DEDICATIONS

Dedication is the act of devoting or consecrating something to the Lord, or “setting apart” something for a specific purpose in building the KINGDOM OF GOD. It is a PRIESTHOOD function performed through an official and formal act of prayer.

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, dedications serve at least two clear functions. First, they call down the powers of heaven to establish a sacred space or time in the furthering of the desired purpose. Second, they consecrate the participants, focusing their souls upon the meaning of the dedicated object or act. In this way the secular is brought into sacred relationships, and the blessings of God are invoked so that the powers of heaven and earth are joined to bring about works of righteousness.

LDS church buildings are always dedicated to the Lord, usually after all indebtedness is removed. In the Bible the first recorded dedicatory prayer is that of the Temple of Solomon (1 Kgs. 8:22–53), at which time the glory of the Lord filled the temple, in divine approval. The first temple dedication in this dispensation was on March 27, 1836, when the Prophet Joseph Smith dedicated the KIRTLAND TEMPLE as “a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 109:8). Since then many LDS temples and thousands of MEETINGHOUSES around the world have been similarly dedicated to the Lord. Church buildings such as schools, VISITORS CENTERS, storehouses, office buildings, and HISTORICAL SITES are also dedicated to the Lord for their intended uses. Schools may be dedicated as institutions of learning and character development, while bishop’s storehouses are dedicated to provide welfare and physical supplies for the needy.

Lands and countries may be dedicated, sometimes more than once, for divinely appointed purposes. On October 24, 1841, Elder Orson Hyde ascended the Mount of Olives and dedicated the land of Palestine for the return of the Jews and the rearing of a temple. It was rededicated on several other occasions. More than thirty-two countries and entire continents have been dedicated for the preaching of the gospel.

Homes of the SAINTS, whether or not they are free of debt, may be dedicated “as sacred edifices where the Holy Spirit can reside, and as sanctuaries where family members can worship, find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships” (General Handbook of Instructions, 11–2, 1989). On some occasions it has been deemed appropriate to dedicate business places or enterprises to accomplish righteous and divine purposes. It is customary in the Church to dedicate graves as the final resting place for the deceased, asking that the ground be hallowed and protected until the day of resurrection.

Olive oil is also consecrated by a dedicatory prayer. It is thus set apart by the power of the priesthood for the divinely prescribed purposes of blessing the sick and anointing in the temple (James 5:14; D&C 109:35; 124:39).

TAD R. CALLISTER

DEGREES OF GLORY

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has an optimistic view of the eternal rewards awaiting mankind in the hereafter. Members of the Church believe that there are “many mansions” (John 14:2) and that Christ’s ATONEMENT and RESURRECTION will save all mankind from death, and eventually will reclaim from hell all except the SONS OF PERDITION (D&C 76:43–44). The saved, however, are not placed into a monolithic state called HEAVEN. In the resurrection of the body, they are assigned to different degrees of glory commensurate with the law they have obeyed. There are three kingdoms of glory: the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial. The apostle Paul spoke of three glories, differing from one another as the sun, moon, and stars differ in brilliance. He called the first two glories celestial and terrestrial, but the third is not named in the Bible (1 Cor. 15:40–41; cf. D&C 76:70–81, 96–98.) The word “telestial” is an LDS term, first used by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in reporting a vision they received on February 16, 1832 (D&C 76; Webster’s Third New International Dictionary defines telestial glory as “the lowest of three Mormon degrees or kingdoms of glory attainable in heaven”; see also CELESTIAL KINGDOM; TERRESTRIAL KINGDOM; TELESTIAL KINGDOM).

At the final JUDGMENT, all except the DEVIL, his ANGELS, and those who become sons of perdition during mortal life will be assigned to one of the three kingdoms of glory. The devil and his fol-
lowered will be assigned a kingdom without glory (D&C 76:25–39; 88:24, 32–35).

LDS SCRIPTURE SOURCES. Although the Bible contains references to varying levels of resurrection and heaven (1 Cor. 15:39–58; 2 Cor. 12:2), LDS understanding of the subject comes mainly through revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The first revelation dealing directly with this matter was received February 16, 1832, and is called “The Vision” (D&C 76). Concerning the circumstances of receiving this revelation, Joseph Smith explained:

Upon my return from Amherst [Ohio] conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled. It appeared self-evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body the term “Heaven,” as intended for the Saints’ eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one. Accordingly . . . while translating St. John’s Gospel, myself and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision:

[HC 1:245; see also JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE (JST)].

Later revelations, especially Doctrine and Covenants 88, 131, 132, 137, and 138, have added information on this subject.

THE CELESTIAL GLORY. The celestial kingdom is reserved for those who receive a testimony of Jesus and fully embrace the gospel; that is, they have faith in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, are baptized by immersion by one having authority, receive the HOLY GHOST by the LAYING ON OF HANDS, and endure in RIGHTEOUSNESS. All who attain this kingdom “shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever” (D&C 76:62). There are, however, different privileges and powers within this kingdom. “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood (meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage); and if he does not, he cannot obtain it. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom, he cannot have an increase” (D&C 131:1–4). “Increase” in this instance means the bearing of spirit children after mortal life (see ETERNAL LIVES). Joseph Smith explained, “Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity . . . by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection” (TPJS, pp. 300–301).

Latter-day Saints believe that those who attain the highest level in the celestial kingdom become gods, receive exaltation, and are joint heirs with Christ of all that the Father has (cf. Rom. 8:14–17; D&C 76:50–70; 84:33–39; 132:19–25).

There is no scriptural explanation of those who go to the two lower categories of the celestial kingdom except that they “are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever,” ministering servants who “remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity” (D&C 132:16–17).

THE TERRESTRIAL GLORY. The inhabitants of the terrestrial kingdom are described as the honorable people of the earth who received a testimony of Jesus but were not sufficiently valiant in that testimony to obey all the principles and ordinances of the gospel (D&C 76:71–80). Also, those of “the heathen nations” who “died without law,” who are
honorable but who do not accept the fulness of the gospel in the postearthly spirit world, are candidates for the terrestrial glory (D&C 45:54; 76:72). In the hereafter, they receive the presence of the Son, but not the fulness of the Father. The glory of the terrestrial kingdom differs from the celestial as the light we see from the moon differs from that of the sun in glory. There is no mention of different degrees or levels in the terrestrial kingdom, but it is reasonable that there, as in the celestial and telestial kingdoms, individuals will differ from one another in glory (see D&C 76:97–98).

The Telestial Glory. Those who on earth are liars, sorcerers, whoremongers, and adulterers, who receive not the gospel, or the testimony of Jesus, or the prophets, go to the telestial kingdom. They are judged unworthy of being resurrected at the second coming of Christ and are given additional time in “hell” to repent and prepare themselves for a later resurrection and placement into a kingdom of lesser glory. During this period, they learn to abide by laws they once rejected. They bow the knee and confess their dependence on Jesus Christ, but they still do not receive the fulness of the gospel. At the end of the millennium, they are brought out of hell and are resurrected to a telestial glory. There “they shall be servants of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end” (D&C 76:112). However, they do receive “of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial” (verse 86). Though differing in glory from the terrestrial and celestial kingdoms as the light we perceive from the stars differs from that from the moon and the sun, the glory of the telestial kingdom still “surpasses all understanding” (verse 89; see D&C 76:81–90, 98–112; 88:100–101).

Opportunity for All. The Church holds that all mankind, except the sons of perdition, will find a place in one of the kingdoms of glory in the hereafter and that they themselves choose the place by the lives they live here on earth and in the postearthly spirit world. Even the lowest glory surpasses all mortal understanding. Everyone is granted agency (D&C 93:30–32). All have access to the revelatory power of the Light of Christ, which, if followed, will lead them to the truth of the gospel (John 1:1–13; Alma 12:9–11; Moso. 7:14–19; D&C 84:45–48). Everyone will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, either on earth or in the postearthly spirit world, and have ample opportunity to demonstrate the extent of their acceptance (D&C 138; cf. 1 Pet. 4:6). Those who do not have a chance to receive the gospel on this earth, but who would have fully accepted it had they been able to hear it, and who therefore do receive it in the spirit world, are heirs of the celestial kingdom of God (D&C 137:7–8). They will accept the saving ordinances performed for them by proxy in a temple on the earth (see Salvation of the Dead). Christ, victorious and gracious, grants to all the desires of their hearts, allowing them to choose their eternal reward according to the law they are willing and able to abide.

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DEIFICATION, EARLY CHRISTIAN

From the second to eighth centuries, the standard Christian term for salvation was theopoeisis or theosis, literally, “being made God,” or deification. Such language survived sporadically in the mystical tradition of the West and is still used in Eastern Orthodoxy. LDS doctrines on eternal progression and exaltation to godhood reflect a similar view of salvation.

In its classical form, particularly in the works of Athanasius (fourth-century bishop of Alexandria), deification was built upon the concept of the Incarnation of Christ. The Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) defined the Son as homousios (of the same substance) with the Father, and thus fully God. By taking upon himself our flesh through birth, Jesus as God united the essence of humanity to the divine nature. Eventually Christ’s divinity overcame the limits of the flesh through resurrection and glorification, transforming and raising his body to the full level of godhood. As Athanasius summarized, “God was made man that we might be made God” (On the Incarnation of the Logos 54).

Although the doctrine has been dismissed by later scholars as a mere “physical theory of redemption” focused on the Resurrection, deifica-