, the heading being: "General Principles of the Church Financial System as Set Forth in the Law of Christ, by a Joint Council of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, May 2, 1903."

They then recited the action of the General Conference of April 15, 1905, setting forth at length first the General Conference action which authorized its inclusion, followed by the "Address" in full. The resolution was as follows:

Whereas, It is a part of the work and duty of the Saints to do all in their power to redeem the waste places and establish Zion, in keeping with the commandments as revealed in the law of Christ, and

Whereas, It is only by fulfillment and administration of the "celestial law" that the land of Zion can be sanctified and her children stand justified and made acceptable to God, therefore be it

Resolved, That we commend the efforts of the Bishopric to administer the law touching all of the interests and work of the church in the stakes, and as far as the same is applicable in all the branches of the church in every land and in every department of work, and believe it proper that a full compliance with the same be urged upon every member, so far as the same may be had in equality and justice.

Resolved, That we recognize in the work and findings of the joint council, of the presidency, Twelve, and Bishopric contained in the report of said council entitled "An Address to the Saints," a proper presentation of this law, and outlines upon which to carry forward such work.

The revelation (Section 129), presented at the General Conference of 1909, followed the foregoing events, and we find that the reference in Section 129 to the "rendition of the law" is in harmony with the statement of fact by the Presiding Bishopric.

In conclusion, therefore, we find that by reference the general discussion of the Bishops in their paper published in the *Saints Herald* on January 1, 1902, received divine approval and is law by reference, whereas the "Address to the Saints" of May 2, 1903, is not only law by reference but by the direct and specific approval of the General Conference of 1905.

If we are correct in the facts set forth in the foregoing and in our conclusions of law, interpretations of the law relating to temporalities should be in harmony with the "application" heretofore identified as the paper on duties and responsibilities, etc., but must be in harmony with the "rendition" heretofore identified as the "Address to the Saints."

In the foregoing article I have not concerned myself with interpretation, leaving to those upon whom under the law responsibility is placed. I am content to rest the welfare of the church on the suggestion in Section 129 of the proper procedure in the event that the rights of the people are in jeopardy. Without an exhaustive examination, I have the conviction that the two documents - the "application" of Section 126, and the "rendition" of Section 129 - provide all that is necessary by way of interpretation.

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