

COMMON CONSENT

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By

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LAW OF COMMON CONSENT RESTORED

What is the truth about the gospel law of common consent?

Provision is made in the gospel of Christ whereunder the members of his Church perform certain actions by common consent, meaning by the united voice of the Church.

The proper operation of this law—that is, its operation in strict conformity with the revealed will of the Lord—is one of the evidences of the divinity of the true Church.

Since the restoration of the gospel in our age—including, of course, a restoration of the true doctrine of common consent—the Church and kingdom of God on earth has grown and prospered in a marvelous manner. The predictions of the ancient prophets are receiving a triumphant fulfillment.

We are living in “the times of restitution of *all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”¹

The restored Church and kingdom — the kingdom “which shall never be destroyed,” which “*shall not be left to other people,*” but which “*shall stand for ever,*” the very kingdom of God on earth — has been set up, and established in all its beauty, glory, and perfection.²

For those who are honestly and sincerely seeking to live the laws of God as they have been revealed in modern times, so that they may thereby gain salvation in his

¹Acts 3:19-21.

²Daniel 2:44-45.

kingdom, it becomes a matter of surpassing importance to learn the truth about the law of common consent.

Now, what is this law and how does it operate? Are the members of any church group, acting under the provisions of this law, within their rights, for instance, in choosing their own church officers, either local or general?

Do the provisions of this law apply to the revelations which the Lord has given? Is a church free to accept or reject, as it chooses, a revelation coming from the Lord? If the Lord gives a revelation through his Prophet, does the Church have to vote to approve that revelation before the members thereof are bound by the provisions and requirements found in the revealed word?

When the Lord chooses certain officers to preside over his Church or to govern any of its affairs, do the people have the veto power? When he gives a revelation, are the people bound by it, with or without their consent? Is the voice of the Church the same as the voice of God? Salvation itself rests on learning the true answers to these questions.

REVELATIONS ABOUT COMMON CONSENT

The law of common consent has been operative in every dispensation, and some examples of its ancient operation have been preserved for our enlightenment in the ancient scriptures. Our present concern, however, centers primarily around the latter-day revelation of this doctrine and the manner in which it has operated beginning with Joseph Smith the Prophet.

So that a clear, full understanding of the law may be gained, we will now quote — with sufficient context to avoid ambiguity or false conclusions — *all* of the *principal* revelations the Lord has given on this subject. Then with the revelations clearly in mind, we will summarize the important provisions of the law. Finally, we will see how they have operated in our day and thus find conclusive assurance as to the existence of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

In April, 1830, Joseph Smith received the revelation and commandment to set up the Church and kingdom of God again on earth as part of the promised "restitution of all things."³ So that the restored kingdom would be perfect and operate in precisely the same manner as had been the case in all former dispensations, the Lord revealed the *specific procedural details* governing *all vital phases* of its establishment and operation. As to the law of common consent, he said:

"Every elder, priest, teacher, or deacon is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him; and he is to be *ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost*, which is in the one who ordains him.

"The several elders composing this church of Christ are to meet in conference once in three months, or from time to time as said conferences shall direct or appoint; And said *conferences are to do whatever church business is necessary to be done at the time.*

"The elders are to receive their licenses from other elders, *by vote of the church to which they belong, or from the conferences.* Each priest, teacher, or deacon, who is ordained by a priest, may take a certificate from him at the time, which certificate, when presented to an elder, shall entitle him to a license, which shall authorize him to perform the duties of his calling; or he may receive it from a conference.

"*No person is to be ordained to any office in this church, where there is a regularly organized branch of the same, without the vote of that church;* But the presiding elders, traveling bishops, high councilors, high priests, and elders, may have the privilege of ordaining, where there is no branch of the church that a vote may be called.

"*Every president of the high priesthood (or presiding elder), bishop, high councilor, and high priest, is to be ordained by the direction of a high council or general conference.*"⁴

³Acts 3:19-21.

⁴Doctrine and Covenants 20:60-67; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 17:12-17).

In July, 1830, the Lord said: "*All things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith.*"

SOLE SOURCE OF REVELATION FOR THE CHURCH

By September of the same year, as the young Church began to grow and its newly converted members to gain experience in the operation of the affairs of the kingdom, Satan (in imitation of the true order of heaven) found a receptive Church member to whom he could give false revelations. Hiram Page had a certain stone and by its aid he professed to receive revelations concerning the upbuilding of Zion and the order of the Church.

These false claims deceived several Church members, and even Oliver Cowdery, the second elder in the kingdom, had been wrongly influenced by them. Just before a Church conference and following earnest inquiry, Joseph Smith received the following earnest inquiry, which the Lord addressed to Oliver Cowdery:

"Behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, *no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses.*"

Oliver was told to "declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations" given through the Prophet; to speak and teach by the Comforter; but, said the Lord, "*Thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom; And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church; For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead. . . . Thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment.*"

"My servant Joseph," the Lord continued, "shall be appointed to preside over the conference *by the voice of it, and what he saith to thee thou shalt tell.*"

⁵Doctrine and Covenants 26:2; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 25:2).

Then Oliver was commanded to undo, as far as he could, the ill effects of his wrongful acceptance of false revelations. "Thou shalt take thy brother, Hiram Page," the Lord told him, "between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me, and that Satan deceiveth him;

"For, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him, *neither shall anything be appointed unto any of this church contrary to the church covenants. For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith.* And thou shalt assist to settle all these things, according to the covenants of the church."⁶

In that great revelation, given February 9, 1831, at Kirtland, and known as "*the law of the Church,*" the Lord said: "I say unto you, that *it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church*

"And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and *if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.*"

In February, 1831, the Lord spoke again to the Prophet with reference to the one to whom he would give revelations for the Church. No reference whatever to the law of common consent is made in this revelation. But because some avoid its plain meaning, it seems wise to consider it here, in context and along with the various revealed terms and conditions of the true law of common consent.

At the time the Lord gave this instruction, some members of the Church were disturbed by people making false claims as revelators. In his infinite wisdom the Lord denounced in plain words the false and specious claims of those who, as the authors of false revelations

⁶Doctrine and Covenants 28:1-16; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 27:1-5).

⁷Doctrine and Covenants 42:11, 14; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 42:4, 5 b).

which had not come from him, "use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority."⁸

First, the Lord reminded the Church that they had received his law "through him whom I have appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from my hand."

Then he decreed: "And this ye shall know assuredly—that *there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me. But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him; for if it be taken from him he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead.*

"And this shall be a *law* unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me.

"For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed."⁹

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS GOVERNED BY COMMON CONSENT

Several revelations mention the law of common consent in connection with the responsibility of the Church to care for the poor and to administer the affairs of the United Order — a social and economic system offered the early saints of this dispensation.

As early as January 2, 1831, at a conference of the Church being held at Fayette, New York, the saints were commanded that certain men among them should be appointed "*by the voice of the church,*" to care for "the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer."¹⁰

⁸*Doctrine and Covenants* 63:62; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 63:15d).

⁹*Doctrine and Covenants* 43:2-7; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 43:1-2).

¹⁰*Doctrine and Covenants* 38:34-35; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 38:8).

In May of that year, in connection with consecrations and stewardships made and held under the United Order, the Lord specified that each man had certain rights "until he transgresses and is not accounted worthy *by the voice of the church,* according to the laws and covenants of the church, to belong to the church."¹¹

Later (April 23, 1834) more detail was revealed as to how the principles of common consent were to operate in the United Order. The funds in the treasury were to be expended "only by the *voice of the order,* or by commandment," or in other words, "only by the *voice and common consent of the order.*"

Then the Author of the law of common consent told how it should operate. "And this shall be the voice and common consent of the order," he said, "that any man among you say to the treasurer: I have need of this to help me in my stewardship," and he should receive it—"Until he be found a transgressor." Provision was also made for removal of a transgressing treasurer by "the council and voice of the order." Properties, also, were to be pledged to the order "by common consent or otherwise."¹²

OFFICERS SUSTAINED BY COMMON CONSENT

As the Church had need for the appointment of officers to administer its affairs, the Lord required that certain of these be sustained by the people in accordance with the law of common consent.

"I have called my servant Edward Partridge," he said to the Prophet on February 4, 1831, "and I give a commandment, that he should be appointed by the voice of the church, and ordained a bishop unto the church, to leave his merchandise and to spend all his time in the labors of the church."¹³ In case of transgression another was to be "appointed in his stead."¹⁴

¹¹*Doctrine and Covenants* 51:4; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 51:c).

¹²*Doctrine and Covenants* 104:64, 71-77, 85; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 101:11d, 12e - 12j, 13f).

¹³*Doctrine and Covenants* 41:9-11; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 41:3c - 3d).

¹⁴*Doctrine and Covenants* 42:10; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 42:3c).

A bishop or agent administering the United Order was to be "appointed by the voice of the church."¹⁵ The duty of the bishop was to "be made known *by the commandments* which have been given, and the *voice of the conference*."

"And now, verily I say unto you, my servant *Newel K. Whitney is the man who shall be appointed and ordained unto this power* [i.e. to serve as a bishop]. This is the *will of the Lord your God, your Redeemer*."

Elders were to be "recommended" by the church or churches in which they labored, and were to carry a certificate from other elders or the bishop when going to the land of Zion.¹⁶

On January 19, 1841, we find the Lord naming by revelation certain officers whom he had chosen to administer the various affairs of his kingdom on earth. For instance: "I give unto you Hyrum Smith to be a patriarch. . . . I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet. . . . I give unto you my servant Brigham Young to be a president over the Twelve traveling council; *Which Twelve hold the keys to open up the authority of my kingdom upon the four corners of the earth, and after that to send my word to every creature*. They are Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, William Smith, John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, George A. Smith; David Patten I have taken unto myself."

Then the Lord named whom he had chosen to serve as high counselors, as the presidency of a high priests quorum, as the presidency of an elders quorum, as the presidents of the quorum of seventies, as members of a bishopric, and as the presidency of a quorum of priests.

Following the listing of these brethren, he said: "The above offices I have given unto you, and the keys

¹⁵*Doctrine and Covenants* 51:12; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 51:3c).

¹⁶*Doctrine and Covenants* 72:5, 7-8, 19, 24-26; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 72:1c, 1f - 2, 4b, 5).

thereof, for helps and for governments, for the work of the ministry and the perfecting of my saints.

"And a commandment I give unto you, that you should fill all these offices and approve of those names which I have mentioned, or else disapprove them at my general conference."¹⁷

The principle whereunder Church officers are both called of God and sustained by the people is found in the account of the organization of the first high council. "*The president of the church*, who is also president of the council," the inspired record says, "*is appointed by revelation, and acknowledged in his administration by the voice of the church*."¹⁸

SUMMARY OF LAW OF COMMON CONSENT

The foregoing are *all* of the principal latter-day revelations relative to the law of common consent. They show conclusively that the Lord's house is a house of order and not a house of confusion. Every principle, every procedure, every requirement for the organizing and governing of the Church fits into a perfect pattern, so that the saints need not be deceived, misled, or left in darkness.

Now let us summarize these revealed laws and procedures, so that we may weigh the claims and procedures of all churches against the laws the Lord has given. The Lord's Church, the earthly repository of his gospel, power, and authority, will conform in *every* respect to his revelations and will be able to offer salvation to all who will come and drink at the true fountain.

1. *The Holy Spirit guides the Church of Jesus Christ*. That Spirit will not dwell in unclean tabernacles or in unholy places. Hence, no person or organization can prosper in spiritual things except on the basis of righteousness — the righteousness which must precede the receipt of guidance from the Spirit.

All the teachings, performances, programs, and ordinances of the Church must be performed under the direc-

¹⁷*Doctrine and Covenants* 124:124-145; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 107:38-46).

¹⁸*Doctrine and Covenants* 102:9; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 99:6a).

tion of the Spirit. Ordinations to all offices in the true Church are performed by the power of the Holy Ghost in the one performing the ordinance. By the prayer of faith the saints may gain the Spirit, and if they do not receive it, they are commanded not to teach.

2. *All the acts of the true Church must conform to the revealed pattern.* No procedures may be followed, no principles espoused, which are not recorded in the revelations or directed by the Spirit. Nothing is to be done by the Church contrary to the covenants the Lord has given.

3. *All of the organizational things which the Church does—that is, the procedures which it follows and the officers which it appoints—must be done by common consent, by much faith and prayer.* Even the Prophet Joseph Smith could not be imposed upon the people of the Church by divine fiat. He presided over a conference, for instance, by the voice of the conference. All things must be done in order. There is no confusion or uncertainty where the Spirit of the Lord reigns.

4. *General Church business cannot be transacted in secret.* No man, for instance, could be appointed in secret to head the Church or to carry on some supposed great program for the salvation of men. The Lord has decreed otherwise. Conferences are to transact the business of the Church.

5. *No man can so much as be ordained to any office in the Church without a vote of the Church.* There is no such thing as a secret ordination to office, either high or low, in the Church of Christ. The Lord does not work in dark corners. His great works are trumpeted in the ears of all living so that every soul who is willing to do so may learn of them.

6. *Even after a proper ordination, the elders of the Church have no power to act independently of the direction of the Church.* They cannot presume to have any right or prerogative that has not been specifically given to them. Those holding priestly offices must have certificates of ordination. Elders must be properly recommended for special labors and must carry certificates so certifying.

And no elder can receive a license to act in his calling without a vote of the Church, or by direction of a conference.

7. Church officers are empowered to act within the scope of their appointments, only if they are first, *called by revelation*, and second, *sustained by the vote of the Church*. The appointment comes by revelation. Conferences are empowered to approve or disapprove when the names of church officers are read.

8. *After their appointment and acceptance, Church officers have no power to proceed according to their private notions either in their teachings or in their direction of those over whom they preside. They must conform to the Lord's pattern for those so called.*

Their duties are given them by revelation in the commandments, and also by the voice of the conference. For instance, if one professing to head the Church did not lead the people in the performance of baptism or any other revealed principle, he would stand condemned and rejected of the Lord. He could not claim to be the Lord's servant because he failed to do the Lord's work.

9. The *President of the Church* gains his position only if *two* conditions are met. He must be *appointed by the Lord*. Then he must be *acknowledged* as Church President *by the voice of the Church*. They must vote to sustain him in his position. *Even after the Lord names him, he cannot be ordained to his high calling except by the direction of a high council or general conference.* Obviously the appointment cannot be a secret one; the vote of the people cannot be taken in secret; the fact of ordination cannot be withheld from Church knowledge. The Lord works in the open.

10. Indeed, *no one can be appointed in secret to preach the gospel or build up the Church.* To enable any man to carry the message of salvation to the world or to build up the Church and kingdom on earth, he must be authoritatively ordained by the heads of the Church, and *it must be known to the Church that he has been given*

authority to preach or perform whatever work is involved. The wisdom of the Almighty is seen in these provisions.

11. We have seen how the law of common consent was applied to the United Order in the early days of this dispensation. Since this social and economic system is no longer operative, these procedures do not now apply. The application of the principle of common consent to the procedures of that Order, however, are of importance to us. In general, *all the temporal, financial, and economic affairs of the Order were administered by the voice and common consent of the Order.*

12. The Church of Jesus Christ is the kingdom of God on earth. It is not a democracy. Laws and commandments do not originate with the people. Church members do not adopt legislation by which they will be governed. Christ is the heavenly King. He is the Lawgiver.

13. *Christ chooses his own administrators.* "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," he said to his apostles of old.¹⁹ The earthly representative of the heavenly King is the President of the Church. He is a prophet, a seer, a revelator, and the *only* one authorized to give the mind and will of the Lord to his people.

14. So that the President of the Church may govern all the affairs of the kingdom on earth, he holds what are called *the keys of the kingdom*. Keys are the right of presidency. In the fullest sense they can be exercised by only one man at a time because someone has to stand at the head and preside over all others.

No one but the Lord has power to command him who is at the head. He stands supreme over all other men. Such was the position of Joseph Smith, the first Prophet and first earthly head of the kingdom in this dispensation; and such has been the position of each of his successors—mighty men named by the Lord and acknowledged by the voice of the people.

15. Although the nature of presidency is such that only one man can exercise the fulness of the keys at one

¹⁹John 15:16.

time, the Lord has ordained that these keys be conferred also upon others. The others so honored are the *Twelve*. *They hold the keys of the kingdom of God and of the dispensation of the fulness of times.*

Each man who is ordained to this apostolic calling receives *all* of the keys and prerogatives, but their full operation remains dormant in him unless he becomes the senior or presiding apostle of God on earth. Such was the position of Brigham Young following the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum.

On July 23, 1837, at the time when Thomas B. Marsh was president of the Twelve and Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith were the First Presidency, the Lord said through the Prophet:

"I say unto all the Twelve: Arise and gird up your loins, take up your cross, follow me, and feed my sheep. Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph; for verily I say unto you, I am with him, and my hand shall be over him; and *the keys which I have given unto him, and also to youward, shall not be taken from him till I come.*

"Verily I say unto you, my servant Thomas, thou art the man whom I have chosen to hold the keys of my kingdom, as pertaining to the Twelve, abroad among all nations—That thou mayest be my servant to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places where my servant Joseph, and my servant Sidney, and my servant Hyrum, cannot come; For on them have I laid the burden of all the churches for a little season.

"Wherefore, whithersoever they shall send you, go ye, and I will be with you; and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word.

"*Whosoever receiveth my word receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth those, the First Presidency, whom I have sent, and whom I have made counselors for my name's sake unto you.*

"And again, I say unto you, that whatsoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, shall

have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them—Inasmuch as they shall humble themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit

“For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times. Which power you hold, in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation; For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and last of all, being sent down from heaven unto you. Verily I say unto you, behold how great is your calling.”²⁰

Speaking of the right to exercise that power which is inherent in the keys of the priesthood, of the Church, and of the kingdom, the Lord has also left us this revealed word: “I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and *there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.*”²¹

Joseph Smith also had the Lord’s promise that “the keys of this kingdom shall *never* be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come; Nevertheless, through you shall the oracle be given to another, yea, *even unto the church.*”²²

16. *Those who receive the Lord’s servants receive the Lord.* To receive the Lord (and therefore gain salvation) one must accept the First Presidency and the Twelve—those who *actually* have the power to open the the door of his kingdom for any person.

²⁰*Doctrine and Covenants* 112:14-22, 30-33; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 105:6a - 8b, 12a - 13a).

²¹*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:7.

²²*Doctrine and Covenants* 90:3-4; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 87:2a).

17. *Joseph Smith was a true prophet. He did not fall.* He kept his covenants, obeyed the Lord’s law, endured to the end, and went on to his eternal reward in the kingdom of him whose servant he was. After the Prophet had been fully tried and proved worthy, he received the promise, without qualification or restriction, that the keys of the kingdom would never be taken from him in this world nor in the world to come.

18. But as there was to be a day when the Church, to fill its glorious destiny, would be required to continue without the personal guidance of its first Prophet, so provision was made whereby *the keys and oracles were to be given by the Prophet to the Church, that is others were to hold them.* This was done by conferring all of the keys upon all of the twelve so there would be *no break, no lapse, no less of authority.* It was not the design of the Lord to let his work fail.

19. *Revelation for the guidance of the Church comes only through the President of the Church.* While Joseph Smith lived, he alone could receive the mind and will of the Lord for the establishment and perfection of the Church. He alone could write by way of commandment to the Church. Even Oliver Cowdery, who had received from heavenly messengers the same keys held by the Prophet, could not write by way of commandment to the Church, could not command him who was at the head. *The mere fact that any supposed revelation for the Church comes from anyone except the President of the Church is conclusive proof that the supposed revelation is false and is not of God.*

20. The validity of revelation—its truth or its falsity—is not established by the operation of the law of common consent. There is no provision in the Lord’s plan for the members of his Church to pass upon the validity of revelations by a vote of the Church. There is not one syllable in any commandment or revelation which by inference or otherwise can properly be construed as permitting the Church to choose which of the revelations

will be binding upon it, either by a vote of the people or by other means.

Revelation is revelation. When the Lord speaks, he has spoken. His word is to be accepted and obeyed if men expect to receive salvation. To reject the word of the Lord is to reject the Lord himself to that extent.

It is true that a prophet is a mortal man, subject to afflictions, disease, sin, and error. Christ only was perfect. But when a prophet acts in his capacity as a prophet, when he is enwrapped in the visions of eternity, when he is overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, when his mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God so that he receives revelation—then he is not acting of *himself*, but *the Lord is speaking through him*.

Thus Joseph Smith, speaking in Nauvoo on May 12, 1844, said: "*When did I ever teach anything wrong from this stand? When was I ever confounded?* I want to triumph in Israel before I depart hence and am no more seen. I never told you I was perfect; but *there is no error in the revelations which I have taught*. (*Church History*, vol. 6, p. 366.)

Could the Corinthian Saints free themselves from the responsibility of performing baptisms for the dead because their members or priesthood assemblies had not voted to accept the revealed word of the Lord on that subject, as it was conveyed to them by Paul? Such a conclusion is absurd. Mortal, weak, finite men are not called to sit in judgment upon an immortal, omnipotent, and infinite God.

So in our day. The Lord spoke. Joseph Smith announced the revealed truths. Men accepted the revelation; obeyed the commandment; gained salvation. Or, men sat in judgment upon the Lord and his Prophet; decided the revelation and commandment was not binding upon them because they did not vote to be bound by it; and the promised salvation passed them by.

It is as simple as that. The Lord's revelations are not submitted to man for his approval; they

are revealed so that if man will obey them, he can gain an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God. The Lord never designed that man would have the last word on his revelations. He, not man, is the Almighty. There is no scriptural warrant or authorization whatever for the view that the Church, its priesthood quorums, or any of its members, must vote to accept revelations before they become binding upon the Church members.

If there are those who have the view that the Church must pass upon and approve the revelations, such theory can be only an attempt to explain why those so believing do not accept all that has been revealed. There is no scripture to justify such a view. The law of common consent does not apply to the acceptance or the rejection of revelations.

APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

Now, we have quoted or referred to *all* of the *principal revelations* which the Lord has given in Latter-days relative to the law of common consent. We have summarized the chief truths taught in these revelations (and in some others so well known that quotations or documentation has seemed unnecessary).

The true doctrine of common consent is before us. All who are troubled by the applications which have been made of these principles, in the various factions which have broken off from the Church organized by Joseph Smith, should study and re-study these principles, until a clear and comprehensive understanding of them is reached. Then they should, *point by point*, apply the principles to *all* of the circumstances surrounding the rise and functioning of the various factions and groups claiming rights and powers originally vested in the Prophet Joseph.

The principles cannot be controverted. They came by revelation. They are the mind and will of the Lord. If any group or organization has not conformed to them

in every particular, then can that church or group righteously claim to be the Lord's Church?

Every sincere truth-seeker should be fair enough with himself to make an honest and open-minded investigation of the whole matter—an investigation upon which the gaining or losing of personal salvation hinges.

If the spirit of contention, or argument and debate, of confusion and uncertainty, of uncleanness in thought or deed prevails in any group, can such group have the Holy Spirit? And if it does not have the Holy Spirit can it be the true Church?

If any faction professes to follow early leaders who were supposedly called quite secretly, without the general knowledge of the Church, and whose calls were not acknowledged by the Church at the time of their supposed selection, can that organization be the true Church?

If any group has leaders who do not teach *all* of the principles of revealed truth and who do not direct the performance of *all* of the ordinances of salvation—and such there are, as witness the glorious truths surrounding baptism for the dead, and eternal marriage—then can these leaders possess the spirit of revelation? Can they act as legal administrators for the Lord?

If any faction chooses to rank Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet rather than accept all of the truth he gave—and there are those who do this—then has that group departed from the truth and rejected the Lord by rejecting his Prophet? Are they of God?

If any group has come into being, in part or in whole, as a result of supposed revelations coming from others than the one man on earth who holds the keys whereby he may learn the mind of the Lord for his people—can it be approved of the Lord?

If any group or unit came into existence and chose its officers and heads *after* the body of the saints, in accordance with the law of common consent, had voted to accept the Quorum of the Twelve as their leaders and follow them—and what faction did come into existence under these circumstances?—then can such church organ-

ization be of God? Can they implant the sure hope of salvation in any human heart?

If any factions followed leaders other than those who received all of the keys of the kingdom from the Prophet while he yet lived, namely, the Quorum of the Twelve—and such there are—then are such following other shepherds than the Lord's shepherds, and are these in a sheepfold whose owner is *not* the Good Shepherd?

POWER OF THE TWELVE TO LEAD CHURCH

*Those who have come to a knowledge of the *whole* truth about the *whole* law of common consent can continue this line of inquiry, suiting the propositions to be analyzed to the circumstances surrounding the various factions. But for our present inquiry perhaps it would be more profitable to make brief mention of the detailed and careful manner in which *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* has followed and does now follow all the provisions of the law of common consent.

As is well known, the work of the Lord started with a small beginning in this dispensation. But line upon line; precept upon precept; key, power, and authority upon key, power, and authority; the truth was revealed, until the Prophet Joseph had, centered in him, all that was necessary to save and exalt the human family in the kingdom of God.

All of these truths, powers, and keys were given by him, during his lifetime, to the Quorum of the Twelve. This conferring of the fulness of the keys upon the Twelve was completed in the winter of 1843-44 in the Nauvoo Temple.

Joseph Smith then said to them: "*I have sealed upon your heads all of the keys of the kingdom of God. I have sealed upon you every key, power, and principle that the God of heaven has revealed to me. Now, no matter where I may go or what I may do, the kingdom rests upon you. . . . Ye apostles of the Lamb of God, my brethren, upon your shoulders this kingdom rests; now you have*

got to round up your shoulders and bear off the kingdom. If you do not do it you will be damned."²³

That the Twelve were sustained by the Church, time and again during the lifetime of the Prophet, as the lawful holders of the keys of the kingdom, is known by all informed persons.

For instance, recording the business transacted during the dedicatory services in the Kirtland Temple, March 27, 1836, Joseph Smith said: "I then called upon the quorums and congregation of saints to acknowledge the *Twelve Apostles*, who were present, as prophets, seers, revelators, and special witnesses to all the nations of the earth, *holding the keys of the kingdom*, to unlock it, or cause it to be done, among them, and uphold them by their prayers, which they assented to by rising."²⁴

That the Prophet always taught that the Twelve stood next to the First Presidency in regulating all the affairs of the kingdom of God on earth is well known. He gave such instruction, for instance, on January 16, 1836, explaining that the Twelve were not subject to any other than the First Presidency, that is, he said, "Myself, Sidney Ridgon, and Frederick G. Williams, who are now my Counselors; and *where I am not, there is no First Presidency over the Twelve.*"²⁵

At a conference of the Church, August 16, 1841, the Prophet called upon the *Twelve* "to stand in their place next to the First Presidency, and attend to the settling of immigrants and the *business of the Church at the stakes, and assist to bear off the kingdom victoriously to the nations.*" Then by vote of the conference, approval was given of his instructions in relation to the *Twelve*.²⁶

THE LORD AND CHURCH ACT TOGETHER

Thus the position, office, calling, responsibilities, power, and authority of the *Twelve* were well established while the Prophet yet lived. When he and Hyrum were

²³Wilford Woodruff, *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, p. 72.

²⁴*History of the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 417-418.

²⁵*History of the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 373-374.

²⁶*History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 403.

martyred, the leadership fell automatically upon the *Twelve*, Brigham Young, the senior apostle and president of the *Twelve*, at the head.

It was well known to the members of the Church that the right and power to lead the Church, following the martyrdom, rested with the *Twelve*. When Sidney Rigdon proposed that he be appointed a guardian to build up the Church unto Joseph, Brigham Young responded that he did not care who presided over the Church, but one thing he would have to know and that was what the Lord said about it.

"*Joseph conferred upon our heads,*" President Young said, "*all of the keys and powers belonging to the apostleship which he himself held before he was taken away, and no man or set of men can get between Joseph and the Twelve in this world or in the world to come. How often has Joseph said to the Twelve: 'I have laid the foundation and you must build thereon, for upon your shoulders the kingdom rests.'*"²⁷

The saints assembled in conference in Nauvoo on August 8, 1844, to choose the leadership the Lord had named to preside over his Church. In a most marvelous and miraculous manner the Lord confirmed, in the sight of the thousands of assembled saints, that the keys of the kingdom were held by the *Twelve* and that the mantle of the Prophet had fallen upon Brigham Young.

When President Young arose to address the saints, *he was transfigured before them*. They beheld the Prophet Joseph Smith and heard the voice of the Prophet as naturally and plainly as they ever had done while the Prophet lived. The Lord was having his say as to who should lead his people.

Then, while the Spirit of God was poured out upon them, the saints were called upon, in accordance with the law of common consent, to acknowledge and sustain as their leaders those whom the voice of the Lord had named. *The vote was unanimous. Not one hand was raised against Brigham Young and the Twelve. The Lord had spoken. The people had acknowledged that his*

²⁷Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, p. 387.

voice had been heard. The law of common consent had worked perfectly. The action taken was binding upon the Church. And the overwhelming majority of the members of the Church followed Brigham Young to the West.

REVELATION AND LAW OF COMMON CONSENT

If any faction has rejected, or failed to accept, *any* of the revelations given of the Lord in this dispensation, thereby presuming to stand in judgment upon the Lord, can they be in the strait and narrow way?

What application, if any, does the law of common consent have to the revelations which the Lord gives? Are revelations binding upon the Church only in the event the Church votes to be bound by them? Who has the final say about the validity and binding effect of revelation—man or God?

Revelations originate with God, not with man. When the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, deems fit to give counsel, direction, and doctrine to his people, he does so through the prophet whom he has appointed.

It goes without saying that all revelation is truth; that progress toward perfection comes only by adherence to the truth; and that the truths of salvation are known only by revelation. *When the Lord speaks, therefore, his words are binding upon all men, whether they approve of what he has said or whether they reject it and rebel against the Author of their being.*

Any principle of the gospel can be used to illustrate these truths. The Lord reveals that all men must believe and be baptized in order to be saved, and that those who do not believe and are not baptized shall be damned. Now, does this revelation have to be approved by a vote of the Church in order to be binding upon men?

Men have their agency, of course, and they can accept or reject any truth of which they have knowledge. But they cannot change either the revelations or their effects upon men. If they do not believe and accept baptism under the hands of a legal administrator, they cannot be saved, irrespective of whether they voted to be bound by

the revealed law or voted not to be bound by it. As individuals or in groups, men may reject the revelations, but by so doing they reject the blessings that would have come by obedience and for their rejection they are damned.

The same principles that apply to the revealed law of baptism apply to any other revelation. The Lord commands his people to perform baptisms for the dead; he reveals to them holy ordinances whereby they are endowed with power from on high; he gives them an eternal law of marriage by obedience to which the family unit has power to continue on in eternity—and all these laws are binding whether the Church accepts them by vote or not. If they are rejected, by vote or otherwise, those so acting cut themselves off from the promised blessings.

Now, if some church, professing to be built upon the foundation revealed by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith, does not have all of the revelations (for instance, those about salvation for the dead, temple endowments, eternal marriage), then is it the Lord's Church?

Because some have officially announced *they* know of no temple building and of no ceremonial endowments therein, is the revelation any the less binding upon them? And can they reap the blessings attendant upon obedience to such principles, if they do not obey them?

Because some have officially said that the doctrine of baptism for the dead as revealed to the Prophet is not binding upon them, since it has neither been *reiterated* nor *referred* to as a commandment, is it any the less binding? And can the attendant blessings be gained by *failure* to conform to the revealed law?

WHY ARE REVELATIONS DELETED?

Why should followers of Joseph Smith wish to delete any of the revelations of God? Is it because it would be embarrassing to them to publish revelations which are opposite to their beliefs, doctrines, and practices?

If they have unbounded animosity in their hearts for Brigham Young, what is more natural than that they

would delete the revelation in which the Lord calls him "dear and well-beloved" and commends him for his integrity and devotion?²⁸

If they have changed the name of the Church from that which the Lord specifically decreed by revelation, how better can they avoid embarrassment than to delete the revelation?²⁹

If they claim no knowledge of temple building, what would be an easier way out than to delete a revelation on temple building?³⁰

If they are without the full comprehension of the doctrine of salvation for the dead, and if they made no attempt to exercise the sealing power restored by Elijah, what is more natural—from their standpoint, not the Lord's—than to delete the revelation promising that Elijah would come, and the one reciting that he did come?³¹

If they reject Brigham Young, they must necessarily delete the revelation given him commanding the westward march of the pioneers.³²

If they do not believe in eternal marriage and the continuation of the family unit in eternity, then the revelations pertaining thereto must be discarded and denied.³³

And so it goes, revelation after revelation, and subject after subject. For one reason or another—reasons that frequently can be gained only by surmise—more than a score of revelations are deleted. The *Doctrine and Covenants*, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, contains glorious truths in all of the following sections (none of which sections are published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri): 2, 13, 77, 85, 87, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 136.

²⁸*Doctrine and Covenants* 126.

²⁹*Doctrine and Covenants* 115.

³⁰*Doctrine and Covenants* 115.

³¹*Doctrine and Covenants* 2; 110.

³²*Doctrine and Covenants* 136.

³³*Doctrine and Covenants* 131; 132.

No reason is readily apparent why some of these do not find favor in the eyes of those professing to believe in the prophetic call of Joseph Smith. Why, for instance, should the revelation on war be missing? Why should the revealed dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple be taken out? What of missing revelations giving instructions to the Twelve, specifying how tithing funds are to be spent, recording glorious truths about priesthood, directing the activities of the saints in Iowa, and so on and so on?

And if one revelation can go by the board, why not another, and another, and another? *Where will it end, and how long will it be before the power of finite man makes the infinite wisdom of God conform to man's whims and prejudices? When will the next revelation be deleted, and what will it be?*

Instead of rejecting portions of what has been revealed, how much better it would be to *seek for light, and truth, and revelation*, so that going from grace to grace we might eventually attain the perfect day, have all light, and all truth, and inherit eternal exaltation.³⁴

Now we have seen what the law of common consent is; the things to which it applies; the things to which it does not apply; and the manner in which it has operated among the *true saints* of God.

Why should any remain in darkness relative to this doctrine? Truly, those who are alive to the things of the Spirit will have no difficulty in recognizing the truth and in conforming to it.

The true operations of the law of common consent distinguishes those who have the fulness of the gospel from those who have only a part of the Lord's will; it differentiates between those who have found the true Church of Jesus Christ with all its saving powers and those who cling to a hollow shell, without power to foster hope in this life, or assure eternal life in the world to come.

³⁴*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:54-60; 93:6-37; (Reorg. Ch. ed. 76:5s-k; 90:1c-6a).

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