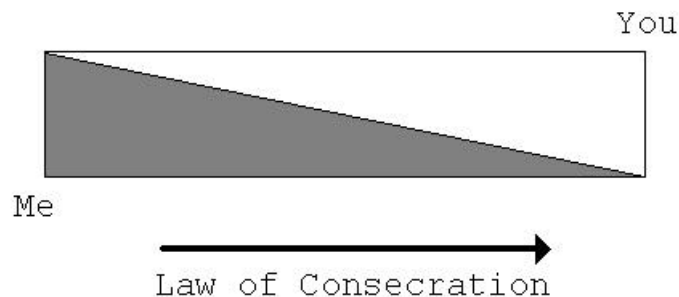


GD14 The Law of Consecration
Goose Creek Ward, Warrenton, VA Stake
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Introduction

The Law of Consecration is all about me and you, primarily how I feel about you with respect to me (the "me" being each individual and the "you" being everyone else). In other words, who comes first and how often.



In the continuum of me and you, the Law of Consecration is designed to push me to spend more time thinking about your well-being than my own. It is intended to make people less selfish.

Lets consider two pieces of green paper (for this exercise one of them is a piece of $8\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 green construction paper and the other is a five dollar bill). If I offer you one or the other of these two pieces of green paper, which are you going to choose? The smaller one of course, but why? The larger piece is larger isn't it? It had greater intrinsic value, doesn't it? Why then the smaller? Its because of how we feel about it. We collectively feel differently about the smaller piece of green paper because we collectively agree between us and amongst our society that we can do more with the small piece of green paper than the large piece of green paper. With the small piece of green paper we can go and trade it for 500 sheets of the big piece of green paper. Not because it has an intrinsic value that makes it worth 500 sheets of the big green paper, but because of how we feel about the little piece of green paper.

How do we really feel about the little piece of green paper? When it comes to me versus you, how do we feel about this little piece of green paper?

1. Ancient Doctrinal and Historical Context

Doctrinal - in the beginning Adam and Eve enjoyed the blissful, albeit naive, state of comfort and plenty living in an ideally abundant and divinely supported Garden, so verdant because the greatest rivers of the earth watered it. He placed Adam in the Garden with a stewardship.

Gen. 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.... 15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Adam and Eve were kicked out because of sin and the result was they had to suffer and toil. Mankind has largely been suffering and toiling ever since.

16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed [is] the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat [of] it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.... 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

However, the promise of abundance did not stop with the Fall. The Lord is ever willing to bless us with Eden.

Lev. 26:3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; 4 Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. 5 And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.... 9 For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. 10 And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. 11 And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

Isa. 58:6 [Is] not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 [Is it] not to

deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? ... 10 And [if] thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness [be] as the noonday: 11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

The prophecies concerning the Millennial reign of Christ indicate a return to the blessed Garden-like state.

Isa. 51:3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

The Lord is perfectly willing to bless us with idyllic Garden of Eden conditions, and historically, this has been achieved three times that we know of on the fallen earth.

Historical - three "Zions" have been established, how did they feel about their material possessions?

Moses 7:16 ...the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness. 17 The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish. 18 And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and **there was no poor among them**. 19 And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed 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**. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 **Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid [them] down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.** 36 And Joses... 37 Having land, sold [it], and brought the money, and laid [it] at the apostles' feet.

4 Ne. 1:1 AND it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost. 2 And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. 3 And they **had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor,** bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

Anciently, Jesus admonished his followers to put material pursuits well behind spiritual pursuits.

Matt. 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Furthermore, Jesus explicitly required the ancient apostles to set aside all concerns over their material well-being and to concentrate strictly on spiritual things:

Matt. 10:8 ...freely ye have received, freely give. 9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, 10 Nor scrip for [your] journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

2. Modern Doctrinal and Historical Application

Doctrinal - Just as the Lord promised ancient Israel an Eden-like garden he promises it to us as well, but the same conditions are attached.

D&C 38:17 And I have made the earth rich, and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it. 18 And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh; 19 And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.... 24 And let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practise virtue and holiness before me. 25 And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself. 26 For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there--and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just? 27 Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

The Lord commands the contemporary Church to remember the poor.

D&C 42:29 If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments. 30 And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them.... 31 And inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me.... 32 And it shall come to pass...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.... 38 For inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me.

Similar to the historical descriptions of Zion, the Lord commands the contemporary Church to be one and equal.

D&C 51:3 Wherefore, let my servant Edward Partridge, and those whom he has chosen, in whom I am well pleased, appoint unto this people their portions, every man equal according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs.... 9 And let every man deal honestly, and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be one, even as I have commanded you....

The Lord tells the saints that all members of the Church, none excepted, are to observe this Law. Failure to be equal with regard to temporal things results in the Lord withholding His Spirit.

D&C 70:7 Nevertheless, inasmuch as they receive more than is needful for their necessities and their wants, it shall be given

into my storehouse; 8 And the benefits shall be consecrated unto the inhabitants of Zion, and unto their generations, inasmuch as they become heirs according to the laws of the kingdom. 9 Behold, this is what the Lord requires of every man in his stewardship, even as I, the Lord, have appointed or shall hereafter appoint unto any man. 10 And behold, none are exempt from this law who belong to the church of the living God;... 14 ... in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld.

The Lord's intent is to teach the Saints their stewardship over their temporal/material things has eternal/spiritual consequences.

D&C 78:3 For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion-- 4 For a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which ye have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven; 5 That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. 6 For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; 7 For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

The Lord further educates the Saints by telling them His intent is to have everyone have a stewardship so that everyone might improve themselves and be in a position to help others. His goal is to get people to be actively interested in the welfare of others.

D&C 82:17 And 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-- 18 And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church-- 19 Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

The Lord makes it clear all of Creation is his and His intent is to have all people obtain a stewardship thereupon. He also states flatly that those who fail to impart of their abundance to the poor will be damned.

D&C 104:11 ...a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall organize yourselves and appoint every man his stewardship; 12 That every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him. 13 For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly

blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. 14 I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. 15 And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. 16 But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low. 17 For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. 18 Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

Historical

The Lord commanded the early Latter-day Saints to establish Zion and to live the Law of Consecration via a specific application called the United Order.

The history by Lucy Mack Smith shows that while some of the early Saints (e.g., Esquire Chamberlain) observed the Law of Consecration, others saw it as a means to be exploited. This historical account occurred when Lucy lead a group of believers on their trek to Ohio.

When the brethren considered the spring sufficiently open for traveling on the water, we all began to prepare for our removal to Kirtland. We hired a boat of a certain Methodist preacher, and appointed a time to meet at our house, for the purpose of setting off together; and when we were thus collected, we numbered eighty souls. The people of the surrounding country came and bade us farewell, invoking the blessing of heaven upon our heads.

... one Esquire Chamberlain came on board, and asked me, if I had what money I wanted to make my family comfortable. I replied, that I had an abundance for myself and children, but he might, perhaps, find some on board, who stood in need of assistance. "Well," said he, "here is a little money, and you can deal it out as you like," and, handing me seventeen dollars, he left the boat. Soon after this, we were pushed off and under fine headway....

The services of the evening being ended, I inquired of the brethren concerning the amount of provisions which they had on hand for the journey; and, to my surprise, I ascertained that we had on board, besides twenty grown persons, thirty children, who were almost destitute of food. This was unaccountable to me at first, but I afterwards learned that they had converted their substance into clothing, expecting that those who were in better circumstances would support them, as well as defray their traveling expense; those, however, from whom they expected the most assistance, disappointed them, consequently, the burden was thrown entirely upon my shoulders. From this time forward, I furnished the whole fifty persons with food from day to day. (Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by his Mother, pages 195-197)

John Whitmer's history indicates there were many who joined the Church deliberately to exploit the Law of Consecration for their personal gain. And, the Church was too small and too scattered to accomplish the Lord's commands.

Also consider how early in the Church's history this command came. The Church was officially organized April 1830, they were told to gather to Kirtland, Ohio in December 1830 and did so January 1831 and then February 1831 they receive the commandment to have all things equal.

About these days Joseph and Sidney arrived at Kirtland to the joy and satisfaction of the Saints. 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 disappointments, for they did not understand the scripture. After Joseph lived there a few days the word of the Lord came saying:

(See D&C 41)

Behold, after this revelation was received the elders were called together, and united in mighty power; and were agreed, as touching the reception of the law. Therefore, thus saith the Lord:

(See D&C 42)

After the above law or revelation was received, the elders went forth to proclaim repentance according to commandment, and there were members added to the Church. The Bishop Edward Partridge visited the Church in its several branches, there were some that would not receive the law. The time has not yet come that the law can be fully established, for the disciples live scattered abroad and are not organized, our numbers are small and the disciples untaught, consequently they understand not the things of the kingdom. There were some of the disciples who were flattered into the Church because they thought that all things were to be common, therefore they thought to glut themselves upon the labors of others. (John Whitmer, The Book of John Whitmer, chapter 2 paragraph 1 through chapter 3 paragraph 1)

Conclusion

The early Saints failed to establish the United Order and establish Zion as the Lord commanded them to do, so the Order was subsequently fragmented (cf. D&C 104) and ultimately was suspended (cf. D&C 119).

With the command to live the United Order suspended, we are left with less stringent requirements of Tithing and Fast Offerings. Does this mean we don't have to live the Law of Consecration? If we just pay our Tithe and Fast offerings, is that it?

How we feel about our material possessions in relations to other people is what the Law of Consecration is targeting. Do we view material things, and little pieces of green paper, as a means of enriching ourselves, or as a means of helping others? If it is the latter, then the Lord will bless us beyond measure. If it is the former, we will continue to wallow in the toil and suffering the fallen earth was cursed with.

The Lord wants to test and try us, and teach us what we should do with what He gives us. The Lord's intent is for us to use material things to bless all people.

Jacob 2:17 Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. 18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. 19 And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good--to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

This spiritual principle of the Law of Consecration is not specific to the United Order. Even though we are not required to live the United Order, we are still required to live the spiritual principles underlying the Law of Consecration.

Matt. 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.