

52. David O. McKay to Franklin S. Harris, 28 January 1939, correspondence, in Franklin S. Harris Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
53. Glenn L. Rudd interview.
54. David O. McKay to Franklin S. Harris, 9 November 1923, correspondence, in Franklin S. Harris Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
55. Henry B. Eyring interview.
56. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, April 1914, 89.
57. Joseph C. Muren, "When Spirit Speaks to Spirit," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4, no. 4 (winter 1969): 52.



President Spencer W. Kimball

Courtesy Edward L. Kimball

“That Every Man Might Speak in the Name of God the Lord”: A Study of Official Declaration 2^{lxxi}1

Richard E. Bennett

Richard E. Bennett is a professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Official Declaration 2, tucked away quietly at the very tail end of the Doctrine and Covenants, is in many ways a fitting conclusion to the preface of the Doctrine and Covenants recorded 147 years before. In section 1 the Lord reveals much about the Restoration and about the divine

pulley of the First Vision in particular. The term *pulley* emphasizes the two-way nature of the First Vision, for although Joseph prayed to know heaven's will, God "called upon" his servant to initiate the Restoration. Although much has been said about the boy prophet's request, surely God's intent counts for just as much. The First Vision and resultant revelations were a two-way street: man searching, God revealing.

Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets—

The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh—

But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;

That faith also might increase in the earth;

That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

Behold, I am God and have spoken it. (D&C 1:17–24)

"That every man might speak in the name of God," with power and with priesthood, reflects the fact that Declaration 2 is a prophecy fulfilled, a promise realized, and a fervent prayer firmly answered.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to reexamine Declaration 2 on this the twenty-fifth anniversary of its pronouncement, looking not so much from the standpoint of what came of it—that is, the priesthood being extended to every worthy male within the Church regardless of race or color—but from the perspective of the process itself, the principles and distinguishing characteristics of revelation. That the blacks would now receive the priesthood was of great significance; no less important, however, was the declaration's stunning reaffirmation of the overarching principle of divine direction over this and every other difficult issue facing the Church.

Response to Revelation

The revelation, in the form of a letter dated 8 June 1978 and now canonized as scripture, in part reads as follows:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.

Upon hearing news of this announcement, President Jimmy Carter called Church headquarters almost immediately praising President Spencer W. Kimball's "compassionate prayerfulness and courage."^{lxxii}2 It is more than a little interesting to note President Kimball's own relief at the response of the Church to the event. Remembered his son, Edward L. Kimball:

I recall one day arriving to visit my father and coming in on the end of a conversation that he was having with my mother about the revelation. "That never happened," he said. I caught my breath. Unaware of my reaction he went on, and it soon became clear that he was talking about stories of heavenly appearances and voices from heaven. "There was no voice," he said. Then I exhaled. But he also said, as earnestly as ever I heard him *spe*ak, that there *was* a revelation. "It is true," he said.

My mother had sensed the anxiety in him for some little while before the announcement. She heard him pray with special fervor. When she learned of the revelation one of her first thoughts was, "Will the people accept it?" I believe his anxiety was not about the revelation itself, but about the preparedness of the people to accept it, about the possible divisiveness of the change. One of the things that pleased him greatly *was* the high level of acceptance among the Saints.^{lxxiii}3

The response of the membership of the Church to President Kimball's revelation was indeed overwhelmingly positive and, in most circles, generally and earnestly celebrated, not as a cave-in to the cry of civil rights activists but as a rightful change. Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton argue that the new revelation "was received, almost universally, with elation."^{lxxiv}4 For example, some in Albany, Georgia, "called the bishop and expressed concern. Others asked questions. Generally, however, they wanted to accept the will of the Lord and do what was right. A member of the high council summed up the attitudes of many when he said, 'I have lived in the South all of my life. I've held prejudices. Now the Prophet and the Lord have asked me to change my views and practices. I'll certainly go along with it, support it, and sustain it.' He spent his family home evening talking with his family about how they could follow the intent of the Lord's manifestation."^{lxxv}5

Meanwhile, the response of the press to the First Presidency's announcement, as many today may remember, was couched in less scriptural language and makes for highly interesting front-page reading. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, not known for singing Latter-day Saint tunes, responded in the spirit of "what took you so long" by quoting from Sterling M. McMurrin, well-known philosopher on Mormonism and dean of the Graduate School at the University of Utah: "I am very pleased at the action taken and had expected such action to have been taken in the late 1950s or early 1960s, I am rather surprised that it has been taken now." He said he had expected action to be taken sooner because "of the very liberal attitude of President David O. McKay and especially his counselor, Hugh B. Brown, with regard to ethnic matters and especially the position of the blacks in the Church."^{lxxvi}6

The *Los Angeles Times* featured statements of praise from James Dooley, president of the Utah branch of the NAACP,^{lxxvii}7 while Kenneth A. Briggs, writing for the *New York Times*, believed the change in policy, as he put it, would benefit the Church in both the short and long run. “Many believe that the controversy has hindered the church’s vigorous missionary activity. The change is expected to have both real and symbolic meaning.”^{lxxviii}8

The *Chicago Tribune*, quoting the entire letter of the First Presidency, reported that many members of the Church “were surprised but happy about the announcement.” The *Tribune* went on to say that “most black members . . . indicated they were stunned. ‘I never thought I’d live to see the day,’ said Lucille Bankhead, 76, a black who has been a Mormon all her life. Judy Dunsson, another society member, lauded the decision but predicted that it might have negative results as well. ‘I honestly feel that a lot of the white people will leave the church.’”^{lxxix}9 A full study of the reaction of the press is beyond the parameters of this article and waits for later careful academic study and analysis. But speaking of the *Chicago Tribune* in particular, Elder David B. Haight could not resist recording the following reaction:

Just a few hours after the announcement was made to the press, I was assigned to attend a stake conference in Detroit, Michigan. When my plane landed in Chicago, I noticed an edition of the *Chicago Tribune* on the newsstand. The headline in the paper said, “Mormons Give Blacks Priesthood.” And the subheading said, “President Kimball Claims to Have Received a Revelation.” I bought a copy of the newspaper. I stared at one word in that subheading—claims. It stood out to me just like it was in red neon. As I walked along the hallway to make my plane connection, I thought, *Here I am now in Chicago walking through this busy airport, yet I was a witness to this revelation. I was there. I witnessed it. I felt that heavenly influence.* I was part of it. Little did the editor of that newspaper realize the truth of that revelation when he wrote, “. . . Claims to Have Received a Revelation.” Little did he know, or the printer, or the man who put the ink on the press, or the one who delivered the newspaper—little did any of them know that it was truly a revelation from God. Little did they know what I knew because I was a witness to it.^{lxxx}10

Prelude to the Revelation

President Spencer W. Kimball had many experiences in his life, particularly spiritual impulses, that led him to pray so fervently and so confidently as he did on the matter of the priesthood.^{lxxxi}11 First, President Kimball, from his earliest childhood, was well grounded in the process of prayer and revelation.

One day when Spencer was five and out doing his chores, little one-year-old Fannie wandered from the house and was lost. No one could find her. Clare, sixteen, said, “Ma, if we pray, the Lord will direct us to Fannie.” So the mother and children prayed. Immediately after the prayer Gordon [Spencer’s older brother] walked to the very spot where Fannie was fast asleep in a large box behind the chicken coop. “We thanked our Heavenly Father over and over,” Olive recorded in her journal. “We could think of nothing else all evening.” When her horses bolted on the road to Safford, Olive was terrified that someone would be hurt and the buggy broken. “We were frightened awfully. But the Lord heard my silent prayers and we got the horse stopped. Praise be to our Heavenly Father for His goodness to us.”^{lxxxii}12

A terribly honest man, President Kimball, in a letter written to his parents during his mission in 1914, told of his struggles before telling others that he could truthfully say he knew the gospel was true: “I wanted to be very honest with myself and with the program and with the Lord. For a time I couched my words carefully to try to build up others without actually committing myself to a positive, unequivocal statement that I *knew*. When I approached a positive declaration it frightened me, and yet when I was wholly in tune and spiritually inspired, I wanted to so testify. I thought I was being honest, very honest, but finally decided that I was fooling myself to be reticent when the spirit moved me.”^{lxxxiii} 13

Few passages in President Kimball’s biography are more revealing about his sense of revelation than the accounts of his deep anguish and personal struggle to gain spiritual confirmation of his call to the apostleship in July 1943. “Never had I prayed before as I now prayed,” he wrote in his journal of the experience that drove him to his knees on a high mountain in Arizona. “What I wanted and felt I must have was an assurance that I was acceptable to the Lord. I told Him that I neither wanted nor was worthy of a vision or appearance of angels or any special manifestation. I wanted only the calm peaceful assurance that my offering was accepted. . . . I threw myself on the ground and wept and prayed and pleaded.” Almost ashamed, he said, of “trying to be dramatic,” he nevertheless persisted. “How I prayed! How I suffered! How I wept! How I struggled!”^{lxxxiv} 14

Then came his answer, “a calm like the dying wind, the quieting wave after the storm is passed. . . . My tears were dry, my soul was at peace. A calm feeling of assurance came over me, doubt and questionings subdued. It was as though a great burden had been lifted. I sat in tranquil silence surveying the beautiful valley, thanking the Lord for the satisfaction and the reassuring answer to my prayers.”^{lxxxv} 15 Spencer W. Kimball’s invitation to the apostleship was, once again, unforgettable personal instruction, a careful tutoring into the workings of the Lord when making known His will to man.

Two years later, while his son Andrew was serving a mission, President Kimball summarized his understanding. “I have come to realize that the Lord does not expect to reveal to us generally in actual daylight vision as he did to Joseph Smith in the grove. Sometimes it will come in open vision, sometimes in dreams, sometimes in whisperings, but generally His revelations will come” through a burning in the heart.^{lxxxvi} 16 And so his preparations continued.

Then, with his call to become President of the Church in April 1977, President Kimball reiterated and refined these views, hinting in ways we now more clearly understand that a sea change in policy might be ahead:

In our day, as in times past, many people expect that if there be revelation it will come with awe-inspiring, earth-shaking display. For many it is hard to accept as revelations those numerous ones in Moses’ time, in Joseph’s time, and in our own year—those revelations which come to prophets as deep, unassailable impressions settling down on the prophet’s mind and heart as dew from heaven or as the dawn dissipates the darkness of night.

Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication. I say, in the deepest of humility, but also by the power and force of a burning testimony in my soul, that from the prophet of the Restoration to the prophet of our own year, the communication line is unbroken, the authority is continuous, and light, brilliant and penetrating, continues to shine. The sound of the voice of the Lord is a continuous melody and a thunderous appeal. For nearly a century and a half there has been no interruption.^{lxxxvii} 17

He seems to have been prepared line upon line in yet another way. Blessed with a deep affection for the Native Americans and a desire to improve their blighted conditions, President Kimball fought vigorously on their behalf, championing the Indian Placement Program and disdaining racial prejudice of any kind. When asked by President George Albert Smith to supervise the first Indian mission of the Church in Arizona, President Kimball wrote, “I wondered if I was marked for destruction by the enemy of all righteousness—if I might be getting into a program which would upset the plans of the god of this world.”^{lxxxviii}18 In speaking of the Indians, he often reminded a mostly white Church membership that “the only difference between us and the Indian is opportunity. They are not stupid. They have a high I.Q. They are equal to us in their mental powers.”^{lxxxix}19 Seeking to change long-entrenched attitudes, he went on to say that the first part of the Church Indian program “is education of the Latter-day Saints at home, some of whom need their hearts opened, cleansed, and purged. . . . Racial prejudice is of the devil and of ignorance.”^{xc}20

When speaking at Brigham Young University, he took up the gauntlet once more and in no uncertain terms drove home his point. There are “too many Pharisees among the white men,” too many who worry about “unwashen hands; too many ‘superior’ ones who call, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ . . . too many who ascribe the degradation of the Indian as his just due, . . . too many priests who ‘pass by on the other side of the road,’ . . . too many Levites who pull their robes about them and pass by with disdain, . . . too many curiosity seekers and too few laborers.” He ended his speech with an impassioned plea “not for your tolerance—your pitying, coin-tossing tolerance—but for Christian help born out of love.”^{xc}21 Just as he had a gift “to believe in the possibility of change in people,”^{xcii}22 he likewise believed that if the Lord saw fit, change could come at the collective level of the entire Church.

The fact that he lived a long and difficult life, enduring a myriad of physical ailments extending from painful boils to troubling throat cancer, gave him pause to wonder why the Lord had suffered him to become President of the Church. In terms reminiscent of Wilford Woodruff, who himself believed he had lived long enough to proclaim the Manifesto ending plural marriage some eighty years before, President Kimball wondered if he too had been so spared: “Am I destined to do something important enough to cause the Evil one to desire my death?”^{xciii}23 And as for becoming President of the Church, he firmly believed such appointments could never be coincidental, his own included. “I am positive that the appointments of His Twelve by the Lord and the subsequent deaths control the Presidency of the Church,” he once confided. “No man will live long enough to become President of this Church ever who is not the proper one to give it leadership. Each leader in his own peculiar way has made a great contribution to the onward march of the Church. No one of the nine Presidents had all the virtues nor all the abilities. Each in his own way and time filled a special need and made his great contribution. This I know.”^{xciv}24

President Kimball fully realized that previous presidents had not received all revelation and would have echoed the sentiments of his predecessor, President Woodruff, who said, “The Lord would not permit me to occupy this position one day of my life, unless I was susceptible to the Holy Spirit and to the revelations of God. It is too late in the day for this Church to stand without revelation. Not only the President of the Church should possess this gift and give it unto the people, but his counselors and the Apostles and all men that bear the Holy Priesthood. . . . We have not got through revelation. We have not got through the work of God.” President Woodruff believed that just as the Prophet Joseph Smith, as great as he was, did not receive all revelation, neither had Brigham Young. “He accomplished all that God required at his hands. But he did not

receive all the revelations that belong to this work; neither did President Taylor, nor has Wilford Woodruff. There will be no end to this work until it is perfected.”^{xcv}25

A Time of Change

President Kimball will be remembered for many positive changes in the Church besides his revelation on priesthood. In 1975, he activated the full First Quorum of the Seventy and canonized sections 137 and 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In 1978, the first all-Church women’s meeting was held with similar meetings for the Young Women beginning in 1980. That he was however, concerned, with the matter of the blacks and the priesthood and the surging tide of criticism aimed at the Church cannot be questioned. Brigham Young University, in particular, at the height of the Civil Rights movement in 1968 had come under very sharp attack. Players on opposing teams wore black armbands, and Stanford University and the University of Washington announced that they would no longer schedule athletic contests with BYU. “There are many problems that face us,” President Kimball remarked, “and every effort seems to be against us to force us to change the Lord’s program concerning the Negro.”^{xcvi}26 Nonetheless, he decried violence of any kind and was not one to surrender to secular pressure. He was his own man attuned, as ever, to his own questions and to revelation from the Lord. Years later, his son, Edward Kimball, testified of his father’s independency of mind in the following:

My father was not a particularly prejudiced man, as his years of working with American Indians and individuals of other races in an open and completely accepting manner showed. And I am not aware of any personal antipathy toward blacks. But I have no sense that this change was on his personal agenda. As he himself said, he had spent a long lifetime defending the Church position that blacks were properly denied the priesthood. And he knew that change would be identified by many as capitulation to pressures and thus evidence of the humanness of the Church.

Putting spiritual witness aside, I say without the slightest doubt that President Kimball would never have made the change unless he was sure that it was the Lord’s will. Whatever his personal feelings of compassion, he was simply not a man who could have acted from expediency in such a manner.^{xcvii}27

As President of the Church, President Kimball embarked upon a course of direction that would inevitably bring the matter to the fore. The first was his inspired vision of expanded missionary work that would encircle the globe, with young men and women being called from their own lands to preach to their own races and cultures. The second was his determination to bring the blessings of the temple to the Saints in far-off countries. His 1974 decision to construct a temple in Brazil surely was evidence of his desire to confront the issue of the blacks in a nation where culture and race combined in ways almost impossible to distinguish.

Prayer and Pondering

The stage was now set for this modern prophet to seek the mind and will of the Lord on this troubling issue: “Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what He wanted. I talked about it to Him and said, ‘Lord, I want only what is right. We are not making any plans to be spectacularly moving. We want only the thing that thou dost want, and we want it when you want it and not until.’”^{xcviii}28

Dale LaBaron, in his excellent research on this revelation and the progress since of the Church in Black Africa, gives us the following: Unknown to anyone except the First Presidency and the

Twelve, President Kimball had asked each of them to carefully research the scriptures and statements of the earlier brethren, to make an exhaustive study of all that had been recorded concerning this issue. For months before the revelation, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve discussed these sacred matters at length in their temple meetings. He also met privately with each of the brethren to learn their feelings on the matter.

On Thursday, 1 June 1978, the general authorities held their regular monthly fast and testimony meeting. The members of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric were then excused, and President Kimball, his two counselors, and ten of the apostles remained (Elder Mark E. Peterson was in South America, and Elder Delbert L. Stapley was in the hospital).

Before offering the prayer that brought the revelation, President Kimball asked each of the brethren to express their feelings and views on this important issue. For more than two hours they talked freely and openly. Elder David B. Haight, the newest member of the Twelve, observed: “As each responded, we witnessed an outpouring of the Spirit which bonded our souls together in perfect unity—a glorious experience. In that bond of unity we felt our total dependence upon heavenly direction if we were to more effectively accomplish the Lord’s charge to carry the message of hope and salvation to *all* the world.

“President Kimball then suggested that we have our prayer at the altar. Usually he asked one of us to lead in prayer; however, on this day he asked, ‘Would you mind if I be voice at the altar today?’ This was the Lord’s prophet asking us. Such humility! Such meekness! So typical of this special servant of all. . . .

“The prophet of God pour[ed] out his heart, pleading eloquently for the Lord to make his mind and will known to his servant, Spencer W. Kimball. The prophet pleaded that he would be given the necessary direction which could expand the Church throughout the world by offering the fullness of the everlasting gospel to all men, based solely upon their personal worthiness without reference to race or color.”

In response to a prophet’s humble prayer of faith, united with those of twelve other prophets, seers, and revelators, the Lord poured out his Spirit—and his answer—in a most powerful way.^{xcix}29

Elder LeGrand Richards elaborates further on this matter:

The Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric were excused, while there remained the President of the Church, his two counselors, and ten members of the Council of the Twelve—two being absent, one in South America and the other in the hospital.

The question of extending the blessings of the priesthood to blacks had been on the minds of many of the Brethren over a period of years. It had repeatedly been brought up by Presidents of the Church. It had become a matter of particular concern to President Spencer W. Kimball.

Over a considerable period of time he had prayed concerning this serious and difficult question. He had spent many hours in that upper room in the temple by himself in prayer and meditation.

On this occasion he raised the question before his Brethren—his Counselors and the Apostles. Following this discussion we joined in prayer in the most sacred of

circumstances. President Kimball himself was voice in that prayer. I do not recall the exact words that he spoke. But I do recall my own feelings and the nature of the expressions of my Brethren. There was a hallowed and sanctified atmosphere in the room. For me, it felt as if a conduit opened between the heavenly throne and the kneeling, pleading prophet of God who was joined by his Brethren. The Spirit of God was there. And by the power of the Holy Ghost there came to that prophet an assurance that the thing for which he prayed was right, that the time had come, and that now the wondrous blessings of the priesthood should be extended to worthy men everywhere regardless of lineage.

Every man in that circle, by the power of the Holy Ghost, knew the same thing. It was a quiet and sublime occasion.

There was not the sound “as of a rushing mighty wind,” there were not “cloven tongues like as of fire” (Acts 2:2–3) as there had been on the Day of Pentecost. But there was a Pentecostal spirit, for the Holy Ghost was there.

No voice audible to our physical ears was heard. But the voice of the Spirit whispered with certainty into our minds and our very souls.

It was for us, at least for me personally, as I imagine it was with Enos, who said concerning his remarkable experience, “And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind.” (Enos 1:10.)

So it was on that memorable June 1, 1978. We left that meeting subdued and reverent and joyful. Not one of us who was present on that occasion was ever quite the same after that. Nor has the Church been quite the same.³⁰ **Principles**

of Revelation

Drawing freely upon modern apostolic witness of the divine origin of this declaration, we are now prepared to consider several of the ageless principles of revelation as evident in Declaration 2. Principles as clear as a Colorado blue sky in the fall, they are presented in no particular order of importance, as all combined comprise the essential elements of scripture.

1. “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (3 Nephi 27:29). President Gordon B. Hinckley asserts that the matter had been before the highest councils of the Church for many years and that President Kimball was proactive and determined in asking God about this serious and difficult question. Prompted by the Spirit of the Lord, the Lord’s Prophet nevertheless had to make the request.

Elaborating on this doctrine, Elder Bruce R. McConkie in his memorable address, “All Are Alike unto God,” given at a BYU devotional in August 1978, remarked as follows:

Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. . . .

We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. . . .

It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year (1978). It is a new day and a new arrangement. . . . We now do what meridian Israel did when the Lord said the gospel should go to the Gentiles. . . .

Obviously, the Brethren have had a great anxiety and concern about this problem for a long period of time, and President Spencer W. Kimball has been exercised and has sought the Lord in faith. When we seek the Lord on a matter, with sufficient faith and devotion, he gives us an answer. . . . One underlying reason

for what happened to us is that the Brethren asked in faith; they petitioned and desired and wanted an answer—President Kimball in particular.

While some critics scoff and charge that there was little of inspiration in changing what was a misdirected policy in the first place,^{ci}31 Church leaders saw it as a matter of faith, mighty faith, and fervent prayer.

2. In the same breath, Elder McConkie signals a second principle of revelation—that such comes on the Lord’s calendar and in His own way as per His terms and purposes. “The other underlying principle,” he confirmed, “is that in the eternal providences of the Lord, the time had come for extending the gospel to a race and a culture to whom it had previously been denied, at least as far as all of its blessings are concerned. So it was a matter of faith and righteousness and seeking on the one hand, and it was a matter of the divine timetable on the other hand.”^{cii}32

3. Third, an essential prerequisite to revelation is the accompaniment and confirmation of the Holy Ghost. Church scripture has been clear on this point from the beginning: “Behold, you have my gospel before you, and my rock, and my salvation. Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men” (D&C 18:17–18). Said Elder McConkie on a later occasion:

Revelations come in many ways, but they are always manifest by the power of the Holy Ghost. Jesus’ promise to the ancient apostles was: “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things” (John 14:26). Our modern scriptures say: “The Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son” (D&C 42:17). They also give us this promise: “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” (Moroni 10:5).

When men are quickened by the power of the Spirit, then the Lord can reveal his truths to them in whatever way he chooses. . . .

Truly, the Holy Ghost is a revelator. He speaks and his voice is the voice of the Lord. He is Christ’s minister, his agent, his representative. He says what the Lord Jesus would say if he were personally present.^{ciii}33

4. Fourth, revelation to God’s prophet will ever further the divine mission of His Church. It is a contradiction in terms and of our doctrine to believe otherwise. President Howard W. Hunter put it this way in a 1979 address:

Another significant development of recent date is the revelation on extending priesthood blessings to all worthy male members, regardless of race or color, which will assist also in accomplishing the commission to teach all nations. Gradually nations are opening their doors, and the areas of the earth to which the gospel is being carried are increasing. With approximately 28,000 missionaries, more than at any time in the past, teaching is being increased. Missionaries are now extending the work to the west as far as Thailand, which leaves only Burma and Pakistan, to India, on the backside of the world. To the east there are missionaries as far as Iran, with only a short gap to India. They almost circle the globe.

From these revelations and developments, it should be manifestly evident to members of the Church that our Father loves all of his children. He desires all of them to embrace the gospel and come unto him. Only those are favored who obey him and keep his commandments.^{civ}34

5. There is much also to be said about how revelations are usually given. The scriptures make clear that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1). In the case of the 1978 revelation, twelve others besides President Kimball bore unanimous witness to what they felt that day. Though many members were surprised at the following October conference that only one dedicated his remarks to this subject, those with ears to hear have noticed that in the months and years that followed, the others all gave witness in their own place and time. Said Elder McConkie: “The revelation came to the President of the Church; it also came to each individual present. There were ten members of the Council of the Twelve and three of the First Presidency there assembled. The result was that President Kimball knew, and each one of us knew, independent of any other person, by direct and personal revelation to us, that the time had now come. . . . The revelation came to every member of the body that I have named.”^{cv}35

6. Elder Haight recalls yet another evidence of revelation—the joy and unity that come in its wake: “President Kimball arose from the altar. (We surrounded it according to seniority, I being number twelve.) . . . He turned to his right, and I was the first member of the circle he encountered. He put his arms around me, and as I embraced him I felt the beating of his heart and the intense emotion that filled him. He then continued around the circle, embracing each of the Brethren. No one spoke. Overcome with emotion, we simply shook hands and quietly went to our dressing rooms.”^{cvi}36

When the revelation was announced to the Quorum of Seventy, Elder Neal A. Maxwell recalled that President Kimball invited responses from all who cared to speak, and each man responded. Elder Maxwell said that he felt a spiritual witness, that his step was “revelation, not accommodation. The waves of the Spirit washed over us like a surf, and I shed many tears.”^{cvi}37

“All That God Has Revealed”

In conclusion, the purpose of this article was not to determine the reason for the revelation, although this has been hinted at. Likewise, the intent has not been to explore the results of such a dramatic change. Rather, it has been to revisit some of the abiding principles of revelation, for it may well be, after all is said and done, that as important as this revelation is to the history of the Church, no less equally significant is the very fact that God continues to speak to modern prophets in our times. Whatever troubling and daunting issues face us in the future, the Church remains confident and assured. The Prophet Joseph Smith perhaps said it best: “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

Notes

1. I wish to thank my research assistant, Amber Seidel, for her research assistance for this article.
2. Keith Terry, *Great Moments in Mormonism* (Santa Barbara, California: Butterfly Publishing, 1980), 103.
3. Edward L. Kimball, “The Administration of Spencer W. Kimball,” *Sunstone*, March 1987, 12.
4. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1979), 324.
5. David Hanna and Steven Ostler, “No Respecter of Persons,” *Ensign*, August 1981, 18.
6. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 10 June 1978.
7. *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 1978.
8. *New York Times*, 10 June 1978.

9. *Chicago Tribune*, 10 June 1978.
10. David B. Haight, “This Work Is True,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 23.
11. In preparation for this article, I reread the very insightful, highly readable biography of President Kimball, *Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977) written by his sons, Edward L. and Andrew E. Kimball. Published before the 1978 revelation, this solid, very candid study provides us with clues into his background and personality that bear upon our topic. Until the journals of President Kimball are made available to scholars, we must rely on such careful works as this.
12. *Kimball*, 31.
13. *Kimball*, 76.
14. *Kimball*, 193–95
15. *Kimball*, 195.
16. *Kimball*, 228–29.
17. *Kimball*, 426–27.
18. *Kimball*, 238.
19. *Kimball*, 247.
20. *Kimball*, 248.
21. *Kimball*, 274.
22. *Kimball*, 297.
23. *Kimball*, 300.
24. *Kimball*, 269.
25. Discourse delivered by Wilford Woodruff, 8 April 1894, in *Collected Discourses* (Burbank, Calif.: BHS Publishing, 1991), 4:70–72.
26. *Kimball*, 366.
27. Kimball, “The Administration of Spencer W. Kimball,” 11–12.
28. *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 451.
29. E. Dale LeBaron, “Revelation on the Priesthood,” *The Heavens Are Open* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 199–200.
30. President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Priesthood Restoration,” *Ensign*, October 1988. An edited version of a talk given 15 May 1988 at the Church-wide fireside commemorating the 159th anniversary of the restoration of the priesthood.
31. For example, Bob Witte, “Interview with Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards Concerning the 1978 Negro ‘Revelation,’” 16 August 1978.
32. McConkie, *Sermons*, 165.
33. Bruce R. McConkie, “Thou Shalt Receive Revelation,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 60–61.
34. Howard W. Hunter, “All Are Alike Unto God,” *Ensign*, June 1979, 72.
35. McConkie, *Sermons*, 167.
36. Lucile C. Tate, *David B. Haight: The Life Story of a Disciple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 280.
37. In Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 417.