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THE LAW OF THE LAND

Should We Submit to It?

WE believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law. (Articles of Faith, 12).

Religion is essentially a matter of every-day life. It has as much to do with the adjustment of the individual to his material environment as with his abstract belief in matters spiritual. A man's religion should be a concrete demonstration of his conceptions concerning God and the Divine purposes respecting himself and his fellows. Anything less lacks both the form of godliness and the power thereof.

The Master associated love for God with love for fellow-man; and surely love comprises duty, and duty means effort and action. See Matt. 22:35-40. A very large part of the course of education provided in the school of mortality is attained through association with our kind and the righteous observance of duty in community life. We are not here to be recluses nor to hold ourselves aloof from public service, but to live in a state of mutual helpfulness and effective cooperation.

It is a fundamental necessity that laws shall be established among men for general governance; and obedience to law is the obvious duty of every member of organized society. Violation of the law, therefore, is not only a secular offense but a transgression of the principles of true religion. This world would be a happier one if men carried more religion into their daily affairs—into business,

politics, and statesmanship. Mark you, I say religion, not church. Under existing conditions it is imperative that State and Church be kept separate; and this segregation must be maintained until the inauguration of Christ's personal reign.

Loyal citizenship is at once a characteristic and a test of a man's religion; and as to the incumbent duties of citizenship, the voice of the people, as expressed through the established channels of government, must determine.

Obedience to secular authority is enjoined by Scripture; and the Lord Christ exemplified the principle in His own life, even to the extent of meeting a demand that could have been legally challenged. When the tax collector called for tribute money, the following instructive colloquy occurred between Jesus and Peter: "What thinkest thou, Simon, of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." (Matt. 17:25-27. For a discussion of this incident and lessons associated therewith see the writer's work "Jesus the Christ").

On another occasion a treacherous snare was laid to make Christ appear as an offender against the Roman power. Certain wicked Pharisees sought to entangle Him by the question: "What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" The Lord's reply was a telling lesson in the matter of submission to the law. "Shew me the tribute money," said He, "And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is

this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matt. 22:15-21).

The Apostles made it clear that respect for the law and its officers was a part of the religious duty of the saints. In writing to Titus, who was in charge of the Church at Crete, Paul thus admonished him to teach his flock to be orderly and law-abiding: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." (Titus 3:1).

To the saints in Rome the same Apostle wrote, emphasizing their duty toward the civil power, pointing out the necessity of secular government, and designating the officers of the law as ministers of God:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. . . . For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." (Rom. 13:1-7).

To the same effect the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ has come to the Church in this age. Thus spake He in 1831:

"Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land: Wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until He reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues

all enemies under His feet." And the distinction between the laws of the Church and the laws of the nation is emphasized in the further word: "Behold, the laws which ye have received from my hand are the laws of the church, and in this light ye shall hold them forth." (Doctrine & Covenants 58:21-23).

Loyal and whole-souled support of the government, service to country, and devotion to the interests of the nation, are requirements of the religion embodied in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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CHURCH AND STATE

Independent But Mutually Helpful

THE teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints concerning the duty of its members, and of all men, in relation to the secular law, are set forth in Section 134 of the Doctrine & Covenants, which is one of the standard works of the Church. This is part of the law of the Church, and has been adopted as a guide in faith and practise by the members in general conference assembled.

Of Governments and Laws in General

"1. We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man, and that He holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, either in making laws or administering them, for the good and safety of society.

"2. We believe that no government can exist in peace,