

# Praxis Makes Perfect

Christian Perfection and *Imitatio Christi*  
in Joseph Smith's Temple Pedagogy

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It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.<sup>1</sup>

**T**he Nauvoo period in Latter-day Saint history was a time of welding for Joseph Smith: bringing together previous revelatory teachings and actively shaping rituals into “a whole and complete and perfect union.”<sup>2</sup> He believed he was opening a dispensation, or a pouring out of knowledge and authority from heaven, and was

anxious to finish it. He had a vision—at least in the down-to-earth sense of a goal—of all Saints being educated in the knowledge prerequisite for a salvation he coined exaltation.

This exaltation can be seen as a unique form of Christian perfection,<sup>3</sup> as the end goal toward which followers of Christ strive—in this life or the next—to achieve a wholeness or degree of refinement that would bring them salvation. Most early nineteenth-century Christian denominations were seeking after salvation, differing in forms and degrees, but united in their desire for certainty. Denominations based on Calvinism found surety of salvation in God-given grace to a select few, while Arminian-based theologies, such as that found in Methodism, believed that all who chose Christ as their Savior could be saved. Universalists, like Joseph Smith's grandfather,<sup>4</sup> believed that Christ would (eventually) save all. The basic premise of Christian theology—forgiveness of sins through Christ's Atonement—seemed undebated, though. Each acknowledged that a power went forth from the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The debate centered on how to access that power—how one could be certain that power was manifest, and hence whether salvation was sure.

Joseph Smith revolutionized the idea of and prerequisites for salvific surety into a perfectionism that was both concrete and attainable but to most people was quite unfathomable: becoming as God, or becoming gods.<sup>5</sup> The rationale is that to be certain one can reenter the presence of God, one should strive to know or see God and progress to be like him.<sup>6</sup> In other words, Joseph saw theophany (encounter with God) as a precursor to theosis (becoming like God). This is *imitatio Christi* in its purest form: striving to become as Christ as a means to become godlike, by “receiv[ing] his image in [our] countenances” (Alma 5:14), and by “becom[ing] sons [and daughters] of God; [so] that when he shall appear we shall be like him [theosis], for we shall see him [theophany]” (Moroni 7:48).

Some of Joseph's teachings during the Nauvoo period indicate that spiritual education and personal development were a prerequisite to

meeting/seeing God (theophany) and to becoming like him (theosis). How were these teachings to be transposed into praxis and what was the place to prepare to meet God?— in God's temple through sacred ordinances. But what was Joseph Smith's pedagogy? How should a Latter-day Saint progress as it were "from grace to grace"<sup>7</sup> toward this exaltation? What educational means or pedagogic devices did Smith and his contemporaries in the Church devise to make this perfectionism comprehensible and tangible? And how were these dispensed?

In this chapter I will answer these questions by first sketching the cultural religious context within which Joseph's view on salvation as exaltation took shape. Next I will draw from Joseph's teachings about gaining certainty of exaltation found in his revelations, public sermons, and more private teachings. Then I will examine the pedagogy, the modes of teaching, and the associated (temple) ordinances and how Joseph Smith planned to dispense these, first to the Twelve Apostles and then to all the Saints. I will conclude by applying these findings to Latter-day Saints seeking surety of salvation as exaltation in our time.

## **Historical Context: Protestant Perfectionism and the Search for Certainty of Salvation**

Joseph Smith's contemporary religious teachers and reformers were united in their search for salvific certainty<sup>8</sup> and taught various versions of Christian perfectionism to achieve it.<sup>9</sup> One could say that, as Protestants, they had left the security of Catholic sacramentalism behind and had all proposed different substitute doctrines to achieve perfection and salvation.<sup>10</sup> Joseph himself describes the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists as three of the main sects he and his family were in contact with. He said he "attended their several meetings as occasion would permit" and that his "mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect."<sup>11</sup> Christopher Jones documents further that Methodism was one of the most expansive and influential sects in antebellum America.<sup>12</sup> Many early converts to the Church, as

Jones shows, came from a Methodist background, such as Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Thomas B. Marsh. Many of them stayed sympathetic toward the Methodist founder John Wesley and—while engaged in missionary activities—saw Methodist teachings as a sound basis upon which converts could add in their conversion to the restored Church. Even Joseph Smith reportedly said that “if the Methodists would only advance a step or two further, they would take the world. We Latter-day Saints are Methodists, as far as they have gone, only we have advanced further.”<sup>13</sup> This begs the question: how much did the soteriology and perfectionism of the Methodists (and others) influence or even shape Smith’s own search for a personal and later doctrinal surety of salvation?

Despite the doctrinal differences of these Christian sects, there was some consensus on the idea that humanity’s fallen and sinful state had to be overcome through the mediation and power of Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice. As mentioned earlier, the debate focused on how to access that power and how one could be certain that power was manifest and hence that salvation was sure. The sectarian landscape was also divided over the question of individual choice in salvation. For Calvinistic Presbyterians, there was no choice: God had to elect you and make it known in a spiritual outpouring of grace. For Arminian-Wesleyan Methodists, individuals could choose to accept Christ’s Atonement and exercise faith to bring about good works and confirming spiritual experiences. For Universalists, the choice to believe in Christ was relevant only for the moment you were saved, for eventually—at the last judgment—all were saved. The divide was present in Joseph Smith’s own family, where mother, brothers, and older sister joined the Presbyterian Church and father turned from a Universalist to a more neutral standpoint and did not adhere then to a particular church.<sup>14</sup> Joseph’s quest, most likely sparked by a Methodist camp meeting,<sup>15</sup> was an individual endeavor to gain certainty of forgiveness for his sins, an endeavor that hinged on deciding which church to join in this pursuit of justification. He attended meetings but did not seem to have the same level of excitement, nor

experience the physical sensations that others had.<sup>16</sup> This set Joseph in dire need of a different confirmation or source of certainty.<sup>17</sup>

Methodists looked for certainty through scripture,<sup>18</sup> full devotion to a Christian life, and spiritual manifestations, or what they called works of grace. These were commonly sought after and celebrated when received, confirming to faithful seekers that God corroborated their efforts with an “outpouring” of his power. The most well-known spiritual manifestations, mainly derived from biblical reports, were speaking in tongues, healings, dreams, and visions. Also, very physical effects were seen, like “people [who] went into trances, jerked, rolled and crawled on the ground,” or were, in Joseph Smith’s time, at least “crying, mourning, and sighing.”<sup>19</sup> The feeling of being “touched upon” or “recognized” or “accepted” by God was mostly a communal experience. Among the Methodists, camp meetings were predominant in bringing about this communal excitement, aimed at a spiritual “revival” or a bringing of souls “from darkness to light.”<sup>20</sup>

This begs the question: once such an “acceptance” took place, did those in the congregation who were part of this group experience feel secure about their standing before God; did they feel they were “forgiven of their sins”? If so, this must have been more of an individual certainty, for not all present experienced it. The ecclesiastical counterpart of that experience was the power or authority of a church to extend the right doctrines and means whereby its adherents could have these reviving experiences.<sup>21</sup> If false doctrine were preached or one adhered to a corrupt faith, there was danger of damnation, or at least—as Joseph Smith portrayed it—such things were being preached in an effort to dissuade converts from one sect to another.<sup>22</sup>

Christopher Jones also points out that Methodists were very likely to accept dreams and visions, like Joseph Smith’s First Vision, to be authoritative revelations from God.<sup>23</sup> Joseph’s vision, seen through a Methodist lens, can be seen as a conversion experience whereby God answers a prayer by an apparition of sorts, invoking spiritual gifts and/or forgiving sins. Brigham Young’s older brother Phineas, also a Methodist who later converted to the Church of

Jesus Christ, had a similar experience as Joseph when he prayed to be “made holy” to fulfill his recent calling.<sup>24</sup> From the earliest account of Joseph Smith’s First Vision we learn that his initial effort was indeed a search for confirmation of forgiveness of personal sin. His prayer, he writes, was answered by God appearing and saying, “Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee.”<sup>25</sup> This was the first certainty Joseph longed to experience.

Pertaining to authority as a church, Joseph sought additional certainty about which church to join, a church that would be “accepted of God.” Wesleyan teachings on power derived from “spiritual witness” were indicative of the certainty needed to be a “living church.” When denied, Wesley taught, “there is a danger lest our religion degenerate into mere formality; lest, ‘having a form of godliness,’ we neglect if not ‘deny, the power of it.’”<sup>26</sup> This resembles a statement of the Lord in Joseph Smith’s 1838 account of his First Vision and was part of the answer and instruction Joseph received to join none of the churches he was in contact with.<sup>27</sup> What was truly remarkable and very decisive for his later perfectionism—as we will see below—is that Joseph professed to receive these confirmations from God the Father and Jesus Christ in person. The accompanying conclusion, one that up to this day continues to make many other Christian denominations feel uneasy, is that Joseph claimed that the church he was asked to organize was not his own, but the Lord’s, and the gospel he proclaimed was not his own, but restored by the Lord himself.

With regard to perfectionism among Methodists, John Wesley wrote three works with “perfection” prominent in their title.<sup>28</sup> In his treatise on perfection he defines it as

that habitual disposition of the soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies being cleansed from sin, “from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit”; and, by consequence, being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; being so “renewed in the image of our mind,” as to be “perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.”<sup>29</sup>

Wesley describes perfection in another sermon as

a restoration not only to the favour, but likewise to the image of God, implying not barely deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fullness of God.<sup>30</sup>

Phrases such as “holy,” “cleansed from sin,” “endued with Christlike virtues,” and “renewed in mind” all imply a change brought about by the exercise of faith and the working of grace, but which make the human believer only “as to be” perfect as God. Receiving the image of God or being filled with his fullness seems to point more to *imitatio Christi* in the form of a refinement of Christian character, but not leading to eventual achievement of godhood in the more literal sense Joseph Smith later adopted. Methodist perfection can more readily be incorporated with its teaching of entire sanctification, as shown in two other quotes from Wesley, stating that perfection is “deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin” and “a Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin.”<sup>31</sup> Joseph clearly also taught about the need to be cleansed from sin but added that we then need to move forward—even beyond the grave—to attain godlike qualities that would enable us to inherit the kind of life God lives.<sup>32</sup> We see here that Smith’s teachings—drawing upon both his Protestant heritage, study of the Bible, and his continuing revelations—employ similar language but pointed toward different or added meanings. Joseph’s understanding of perfection and salvation as exaltation, as already explained, developed over many years. As these doctrines of exaltation became clearer, Joseph gathered elements of temple ritual (literally and spiritually cleansing our bodies as a preparation to enter the temple or God’s presence) leading up to the Nauvoo era, where doctrine and ritual came together.

A lesser-known influence on Joseph Smith was that of the Universalist Society, originating in Boston but present in most of New England, a movement to which Joseph’s grandfather and father adhered.<sup>33</sup> Asael Smith had moved away from orthodox Congregationalism to the Universalist teachings of John Murray.<sup>34</sup>

Murray rejected the Calvinist idea of election and damnation and universalized the idea that Jesus was “from everlasting ordained to be the savior of all.” Through unity with Christ, everyone could be justified through his vicarious Atonement.<sup>35</sup> Similar teachings on perfection can be found with the related Unitarians. William Ellery Channing, the latter movement’s dominant minister, taught that “likeness to God is a good so unutterably surpassing all other good, that whoever admits it as attainable, must acknowledge it to be the chief aim of life.”<sup>36</sup> He even talks about exaltation but in a broader sense of a God who cares for his children so much that he does everything for their “recovery and exaltation.” Channing also strongly believes that God and all of his attributes can be known because man himself carries the knowledge of God in his own soul, and that through the influence of the Holy Ghost and a Christian life of service, these godly attributes can be brought to perfection.<sup>37</sup> It is unclear how much Universalist or Unitarian teachings passed from Joseph’s grandfather and father to him. One Universalist idea Asael Smith certainly taught, which can be recognized in Joseph’s soteriology, is its anti-Calvinistic conception of God’s universal salvific love: a desire to save all his children.<sup>38</sup> It is likely that Joseph accepted this desire that God could save all, while also adhering to the Methodist requirements of agency and exercise of faith to bring about saving grace. Having established this context, we will now investigate how Joseph situated this reciprocal desire for human and God to reunite in perfect unity in an almost Catholic sacramental covenant theology with accompanying temple ordinances.

### **Joseph Smith’s Own View on Salvific Surety through Perfection: The Pinnacle of Salvation**

If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses. . . . A man is saved no



faster than he gets knowledge, . . . Hence [we] need revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding his historical background and surroundings, Joseph took a different course—guided by the revelations he received—in restoring teachings on what salvation meant and how it was to be achieved. Starting from the earliest period, while translating the Book of Mormon, and moving into the Kirtland/Missouri period and on to the Nauvoo period, this process can be described as a process of consolidation and dissemination. By *consolidation* and *dissemination*, I mean the bringing together (*con*) of principles of salvation into tangible (*solid*) ordinances that can be experienced and teaching them to more and more of the Saints (*dis*) to eventually bear much fruit (*seminate*). Teaching the Quorum of the Twelve, building the Kirtland Temple, later teaching a Quorum of the Anointed, and building the Nauvoo Temple all illustrate these purposes.

I argue that the two forms of certainty Joseph sought after, as explained earlier as doctrinal (ecclesiastical) and personal certainty, also came together as (1) the presence of God's power, acceptance by God, authority, and (2) surety of salvation.

First, the presence of God's power and authority took form in the priesthood, which had to accompany all performed ordinances. While translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery explained, they had received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist. At a later time they also claimed to have received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John. Several revelations on Church and priesthood organization (for example, Doctrine and Covenants 20, 84, 88, 107, 110, 131, 132) gradually explained and clarified the different offices and uses of those priesthoods. Even before any temple ordinances were revealed, people were baptized and confirmed and received the sacrament, drawing upon these two priesthoods to perform such acts with authority.

In Kirtland, however, a new priesthood was installed—after the order of the ancients—namely the “High Priesthood.”<sup>40</sup> Within a

few months of ordaining elders to this priesthood for the first time, Joseph taught that “the order of the High priesthood is that they have power given them to seal up the Saints unto eternal life.”<sup>41</sup> As David Buerger suggests, Joseph was teaching what “strict Calvinists reserved solely to God.”<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, he introduced accompanying ordinances that were later incorporated into the temple endowment.<sup>43</sup> *Sealing* is another word connoting certainty and can be seen in connection with the sealing or binding power Peter and Nephi received “to bind on earth as in heaven” and later in the reception of the sealing keys of Elijah in the Kirtland Temple.<sup>44</sup> Zebedee Coltrin in 1831, Jared Carter in 1832, and Orson Pratt in 1833 all testified of the outpourings of the Spirit, not only on individuals, but on entire groups that Joseph gathered in his School of the Prophets to “seal them up” “to the Lord” “unto eternal life” “by the power of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>45</sup> These greatly resembled Methodist communal outpourings but in a completely new doctrinal context of apostles and prophets (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:127–38) called to the ministry (see Doctrine and Covenants 95:4–5). Authority thus came from being called and then receiving the(se) priesthood(s).<sup>46</sup>

Second, Joseph Smith’s first quest for personal salvation was answered by a personal visitation<sup>47</sup> of the Father and the Son, which is exactly the theophany that he later posed as the end goal of temple practice. I say “practice” because Joseph merged gaining knowledge, exercising faith, and producing works in a development toward perfection or godhood. The temple was to be a place to meet God and a place of learning in preparation for that.<sup>48</sup> These can be seen as original additions to the Methodist faith and works required for spiritual approval from God—searching for the mysteries of god(liness) by study and by faith made education into a mode of worship. We could redefine the word *worship* now as “a mode to approach God,” a reciprocal act to return to him.<sup>49</sup> God had asked Joseph and the early Saints to build a temple to be able to receive the knowledge requisite for salvation, and now they had to respond. Joseph started first by organizing (on divine command)

the previously mentioned School of the Prophets in Kirtland. It was in this school, and later—upon its completion—in the Kirtland Temple, that Joseph started preparing others to meet the Lord, preparatory for their missions as literal witnesses of Christ. In this school they taught one another by posing and answering questions (almost in a Socratic manner):

How do men obtain a knowledge of the glory of God, his perfections and attributes? By devoting themselves to his service, through prayer and supplication incessantly strengthening their faith in him, *until*, like Enoch, the Brother of Jared, and Moses, they obtain a *manifestation of God* to themselves.<sup>50</sup>

This resembles the Methodist method of receiving entire sanctification up to the point when the word *until* appears, after which Joseph refers to other prophets in the scriptures who were called by God in person.

To make that viable, the Kirtland Temple needed to be built. The twelve apostles were charged “not to go to other nations . . . [but to] tarry at Kirtland until [they were] endowed with power from on high.”<sup>51</sup> Oliver Cowdery gave them this charge:

The ancients passed through the same. They had this testimony, that they had seen the Saviour after he rose from the dead. . . . You must bear the same testimony, that there is but one God and one Mediator; he that has seen him will know him and testify of him. . . . You have been indebted to other men in the first instance for evidence, on that you have acted. But . . . you will, therefore see the necessity of getting this testimony from Heaven. Never cease striving until you have seen God, face to face. Strengthen your faith, cast off your doubts, your sins and all your unbelief and nothing can prevent you from coming to God. Your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid his hand upon you.<sup>52</sup>

This ordination refers to their calling as apostles to be witnesses, which flows from having seen God. In other words, the Twelve had to make their calling and election as apostles sure. Here we witness another shift in meaning of the word *calling* and the added *election*. Apostles needed to be called and elected to their ministry through the laying on of hands (literally or symbolically) by the Lord himself in a theophany that resembled Joseph's First Vision. The event of seeing God the Father and his Son occurred (at least for most of the Twelve)<sup>53</sup> "at one of these meetings after the organization of the school (the school being organized on the 23rd of January, 1833)."<sup>54</sup> Afterwards the prophet Joseph said: "Brethren, now you are prepared to be the apostles of Jesus Christ, for you have seen both the Father and the Son and know that they exist and that they are two separate personages."<sup>55</sup> Similar to the vision and calling he personally received in Palmyra, Joseph also deemed such a witness necessary for the Twelve and others sent out to the ministry from Kirtland. It is interesting to see that many also received a blessing by the laying on of hands whereby their "sins were forgiven them."<sup>56</sup>

Here we see a complete unity of the two lines of authority in Joseph's search for salvific surety: (1) priesthoods were restored, including the sealing power, and (2) the "most sure" way of getting salvation is by meeting God, but this was also a way of having the apostles' calling and election made sure—to enable them to teach with authority as witnesses of Christ. Nevertheless, this theophany to the Twelve in preparation of their ministry was only a precursor to what was about to come. Their calling and election did not deal explicitly with surety of salvation. They were still learning and repenting, confessing their sins to one another, bearing one another up. Theophany as a means whereby one could be sure of salvation, being sealed unto eternal life or exaltation, is something Joseph would start teaching in Nauvoo.

In a sermon delivered at the Nauvoo Temple grounds on 12 May 1844, Joseph pleaded with all Saints present there: "I am going on in my progress for eternal life. . . . Oh! I beseech you to go forward, go

forward and make your calling and election sure.”<sup>57</sup> Surely Joseph had been adamant in his search for knowledge: the inspired or explanatory translation of the Old and New Testaments, the discussions in the School of the Prophets, the ongoing revelations, receiving the sealing keys of Elijah, the discovery of the Abraham papyri, and joining the Masonic Lodge were all sources of knowledge—ancient and new—that Joseph employed to construct his theology of exaltation. All were being consolidated, brought together: the knowledge and principles needed to guide all Saints to meet God in his holy house, the temple, and thus to become sure of salvation.

Joseph named this surety of salvation after Peter’s “calling and election made sure” (see 2 Peter 1:10, 19). He explained on 17 May 1843, “The more sure word of prophecy means a man’s knowing that he is *sealed up unto eternal life*, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood” (Doctrine and Covenants 131:5). The Protestants around him used these scriptures too. For example, Calvinists talked about them, using scriptures on sealing to corroborate their doctrine of predestination. Methodists, like John Wesley, as we saw above, had teachings on sanctification and even perfection. But none went as far in teaching perfection as reaching a point in spiritual development where God—in person—seals a person unto eternal life. Moreover, Smith also devised temple ordinances to mediate these sealings, through one holding the priesthood power to seal both on earth and in heaven.<sup>58</sup> What Calvinists could only assume based on professed faith and Methodists hoped to derive from spiritual witness, Latter-day Saints could obtain by revealed knowledge coupled with a priesthood ordinance.

Joseph made one more addition unique to Latter-day Saint theology to his concept of exaltation—eternal marriage, and for some plural marriage. One day before his 17 May explanation on the more sure word of prophecy, Joseph taught:

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.<sup>59</sup>

Joseph's February 1832 vision already showed him that heaven was divided into three kingdoms of glory (see Doctrine and Covenants 76). The celestial kingdom now had three degrees. The eternal increase mentioned points to similar blessings Abraham received pertaining to his posterity, "both in the world and out of the world" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:30; see Abraham 2:11). This revelation on both the sealing power and the covenant of eternal (and plural) marriage, made exaltation and perfection—becoming gods—more explicit: all gods are married—or sealed to one another—and continue in procreation in the eternities. Any lesser form of salvation (a "saved state" or obtaining a place in (one) heaven, as most Christian sects would see it), would be a limitation to eternal progression:

For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. (Doctrine and Covenants 132:17)

Later on this revelation shows that exaltation entails knowing who God is and being able to live where and how he lives:

For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me. But if ye receive me in the world, *then shall ye know me*, and shall receive your exaltation; that *where I am ye shall be also*. (Doctrine and Covenants 132:22–23; emphasis added)

Joseph was now doctrinally prepared to make these highest blessings available to all who were “spiritual[ly] minded” and “prepared to receive” them.<sup>60</sup> This spiritual preparation was of course the purpose of the Church in general and of the priesthood quorums and the newly established Female Relief Society of Nauvoo as well. In preparing the Saints, Joseph wanted to make haste, as he expected to be taken from this world and felt the need “to instruct the [Relief] Society and point out the way for them to conduct, that they might act according to the will of God . . . delivering the keys to this society and the church.”<sup>61</sup> This sermon reflected the need for the women to be instructed in the same knowledge as the men. This anticipated Smith’s presentation of the endowment a few days later and the emergence of the Quorum of the Anointed, in which—logically—women played an equal part. This Quorum of the Anointed was different in the sense that it focused on couples preparing for the newly completed temple rituals. There Joseph eventually revealed all these ordinances of exaltation (keys), which were later to be disseminated to the entire church. Joseph started with the initiation of a select few, twenty-four couples and seventeen others to be exact,<sup>62</sup> but with a broader view ahead:

In this Council [Quorum] was instituted the Ancient order of things for the first time in these last days. . . . and there was nothing made known to these men, but what will be made known to all <the> Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them, even to the weakest of the Saints.<sup>63</sup>

That proper place was the (Nauvoo) temple, but it was still under construction, so Joseph went ahead and set up the upper room of his red brick store to serve as an ordinance room. Two more essential elements were part of the ordinance: marriage and generations. By adding marriage, the gospel of Adam and Eve one could say, the full meaning of the word *sealing* was established: this sealing of couples to one another and to God now extended—through the Abrahamic

covenant and the keys of the sealing power of Elijah (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16)—to all progenitors and progeny, both living and dead, so that the entire human family could be bound together on earth and in heaven. This bonding of generations ties in to an element of perfection Joseph had already introduced in 1840 and further developed in 1842: that “neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:15; see Hebrews 11:40). Hence, all the ordinances that Joseph had instituted would eventually also be performed by proxy for ancestors. This adds a small Universalist element—namely, that God’s salvific love extends to the entire human family, back to Adam and Eve, and that he gives a chance to all who have lived to accept his covenant. And here we find the complete fitting together of all aspects of salvation as exaltation as are now found and taught in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **Praxis: Joseph Smith’s Search for Fitting Ordinances, A Pedagogy of Perfection**

And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. (Doctrine and Covenants 84:21–22)

The question is frequently asked: Can we not be saved without going through with all these ordinances &c. I would answer: No, not the fullness of Salvation, . . . any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a Celestial law & the whole law to.<sup>64</sup>

Now that the doctrines were in place, or consolidated, they were ready to be passed on, or disseminated. How? Orally and performatively. An oral canon of scripture was about to be opened, expounded upon, clothed in symbolic scenes and acts, all fitted to the envisioned purpose that every Saint who was prepared to receive the temple



endowment should receive it in preparation to meet God in person and be assured of exaltation. Oral and performative transmissions of sacred truths, which were “not to be ritten,”<sup>65</sup> serve several important purposes, as we will see below. This mode of ritual transmission was performed by the Jews, Egyptians, Masons, and as far as we can infer from the limited canon of the New Testament, also in the days of the early apostles.<sup>66</sup>

Joseph considered many plain and precious things from the gospel to have been lost,<sup>67</sup> mostly from scripture, but much, he believed, had been preserved through these other traditions. Through his study and “inspired translation” of the Old and New Testaments, Joseph learned (among other things) about priesthood and the nature of salvation. Joseph’s discovery of the Egyptian papyri brought back teachings (among others) on the premortal life and the Abrahamic covenant. His involvement in the Masonic temple and his own revelations concerning the rituals there helped him discover precious parts of that (lost) ritual tradition. Although it is very hard to trace back exactly and chronologically each of the building blocks that formed the Nauvoo temple ceremony, one could accept the idea that oftentimes information precedes inspiration. Gathering all these pieces of knowledge and tradition and seeking revelation about their meaning and purpose led at least to certain clear doctrines and covenants, around which the much more culturally or even biographically infused ritual forms and language took shape.<sup>68</sup> Following his pattern of dissemination, he introduced them to the Twelve Apostles as well as to others and expounded on them in his public sermons. In Nauvoo he urged the apostles and hundreds of Church members to join the Masonic lodge<sup>69</sup> to learn what he had learned and help him bring it into one revealed whole.

The next step Joseph took was to fit all these saving principles into a mode of teaching that would, on the one hand, be instrumental in revealing unto the participant all knowledge necessary to reenter God’s presence. On the other hand, since it was sacred knowledge, he had to safeguard it. This put Joseph in a delicate position, and the

way he went about it was to create a tradition of knowledge by initiation. The Masonic temple rites are the most exemplary for this mode of teaching.<sup>70</sup> The important point about this teaching approach is how Joseph Smith envisioned it and its purposes. This method of teaching resembles Jesus's use of parables—to communicate hidden knowledge to those who had “ears to hear” (Matthew 13:9) but conceal at the same time the pearls from the swine (see Matthew 7:6). Masons would express the principle as being hidden in plain sight. This approach requires a specific form of pedagogy between a master or mentor and a learner.

Education<sup>71</sup> and pedagogy<sup>72</sup> are in their Latin and Greek roots almost interchangeable. *Educare* (“leading out”) is mostly associated with training the powers of the mind, oriented more toward the transmittal and sharing of knowledge. Παιδαγωγία, or *paidagōgia* (“leading a child”), is more relational, associated with mentoring and aiding in the development of a child. By combining these concepts, we perceive the need for teaching both principles and knowledge and for the leading, guiding, or mentoring that is part of initiation and providing certain experiences necessary for development. This method also resembles the way Jesus taught his disciples. As a rabbi he explained to them the scriptures, taught them principles, and expanded their knowledge. But he also wanted the apostles to experience certain things, so as a Master he gave them assignments and performed rituals with them like the Last Supper and the washing of feet.

Hidden knowledge of principles, and the experiences necessary to internalize these principles “deeply into the bone,”<sup>73</sup> are made into a whole by initiation into rituals or ordinances. Ordinances are not only tools in teaching, but—like Catholic sacraments—are also binding rituals. A ritual can be defined as a symbolic act meant to bridge a distance, to initiate a passage, or to symbolize a relationship of belonging.<sup>74</sup> In a Christian context, binding or sealing both refer to a covenant relationship between humans and God that is meant to bridge the gap between them: the gap in refinement of character (perfection) and the gap between earth and heaven (salvation) or

between the mortal life we live now and the eternal life that gods enjoy (exaltation). One can view the temple ritual in both Methodist and Calvinist senses of surety of salvation: it can be instrumental both in receiving spiritual outpourings and in confirming one's holiness or standing before God. Another Methodist or Arminian element, one could say, is that the relationship is entered into of one's own free will and choice.

All these functions can be applied to the temple ordinances, which for Joseph Smith and the early leaders were seen as parts of one ritual. Perhaps with the exception of baptism for the living—the first initiation rite to become a member of the Church—all other ordinances were done in the temple setting: sacrament,<sup>75</sup> washings and anointings, endowment, marriage sealing, washing of feet, and so forth (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:75, 138–41). The new (Nauvoo) additions to the endowment and marriage ordinances were introduced in the upper room of Joseph's red brick store. He had asked five men who were Masons to prepare the room according to his instructions. Eight people were the first to receive this improvised endowment on 4 May 1842. It is illustrative to consider how Joseph later apologized for the improvised quarters, saying to Brigham Young:

This is not arranged right, but, we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed, and I wish you take this matter in hand . . . organize and systematize all these ceremonies . . . [Brigham Young:] We performed the ordinances under Joseph's supervision numerous times and each time I got something more so that when we went through the Temple at Nauvoo I understood and knew how to place them there. We had our ceremonies pretty correct.<sup>76</sup>

It was an evolving ceremony, and frankly, it has been evolving ever since,<sup>77</sup> which tells us something about its instrumental nature. Symbols, by their metaphorical nature, are meant to “carry over” (μετα-φέρειν) from one realm of reality to another. For example, the story of Adam and Eve can have meaning within the context of their

dealings with God but at the same time can carry over meaning for all men and women going through mortal life. The portrayal of the stories and symbols—with the exception of some key elements—does not have to be exact every time. There is constant interpretation: some (though little) by the persons portraying the symbols (live performance) and even more by the persons receiving them. In fact, every individual receiving them can make his or her own interpretations and apply them in his or her life.

These new temple ordinances bring initiates into higher knowledge and ritual experiences and prepare them for meeting God and becoming like God. They can be seen as steps on a ladder, a pedagogy toward perfection, as Joseph explained:

Here then is eternal life, to know the only wise and true God. You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves; to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done; by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you are able to sit in glory as doth those who sit enthroned in everlasting power; . . . When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom and go on until you learn the last principle; it will be a great while before you have learned the last. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it is a great thing to learn salvation beyond the grave.<sup>78</sup>

Joseph Smith seemed eager to prepare the Saints to meet God in this life and have the promised blessings sealed upon them. All his temple instructions point to that.

Washings and anointings were among the first temple ordinances to be performed in this dispensation. An important part of these rituals are the references to our own bodies and the blessings connected to them. So, one's own body becomes an instrument in sanctification by overcoming the natural tendencies of the flesh and instead by using the body to acquire these spiritual blessings. One could say the Methodist sense of perfection, becoming entirely clean of (the blood and) sins (of this generation), took on this sacramental

form in Joseph's perfectionism. Again, internalization through the ritual is very prominent, as these blessings are memorized and one's own body—and the symbolic garment it is clothed with—serve as daily reminders. It also has a communal aspect of great trust since the washings and anointings are performed by a brother or sister, who symbolically touches the parts of the body being blessed, thus providing the experience that internalizes the ritual.

The endowment is even closer to a ladder of sanctification, as the initiate is literally taken from one phase to the other, symbolized by the different rooms one passes through, the increasing brightness of light, and the ever deeper commitments entered into. Deeper commitments also lead to a closer connection with the divine in anticipation of reuniting with God at the end of the ceremony, where one ritually steps into God's presence by passing through a veil (see Ether 3:20).

Temple marriage is, of course, a direct symbol of uniting man and woman in God and having these relationships sealed beyond the grave. Children of parents who have been sealed are born in the covenant, and covenant relationships can be extended vicariously to ancestors. Blessings pertaining to offspring in this world and the next are pronounced and are found in symbolic representations of fertility.<sup>79</sup> Unity in marriage as a way to grow nearer to Heavenly Father and Mother sets up family life as a learning environment as well, one that allows us to practice becoming gods and to have an "increase" (Doctrine and Covenants 131:4).

We could go on expanding on the symbolism of these ordinances, but I noted only some that had relation to the perfectionism Joseph taught. The Latter-day Saint temple ritual is deeply pedagogical: anyone can learn new things relevant to one's current phase of development and as the Holy Spirit may direct. This, one can say, is the perfect mode of learning: tailored, deeply spiritual, and experiential. On the one hand it brings personal revelation to the individual by communal symbolic rites and experiences, and on the other hand the sacredness of these teachings is safeguarded by the principle

of initiation and the promises entered into. I identify this mode of teaching with Joseph's pedagogy of perfection. In essence this model allows all Saints, of their own free will and choice, to participate in ordinances as a means to experience spiritual maturation, to the end purpose of meeting and becoming like God.

The early Saints who first received these ordinances were still innovating and learning to apply this new mode of teaching to their development and spiritual life. I would like to show, from their own experiences, how they thought these teachings were to be applied and disseminated. Just as Joseph had openly preached many of the principles pertaining to exaltation and making one's calling and election sure, partakers of the ordinances discussed their experiences in the temple. Helen Mar Whitney recorded Amasa Lyman's insights and experiences of the temple ordinances he received on 21 December 1845, which reveal some keys to the perceived purposes of temple pedagogy:

These things [are] to put you in possession of the means of salvation, and be brought into a *proper relationship to God*. . . . It is the key by which you *approach* God. No impression which you receive here should be lost. It was to rivet the recollections of these things in your *memory*, like a nail in a sure place *never to be forgotten*. The scenery through which you have passed is actually laying before you a picture or *map*, by which you are to *travel through life* and obtain entrance into the celestial Kingdom hereafter.<sup>80</sup>

According to this statement, the ritual accomplishes three things: First, it is meant to bridge the gap between humans and God, to establish a "covenant relation." Second, it provides a specific goal to internalize the oral scripture by memorizing the proceedings of the ordinances and even to imprint them in our bodies through gestures. Third, there is a close relation between our symbolic journey through the temple and our everyday travel through life.

Nowhere in any ordinance or covenant is there such a clear connection with the everyday, or Christian, life. We are to imitate Christ,

we put on Christ, we become as Christ as we advance in his priesthood, we take his name upon us and we even pass through him—which symbolically sanctifies us to be ready to meet him—so that we, as “true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; . . . may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48).

Easily overlooked, but to me very poignant, is the fact that Amasa Lyman’s experience quoted above comes from minutes of meetings held just after the performance of the ordinances. This was like a temple testimony meeting, with seventy-five brothers and sisters present and where several shared their views on what they had just experienced. These early Saints, under the direction of Heber C. Kimball, helped each other understand and get a testimony of these important saving ordinances. They were actively making that connection with real life and following and becoming like Christ, and that is what Saints today are asked to do.

## **Conclusion: Teaching Joseph’s Perfectionism and Temple Pedagogy in Our Time**

God’s earthly kingdom is a school in which the saints learn the doctrines of salvation. Some members of the Church are being taught elementary courses; others are approaching graduation and can do independent research where the deep and hidden things are concerned. All must learn line upon line and precept upon precept.<sup>81</sup>

As in Joseph’s time, we too hope to progress—and help fellow members progress—and to be initiated further and further into the prerequisite knowledge, moving from grace to grace in our lives, onto exaltation and making our calling and election sure. But are all the modes of teaching that the early Saints had at their disposal still present and intact? We have some institutionalized ways to prepare,

initiate, and perform temple ordinances for members who are ready to receive them. There is an official temple preparation class, and up until 1990 there was a summary at the conclusion of the endowment ceremony that provided some explanation about the symbolism involved. Systematic teaching and mentoring about the temple ceremony, as in the School of the Prophets or like the temple testimony meetings of 1845, have been discontinued.

Education is still the most dominant form of worship in Latter-day Saint Church meetings and homes, with Church members being encouraged to keep rereading the standard works of scripture, aided by Sunday School and seminary and institute classes. But does this bring about sufficient development? If one is to learn line upon line, ascending Joseph's ladder, advancing from the preparatory gospel to the temple university, one needs constant hints leading to new and deeper meanings and insights<sup>82</sup> into knowledge beyond one's current understanding. I argue that the same goes for the oral scripture hidden in the proceedings and performances of the temple. Progress without mentoring is difficult.

Just recently Elder Bednar stressed the importance of teaching about the temple in the home and announced the release of a new specialized website about temples. He reiterated President Benson's guidelines to speak about the temple with care and reverence, but he underscored the need to indeed teach about it.<sup>83</sup> And the home is a fitting place, closely connected to the temple, both to teach about the principles and covenants of the temple and to share experiences or even revelations received in the temple. But are other more communal schools of prophets outside the home imaginable?

True, Joseph's pedagogy of perfection is quite a unique form of salvation theology, adding elements that Joseph deemed to be lost in most traditional Christian theologies he was surrounded with and that he thus sought to restore. It made the restored Church, with its emphasis on temple praxis, stand out more than it blended in. This gave rise to a paradox,<sup>84</sup> even in Joseph's time, of stressing the newly revealed points of doctrine (including premortal existence, eternal



marriage, and exaltation as theosis) on the one hand and wanting to be accepted as a Christian religion on the other. But this now seems to have changed as the temple—and all that it stands for—is moved more to the forefront, for example, in the Church's message of hastening the work of salvation on "both sides of the veil."<sup>85</sup> The temple offers a tangible and achievable way to prepare faithful believers in Christ to the point where they are ready to meet him. We could take the same pride in these teachings as did the early Saints who announced it in bold terms:

These teachings of the Savior [in 1 John 3:2–3; 1 Peter 1:15–16; Matthew 5:48; John 14:12; 17:20–24] most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation, and what He proposed unto the human family when He proposed to save them—that He proposed to make them like unto himself, and He was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings; and for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved.<sup>86</sup>

And we could recognize, as did Bruce R. McConkie, that to continually advance toward God is an innate human desire:

Among those who have received the gospel, and who are seeking diligently to live its laws and gain eternal life, there is *an instinctive and determined desire to make their calling and election sure*. Because they have tasted the good things of God and sipped from the fountain of eternal truth, they now seek the divine presence, where they shall know all things, have all power, all might, and all dominion, and in fact be like Him who is the great Prototype of all saved beings—God our Heavenly Father. (Doctrine and Covenants 132:20.) *This is the end objective, the chief goal of all the faithful*, and there is nothing greater in all eternity, "for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation." (Doctrine and Covenants 6:13.)<sup>87</sup>

## Notes

This paper resulted from research done during the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship 2015 Summer Seminar, “Organizing the Kingdom: Priesthood, Church Government, and the Forms of LDS Worship.” This adaptation is shortened and focuses more on soteriology as *imitatio Christi* and the role temple practice and worship play in the development of the Saints as Joseph Smith envisioned it. A broader version of this paper was published earlier as “Pedagogy of Perfection: Joseph Smith’s Perfectionism, How It Was Taught in the Early LDS Church, and Its Contemporary Applicability,” *Dialogue* 51, no. 4 (2018): 105–43.

1. From a letter by Joseph Smith “to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” 6 September 1842, in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011). See also Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
2. Joseph Smith, “To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” 6 September 1842.
3. For a definition of Christian perfection, with an etymology and all its shades, see Thomas A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People; The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 22–25. For an extensive treatise of precedents to Latter-day Saint perfectionism (or *theosis*), see Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought; Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), chapter 21.
4. Richard L. Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), 162, 133–35.
5. Becoming as God is to this day the single most-contested doctrine upon which mainstream Christianity disavows The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a Christian religion. An example of disputing this doctrine is “Response to the 1982 anti-Mormon film *The God*

- Makers*,” FairMormon, [https://fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism\\_of\\_Mormonism/Video/The\\_God\\_Makers](https://fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Video/The_God_Makers).
6. “Discourse, 10 April 1842, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff,” p. [146], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-10-april-1842-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/1>.
  7. “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by *Times and Seasons*,” p. 614, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/3>. See also Doctrine and Covenants 93:12–13.
  8. I will distinguish two lines of certainty: The first is about believers who looked for certainty that the power of God was present, and that by that presence God showed his acceptance of the exercise of their faith—in other words, that their religious acts or rites were recognized by God and that they administered them—as a church—with (a degree of) authority. The second line is about surety of salvation, expanding on the first line because it has to do with reassurances received in this life about our ability to transfer to the next life in a saved state. We will see that the definition of that saved state determines to a great extent the reassurances and the authority needed.
  9. For example, Methodist evangelist and cofounder of the Holiness movement Phoebe Palmer, in her book *The Way of Holiness*, taught that to be a Bible Christian one must “travel the way of holiness,” being fully obedient to and a “co-worker with God” by being true to the “Spirit’s operations on the heart” and fully open to “the direct teachings of the Spirit” as the only way to be forgiven and “cleanse[d] from all unrighteousness” “for the attainment of the salvation promised in the Gospel of Christ.” See Phoebe Palmer, *The Way of Holiness* (New York: Lane & Tippett, 1845 [1843]), 59. Additionally, the Presbyterian revivalist Charles G. Finney taught about “Growth in Grace” as “exhibit[ing] the character of God more and more, to reflect as many rays of image of God possible . . . to obey more and more perfectly and constantly the Law of God.” See Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York: Leavitt, Lord, 1835), lecture 22, 416.
  10. However, not all Protestants left sacramentalism. Some reformists like Calvin and followers (for example, Theodore Beza and Théodore

Turrettini) viewed sacraments as instruments of grace (albeit not in the same way as Catholicism [for example, the Council of Trent]).

11. "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/2>. There is some evidence also that Joseph did indeed attend Methodist meetings; see Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 37.
12. Christopher C. Jones, "We Latter-day Saints Are Methodists: The Influence of Methodism on Early Mormon Religiosity" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2009), 14–24.
13. *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright*, with an introduction by Charles L. Wallis (Nashville: Abingdon Press reprint, 1984), 225–26. Christopher Jones warns though that "there is no record that authenticates Cartwright's attributed statement to Joseph Smith," although it does strengthen the suggestion that Joseph and his contemporaries believed "that Methodism contained more truth than other religions of the era." See Jones, "We Latter-day Saints Are Methodists," 25.
14. "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 2; Steven C. Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision: A Guide to the Historical Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 14–21.
15. Orsamus Turner, a former printer's apprentice at the *Palmyra Register*, records in 1851 that he remembered that Smith caught "a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting, away down in the woods, on the Vienna road" and that he later became "a very passable exhorter in the evening meetings." See Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester, NY: William Alling, 1851), 214.
16. Alexander Neibaur, in a journal excerpt of 24 May 1844, recorded that "Br Joseph tolt us the first call he had a Revival Meeting his Mother & Br & Sister got Religion, he wanted to get Religion too wanted to feel & shout like the Rest but could feel nothing." "Alexander Neibaur, Journal, 24 May 1844, extract," p. [23], in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*, vol. 3 of the Journals

- series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015).
17. Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 23–25.
  18. Methodists also clung to *sola scriptura*—whatever revelation was received must be in accordance with scripture.
  19. Milton V. Backman Jr., “Awakenings in the Burned-Over District: New Light on the Historical Setting of the First Vision,” in *Exploring the First Vision*, ed. Samuel Alonzo Dodge and Steven C. Harper (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 177–78.
  20. William Neill, “Thoughts on Revivals of Religion,” *Christian Herald*, 7 April 1821, 708–11, in Backman, “Awakenings,” 186.
  21. The partaking of the sacrament in Latter-day Saint theology can also be seen as a weekly reviving spiritual experience.
  22. “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 2.
  23. Jones, “We Latter-day Saints Are Methodists,” 32–33.
  24. The similarities are quite striking. In Young’s own words: “I prayed continually to God to make me holy. . . . While in this state of mind I had a very singular manifestation, . . . when all of a sudden I saw the Heavens open and a body of light above the brightness of the sun descending towards me, . . . I then felt satisfied that the Lord had heard my prayers and my sins were forgiven.” Phinehas Young, “Life of Phinehas Howe Young—Written by Himself,” L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections). Quoted in Jones, “We Latter-day Saints are Methodists,” 33.
  25. “Letterbook 1,” p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letterbook-1/9>.
  26. John Wesley, “Sermon 11, The Witness of the Spirit II,” 1, no. 2 (1767), in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1872), 1:285, quoted in Jones, “We Latter-day Saints Are Methodists,” 42.
  27. “They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof.” “History, 1838–1856, volume

- A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 3. See Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:9.
28. *On Perfection* (Sermon 40, 1739), *Christian Perfection* (Sermon 76, 1784). These were sermons on sanctification, which hints at how Wesley understood “perfection.” See “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection” (treatise, 1739).
  29. John Wesley, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” in *The Works of John Wesley* 11, no. 29, 1:366–446.
  30. John Wesley, “The End of Christ’s Coming” (Sermon 62), Wesley Center, available at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-62-the-end-of-christs-coming/>.
  31. Wesley, “Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” 366–446.
  32. Like Smith taught in the King Follett discourse. “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by *Times and Seasons*,” p. 614, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/3>.
  33. Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 17. Also, Richard L. Bushman makes a strong claim of Universalism present in the New England area and influence on Asael Smith’s religious beliefs, in Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1984), 27–28. See also his more recent *Rough Stone Rolling*, 17.
  34. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 17.
  35. E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 221–22.
  36. William Ellery Channing. “Likeness to God: Discourse at the Ordination of the Rev. FA Farley, Providence, RI, 1828,” in *The Complete Works of William E. Channing* (Whitefish: Kessinger, 2010), 230. The connection to the topic of theosis was also made by Givens in *Wrestling the Angel*, 263. For further discussion on Channing, see Nicholas J. Frederick’s paper “Incarnation, Exaltation, and Christological Tension in Doctrine and Covenants 93:1–20,” in this volume, 11–41.
  37. As exemplified in this quote: “To hold intellectual and moral affinity with the Supreme Being, to partake his spirit, to be his children by derivations

- of kindred excellence, to bear a growing conformity to the perfection which we adore, this is a felicity which obscures and annihilates all other good." Channing, "Likeness to God," 230.
38. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 136. See also Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 17.
  39. "Discourse, 10 April 1842, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," pp. 146–47, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-10-april-1842-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/2>.
  40. "Minutes, circa 3–4 June 1831," p. 4, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-circa-3-4-june-1831/2>. The historical introduction notes that "this conference marked the first time elders in the church were "ordained to the High Priesthood."
  41. "Minutes, 25–26 October 1831," p. 11, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-25-26-october-1831/2>.
  42. David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 5. He further explains, "Key players in the sixteenth-century Reformation used many of these sealing passages [in the Bible] as evidence for their belief in predestination. Liberal reaction to Calvinist doctrine arose early in the seventeenth century when Arminians rejected this view, asserting that God's sovereignty and human free will were compatible, that such sealings depended on choices of the individual believer."
  43. This Kirtland "endowment" during the solemn assembly held on 30 March 1836 included washings and anointings of kinds, the washing of feet (and face), and the sacrament. "Minutes, 30 March 1836," pp. 187–88, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-30-march-1836/2>. See also Doctrine and Covenants 88:127–41.
  44. See Matthew 16:19; Helaman 10:4–7; and Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16; and Joseph Smith's explanation in Doctrine and Covenants 128:5–18.
  45. See Zebedee Coltrin Diary, 15 November 1831, Church History Library (hereafter CHL); Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 27 September 1832, CHL; and Journal of Orson Pratt, 26 August and 8 September 1833, CHL.

46. Later, Joseph Smith would express this in the Wentworth Letter as one of the central characteristics of the Church; it was later canonized as the fifth article of faith: “We believe that a man must be called of God, ‘by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands’ by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.” “*Times and Seasons*, 1 March 1842,” p. 709, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-1-march-1842/7>. See also Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith 1:5.
47. Actually several visitations, because three years after his First Vision he again prayed to know his standing before God, and as an answer angel Moroni appeared: “I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; when on the evening of the above mentioned twenty first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me that I might know of my state and standing before him. For I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation as I had previously had one.” “History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2],” p. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/5>.
48. Doctrine and Covenants 88:68 says, “He will unveil his face unto you,” and verse 119 says, “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even 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.”
49. As Joseph once stated, “A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge.” “Discourse, 10 April 1842, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff,” p. 147. Being brought back into God’s presence by gaining knowledge is an idea also found in the Book of Mormon: “And because of the knowledge of this man [brother of Jared] he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; . . . wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and He did minister unto him” (Ether 3:19–20).



50. Lectures on Faith, Second lecture; emphasis added. "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," p. 35, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/43>.
51. "Minute Book 1," p. 162, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-1/166>. Note the resemblance to Luke 24:49.
52. "Minute Book 1," pp. 156a–b; 159; 162.
53. "There were members as follows: Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, William Smith, Frederick G. Williams, Orson Hyde (who had the charge of the school), Zebedee Coltrin, Sylvester Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr., Levi Hancock, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, Newel K. Whitney, Samuel H. Smith, John Murdock, Lyman Johnson and Ezra Thayer." As related by Zebedee Coltrin in "Minutes, Salt Lake City School of the Prophets," 3 October 1883.
54. This remark by Zebedee Coltrin obscures the date when this took place. He doesn't state the date, only the date of the organization of the School. The apostolic charge was given in 1835 and the temple dedicated 27 March 1836.
55. As related by Zebedee Coltrin in "Minutes, Salt Lake City School of the Prophets," 3 October 1883.
56. "Minute Book 1," p. 154.
57. "Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/2>.
58. "Sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred)." "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/1>. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7; see also 132:46.

59. "History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843]," p. 1551, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/194>. See also Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.
60. "History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842]," p. 1328, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/502>.
61. "Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book," p. 37, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book/34>.
62. See table with list of initiated in Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances," in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 102.
63. "History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842]," p. 1328, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/502>.
64. "History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844]," p. 1866, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/238>.
65. From Heber C. Kimball, in a letter to Parley and Mary Ann Pratt, dated 17 June 1842, Church History Archive: "We received some precious things though the Prophet on the priesthood that would caus your Soul to rejoice. I can not give them to you on paper fore they are not to be riten. So you must come and get them fore your Self. We have organized a Lodge here. Of Masons. Since we obtained a Charter. That was in March since that thare *has near two hundred been made masons* Br Joseph and Sidny was the first that was Received in to the Lodg. All of the twelve have become members Exept Orson P. . . . thare is a similarity of preast Hood in Masonry. Bro Joseph ses masonry was taken from preasthood but had become degenerated but menny things are perfect"; emphasis added. Actually, the temple ceremonies were not written down until the year before Brigham Young's death.

66. A complete study of aspects of the Latter-day Saint temple ritual that can be traced back to Jewish, Egyptian, and Masonic sources, as well as the early apostles lies far beyond the scope of this paper. Hugh Nibley's extensive work on this can be consulted. I have focused, for the latter part of this paper, on the intended purposes of the mode of teaching that was devised.
67. See 1 Nephi 13:20–29. Verse 26 says, “For behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.”
68. See Armand L. Mauss, “Culture, Charisma, and Change: Reflections on Mormon Temple Worship,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 4 (1987): 79–80.
69. Also from Heber C. Kimball's letter to Parley P. Pratt, dated 17 June 1842, Church History Archive.
70. There are many excellent sources on the comparison and evolvement of Masonic and Latter-day Saint temple ordinances; for example, Buerger compares them in *Mysteries of Godliness*. See Michael W. Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry: The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 3 (1984): 1–113. See also Matthew B. Brown, *Exploring the Connection between Mormons and Masons* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2009), a recent article by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Freemasonry and the Origins of Modern Temple Ordinances,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 159–237, and again Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992).
71. Educate (v.) mid-15c., “bring up (children), to train,” from Latin *educatus*, past participle of *educare* “bring up, rear, educate,” which is a frequentative of or otherwise related to *educere* “bring out, lead forth,” from *ex-* “out” (see *ex-*) + *ducere* “to lead” (see *duke* (n.)). Meaning “provide schooling” is first attested 1580s. Related: Educated; educating. According to “Century Dictionary,” *educere*, of a child, is “usually with reference to bodily nurture or support, while *educare* refers more frequently to the mind,” and “There is no authority for the common statement that the primary sense of education is to ‘draw out or unfold the powers of the mind,’” from [http://etymonline.com/index.php?term=educate&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://etymonline.com/index.php?term=educate&allowed_in_frame=0).

72. Pedagogue (n.) late 14c., “schoolmaster, teacher,” from Old French *pedagogue* “teacher of children” (14c.), from Latin *paedagogus*, from Greek *paidagogos* “slave who escorts boys to school and generally supervises them,” later “a teacher,” from *pais* (genitive *paidos*) “child” (see pedo-) + *agogos* “leader,” from *agein* “to lead” (see act (n.) from [http://etymonline.com/index.php?term=pedagogue&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://etymonline.com/index.php?term=pedagogue&allowed_in_frame=0)).
73. Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 16.
74. See Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 121.
75. The sacrament, of course, was also performed outside of the temple in regular Sunday meetings. It seems to have been an ordinance to remember Christ’s sacrifice on any occasion the early brethren seemed fit. For an extensive treatise on the sacrament, see Ugo A. Perego, “The Changing Forms of the Latter-day Saint Sacrament,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 22 (2016): 1–16. Available online at <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-changing-forms-of-the-latter-day-saint-sacrament/>.
76. L. John Nuttall, diary, typescript entry for 7 February 1877, Vault MSS 790; Journals of L[eonard] John Nuttall, 1857–1904, 19th Century Western and Mormon Americana, Special Collections.
77. In January 2019 the First Presidency announced the new changes to the temple ceremony using these words: “Over these many centuries, details associated with temple work have been adjusted periodically. . . . Prophets have taught that there will be no end to such adjustments as directed by the Lord to His servants” (First Presidency Statement on Temples, 2 January 2019, available at <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/temple-worship>). The previous major changes in the endowment date from 1990; some minor changes in the initiatories were made in between, diminishing the communal part of touching at the pronouncement of blessings. See below and John-Charles Duffy, “Concealing the Body, Concealing the Sacred: The Decline of Ritual Nudity in Mormon Temples,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 1–21. A full account of all policy and content changes can be found in the works of Buerger, *Mysteries of Godliness*, and Buerger, “‘The Fulness of the Priesthood’: The

- Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 1 (1983): 10–44.
78. “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Times and Seasons,” p. 614; emphasis added.
  79. This is most obvious in the Salt Lake Temple where the celestial room is adorned with many fertility symbols.
  80. Helen Mar Whitney, “Scenes in Nauvoo, and Incidents from H.C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Woman’s Exponent* 12 (1 and 15 August 1883), 26, in Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances,” 115–16; emphasis added.
  81. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 2:323.
  82. In the literal meaning of “looking into” or “peeking.” So “dropping hints” and letting others “take a peek” becomes part of the teaching skill. In Dutch there is a phrase that comes even closer to this skill: Een tip van de sluier oplichten, “lifting up a tip of the veil.”
  83. David A. Bednar, “Prepared to Obtain Every Needful Thing,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 101–4.
  84. The fourth paradox as explained by Terryl Givens in *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 53–62.
  85. President Russell M. Nelson and Sister Wendy W. Nelson, “Hope of Israel,” Worldwide Youth Devotional, 3 June 2018, Conference Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, at [https://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/worldwide-devotional-for-young-adults/2018/06/hope-of-israel?lang=eng&cid=rdb\\_v\\_hope-of-Israel](https://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/worldwide-devotional-for-young-adults/2018/06/hope-of-israel?lang=eng&cid=rdb_v_hope-of-Israel).
  86. Lectures on Faith, Seventh lecture, verse 16. “Doctrine and Covenants, 1835,” p. 701; emphasis added.
  87. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:325; emphasis added.