REVELATIONS, UNPUBLISHED

Not all revelations of God to his latter-day prophets have been formally published, let alone accepted by the common consent of the Church as canonized scripture. Just as the compilers of the Bible had to decide which texts to include, similar decisions have been made in this dispensation with respect to modern revelations. Initially this process was carried out by those assigned by the Prophet Joseph Smith to gather the revealed materials, organize them, and, under his supervision, print the Book of Commandments (1833) and the Doctrine and Covenants (1835). They included those revelations that were relevant "for the establishment and regulation of the kingdom of God on the earth in the last days" (D&C [1881], "Explanatory Introduction"). Latter-day Saints believe that divine inspiration played a role in guiding these selections (DS 3:202).

Many revelations are not included in the standard works, however; for example, those given to specific individuals under particular circumstances containing personal instructions rather than doctrine for the Church. Many are published in the History of the Church or are found in collections of Church documents. Examples include a revelation calling John E. Page to go to Washington, D.C. (HC 6:92), and a revelation about the division of the United Firm (Kirtland Revelation Book, p. 111). Also excluded are temple ordinances and other sacred matters not published to the world.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regards its canon of scripture as open, and two earlier revelations were added to the canon in 1979 (D&C 137 and 138). Latter-day Saints believe that God "will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (A of F 9).

Another example of revelation received but not published is the revelation underlying the announcement by the First Presidency in June 1978 extending the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church. Only an official statement concerning that revelation was published (see Doctrine and Covenants: Official Declaration—2). Other changes in the Church, such as the recent expanding of the role of the seventy, accelerating temple building, and expanding mission activity, are viewed by Latter-day Saints as manifestations of divine direction. The revealed basis of these changes is not always published, as it more often was in the early years of the Church. As Elder James E. Faust declared, "In our time God has revealed how to administer the Church with a membership of over six million differently than when there were just six members of the Church" (Faust, p. 8).

A few writers have attempted to collect and publish revelations that are attributed to prophets but not published in the scriptures. Some of these texts are based on credible sources; others come from sources that are suspect, if not invalid. When a so-called revelation contains statements and declarations that are clearly out of harmony with the standard works and official statements of the First Presidency, such materials are considered to be spurious.

In biblical times, false prophets sometimes spoke and wrote in the names of others and claimed revelations from God (cf. Deut. 18:20–22; Matt. 7:15). Today, some people similarly find journals or produce documents containing alleged revelations. The main guideline used for assessing these is as follows: "No one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this Church except my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses... until I shall appoint... another in his stead" (D&C 28:2, 7). Latter-day Saints believe that the right to receive revelation for the entire Church is reserved for the president of the church.

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REVERENCE

Latter-day Saints share with other religious people an inner yearning or inclination to venerate that which is holy. President David O. McKay empha-
sized this principle by saying, “The greatest manifestation of spirituality is reverence; indeed, reverence is spirituality. Reverence is profound respect mingled with love” (Instructor 101 [Oct. 1966]: 371). The supreme object of reverence is God the Father; his son Jesus Christ did the will of the Father by effecting the infinite Atonement; and Latter-day Saints also equally revere him. They revere not only his personage but his name as well, for as Peter said, “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12; cf. 2 Ne. 25:20). Taking the name of the Lord, or of the Father, in vain is therefore a serious form of irreverence.

While taking pains to avoid any semblance of idolatry, Latter-day Saints revere or venerate all that proceeds from God. Knowledge that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Ps. 24:1) and his “very handwork” (D&C 104:14) impels the Latter-day Saint to respect it. The meek, or the reverent, shall inherit it (Ps. 37:11; Matt. 5:5; D&C 88:17-18).

Certain buildings are set apart as places of worship, and in those places the attitude of reverence is particularly fostered. Written on the eastern facade of the most important of these edifices, the temples, are the words “Holiness to the Lord—The House of the Lord.” Howard W. Hunter, an apostle, noted that “the temple where Jesus taught and worshipped in Jerusalem was built in such a way as to establish respect for and devotion to the Father. Its very architecture taught a silent but constant lesson of reverence. . . . It was intended to be a place of solace for men’s woes and troubles, the very gate of heaven” (Ensign 7 [Nov. 1977]: 52–53). Within the temple are revealed sacred symbols that intimately tie the Latter-day Saint to Christ and his atonement. Because of these vital links, the TEMPLE ORDINANCES are valued and revered and become treasures to be discussed only within the sacred walls. Indeed, only Latter-day Saints who are faithful may participate in temple worship.

Reverence is expected to pervade public places of worship as well. Because Latter-day Saints tend to be vibrant and sociable and because they often worship with their children, the Church leaders periodically emphasize the importance of reverence. Addressing the issue, President Gordon B. Hinckley stated, “We encourage the cultivation of friends with happy conversations among our people. However, these should take place in the foyer, and when we enter the chapel we should understand that we are in sacred precincts. . . . All who come into the Lord’s house should have a feeling they are walking and standing on holy ground” (Ensign 17 [May 1987]: 45).

Latter-day Saints hold as inimical to reverence the tendency of modern society to cynicism and LIGHTMINDEDNESS. They believe that honoring the sacred is necessary to ensure a stable relationship with God.

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REYNOLDS V. UNITED STATES

Reynolds v. United States (98 U.S. 145 [1879]) was the first U.S. Supreme Court decision to interpret the “free exercise” language of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In giving an extremely narrow interpretation to that guarantee of religious freedom, the Reynolds decision opened the way for legal suppression of the Mormon practice of PLURAL MARRIAGE.

The Morrill Act (Act of July 1, 1862, 12 Stat. 501), which defined the crime of bigamy in U.S. territories, had been adopted for the express purpose of outlawing Mormon polygamous marriages. The First Amendment, however, expressly states that Congress shall “make no law . . . prohibiting the free exercise” of religion. The issue posed by the Reynolds case was whether a federal bigamy statute could constitutionally be applied to a person who practiced polygamy as a matter of religious duty. The Court held that it could.

George Reynolds, an English immigrant to Utah, private secretary to Brigham Young, and husband of two wives, was found guilty in March 1875 of violating the antibigamy provision of the Morrill Act. The conviction was overturned by the Utah Supreme Court on procedural grounds (United States v. Reynolds, 1 Utah 226 [1875]), but on retrial he was again convicted and was sentenced to two years in prison with a $500 fine. This conviction was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.