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THE RESTORATION AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIES

The Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844) is the founder and instrument through whom the Mormon revelation of God was transmitted. Joseph Smith was not a theologian; rather, he was in the mold of the Hebrew prophets who delivered revelations from God. His revelations speak of direct encounters with God rather than speculation and theology. His revelations are precritical in the sense that they contain unanalyzed theological assumptions. These revelations usually do not explain theological issues but are in the nature of wisdom sayings or direct commands to individuals or the Mormon Church collectively. Joseph Smith was not systematic in his elucidation of religious truths. Central to the new revelation was the notion that revelation is “continuing” or a process of growth in understanding of the divine disclosure. There is no authoritative systematic development of Mormon beliefs. There is no final, once and for all, statement of the truth. The search for truth takes place on all fronts, through reason, sense experience and the insight associated with revelation.

The Lectures on Faith

The *Lectures on Faith* are the first and foremost systematic statement of Mormon beliefs. In the 17 February 1835 Preface to the *Lectures*, Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, the prominent leaders of the young Mormon Church, signed