
Law of Common Consent

D&C 26:2

The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and John Whitmer the Law of Common Consent, which is that “all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith” (D&C 26:2). The revelation, known as the Law of Common Consent, defines the order of proper procedure and government in the Church.

Participating in the Law of Common Consent is a privilege given to members of the Church in good standing. From the highest levels in the Church to wards and branches, the privilege of common consent is an act of ratifying callings and decisions made by Church leaders. It is not the making of decisions, which is the prerogative of the Lord and His anointed servants. Members are asked to signify approval or disapproval of a proposed decision or action by raising their right hand.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught, “It is clear that the sustaining vote by the people is not, and is not to be regarded as, a mere matter of form, but on the contrary a matter of the last gravity.”¹ It requires of members more than raising a hand of approval. President Harold B. Lee taught, “When you vote affirmatively you make a solemn covenant with the Lord that you will sustain, that is, give your full loyalty and support, without equivocation or reservation, to the officer for whom you vote.”²

The principle of common consent was practiced in one form or another during the days of Moses (Exodus 24:3), Joshua (Numbers 27:19–22), Peter (Acts 1:26), and Mosiah (Mosiah 29:25–26). According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie, the Law of Common Consent “has been operative in every dispensation.”³

¹ J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, April 1940, 73.

² Jay M. Todd, “The Sustaining of President Harold B. Lee,” *Ensign*, January 1973.

³ Bruce R. McConkie, *Common Consent* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.), 4.

The first time the Law of Common Consent was practiced in this dispensation was on April 6, 1830, when the Church of Christ was organized at the Peter Whitmer Sr. Log home in Fayette, New York. Before Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were ordained elders, they received the sanctioning vote from those present. The Prophet Joseph then asked the assembled “if they were willing that they should proceed to organize the church according to the commandment of the Lord. To this they consented by unanimous vote.”⁴

⁴ Part 3: April–September 1830. Joseph Smith Papers.