Church will not support a member in that request until he or she has consulted with the appropriate bishop and stake president and has spiritual confirmation that the way decided upon by the member concerned is acceptable to the Lord.

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CONSECRATION

The following two articles deal with the LDS concept of consecration. Law of Consecration offers an overview of the origin and extended practice of the principles of consecration among Latter-day Saints. The article Consecration in Ohio and Missouri specifically addresses both LDS efforts to live such principles and the resulting economic impact on LDS communities that flourished in these states between 1832 and 1846.

LAW OF CONSECRATION

The law of consecration was introduced through revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. As early as 1829, he was directed by the Lord to “seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion” (D&C 6:6; 11:6; 12:6; 14:6). Anciently, the Zion of Enoch was made up of people who “were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). These features have characterized the Lord’s people who have accepted and applied the fulness of the gospel in their lives, such as the people of the city of Enoch (Moses 7:17–18) and the Nephite golden era (4 Ne. 1:2–3; 15:17) and some of the early Christians (Acts 4:32–37). Latter-day Saints have also been given the law of consecration as an ideal and a challenge and promise for the future (D&C 42:32–39).

The level of dedication required to live the law of consecration has many ancient echoes. The Bible records acts of consecration expressly connected with instituting COVENANTS with God (e.g., Gen. 9:8–17; Num. 6). The willingness to sacrifice Isaac signified the complete dedication of Abraham to God’s commands (Gen. 22:1–18). Exoduses and Leviticus also disclose various sacrificial acts involving consecration to God, principally by AARON and his sons (cf. Ex. 40:12–16; Lev. 1–7). The New Testament records that early Christians were called upon to set their hearts first on the KINGDOM OF GOD and to have “all things in common” (Acts 2, 4, 5).

After the risen Jesus established his Church in the Western Hemisphere about A.D. 34, the Book of Mormon people followed the practice of consecration for nearly 200 years. “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. 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” (4 Ne. 1:2–3).

On January 2, 1831, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Fayette, New York, that:...
ments, as a bride prepared and worthy of the bridegroom (D&C 33:17; 58:11; 65:3; 82:14, 18; etc.); and to prepare the Saints for a place in the celestial kingdom (D&C 78:7).

Commenting on this subject, President John Taylor stated that consecration is a celestial law and, when observed, its adherents become a celestial people (JD 17:177–81). Thus, men and women today can become like as those of Enoch’s day, “of one heart and one mind, . . . with no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). Orson Pratt, an early apostle, observed that if the Lord’s people aspire to the celestial kingdom, they must begin to learn the order of life that is there (JD 2:102–103).

Implementation of the Law of Consecration. The law of consecration requires dedicating all of one’s time, talents, and possessions to the Church and its purposes (D&C 82:19; 64:34; 88:67–68; 98:12–14). John A. Widtsoe, an apostle, noted that its operation was quite simple. Those who joined such an order were to place all their possessions in a common treasury—the rich their wealth, the poor their pittance. Then each member was to receive a sufficient portion—called an “inheritance”—from the common treasury to enable that person to continue in trade, business, or profession as desired. The farmer would receive land and implements; the tradesman, tools and materials; the merchant, necessary capital; the professional person, instruments, books, and the like. Members working for others would receive proportionate interests in the enterprises they served. No one would be without property. All would have an inheritance (Widtsoe, pp. 302–303).

A person’s inheritance was to consist of personal property to be operated permanently and freely for the benefit of the person and the family. Should the person withdraw from the order, the inheritance could be taken with him, but the person would have no claim upon surplus donations or possessions initially placed in the common treasury (D&C 51:3–6). At the end of a year or set period, the member who had earned more than needed for his family would voluntarily place the surplus in the common treasury. Substantial profits were to be administered by the group rather than by one individual. Men and women who, despite diligence, had a loss from their operations would have the loss made up by the general treasury for another start, or they might—with consent—be placed in some activity better suited to their gifts.

In short, the general treasury was to establish every person in a preferred field and was to care for those unable to profit from their inheritance. The general treasury, holding members’ surpluses, would also finance public works and make possible all community enterprises decided upon by the group (D&C 104:60–77).

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., counselor in the First Presidency, explained that the law of consecration as practiced was not a fully communal life. There was no common table. Each family lived as a unit. Property that was not turned back to the donor by mutual consent of the donor and the bishop became the property of the Church and was placed in the storehouse. Every member of the Church had equal access to the contents of the storehouse according to personal needs, circumstances, and needs of the family (Clark, p. 3).

Efforts to Live the Law of Consecration. An early effort to live the law of consecration was first tried at Thompson, Ohio, in May 1831 by the members from the Colesville Branch who had moved there from New York. Complications arose when one of the participants withdrew his land and some of the members left for Missouri to help establish the center place of Zion before the practice could take root (Stewart, p. 125). Continued efforts to make necessary refinements in practicing the law in Ohio ultimately failed. A similar attempt was also made at this same time to institute the law of consecration and stewardship in Missouri, but intolerance and bickering among some of the Saints and the lack of any surplus to consecrate rendered the attempt unsuccessful (see Consecration in Ohio and Missouri below).

After these early failures, the Lord adapted the requirements of the law of consecration to the capacities of the Saints and revealed the law of tithing as a practice to follow (HC 3:44; D&C 119). Although tithing does not require the giving of everything to the Lord, it teaches the fundamental elements upon which the character of a Zion people rests: self-control, generosity, love of fellow humans, love for God, and a desire to build the kingdom of God. Giving tithing for over a century, as the Saints proved their ability to live this commandment, prepared them to accept also the welfare program, introduced in 1936 by Church President Heber J. Grant (CR [Oct. 1936]:3). Five years later, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.,
observed that the practices of tithing, fast offerings, and Church welfare had brought Church members closer to the original principles of the United Order and law of consecration (CR [Oct. 1942]:57).

Concerning the future, Zion can be redeemed only by obedience to the law of consecration. At the proper time, the Lord’s leaders will implement the program. While it is not clear what procedures will be revealed, Latter-day Saints anticipate that the principles of stewardship, equality, agency, and accountability will eventually be subscribed to by all participants and that the goals originally envisioned will be reached (D&C 78:7, 14; 82:14).

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CONSECRATION IN OHIO AND MISSOURI
The principles of consecration were implemented in various forms in Ohio and Missouri in the 1830s to provide for the needs of the poor and of a financially struggling Church (see KIRTLAND, OHIO; KIRTLAND ECONOMY). Many of the Latter-day Saints migrating to Ohio and Missouri lacked the means to support themselves, and the Church had few resources to construct buildings such as the temple or to finance publications. The various implementations of the law of consecration helped to meet these practical needs as well as to teach participants to live a celestial law.

The law of consecration was never fully practiced in Ohio but was implemented in Missouri in several forms between 1831 and 1839. In its 1831 form, the law of consecration required all participants, or "stewards," to consecrate or convey their possessions to the Church storehouse. The bishop would then give back to each individual or family a "stewardship" of land, money, and other possessions according to just wants and needs. Surplus profits generated from these stewardships were contributed to the storehouse to assist the poor and serve other general purposes. To administer the system, separate bishops and storehouses were established in the two Church centers of Kirtland and Missouri.

In 1833, the practice of consecration was modified to provide for private ownership of stewardships, and in 1838, the principle of tithing introduced another change. The law of tithing required the Saints to give "all their surplus property" to the bishop, and subsequently "one-tenth of all their interest [increase] annually" (D&C 119:1, 4).

Implementation of consecration was difficult for the early Latter-day Saints and occurred only intermittently. The impoverished Missouri Saints, were driven and persecuted by mobs, and repeatedly lost personal possessions, lands, and crops. Church property was often taken or destroyed (see MISSOURI CONFLICT). Under such circumstances, most members required more for their stewardships than they could contribute to the pool of resources. Others were reluctant to donate their surpluses, and some who left the Church pursued legal means to recover consecrated properties. In the face of such obstacles, the sincere efforts of some faithful Saints to implement the law are all the more remarkable.

The United Firm, more commonly known as the United Order, a corporate enterprise based on consecration principles, was a second and more limited implementation of consecration, which operated in Kirtland with a branch in Missouri from March 1832 to April 1834. About twelve men consecrated their possessions and received stewardships in this business venture. Surpluses were to go into the storehouse for printing the revelations and for meeting other Church needs. The firm dissolved when loan payments could not be made.

The Literary Firm, a third implementation of consecration principles, continued longer than the other two. Established in November 1831 to print the revelations and other publications for the Church, it operated in several forms until August 1837. Following the 1833 Missouri mob actions, printing operations were moved from Independence to Kirtland. Up to eight men were made stewards over the revelations and consecrated their efforts to manage publication. Although constantly beset by problems, the firm published the DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS (1st ed.), the BOOK OF MORMON (2nd ed.), and other Church books and periodicals.
CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

As a people, the Latter-day Saints are committed to sustaining constitutional government as the best instrument for maintaining peace, individual freedom, and community life in modern society. This commitment is reinforced by their scriptures, which affirm that constitutional law “supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before [the Lord]” (D&C 98:5). The scripture cited further explains that not only has God made people free by giving them agency, but “the law also maketh you free” (verse 8). Furthermore, any standard other than constitutional law “cometh of evil” (verse 10). This principle applies not only in the United States of America, but wherever Latter-day Saints might live throughout the world. However, Latter-day Saints everywhere believe also “in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law” (A of F 12).

Latter-day Saints have both contributed to, and benefited from, laws and American constitutional law. The Constitution of the United States of America made the RESTORATION of the gospel possible because it limits governmental power, protects individual rights, and sets a moral tone tolerating controversial religious views and rights of expression and assembly. LDS belief in the divine origin of the Constitution contributes to respect for the document.

The majority of the main events associated with the restoration of the Church occurred in the United States. Its message was controversial and provocative, and without the protections of the United States Constitution, the Church likely would not have survived. President Wilford Woodruff taught that at that time the United States of America was the only place where the Lord could have established his Church and kingdom (JD 25:211). President David O. McKay, in the dedicatory prayer for the Los Angeles Temple, expressed gratitude for the Constitution and for the fact that it made the establishment of the Church possible (IE 59 [Apr. 1956]:226). This idea is expressed frequently by Latter-day Saints and is more than patriotic rhetoric; a brief examination of the U.S. Constitution shows why.

The United States was especially hospitable to the restoration of the Church because its Constitution limits governments, both state and federal, thereby protecting individual rights. It limits governmental power in two ways: through two structural features commonly referred to as the separation of powers and federalism and through a series of express prohibitions.

The separation of powers refers to the division of governmental power on a horizontal plane among the three distinct branches of the federal government—legislative, executive, and judicial. Federalism divides governmental power on a vertical plane between the national government and the state governments. The separation of powers and federalism, by allocating governmental powers among several entities and by making each of these entities a competitor with the others, minimize the likelihood that government will trample individual rights.

The most famous of the express prohibitions against governmental action are contained in the first eight of the ten amendments to the Constitution that make up the Bill of Rights. By themselves, these provisions had been interpreted to apply only to the federal government, but the Fourteenth Amendment has now been held by the U.S. Supreme Court to make most of those Bill of Rights guarantees binding on state governments as well (see CIVIL RIGHTS). Because the Bill of Rights and the structural provisions of the Constitution protect individual rights against government intrusions, Latter-day Saints and other religious groups have been its distinct and identifiable beneficiaries.

Beyond its limitations on government, the Constitution sets a moral tone tolerating controversial religious views and rights of expression in general. This tone extends beyond its immediate impact on government. Without it, the public opposition to the Church, combined with the zeal of its adherents, might have brought about its demise. That Joseph Smith was born soon after the adoption and ratification of the Constitution is no coincidence in the LDS view.