

THE JOSEPH SMITH LECTURE SERIES

Lecture 5: Joseph Smith and the Kirtland Temple

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How early in the Prophet's consciousness did the idea germinate that God would require the building and dedicating of temples and would reveal his ordinances to be performed in them? One way of reading our history is that the first and last revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants that Joseph received concerned the temple, though at first he may not have fully understood this. When the promise about priesthood which is part of section 2 of the Doctrine and Covenants¹ began to be fulfilled through John the Baptist's conferral of priesthood authority, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were told, "And this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."² Oliver Cowdery's wording of that statement is "that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."³ The Prophet later came to understand that this offering relates to the temple.⁴

Elijah is a character whose life and promises apparently were reviewed when Moroni taught the Prophet over successive years. The passages about Elijah in the book of Malachi were quoted to the Prophet at least four times in two successive days in 1823. Somehow the hearts of the fathers would turn to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. And this was a key or power which Elijah would reconfer.

Kirtland became the preparatory location for the full restoration of those keys and ordinances. It was a revelatory moment when the Prophet was told that a house must be built, the exact dimensions were spelled out,⁵ and he was told that it must be built by the sacrifice of the people—meaning, among other things, that it would not be easy—and that great blessings depended upon the completion of that work. The Church at the time was feeble, struggling, impoverished.

Since the Prophet and the other New York Saints had come to Kirtland, divisions and misunderstandings had developed. A meeting he attended was influenced by the "peepings and mutterings," as it were, of false spirits. Philo Dibble recalled that Joseph said, "God has sent me here, and the devil must leave here, or I will."⁶ After counsel and ministrations, there came a reunion of faith and understanding, and the Saints were given a revelation on how to discern the Spirit of the Lord and other spirits.

The core questions the Prophet asked then and later are still applicable today. "Is there any

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intelligence communicated?" Just babbling or speaking in an unknown tongue is not a communication of truth. Only when it is interpreted by a proper spirit is it so. So, "Is there any intelligence communicated?"⁷ The other question: Is there anything indecorous in the experience? The bouncing, the violent movements, the hysteria that sometimes attended what people thought were "religious experiences" were condemned by the Prophet as not of God. God's Spirit is a refining and glorifying spirit, not a demeaning one.⁸

The Prophet had begun to establish the orders and patterns of Church organization, as he had been taught them, when the commandment came to build a temple. Financially the people were in severe straits. Sickness was not uncommon. Just to obtain the basic means of survival was difficult for most of the Saints. Nevertheless, soon "great preparations were making to commence a house of the Lord."⁹ But in early June 1833 another revelation came in which the Saints were told, "Ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things, that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house."¹⁰

What was the "very grievous sin"? Apparently it consisted in not considering in all its aspects the commandment to build a temple, a failure to keep the commandments that were designed to prepare the Saints for a great spiritual endowment. What would solve this problem and bring about the endowment "with power from on high"? "It is my will," said the Lord, "that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it."¹¹ Less than two months later, on July 23, 1833, the cornerstones of the Kirtland Temple were laid.

It is instructive to observe here the Lord's warning as to the results of *not* keeping his commandments, words we may take as of general application. "If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness."¹² Note that in this passage *love* is made a synonym for *light*, and darkness follows the absence of love. It seems to me that the scriptures show such a close

kinship if not identity between light and love in the divine equation that it is impossible to have the one without the other.¹³

Of the building of the Kirtland Temple, Elder Boyd K. Packer has written: "The temple committee and others were soon busily occupied in obtaining stone, brick, lumber and other materials; funds were solicited; labor was donated for the construction; and the sisters provided food and clothes for the workers. The cost of the temple is estimated at \$200,000, a very large sum in those days."¹⁴ Several of our historians, Wilford Woodruff included, felt that though the Nauvoo Temple cost much more, it did not require the same level of sacrificial effort. The Kirtland Temple was an unprecedented sacrifice, and it was met with an unprecedented divine outpouring.

The Saints already had many active enemies in the Kirtland area, and when they learned of the intent to build a temple they vowed that it would never be finished—they would see to that! Hence, as the work progressed, enemies made attempts to prevent it. George A. Smith records that for every one man working, the brethren sometimes had three men guarding, some of them armed with pistols.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the work went forward. The Prophet himself, not a skilled workman, could contribute at least his energy and muscle. Wearing his old smock he went into the stone quarry and with his bare hands helped to quarry the stone. By careful organization it was arranged that each seventh day, in this case every Saturday, every wagon the Saints had in the Kirtland area was summoned to haul stone to the temple site. Artemus Millett, a convert from Canada, supervised the construction. Truman O. Angell was the brilliant and inspired architect.¹⁶ He planned and organized every element of the building.

As to the preparatory events, just to lay the cornerstones under crisis conditions was a major problem. Twenty-four Melchizedek Priesthood holders were required for the purpose, and at the time there apparently were not that many in the Kirtland area. Accordingly a few young men of fifteen and sixteen had their ordinations to the higher priesthood hastened, as they were made

elders specifically for the purpose. A few older men, somewhat infirm, served as officers in the ceremonies.¹⁷

The Lord's house is a house of order, and the Prophet Joseph Smith had received a revelation as to the order even of laying cornerstones. Years later, at the laying of the cornerstones of the Manti Temple, Brigham Young arranged (and he said this was according to instruction) that the first stone be laid at the southeast corner, the point of greatest light, and at high noon, the time of the greatest sunlight.¹⁸ All that is to remind us, we would assume, that the temple is indeed a house of light where the heavenly and the earthly combine.¹⁹

Several people who lived in Kirtland during the temple-building period have left us their accounts. One was Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, then a young convert. She and her mother were living in Kirtland, and when she discovered the whereabouts of one of the rare copies of the Book of Mormon in that city, she went to the owner's home and asked to borrow it. He agreed, and she read it so avidly that he let her retain it for that purpose. About the time she finished reading it, the Prophet visited her home and, seeing the book on the shelf, recognized it as the one he had given to the present owner, Brother Morley. He was most impressed by young Mary, gave her a blessing, and told her to keep the book—he would give Brother Morley another copy.²⁰

Mary and her mother went a few evenings later to the Smith home, where others were already assembled. Soon Joseph came in and they held a meeting, the people mostly sitting on boards put across chairs. The Prophet began addressing the group, but after a while he stopped speaking and remained silent. His countenance changed, and he became so white that he seemed transparent. He stood looking intently over the congregation. Finally he spoke. "Do you know who has been in your midst tonight?" Someone said, "An angel of the Lord." And Martin Harris said, "I know, it was our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." The Prophet put his hand on his head and said, "Martin, God revealed that to you. Brothers and Sisters, the

Savior has been in your midst tonight. I want you all to remember it. There is a veil over your eyes, for you could not endure to look upon Him."

Then they knelt in prayer, which he led. His prayer was so long, Mary records, that several of the people rose and rested and then knelt back down to endure to the end. "Such a prayer," she said, "I have never heard before or since. I felt he was talking to the Lord, and the power rested upon us all."²¹

Later the Prophet gave a blessing to this dear sister. She became one of the faithful who in her ninety-plus years of life endured incredible trials for the faith.²²

I recount the above story about one of many prayer meetings—John Murdock records several, Eliza R. Snow still others²³—to show that the outpouring of the Spirit which sometimes attended the Prophet's words was but a foretaste of what was to come through the sacrificial building of the temple.

We have also the testimony of Zera Pulsipher, who was a convert to the Church at this time. He said that when old Father Smith came into the temple (presumably this would have been after its completion, but perhaps it also was before) he looked just like an angel.²⁴ We have spoken often of the Prophet's likenesses, but the venerable, aged father of the Prophet, seasoned and mellowed through much affliction, was a man who commanded the respect of the Saints. The Prophet often put him in charge of fast meetings, and in those days they held them quite often on Thursdays, people putting away their implements, leaving their work where it was, and gathering in the spirit of fasting for testimony meetings. In such meetings prayers were often offered, both in private and in public, for the completion of the temple. And one of Father Smith's frequent petitions was that it would be fulfilled upon that temple as on the Day of Pentecost; that is, that the Spirit of God would descend upon it as a rushing, mighty wind, accompanied by tongues of fire. In due time that prayer was answered.²⁵

Another witness to this period was a man named Daniel Tyler. He understood from the

earliest Kirtland days that the priesthood which was bestowed in order to give ordinances the efficacy of authority had several branches and ramifications; that the patriarchal priesthood ultimately was the most inclusive and important priesthood, which could only be conferred in a sacred place; that exaltation, as it became clarified in subsequent revelations—which priesthood holders and their wives could only receive together—was in effect the extending, magnifying, and intensifying of the patriarchal priesthood throughout the expanding of eternal lives; and that God himself is the sovereign patriarch.²⁶

Hints of that understanding came at Kirtland, but not until Nauvoo did the full scope of the patriarchal priesthood, the temple, and temple marriage become common knowledge to the Saints.²⁷

We turn to a brief outline of the actual dedicatory services. Naturally, everyone who had done anything to help with the temple would want to be there at the dedication; and many others who might have been slow or critical or distant would still, out of curiosity, want to be present. The actual capacity of the room is variously estimated. One count of those who came that morning is that there were over 930.²⁸

The Prophet had said that if children who would be orderly and were willing to sit on their parents' laps wanted to come, they could come. That suggestion caught on. It is reported that in the opening session there were two persons in each seat.²⁹

The Prophet had held meetings to prepare the Saints, and especially the priesthood brethren, for what was to come. He told them that they must come in purity, come having studied and pondered prayerfully the revelations given on the subject.³⁰ In section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord said the temple was to be a house of glory, a house of order, a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of God. Some specific commandments accompany those general ones.³¹

First, those coming into the temple were to be solemn; they were to cast away all light-mindedness. Light-mindedness, in the dictionary

sense, is a lack of seriousness, and in the present context can include such attitudes as lack of interest in, making light of, betrayal of, flippant or frivolous approach to, even a ridiculing of sacred things. Nowhere in the scriptures is lightheartedness condemned, nor again does scripture anywhere forbid a genuine, gentle humor that shows an appreciation for the foibles of ourselves and others. But light-mindedness clearly is inappropriate for Latter-day Saints, especially in the temple setting. In spite of the admonition, however, some found themselves upset, not thinking, for example, that it could be appropriate that men should wash one another's feet in the name of the Lord. They thought "some mischief was going on."³² The Saints had been warned: be solemn, avoid light-mindedness.

Second, a series of commandments in section 88 warned the Saints to come as far as possible purified, to sanctify their hearts and hands, to cleanse their lives, to be clean in preparation for bearing the vessels of the Lord.³³

Third came an admonition to study, in effect to read the revelations and to ponder and pray over them. On one occasion, as the climactic promise, the Prophet said to the brethren, "Brethren, all who are prepared, and are sufficiently pure to abide the presence of the Savior, will see Him in the solemn assembly."³⁴ What a promise!

So between nine hundred and a thousand people assembled early in the morning of March 27, 1836,³⁵ the Prophet and other authorities of the Church on the stand, and the dedication services began. The Saints had begun gathering at about 7:00 a.m. Joseph the Prophet presided, and Sidney Rigdon conducted. President Rigdon first read two of the Psalms—the ninety-sixth and the twenty-fourth. Then the choir sang a hymn, written by Parley P. Pratt, called "E'er Long the Veil Will Rend in Twain." President Rigdon offered an opening prayer. The congregation then sang a William W. Phelps hymn called "O Happy Souls Who Pray."

President Rigdon then gave a sermon, based on Matthew 8:20, where the Master says: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but

the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” He expanded on that theme and gave it a modern interpretation: Anciently the house of the Lord in Jerusalem had been left desolate, the priesthood had become apostate, and Jesus himself had had to drive out of the temple the money changers, abusers, and blasphemers, saying: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” But now, following the dedication, the Kirtland Temple would be the house of the Lord.³⁶ The address was appropriate and memorable, and President Rigdon spoke at length. There followed the sustaining of Joseph Smith as Prophet and Seer, and then the hymn “Now Let Us Rejoice.” That ended the morning service.³⁷

A brief intermission followed, twenty minutes, long enough for a few of the sisters to take care of their children. But hardly anyone left. The proceedings then resumed with a hymn, a short talk by the Prophet, and the sustaining of Church leaders in more detailed fashion than is normally employed today. When another hymn had been sung, the moment arrived for which the congregation had waited.

The Prophet arose and gave the dedicatory prayer, a prayer which has been the pattern for all subsequent dedicatory prayers for temples down to the present. That prayer, which now constitutes section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants, was given the Prophet by direct revelation. That was a puzzlement to some of the Saints. Strange that God, to whom we pray, should give a revelation telling the Prophet what to pray! But so crucial was that prayer, and so important, that it was given word for word through revelation. And it is magnificent! Students of Hebrew who know little of Latter-day Saints and less of temples comment that this prayer seems to partake of the Hebraic dualism, the balancing of phraseology and the insights of ancient Israel, that it has echoes and kinship with the prayer fragments we have in the Old Testament relating to the temple of Solomon. And so it does. That is to be accounted for on the ground that the ultimate source of temple worship is not man but God.

“O hear, O hear, O hear us, O Lord,” the prayer finished, “that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne.”³⁸

With the prayer completed, the choir sang that magnificent hymn by William W. Phelps, “The Spirit of God.” The dedicatory prayer was accepted by vote, and the sacrament was administered. Then came testimonies from the Prophet, Don Carlos Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Frederick G. Williams, David Whitmer, and Hyrum Smith.

Finally came the thrice-repeated Hosanna Shout—the first time, so far as I know, that it was used in this dispensation. The Prophet taught them how to do it, and they did it, “sealing it each time with amen, amen, and amen.”³⁹ A shout! Does God want us to shout?

The hymn, written with the light of understanding, says, “We’ll sing and we’ll shout with the armies of heaven, Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb.” Meaning what? Anciently, crying “Hosanna!” with palm branches raised up was, in effect, a two-way reaching. On the one hand it was a plea: “O, save us”—a plea for redemption. On the other hand—as it was in the hearts of those who welcomed Jesus triumphantly into Jerusalem—it was a plea that he enter, that he come; it was an invitation that Christ accept and visit this holy house.⁴⁰ To put it in still another way, out of their depths the congregation expressed their need for Christ, and from the same depths they prayed for him to come. That was done in a shout with the raising of their arms in prayer.

Eliza R. Snow records this remarkable detail. One mother had been turned away at the door because her child was so small, only six weeks old. No one felt that he could endure through the entire day. But Father Smith welcomed the woman and said, “You come, and I promise you all will be well.” Psychologists today tell us that children have two instinctive fears (all others they learn): one, the fear of loud noises; the other, the fear of falling. But when this mother rose to join in the Hosanna Shout, the six-week-old child pushed back his coverlet and joined in the shout.⁴¹

Immediately after the hosannas the Spirit of the Lord descended upon Brigham Young and he

spoke in tongues, while another Apostle, David W. Patten, arose and gave the interpretation, then himself gave a short exhortation in tongues. Although there exists hardly a note about the content, these messages were, in essence, words of admonition and of divine approval. The Prophet then arose and left his personal blessing on the congregation, and the service ended at just a little past 4:00 p.m.⁴²

What occurred in Kirtland following the dedication was something like a jubilee. The fact that every Saint who could had participated in the dedication either in person or in secondhand awareness drew the Church together into oneness. So intense was that feeling for some days and even weeks that many present thought the Millennium had come, that all tribulation and temptation was past. Such peace was in their hearts that they had no will to do evil. None of the standard battles were in their lives. The Prophet had to warn them more than once that all they were experiencing was of God but that, soon enough, opposite experiences would come—the struggles with the adversary and with darkness would be renewed—and that they would know again all the trials that are at the core of saintliness. This was difficult for them to believe.⁴³ They went from house to house, for example, men, women, children, and would meet together, almost as we do on a beautiful Christmas morning, and would share their impressions, their experiences, each one having his own to report. And often the visitors would say, “I have a blessing for you, Brother,” and would bless the other. And the person receiving would say, “I now have a blessing for you,” and he would bless the visitor.⁴⁴

Outside the temple, there were both Church members and nonmembers who sensed that something sacred was happening. Even little children. For example, Prescindia Huntington recalled: “On one occasion I saw angels clothed in white walking upon the temple. It was during one of our monthly fast meetings, when the saints were in the temple worshipping. A little girl came to my door and in wonder called me out, exclaiming, ‘The meeting is on the top of the meeting

house!’ I went to the door, and there I saw on the temple angels clothed in white covering the roof from end to end. They seemed to be walking to and fro; they appeared and disappeared. The third time they appeared and disappeared before I realized that they were not mortal men. Each time in a moment they vanished, and their reappearance was the same. This was in broad daylight, in the afternoon. A number of the children in Kirtland saw the same.” When her fellow Saints returned from the temple that evening and reported that during the meeting someone had said that “the angels were resting down upon the house,” Prescindia understood.⁴⁵

Some said there was a light—some used the word *fire*—that emanated from that building, and that at night it still seemed to be illumined. Others, even nonmembers, feeling this outpouring, this Pentecost, were caught up in the waves of love and light.⁴⁶ It seemed almost bitter contrast that Joseph should have to say to the Twelve in one of their meetings: “God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.”⁴⁷

How prophetic! Nine of the original Twelve became embittered in varying degrees by that wrenching that eventually came. But in the meantime, and before that darkness, there was more light.

The journals of many who were living in Kirtland at the time describe their activities in this period. They record things like this: that a time or two the Prophet would ask them to come, after fasting, and meet late in the day in the temple, and then would say, “We’re going to be here in worship all night.” He would instruct them as to the proper order for the meeting, and appropriate prayers would be offered. And then he would tell them to pray silently and then rise and speak as they were impressed by the Spirit.⁴⁸ Some spoke prophetically and in tongues, some rose to say they had heard heavenly music, and others rose and said, “I, too, heard it.” These were celestial choirs, literally.⁴⁹ And there was the remarkable

meeting in which a man and a woman arose spontaneously on the impression of the Spirit, sang in beautiful harmony in language they did not understand to a “song of Zion,” beginning and ending each verse together, and then sat down.⁵⁰

We would do well to ponder the harmony of soul that is presupposed in such an experience. Perhaps that is one way in which the promise of the Lord could be fulfilled that we shall one day “see as we are seen and know as we are known.”⁵¹

Records of that day speak of remaining in meeting through the night, no one tiring, no one falling asleep, feasting on what the Prophet called the fat things of the Spirit. The effect produced by these was, in many of the Saints, overwhelmingly faith-promoting. But there were some who, instead of being lifted and inspired, felt that somehow this kind of thing was not what was to be expected—as if they had expected either more or less than this.⁵² Shortly after these developments, some left the Church.

During the dedication service angels were seen. Elder Heber C. Kimball testified that “an angel appeared and sat near . . . Joseph Smith, Sen., and Frederick G. Williams, so that they had a fair view of his person.” In the evening meeting that day, “the beloved disciple John was seen in our midst by the Prophet Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and others.”⁵³ The Apostle Peter also was named.⁵⁴ Eliza R. Snow, herself something of a master of language, wrote: “No mortal language can describe the heavenly manifestations of that memorable day. Angels appeared to some, while a sense of divine presence was realized by all present, and each heart was filled with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”⁵⁵

In fulfillment of a promise by Joseph Smith, George A. Smith arose in the evening meeting and began to prophesy. “A noise was heard like the sound of a rushing, mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions.” Joseph recorded: “I beheld the Temple was filled with angels.”⁵⁶

Oliver B. Huntington later recalled: “Father Smith started up and spoke aloud, ‘What’s that—is the house on fire?’ Some one answered by asking, ‘Did not you pray, Father Smith, that the Spirit of God might fill the house as on the day of Pentecost?’”⁵⁷

Now a word about the aftermath. Among the programs established in the midst of the Saints was what was known as the Kirtland Safety Society—which, ironically, turned out to be unsafe. Thwarted by an unexpected refusal of a state charter, its leaders reorganized the society as a joint stock company that would issue notes. Like many other banks of the time, it probably had inadequate reserves in specie (most of its assets being in land holdings), so that when redemption of its notes was sought in increasing quantities it was obliged to shut off payments in coin. Meantime a spirit of speculation developed and spread rapidly across the nation, and in the financial crisis that ensued when the bubble burst, hundreds of banks were closed.

It has been said that no part of man’s anatomy is more sensitive than his pocketbook. The speculative spirit had become rampant among the Kirtland Saints, and many of them saw this time as their opportunity—perhaps even their blessing—to become wealthy. They took risks; they made foolish decisions. Holding notes from the Kirtland bank, some were bereft of all their meager savings when it failed. Many were terribly bitter as a result. Wrongly, they placed the blame upon the head of Joseph Smith. They failed to separate his roles as a man and as a prophet and to realize that from the start there had been no prophetic promise of success, much less a guarantee. Seeing its downward course, the Prophet had withdrawn from its leadership early in the summer of 1837. Actually the bank’s failure brought him greater economic loss than anyone else. Not only had he bought more shares than any other investor except one, but also, apparently in an effort to prevent the bank from failing, he sold property in Kirtland and also obtained three loans.⁵⁸

The trial that came, as had been prophesied, had its effect in purging. It purged the Church of some who had been fair-weather members, and it purged many of the faithful of their more greedy and selfish impulses.

For many years, scholars critical of the Mormon historical past assumed that, since the stock ledger of the Kirtland bank was not available, it had contained a record of illicit transactions. That ledger finally was discovered among documents of the Chicago Historical Society. A comment on this in an article in *BYU Studies* reads: "There are a few irregularities in the ledger, but they do not suggest dishonesty. . . . We now see that the existence of the ledger disproves the allegations of fraud or dishonesty on the part of the Church leaders in Kirtland who had allegedly destroyed the ledger to hide the evidence of their evil."⁵⁹

It is difficult to determine at this point whether it would have been possible to avert in the case of the Kirtland bank the effects of the financial crisis. There is evidence that non-LDS enemies of the Church initiated the run on the bank that caused the suspension of redemption in coin.⁶⁰ And Truman O. Angell was convinced that "this institution would have been a financial success and a blessing to the Saints—which they needed very much—had the Gentiles who borrowed the money of the Bank fulfilled their promises."⁶¹

Later history of the Kirtland Temple was tied up with the changing history of the area. Most of the faithful Saints responded to the call to move to Missouri in 1838–39, but some remained. Another large group moved to Illinois in 1843 to join with the Saints there, leaving a small branch in Kirtland. A few years later apostates took over the temple, and for thirty years or so it was used for both religious and community purposes. Having been abandoned at some stage, it was subjected not only to negligence and the dilapidation produced by time but also to vandalism and destructive pilfering. There is a suggestion too (though written evidence is scanty) of further pollution of that holy house by its sometime use as a shelter for livestock, stores of hay and straw being piled in the pulpit area where the Lord himself had

appeared in that glorious era of dedication and endowment.

In 1880 the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints gained possession of the building. That organization, which subsequently restored the building to its original condition, retains ownership today.⁶²

We have left until last the culminating, transcendent events that took place in the Kirtland Temple. At an afternoon meeting there on April 3, 1836, one week following the dedication, the Twelve blessed and the First Presidency distributed the sacrament. In the reverent spirit thus induced, the curtains that secluded the pulpits from the congregation were lowered, and in the pulpit area Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery knelt "in solemn and silent prayer."⁶³ After rising from prayer, they received the glorious visitation first of the Lord Jesus Christ, then of three other heavenly beings.

What then occurred was one of the highest moments in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The veil was taken from their minds, the record says, and they saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit before them. Not exactly on it, for under his feet, says the record, was a paved work of pure gold.⁶⁴ One wonders—is it the case that the resurrected, glorified Christ will not again touch directly this inferior planet until he descends upon the Mount of Olives, touches that mount with his celestial foot, and thus sets in train the transformation and the earthquake that prepare the earth for the Millennium?⁶⁵ Perhaps so.

The Prophet recorded that the Savior's eyes were as a flame of fire and that his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun. His hair was white as the pure snow, and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah. And what did he say? He said who he was. "I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father."⁶⁶ And now the phrase that must have meant more to Joseph and Oliver than any phrase up until that day: "Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice." They

did. "All who are prepared, and are sufficiently pure to abide the presence of the Savior, will see Him in the solemn assembly."⁶⁷ They had now been declared sufficiently pure.

Then came that series of statements accepting the temple by Christ himself. "Behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. . . . And this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people. Even so. Amen."⁶⁸

With that promise made, the Lord having prepared the way for those who were bringing keys from former dispensations, Joseph and Oliver as joint witnesses saw Moses. He conferred upon them the keys of the gathering of Israel and the restoration of the Ten Tribes. Then they saw Elias, who came with what is recorded as the gospel of Abraham, promising both Joseph and Oliver that through them all subsequent generations should be blessed: the same promise that had been made to Abraham thousands of years before.⁶⁹ And then, to crown it all, Elijah—declaring that the time of Malachi's prophecy about hearts of fathers and children turning to each other had arrived and conferring the keys of the sealing power. And with all that, the warning that was at the core of the Prophet's first visit from the angel Moroni, also the promise. "By this ye may know"—now that this has happened, now that Malachi's prophecy is literally fulfilled, you may know that the coming of the Lord is nigh, even at the very doors.⁷⁰

These visitations constitute the most sublime expression of the entire Kirtland period.

Notes

1. "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (D&C 2:1). This section contains portions of Moroni's words to the Prophet on the night of September 21, 1823.

2. See D&C 13, given on May 15, 1829. The sons of Levi anciently attended to the temple sacrifice, presumably offering it latterly in unrighteousness.

In the last days they shall offer it in righteousness in a restored temple.

3. See Joseph Smith—History 1, p. 59, footnote.

4. See D&C 128, where the offering includes the presenting of accurate records. Compare D&C 124:37–39, where "your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi" are included as part of the order to be performed "in a house which you have built to my name."

5. See D&C 94, given on May 6, 1833. An earlier admonition about the house of the Lord to be built was given on December 27, 1832 (see D&C 88:119). The dimensions were not spelled out until the following May.

6. *Jl* 27 (January 1, 1892): 23. See historical headnote to D&C 50.

7. *TPJS*, p. 204; *HC* 4:572. This is from an editorial ascribed to Joseph Smith appearing under the title "Try the Spirits."

8. Speaking of "fallings, twitchings, swoonings, shaking, and trances," Joseph wrote, "Now God never had any prophets that acted in this way; there was nothing indecorous in the proceeding of the Lord's prophets in any age; neither had the apostles nor prophets in the apostles' day anything of this kind" (*TPJS*, p. 209). Compare Mother Smith's account of Joseph's comments: "When a man speaks by the Spirit of God, he speaks from the abundance of his heart—his mind is filled with intelligence, and even should he be excited, it does not cause him to do anything ridiculous or unseemly" (*History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 193–94).

9. *HC* 1:349.

10. D&C 95:3.

11. D&C 95:11.

12. D&C 95:12.

13. D&C 88:40 teaches that as intelligence cleaves to intelligence, and virtue to virtue, so does light to light. And surely love begets love.

14. *The Holy Temple*, p. 129. For an early reckoning of costs, see *MA* 1 (July 1835): 147–48; *MS* 14 (September 4, 1852): 438; *Contributor* 13 (April 1892): 251.

15. George A. Smith says that "they carried pistols about 3 in. long." Sometimes they were stoned. See Jenson, *Historical Record*, 1872–79;

also *HC* 2:2. “We were obliged to keep up night watches to prevent being mobbed” (journal of Joel Hills Johnson, entry of September 23, 1835).

16. See journal of Truman O. Angell.

17. See discourse of Brigham Young in *JD* 1:133–35; Jenson, *Historical Record* 5:75.

18. See Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, p. 154.

19. On laying the first cornerstone at the “south-east corner” in harmony with the “strict order of the Priesthood,” see *HC* 4:331. See also Joseph’s use of the phrase “Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone,” in his letter to Isaac Galland, March 22, 1839 (*Writings*, p. 418).

20. See Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, in *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 17 (July 1926): 193–95; Andrus, *They Knew*, pp. 22–23.

21. See Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Papers; *YWJ* 16 (December 1905): 556–57; Andrus, *They Knew*, pp. 23–24.

22. See her remarks at age eighty-seven at Brigham Young University.

23. See *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 28 (1937): 61; Snow, *Eliza R. Snow, an Immortal*, pp. 60–64.

24. See Zera Pulsipher papers.

25. See chapter five, note 57 herein.

26. See statement of Daniel Tyler, citing *D&C* 124, 1878, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; also *JI* 15 (May 15, 1880): 111–12.

27. See the discourses of Joseph Smith in August, 1843, and notes, in *WJS*, pp. 236–48, 300–308.

28. The official history says “probably five or six” hundred “assembled before the doors were opened.” An overflow meeting was held in a nearby schoolhouse. Even then “many were left out.” (*HC* 2:410–11.) Later dedicatory services were held to accommodate the many others.

29. See Jillaine K. Baker, “The Dedication of the Kirtland Temple,” typescript.

30. See, for example, the meeting on Thursday, January 14, 1836, where “rules and regulations to be observed in the ‘House of the Lord’” were drafted, all to enhance the order, dignity, and worship in the building (*HC* 2:368).

31. See *D&C* 88.

32. See George A. Smith’s comments in *JD* 2:215.

33. *D&C* 88:74, 123–26. See also *D&C* 38:42; 133:5. Following such a course of sanctification can prepare us to eventually become the very vessels of the Lord. Section 93, for instance, teaches that we may “receive a fulness” through worship—a fulness of truth, of light, and of glory (*D&C* 93:9–20).

34. *TPJS*, p. 92; *HC* 2:310.

35. *HC* 2:410; compare Archibald F. Bennett, “The Kirtland Temple,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 27 (1936): 86.

36. *HC* 2:413–16.

37. *HC* 2:416.

38. *D&C* 109:78–79.

39. This shout, Joseph said, “sealed the proceedings of the day” (*HC* 2:427).

40. The Saints are commanded to bless the name of the Lord with “loud” voices and “with a sound of rejoicing” by Hosanna—see *D&C* 19:37; 36:3; 39:19; 124:101. At times in the Kirtland Temple they also used an expression from 3 Nephi “Blessed be the name of the Most High God!” (3 Nephi 11:17; see also *D&C* 39:19.) Joseph records going home after a night of praise and blessing in the Kirtland Temple, and “my soul cried hosanna to God and the Lamb, through the silent watches of the night” (*HC* 2:387).

41. See *Journal History*, October 1909; Snow, *Eliza R. Snow, an Immortal*, p. 62.

42. The histories make no mention of a benediction either in the morning or the afternoon session. Perhaps the Saints did not consider the meetings closed, since they returned for further meetings. See Jillaine K. Baker, “The Dedication of the Kirtland Temple,” p. 14.

43. Daniel Tyler wrote of this period of dedication: “All felt that they had a foretaste of heaven. In fact, there were several weeks in which we were not tempted of the devil; and we wondered whether the millennium had commenced. At or near the close of the endowments, the Prophet Joseph . . . said: ‘Brethren, for some time Satan has not had power to tempt you. Some have thought that there would be no more temptation. But the opposite will come; and unless you draw near to

the Lord, you will be overcome and apostatize.” (As found in *Scraps of Biography*, pp. 32–33.)

44. Erastus Snow, for one, records: “In the evening they ate the passover and feasted upon bread and wine until they were filled, and after these things were over the disciples went from house to house breaking bread and eating it with joyful hearts, being filled with the spirit of prophecy; and the sick were healed and Devils were cast out” (journal of Erastus Snow, 1836, p. 8).

45. See recollection of Prescindia Huntington in Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, p. 207. Joseph describes an earlier meeting where “the gift of tongues fell upon us in mighty power, angels mingled their voices with ours, while their presence was in our midst, and unceasing praises swelled our bosoms for the space of half an hour” (see entry of January 22, 1836, in diary of Joseph Smith, 1835–36, p. 141; *Writings*, pp. 148–49).

46. Of the evening of the dedication day, when the Prophet met with the priesthood quorums and another great outpouring of the Spirit took place, it is recorded: “The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the temple) and were astonished at what was taking place. This continued until the meeting closed at 11:00 p.m.” (HC 2:428.)

47. This is John Taylor’s recollection. See *JD* 24:197.

48. See HC 2:387–92, 430–33. Jeremiah Willey records: “Joseph Smith requested the Elders to speak their feelings freely and sing, exhort and pray as the Spirit should give utterance. The meeting continued the whole night. Many of the gifts were poured out upon the people; at break of day we were dismissed.” (Autobiography of Jeremiah Willey, pp. 10–12.)

49. Zina D. Huntington and her sister Prescindia “both heard, from one corner of the room above our heads, a choir of angels singing most beautifully. They were invisible to us, but myriads of angelic voices seemed to be united in singing some song of Zion, and their sweet harmony filled the temple of God.” (See Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, p. 207–8.)

50. Prescindia Huntington recalled: “Brother McCarter rose and sang a song of Zion in tongues; I arose and sang simultaneously with him the same tune and words, beginning and ending each verse in perfect unison, without varying a word. It was just as though we had sung it together a thousand times.” (As cited in Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, pp. 208–9.)

51. D&C 76:94; 84:98.

52. George A. Smith recalled that some felt “too little” and some “too much” (*JD* 2:215).

53. As cited in Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, pp. 91, 92.

54. “When the afternoon meeting assembled, Joseph, feeling very much elated, arose the first thing and said the personage who had appeared in the morning was the Angel Peter come to accept the dedication” (journal of Truman O. Angell, p. 5).

55. *Eliza R. Snow, an Immortal*, p. 62.

56. HC 2:428. The Prophet records the seeing of angels. Others who left records in their journals include Brigham Young, Joel H. Johnson, and Erastus Snow. Among the women who recorded these events were Eliza R. Snow and Prescindia Huntington. See, for example, Brigham Young in S. Dilworth Young, “*Here Is Brigham . . .*,” p. 143.

57. *YWJ* 8 (February 1897): 240. Joseph and his father had made the same request—the former in the dedicatory prayer (see D&C 109:36–37). Oliver Cowdery wrote under date of March 27, 1836, which was Sunday, the day of dedication: “In the evening I met with the officers of the church in the Lord’s house. The Spirit was poured out—I saw the glory of God, like a great cloud, come down and rest upon the house, and fill the same like a mighty rushing wind.” There were 316 present for this meeting. (See Leonard J. Arrington, ed., “Oliver Cowdery’s Kirtland, Ohio, ‘Sketch Book,’” p. 426.)

58. See Sampson and Wimmer, “The Kirtland Safety Society: The Stock Ledger Book and the Bank Failure,” pp. 427–36; Partridge, “The Failure of the Kirtland Safety Society,” pp. 437–54.

59. Sampson and Wimmer, “Stock Ledger Book,” p. 436.

60. See Backman, *The Heavens Resound*, p. 318.

61. Journal of Truman O. Angell.

62. See Backman, *The Heavens Resound*, pp. 368–72; McGavin, “The Kirtland Temple Defiled,” pp. 594–95.

63. HC 2:435; historical headnote to D&C 110.

64. D&C 110:1–3.

65. See Proclamation of the Twelve, 1845, in Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 1:258.

66. D&C 110:4.

67. *TPJS*, p. 92. Three years earlier Joseph had written the following to W. W. Phelps on January

11, 1833: “We greatly fear before the Lord lest we should fail of this great honor which our Master proposes to confer on us; we are seeking for humility and great faith lest we be ashamed in his presence” (*Writings*, p. 263).

68. D&C 110:7, 10.

69. D&C 110:11–12.

70. D&C 110:13–16.

For full citations see “Author’s Note on Sources, Abbreviations, and Bibliography” in the Joseph Smith Lecture Series.