

#12: The Law of Consecration

Monte F. Shelley, 3 May. 2009

Quotes

- If you chase two rabbits, both will get away.
- Life is like riding a bicycle. You fall off if you stop pedaling.

1. “They had all things common”

Early Christians “were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of *them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” (Acts 4:32; 4 Ne 1:2–3)

2. New Converts in Kirtland

“The disciples had all things common, and were going to destruction very fast as to temporal things; for they considered from reading the scripture that what belonged to a brother, belonged to any of the brethren. Therefore they would take each other’s clothes and other property and use it without leave which brought on confusion and disappointment, for they did not understand the scripture.” (John Whitmer)

3. Timeline

02/1831: §42—The Law of the Church (Kirtland, Ohio)

05/1831: §51—Instructions (Thompson, Ohio)

1832: §70, 78, 82—United Firm: Kirtland + Zion (Missouri)

The United Firm operated for about two years in Kirtland, with a branch in Missouri. Up to twelve men were given stewardships in this business venture to support their families, with the surpluses to go into the storehouse to support printing and other Church needs. When a mob destroyed the Missouri press, the loans could not be paid. (Pinegar, 169)

1834: §104—Dissolve United Firm; Two Treasuries set up

1838: §119—Tithing restored; Co-ops in Far West, Missouri

The command to pay tithing required greater sacrifice of property than that required by the law of consecration. Few saints at the time had much, if any, surplus goods, and of those that did, very few considered their property to be surplus.

1839: Quincy and Nauvoo, Illinois

1841: Church incorporated so it could hold and sell property

1842: Temple Endowment includes consecration covenant

1870s–1880s: United Orders in Utah

04/1942: Isms and the United Order

We ... warn our people in America of the constantly increasing threat against our inspired Constitution. ... The proponents thereof are seeking to undermine our own form of government and to set up instead one of the forms of dictatorships now flourishing in other lands. These revolutionists are using a technique that is as old as the human race—a fervid but false solicitude for the unfortunate over whom they thus gain mastery and then enslave them. They suit their approaches to the particular group they seek to deceive. Among the Latter-day Saints they speak of their philosophy and their plans under it as an ushering in of the United Order. Communism and all other similar *isms* bear no relationship whatever to the United Order. (First Presidency, Apr. 1842)

10/1942: Welfare plan and the Law of Consecration

“There is a growing ... sentiment that communism and the United Order are virtually the same thing. ... Bishops, who belong to communistic organizations, are preaching this doctrine. ... In practice the brethren in Missouri got away, in their attempts to set up the united order, from the principles set out in the revelations. This is also true of the organizations set up here in Utah.” (President J. Reuben Clark, Oct. 1942)

4. Initial Consecration and Stewardship

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. ... Every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family. (D&C 42:30, 32)

5. Assigning portions, inheritances, or stewardships

Let my servant Edward Partridge ... appoint unto this people their portions, every man *equal* according to his family, according to his circumstances and his *wants and needs*. (D&C 51:3)

You are to be *equal*, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his *wants* and his *needs*, inasmuch as his *wants* are just (D&C 82:17).

6. Private Ownership

Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer. ... Thou shalt stand in the place of thy stewardship. Thou shalt not take thy brother's garment; thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother. (42:42, 53–55)

7. Righteous and law abiding people

Thou shalt not kill; ... steal; ... lie; ... commit adultery; ... speak evil of thy neighbor, nor do him any harm. ... Thou shalt live together in love. (D&C 42:19–27, 45)

Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God. (82:19)

8. Storehouse for residue (D&C 42:34, 55; 51:13).

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, ... it shall be kept to administer to those who have not, from time to time, that every man who has need may be amply supplied and receive according to his wants. 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. (42:33–35)

9. Annual Surplus (D&C 42:55)

If thou obtainest more than that which would be for thy support, thou shalt give it into my storehouse, that all things may be done according to that which I have said. (D&C 42:55)

10. Two Treasuries (D&C 104:54–77).

“The Lord created two other institutions besides the storehouse: one was known as the Sacred Treasury, into which was put ‘the avails of the sacred things in the treasury, for sacred and holy purposes.’ ... The Lord also provided for ... ‘Another Treasury,’ and into that other treasury went the general revenues which came to the Church.” (JRC, Oct. 1942, 56).

11. Is Socialism the United Order? (04/1966)

“When Zion is redeemed ... it will be redeemed under a government and by a people strictly observing those “just and holy principles” of the Constitution that accord to men their God-given moral agency, including the right to private property. If, in the meantime, socialism takes over in America, it will have to be displaced, if need be, by the power of God, because the United Order can never function under socialism or “the welfare state,” for the good and sufficient reason that the principles upon which socialism and the United Order are conceived and operated are inimical.” (Marion G. Romney, April Conf. 1966)

12. Welfare Plan and Perpetual Education Fund

It is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way (D&C 104:15–16)

“The activities of the Welfare plan have provided the greatest opportunities for spiritualizing this Church that perhaps have ever been given this people in our generation.” (H. B. Lee, Apr. 1942, 86)

“The United Order was primarily designed to build up a system under which there should be no abjectly poor, and this is the purpose, also, of the Welfare Plan.” (J. R. Clark, Oct. 1942)

Perpetual Education Fund (2001): “18,900 [of 35,600] have finished. ... With the 2.7 years of education ..., they are increasing their income by three to four times. What a blessing this is in their lives!” (Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign*, May 2009, 4–6)

13. Time, talents; sustain, defend, build up, establish

Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness ... (JST Matt. 6:38; see footnote to Matt. 6:33)

“Sacrifice and consecration are inseparably intertwined. The *law of consecration* is that we consecrate our time, our talents, and our money and property to the cause of the Church: such are to be available to the extent they are needed to further the Lord’s interests on earth. The *law of sacrifice* is that we are willing to sacrifice all that we have for the truth’s sake—our character and reputation; our honor and applause; our good name among men; our houses, lands, and families: all things, even our very lives if need be.” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Obedience, ...,” *Ensign*, May 1975)

14. How can we living the law of consecration now?

“It is our privilege to consecrate our time, talents, and means to build up his kingdom. ... It is our privilege ... to go on missions. ... We can respond to calls to serve ... in our various church organizations. We can labor on welfare projects, engage in genealogical research, perform vicarious ordinances in the temples. We can pay an honest tithing and contribute to our fast offering, welfare, budget, building, and missionary funds. We can bequeath portions of our assets and devise portions of our properties to the Church when we pass on to other spheres. We can consecrate a portion of our time to systematic study, to becoming gospel scholars, to treasuring up the revealed truths which guide us in paths of truth and righteousness.” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Obedience, ...,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 50)

“While we await the redemption of Zion ... we ... should live strictly by the principles of the United Order insofar as they are embodied in present church practices, such as the fast offering, tithing, and the welfare activities. Through these practices we could as individuals ... implement in our own lives all the basic principles of the United Order. ... The law of tithing ... implements ... [the] principle of stewardships, for it leaves in the hands of each person the ownership and management of the property from which he produces the needs of himself and family. ... ‘In lieu of residues and surpluses which were accumulated and built up under the United Order, we, today, have our fast offerings, our welfare donations, and our tithing all of which may be devoted to the care of the poor, as well as for the carrying on of the activities and business of the Church.’ What prohibits us from giving as much in fast offerings as we would have given in surpluses under the United Order? Nothing but our own limitations. ... We had under the United Order a bishop’s storehouse in which were collected the materials from which to supply the needs and the wants of the poor. We have a bishop’s storehouse under the Welfare Plan, used for the same purpose. ...

‘We have now under the Welfare Plan all over the Church, ... land projects ... farmed for the benefit of the poor. ... Thus ... in many of its great essentials, we have, [in] the Welfare Plan ... the broad essentials of the United Order. Furthermore, having in mind the assistance which is being given from time to time ... to help set people up in business or in farming, we have a plan which is not essentially unlike that which was in the United Order when the poor were given portions from the common fund.’ It is thus apparent that when the principles of tithing and the fast are properly observed and the Welfare Plan gets fully developed and wholly into operation, ‘we shall not be so very far from carrying out the great fundamentals of the United Order.’” (Marion G. Romney, Oct. 1942, 51–58.)

15. Keeping back a part (Elder Maxwell)

“Ananias and Sapphira, otherwise good members of the Church, ‘kept back’ a portion instead of consecrating their all. (Acts 5:1–11.) Some would never *sell* Jesus for thirty pieces, but they would not *give* Him their all either! Unfortunately, we tend to think of consecration only in terms of property and money. But there are so many ways of keeping back part. One might be giving of money and time and yet hold back a significant portion of himself. ... If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. Deprivation may prepare us for further consecration, though we shudder at the thought. ... Instead of striving for greater consecration, it is so easy to go on performing casually in halfhearted compliance as if hoping to ‘ride to paradise on a golf cart.’” (*Ensign*, Nov 1992, 65)

“Consider three examples of how honorable people in the Church keep back a portion and thus prevent greater consecration.

A sister gives commendable, visible civic service. Yet even with her good image in the community, she remains a comparative stranger to Jesus’ holy temples and His holy scriptures, two vital dimensions of discipleship. ...

An honorable father, dutifully involved in the cares of his family, is less than kind and gentle with individual family members. Though a comparative stranger to Jesus’ gentleness and kindness, which we are instructed to emulate, a little more effort by this father would make such a large difference.

Consider the returned missionary, skills polished while serving an honorable mission, striving earnestly for success in his career. Busy, he ends up in a posture of some accommodation with the world. Thus he forgoes building up the kingdom first and instead builds up himself. ...

So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see Mosiah 15:7). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our preeminence, and our possessions. No wonder we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see Luke 9:24). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding his true identity! Ironically, so many people already lose themselves anyway in their consuming hobbies and preoccupations but with far, far lesser things. ...

The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we “give,” brothers and sisters, are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give! (*Ensign*, Nov 1995, 22)