

# “A Covenant and a Deed Which Cannot Be Broken”

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF CONSECRATION

Casey Paul Griffiths

Casey Paul Griffiths is an assistant professor of  
Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.

A mong modern Latter-day Saints there is a tendency to use past-tense or future-tense language when speaking of the law of consecration, as if consecration is either something that Church members *used* to live or something the Saints *will come* to live in the future. Not only is this an inaccurate reading of the early revelations of the Restoration, but it also directly ignores standard practice in the Church today. Consecration was introduced by the Lord as “a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken” to fulfill his command to “remember the poor” (D&C 42:30).<sup>1</sup> This study serves to provide a broad overview of the practice of consecration within the Church, from 1831 to the present. While it is impossible to fully explore consecration in all its forms in a work as brief as this one, historical examples from every period of Church history show a consistent series of attempts by the leader of the Church to understand the principles of consecration and adapt them to current circumstances. The few examples mentioned here demonstrate that, while the means and methods of the *practice* of consecration underwent alterations throughout the history of the Church, the *doctrines* and

*principles* of consecration have never been rescinded. The attempts to implement the principles form a golden thread of charity running throughout the entire history of the Church and even into the present day.<sup>2</sup>

## Church Practice and Principles

One of the misunderstandings surrounding the law of consecration surrounds the operation introduced by the Lord in an early revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 42).<sup>3</sup> Part of the tendency to refer to the law of consecration as a practice of the past grows out of a belief that this revelation, given in 1831, represents the only way consecration can be fully carried out. This view ignores the continual alterations made to the methodology of consecration found throughout the revelations of Joseph Smith. Consecration is perhaps best thought of as a set of guiding principles and doctrines introduced throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, and not a strict set of rules. The practice of consecration, like many Church practices, has been continually altered to fit the needs of the changing Church. The way consecration was practiced in 1831 Kirtland, 1838 Missouri, or 1870s Utah does not necessarily represent the best way for it to operate in the global Church of the twenty-first century. President Boyd K. Packer explained, “Changes in organization or procedures are a testimony that revelation is ongoing. . . . The doctrines will remain fixed, eternal; the organizations, programs, and procedures will be altered as directed by Him whose church this is.”<sup>4</sup> The first step toward understanding consecration is to identify the key doctrines and principles found in the revelations of Joseph Smith.

## Principles of Consecration

The most basic approach to understanding consecration is to examine the meaning of the word itself and how it was used in the time frame of the early Restoration. An 1828 dictionary defined “consecration” as “the act or ceremony of separating from a common to a sacred use.” The entry further adds, “Consecration does not make a person or a thing *holy*, but declares it to be *sacred*, that is, devoted to God or to divine service.”<sup>5</sup> This is a broad definition of the term but is perhaps the most useful in order to comprehend the wide range of practical applications of the law of consecration. Throughout

the history of the Church, the terms “law of consecration” and “United Order” both refer to attempts to devote the temporal and spiritual resources of the Church to assist the poor and needy. In practice, these attempts took many forms. While the law of consecration for the early Saints in Kirtland or Nauvoo was markedly different than today’s present practice, Saints in all ages make the covenant to offer their resources to the sacred use of God’s kingdom.

A cursory reading of the revelations of Joseph Smith provides insight to the importance of consecration. Speaking conservatively, at least twenty-four revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants deal directly with consecration and different methods of implementing it.<sup>6</sup> The earliest mention of an organized form of caring for the poor is found in a January 1831 revelation, in which the Lord commands the Saints that certain men should be appointed among them to “look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer” (D&C 38:35).<sup>7</sup> A few weeks later, after Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, a revelation was given and was labeled in its earliest forms as “The Laws of the Church of Christ.”<sup>8</sup> This revelation provided the first specifics about how to provide for the poor.

The portion of the revelation detailing consecration begins, “Behold thou shalt consecrate *all* thy properties that which thou hast unto me with a covenant and deed which cannot be broken and they shall be laid before the Bishop of my church.”<sup>9</sup> Inclusion of the word “all” leads the reader to believe that every single item of property possessed by an individual must be submitted to the priesthood leaders. The Prophet and his associates clarified this in later editions of the revelation, most significantly in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which changed the passage to instruct the Saints to “consecrate *of* thy properties.”<sup>10</sup> Consecration of properties denotes a sacrifice of resources to benefit the poor but leads away from a completely communal interpretation of the law which would require all property to be given to the Church.

This is further bolstered by the next instruction given in the revelation, when the Lord provides instructions for the priesthood leaders administering the law. They must provide a stewardship, allowing participants to be stewards over their “own property, or that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family” (D&C 42:32).<sup>11</sup> Additional revelations confirmed that while unity was a primary goal of the

law, equality was a relative term. Following the Lord's counsel in the earliest copies of the revelation, stewardships were provided not just according to the needs and wants of an individual or family. When the revelation was first published in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Prophet was inspired to add the phrase "according to his circumstances" (D&C 51:3).<sup>12</sup> Provisions were also added, which clarified that, if an individual chose to no longer participate in the law, they retained their stewardship but could not reclaim what was consecrated (D&C 42:37; 51:5).<sup>13</sup> Private ownership of property and voluntary participation served as key principles of the law from the start. Joseph Smith and other Church leaders wrote in an 1833 letter, "Every man must be his own judge how much he should receive and how much he should suffer to remain in the hands of the Bishop. . . . The matter of consecration must be done by mutual consent of both parties."<sup>14</sup>

Another key component of the law consisted of the use of surpluses to provide for a "storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy" and also for purchasing land, "building houses of worship," and "building up of the New Jerusalem" (D&C 42:34–35).<sup>15</sup> Other revelations instruct that the storehouse be directed under the hands of a bishop or church agents "appointed by the voice of the church" (D&C 51:12–13).<sup>16</sup> The storehouse was "common property of the whole church," with every individual improving on their "talents"—a word denoting both the New Testament currency and the gifts and abilities given by the Lord (D&C 82:18).<sup>17</sup> An undergirding motivation for the law was the need for the Saints to sacrifice in order to build a faithful community with the New Jerusalem on their spiritual horizons.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the Lord commanded the Saints to avoid pride, be modest in dress, and be clean (D&C 42:40–41). The revelation also commanded the Saints to avoid idleness, warning, "He that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer" (D&C 42:42).<sup>19</sup> (By no means do these statements represent a comprehensive treatment of all of the Lord's commandments to early Saints concerning consecration. Our aim here is simply to provide a summary of the key principles of the law.) Throughout the history of the Church these principles remained consistent. Since 1831, successive generations of Church leadership have applied them in a wide variety of circumstances. This is logical given the varied circumstances the Saints have found themselves in, from times when the entire membership of the Church

consisted of a small handful of people to today, when millions of Saints live in diverse circumstances around the globe. In an effort to illustrate the different applications of the law of consecration, we will now embark on a brief overview of the history of consecration in the Church from its founding to the present day.

### Consecration in the Early Restoration, 1831–44

One of the key evidences that the law of consecration was not intended to strictly follow the mode of operation explained in Doctrine and Covenants 42 is found in the versatile ways Joseph Smith directed the practice of the law. In some ways, consecration began in the Church as a grassroots effort. When Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, he already found members trying to implement a form of communal living on their own. One outside observer from the time noted, "Isaac Morley had contended that in order to restore the ancient order of things in the Church of Christ, it was necessary that there should be a community of goods among the brethren; and accordingly a number of them removed to his house and farm, and built houses and worked and lived together, and composed what is here called the 'Big Family,' which at this time consisted of 50 or 60, old and young."<sup>20</sup>

The new converts in Kirtland began the effort out of a sincere desire to adhere to the scriptures, but a lack of specific direction caused problems to emerge immediately. Church historian John Whitmer later recorded, "The disciples had all things in common, and were going to destruction very fast as to temporal things. . . . Therefore they would take each other's clothes and other property and use it without leave, which brought on confusion."<sup>21</sup> When Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland in February 1831, a number of members clamored to know the Lord's will concerning the practice of communal living. In response to these requests, the Lord provided the revelations that revealed the foundational principles of consecration (D&C 42; 51).

The first attempt to practice the principles of the law in Kirtland was short lived. The first signs of trouble appeared in June 1831, when Leman Copley, a recent convert, rescinded an offer to allow Church members arriving from Colesville, New York, to settle on his land. In a revelation the Lord informed the Colesville Saints that "the covenant which they made unto me has been broken, even so it has become void and of none effect" (D&C 54:4).

The Lord condemned Copley for breaking his oath but assured blessings for those who “kept the covenant and observed the commandment, for they shall obtain mercy” (D&C 54:5–6).<sup>22</sup>

The episode involving Leman Copley and the Colesville Saints serves as a dramatic example of some of the challenges facing consecration, but it was not the end of attempts at consecration among the early members of the Church. Through Joseph Smith’s Presidency the Lord offered a number of different ways to adapt the principles of consecration to meet the needs of the young Church. In a revelation given in November 1831, the Lord commanded Joseph Smith and five others to create an organization to manage the publication of Church materials, including the scriptures and other supplies. Funds raised through the work of this firm could be used to provide for the temporal needs of its members, with the Lord directing that the surplus “be given into my storehouse and the benefits thereof shall be consecrated unto the inhabitants of Zion and unto their generations” (D&C 70:7–8).<sup>23</sup> In the minutes of this organization it was referred to as the Literary Firm.<sup>24</sup> In March 1832 another revelation directed Church leadership to organize several Church-owned businesses, such as Newel K. Whitney’s store in Kirtland, Ohio, and A. Sidney Gilbert’s store in Independence, Missouri, to serve as a “storehouse for the poor” (D&C 78:3). These businesses, along with the Literary Firm and other Church interests, were brought together in a new organization referred to by its members as the United Firm (D&C 78:8).<sup>25</sup> This organization, at times referred to by the code name “United Order” has been referred to as the Church’s “first master plan of business and finance.”<sup>26</sup> The United Firm continued to play a key role in the financial affairs of the Church until 1834, when it was divided into two separate orders, one in Ohio and the other in Missouri, partially because of the persecution faced by Church members in Missouri but also because of the transgressions and covetousness of the Saints (D&C 104:51, 78–86).<sup>27</sup>

The United Firm was only one of several examples where the principles of consecration were applied in different ways to meet the needs of the Church. In August 1833 Joseph Smith received a revelation directing the organization of a committee to oversee the construction of the House of the Lord, later known as the Kirtland Temple, along with a “house for the presidency” and a “house for the printing of the translation of my scriptures” (D&C 88:119; 94:3,10).<sup>28</sup> When the Lord dissolved the United Firm,

he commanded Church leaders to create two treasuries. The first was designated as “exclusive of the sacred things, for the purpose of printing these sacred things,” a reference to the scriptures (D&C 104:60–66). At the same time the Lord set up “another treasury” for the purpose of “improving upon the properties which I have appointed unto you” (D&C 104:67–68).<sup>29</sup> These moves demonstrated the importance of disseminating revelations as widely as possible.

Throughout the majority of the 1830s, the Saints made various attempts to practice the law of consecration. One of the most important revelations in its development was given in Far West, Missouri, in July 1839. The revelation came in answer to the Prophet’s question, “O! Lord, show unto thy servants how much thou requires of the properties of thy people for a Tithing?” The reply came, “I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church in Zion, for the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church. And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. And after that, those who have thus been tithed, shall pay one tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever” (D&C 119:1–4).<sup>30</sup> From the text it is clear that the law of tithing was not intended to replace the law of consecration. All the principles of consecration remained intact, with the added command for the Saints to contribute an additional tithe of ten percent.<sup>31</sup>

A mistaken impression has arisen within the Church that the law of tithing, given in 1838, replaced the law of consecration. In many ways the law of tithing required a greater sacrifice than the law of consecration: consecration required members to give their surplus *after* their needs were satisfied, but tithing required ten percent *before* any of their needs were met.<sup>32</sup> However, the requirement to give a surplus did not end. After section 119 was given, Brigham Young asked Joseph Smith, “Who shall be the judge of what is surplus property?” to which the Prophet responded, “Let them be the judge for themselves.”<sup>33</sup>

The extreme trials of 1838–40, as the Prophet Joseph and other Church leaders languished in Liberty Jail and the Saints sought refuge in Illinois, caused a further suspension in attempts for the Saints to live the law of consecration. Recognizing the suffering of the Saints, the Prophet continued to urge them to comply to the principles of the law, writing to Saints, “For a

man to consecrate his property . . . is nothing more nor less than to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the widow and the fatherless, the sick and the afflicted, and do all he can to administer to their relief in their afflictions, and for him and his house to serve the Lord.”<sup>34</sup>

In the midst of the difficulties surrounding the move to Illinois and the creation of the city of Nauvoo out of the malarial swamps on the banks of the Mississippi River, Joseph Smith steered a conservative course, freeing the people from their obligation to comply with all facets of the law. Elias Smith recorded a discourse given by the Prophet in 1840: “He said that the law of consecration could not be kept here and that it was the will of the Lord we should desist from trying to keep it . . . and that he assumed the whole responsibility of not keeping it until proposed by himself.”<sup>35</sup>

Historians have at times referred to the Nauvoo era as a fallow period for consecration, but more recently documentary evidence has emerged demonstrating attempts to implement a more regimented practice of the doctrine during this time. A meeting recorded in Wilford Woodruff’s journal from 18 June 1842 notes that “Joseph commanded the Twelve to organize the Church more according to the Law of God,” a likely reference to a renewed attempt to implement consecration.<sup>36</sup> Only a few days later Brigham Young preached a sermon on “the law of consecration, and union of action in building up the city and providing labor for the city and providing labor and food for the poor.”<sup>37</sup> Recently, historians Mitchell K. Schaefer and Sherilyn Farnes identified and published twenty affidavits of consecration dating from June 1842, the same period as when Joseph made this request of the Twelve.<sup>38</sup> Lewis Ziegler, a Saint from the period, wrote in his affidavit, “I for my part feel willing to lay what little is Committed to what is my trust at the Apostle[s]’ feet . . . asking the hand of my heavenly Father to strengthen their hands abundantly.”<sup>39</sup>

These attempts to renew earlier practices of consecration do not appear to have been fruitful, but doctrine of consecration remained at the core of the Saints’ relationships with the Lord. As evidence of this, a covenant to commit to live the law of consecration was included in the sacred rites of the temple when they were revealed to Joseph Smith during his ministry in Nauvoo.<sup>40</sup>

## The United Order in the West, 1846–85

The emergency conditions surrounding the exodus from Nauvoo and the eventual migration of the main body of the Church to the Salt Lake Valley made it difficult to set a uniform system for the practice of consecration. Nevertheless, the principles of the law remained a vital part of the beliefs of the Saints. In October 1845, Brigham Young proposed a covenant “that we take all the saints with us to the extent of our ability, that is, our influence and property.”<sup>41</sup> The Lord reiterated the need for consecration in a revelation given at Winter Quarters, declaring, “Let each company bear an equal proportion, according to the dividend of their property, in taking the poor, the widows, the fatherless” and that “every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place where the Lord shall locate a stake of Zion” (D&C 136:8,10). As the settlements of the Saints spread throughout the Intermountain West, cooperation in irrigation and agricultural projects became essential for their survival. As the Saints became more settled, Brigham Young made attempts to launch a more formal program of consecration in the 1850s, though the conflict with the federal government of the United States in 1857 brought a practical end to most of these efforts.<sup>42</sup>

A more spirited effort to bring to practice the principles of consecration began in 1874 and lasted until roughly 1885.<sup>43</sup> Failure to live the law of consecration had long lingered in the minds of Church leaders, and Brigham Young spearheaded an effort to return the Saints to the ideals of consecration. According to reports of a meeting held in April 1874, “President Young showed very clearly that it [the united order] was not a personal speculation; that himself with the rest would put in all he possessed for the accomplishment of the work he was engaged in. . . . The intention was to elevate the poor, and make them as comfortable and happy as well as the rich. He wanted no poor in our midst, nor would there be any when the Order got fully established.”<sup>44</sup> Spurred by the encouragement of Church leaders, new united orders sprang up throughout the Intermountain West. In initiating these efforts, Church leaders did not follow the exact same procedures given in the Doctrine and Covenants. Instead they taught the principles of the law and allowed the leaders in each individual settlement to work out procedures for the implementation of consecration. Thus, the systems of consecration varied from place to place, with consecration working slightly differently in

St. George than it did in Kanab, Orderville, or any of the locations where the Saints organized their efforts. The entire Church-wide effort was loosely labeled “the United Order” or the “Order of Enoch,” though it differed in many respects from the united order of Joseph Smith’s day.<sup>45</sup>

### **Interlude: The Transitional Period and the Law of Tithing, 1885–1935**

Success varied in each of these efforts, but most ended when the Church became embroiled in the battle with the government of the United States over plural marriage. This battle financially exhausted the Church, making any new attempts to practice the law of consecration out of the question.<sup>46</sup> In the wake of fiscal devastation left by the Anti-polygamy crusades, Church leaders worked to place the Church back on stable footing. As part of this effort, leaders emphasized the law of tithing as the most practical means of accomplishing their goals. It is during this period that the belief that the law of tithing had replaced consecration became more prevalent. For instance, in April 1900 Joseph F. Smith, then a counselor in the First Presidency taught, “The Lord revealed to his people in the incipency of His work a law [consecration] which was more perfect than the law of tithing. It comprehended larger things, greater power and a more speedy accomplishment of the purposes of the Lord. But the people were unprepared to live by the it, and the Lord, out of mercy to the people, suspended the more perfect law, and gave the law of tithing.”<sup>47</sup>

While there was no revelation officially suspending the law of consecration, President Smith was correct in stating that during this period, when the Church was transitioning from its relative isolation in the West and moving closer to the mainstream of society, the practices of consecration received less emphasis, and the more clear-cut guidelines of tithing, a subset of the entire law, were given emphasis. At the same time, the Church did not abandon its charge to assist the poor and needy. During this period bishops were still given instruction to use fast offerings and Relief Society contributions to care for the poor. Church handbooks from the period instructed local leaders to send their surplus to Church headquarters to assist more needy wards and branches, though it was rare at the time for Church units to use less than their members contributed.<sup>48</sup>

These offerings allowed leaders to care for the immediate needs of the poor, but a larger overarching structure to implement consecration did not exist. Furthermore, a general perception lingered that consecration was a future goal. In 1931 Elder Orson F. Whitney taught, “The Lord withdrew the Law of Consecration, and gave his people a lesser law, one easier to live, but pointing forward, like the other, to something grand and glorious in the future.”<sup>49</sup> While Elder Whitney’s comments implied a distant promise of future consecration, they came on the eve of the most successful and long-lasting implementation of consecration practices within the Church.

### **The Church Welfare Program, 1935–Present**

Ironically, the most enduring practical implementation of the law of consecration was born out of one of the worst economic catastrophes in history. In the depths of the Great Depression, Harold B. Lee, the president of the Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake City, launched an innovative series of programs designed to provide work and support for the struggling members of the stake. A storehouse where food and commodities could be gathered and distributed to the needy was built. Lee and his counselors purchased warehouses, a farm, and other enterprises, and the men of the stake were given opportunities to work for what they would receive from the storehouse. The particulars of the plan were new to the Church, but President Lee was quick to point out that the principles behind were not. In an article explaining the plan, Lee wrote, “The Church security plan is not something new to the Church; neither does it contemplate a new organization in the Church to carry out its purposes; but rather it is an expression of a philosophy that is as old as the Church itself, incorporated into a program of stimulation and cooperation to meet the demands of Church members in the solution of present day economic problems.”<sup>50</sup>

While Harold B. Lee and other stake presidents worked from the ground up to care for the poor, leaders in the top echelons of Church government also began to reexamine consecration. J. Reuben Clark Jr., a newly called Counselor in the First Presidency, began to make an extensive study of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants pertaining to consecration.<sup>51</sup> As President Clark and other Church leaders observed the success of these programs, a plan began to develop to apply the principles of consecration on a

wider level. On 18 April 1936, the First Presidency met with Harold B. Lee, who later wrote, “President [Heber J.] Grant said he wanted to take a ‘leaf out of the Pioneer Stake’s book in caring for the people of the Church. . . . He said that nothing was more important for the Church to do than to take care of its needy people and that so far as he was concerned, everything else must be sacrificed [so that] proper relief [could be] extended to our people.”<sup>52</sup> Harold B. Lee was named as the managing director of the new program, and at the October general conference the following fall, the First Presidency announced the launch of the Church welfare plan. At a meeting for stake presidents, the First Presidency declared, “The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church.”<sup>53</sup>

During the infancy of the Church welfare program, Church leaders downplayed the similarities between the new program and the early efforts of Church members. Speaking of the Church welfare system and the law of consecration, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. noted, “We have all said that the Welfare Plan is not the United Order and was not intended to be.” He then added, “However, I should like to suggest to you that perhaps, after all, when the Welfare Plan gets thoroughly into operation—it is not so yet—we shall not be so very far from carrying out the great fundamentals of the United Order.”<sup>54</sup>

## Consecration in Our Time and Beyond

Is the Church welfare program the same thing as the United Order? Church members do not follow the exact methodology first mentioned in the revelations of Joseph Smith, but the principles of consecration have endured. Consecration, stewardships, storehouses, and nearly every component of the early revelations eventually found its way into the structure of the Church welfare systems. In 1943, J. Reuben Clark Jr. presented a plan to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles where he noted, “I took it upon myself to make a study of the financial operations of the Church from the beginning down through and until after the death of the Prophet [Joseph Smith].”<sup>55</sup> At a ten-year anniversary of the Welfare Plan, President Clark reflected, “The Lord

has always been mindful of the poor and of the unfortunate, and He has always charged His Church and its members to see to it that none of their brethren and their sisters suffer.”<sup>56</sup>

Church leaders of the founding generation never became comfortable identifying the Church Welfare Plan as the same thing as the law of consecration, but the ensuing generations began to recognize the fulfillment of the principles of the law in the new plan. In a 1966 general conference address, Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (who later became President of the Quorum of the Twelve) exhorted priesthood holders to “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.” He then added, “Through these practices we could as individuals, if we were of a mind to do so, implement in our own lives all the basic principles of the United Order.”<sup>57</sup> In 1975 Elder Romney said, “The procedural method for teaching Church welfare has now changed, but the objectives of the program remain the same. *Its principles are eternal.* It is the gospel in its perfection—the united order, toward which we move.”<sup>58</sup>

As time progressed Church leaders became more comfortable in seeing the Church welfare program as another iteration of consecration. In an address given in 2011, President Henry B. Eyring stated that the Lord’s “way of helping has at times been called living the law of consecration. In another period His way was called the united order. In our time it is called the Church welfare program.” Providing a summary of the evolution of the law, President Eyring added, “The names and the details of the operation are changed to fit the needs and conditions of people. But always the Lord’s way to help those in temporal need requires people who out of love have consecrated themselves and what they have to God and to His work.”<sup>59</sup>

There is nothing past tense about the law of consecration. It remains a vital part of the work of the Lord’s kingdom on the earth. The doctrines of consecration are eternal and will always have a place in the Church. The eternal components of the law—love for God, love for neighbor, agency, stewardship, and accountability—are a vital part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The temporal applications of the law, deeds, economic practices, and building and publishing projects are subject to frequent change. Until the return of the Savior we shall have the poor with us always (see Matthew. 26:11), and as long as the poor are with us we also have a charge to provide care

and solace to them. The law of consecration is not an ideal or a commandment; it is a covenant entered into by every worthy member of the Church. President Eyring taught, “He has invited and commanded us to participate in His work to lift up those in need. We make a covenant to do that in the waters of baptism and in the holy temples of God. We renew the covenant on Sundays when we partake of the sacrament.”<sup>60</sup> Though often misunderstood, overlooked, or forgotten, the covenant of consecration will always be a foundational part of the Restoration and the operation of the Lord’s true Church.

## Notes

1. The admonition to “remember the poor” and to consecrate properties “for their [the poor’s] support” was first added in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. See Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 251, also *The Parallel Doctrine and Covenants: The 1832–33, 1833, and 1835 editions of Joseph Smith’s Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Petit Foundation, 2009), 68.
2. I am indebted to many authors who have argued this point before me, chiefly Lyndon W. Cook in *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration* (Provo, UT: Grandin Book Company, 1985), viii; Craig James Ostler, “The Laws of Consecration, Stewardship, and Tithing,” in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Craig K. Manscill (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004); and Steven C. Harper, “All Things are the Lord’s: The Law of Consecration in the Doctrine and Covenants,” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008).
3. Revelation, 9 February 1831, in *JSP*, D1:245–56 (D&C 42).
4. Boyd K. Packer, “Revelation in a Changing World,” *Ensign*, November 1989, 14–16.
5. <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/consecration>, accessed 6 February 2016.
6. Craig James Ostler, “Consecration,” in *Doctrine and Covenants Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 106. The sections focusing primarily on consecration are D&C 38, 42, 44, 48, 51, 54, 56, 58, 70, 72, 78, 82–85, 92, 96–97, 104–6, 119–20, and 136.
7. Revelation, 2 January 1831 [D&C 38], in *JSP*, D1:233.
8. Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72], in *JSP*, D1: 245–56.
9. *JSP*, D1:251; spelling, punctuation, and deletions have been removed, and emphasis added.

10. Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Riley M. Lorimer, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 2: Published Revelations*, vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 105, 218, 433. The change in wording first appeared in *The Evening and Morning Star*, July 1832. It has remained consistent in every published version of the revelation down to the present day (2015).
11. Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72], in *JSP*, D1: 251–52.
12. Revelation, 20 May 1831 [D&C 51], in *JSP*, D1:314–16, Book of Commandments, in *JSP*, R&T2:127.
13. 1835 Doctrine & Covenants, Section XXIII, 156, in *JSP*, R&T2:460; revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72], in *JSP*, D1: 252.
14. Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 25 June 1833, in *JSP*, D3:153.
15. Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72], in *JSP*, D1: 252.
16. Revelation, 20 May 1831 [D&C 51], in *JSP*, D1:316.
17. Revelation, 26 April 1832 [D&C 82], in *JSP*, D2:236.
18. See Ostler, “Consecration,” 158.
19. Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72], in *JSP*, D1: 252.
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23. Revelation, 12 November 1831 [D&C 70], in *JSP*, D2:140.
24. Minutes, 30 April 1832, in *JSP*, D2:238, spelling corrected.
25. Minutes, circa 1 May 1832, in *JSP*, D2:244.
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28. Revelation, 2 August 1833-B [D&C 94], in *JSP*, D3:206.
29. Revelation, 23 April 1834 [D&C 104], in Book of Commandments Book C, [pp. 19–43], <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-23-april-1834-dc-104#!/paperSummary/revelation-23-april-1834-dc-104&p=17>.
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31. Ostler, “Consecration,” 172.
32. See Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 936.

33. *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. Richard S. Van Wagoner (Salt Lake City: Smith-Petit Foundation, 2009), 970.
34. Letter to the Church in Caldwell County, Missouri, 16 December 1838, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-the-church-in-caldwell-county-missouri-16-december-1838#/paperSummary/letter-to-the-church-in-caldwell-county-missouri-16-december-1838&p=5>.
35. Discourse, 6 March 1840, as reported by Elias Smith, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/discourse-6-march-1840-as-reported-by-elias-smith>. Another witness recorded the Prophet saying, “Thus saith the Lord you need not observe the Law of Consecration until our case was decided in congress.” Discourse, 6 March 1840, as reported by John Smith, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/discourse-6-march-1840-as-reported-by-john-smith>.
36. *The Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 124–25.
37. *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1:20.
38. Mitchell K. Shaefer and Sherilyn Farnes, “Myself . . . I Consecrate to the God of Heaven,” *BYU Studies* 50, no. 3 (2011): 101.
39. Shaefer and Farnes, “Myself . . . I Consecrate to the God of Heaven,” 132, spelling and punctuation in original. Shaefer and Farnes note that this affidavit of consecration is the only known documentation of Lewis Ziegler.
40. Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration*, 90.
41. *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 102; see also Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 42.
42. Arrington et al., *Building the City of God*, 48, 63, 77–78.
43. Edward J. Allen, *The Second United Order Among the Mormons* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 10.
44. Quoted in *Deseret News*, 22 April 1874, from *Beaver Enterprise*.
45. See Arrington et al., *Building the City of God*, which provides a detailed analysis of consecration systems in Brigham City, St. George, Richfield, Kanab, and Orderville, along with Mormon settlements in Utah Valley, Cache Valley, Bear Lake Valley, and other LDS settlements in Arizona, Nevada, and Mexico.
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48. Bruce D. Blumell, “Welfare before Welfare: Twentieth Century LDS Church Charity before the Great Depression,” *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 92.
49. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, April 1931, 63.
50. Harold B. Lee, “Church Security, Retrospect, Introspect, Prospect,” *Improvement Era*, April 1937, 204.
51. Two unpublished documents in Clark’s papers, “Notes on Church Finances,” produced in June 1942, and “Study of the United Order,” from March 1943, demonstrate Clark’s serious intent to reform Church finances in line with the revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants. J. Reuben Clark Papers, MS 303, box 188, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.

52. Glen L. Rudd, *Pure Religion: The Story of Church Welfare Since 1930* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995), 39–40. Garth Mangum and Bruce Blumell, *The Mormons’ War on Poverty* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 130–32.
53. Rudd, *Pure Religion*, 45.
54. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, October 1942, 58.
55. “General Principles Underlying Church Finances,” box 188, J. Reuben Clark Papers, BYU.
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58. Quoted in Arrington et al., *Building the City of God*, 361, emphasis added.
59. Henry B. Eyring, “Opportunities to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 22–26.
60. Eyring, “Opportunities to Do Good,” 22–26.