

# *The Role of Ordinances in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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**M**y assigned topic is the role of ordinances in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As I am a member of the Church, but not a spokesman, I will quote frequently from those who are spokesmen and also from the official literature, primarily the four standard works of scripture accepted by the Church. In order to discuss this subject properly, I pray for the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit in both the preparation and delivery. Although I will quote official sources, I alone am responsible for the organization and points of communication in this address.

## *Definition of Terms*

Clarity is always a virtue, and in a technical subject it is an absolute necessity. Several years ago I heard an editor, speaking from a writer's perspective, modify the famous words of Paul: "Now abideth these three: consistency, continuity, and clarity; but the greatest of

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these is clarity.” I have great desire to speak in plainness and clarity. It will therefore be helpful to define the terminology that will be used and to state briefly the philosophical setting in which ordinances of the gospel are understood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In striving for clarity, I have tried to be informative but not offensive, convincing but not evangelistic. I trust everyone will receive what I say in that same spirit.

First, by *ordinances* I mean rituals, ceremonies, and performances. In legal language, rules and regulations are often called “ordinances” because they tend to maintain “order.” But in this essay, ordinances mean such things as baptism, the laying on of hands, ordination, marriage, the Lord’s Supper, and other ceremonial behavior necessary for individual eternal salvation. I hope to show that ceremonial ordinances are didactic and tend to maintain unity and a standard of conformity in belief and practice.

Second, the word *plan* in this treatise refers to what Latter-day Saints call the Lord’s plan of salvation for the human family. In Latter-day Saint scripture and literature, the plan is variously called plan of redemption, plan of happiness, plan of mercy, plan of ordinances, and other similar terms. Although neither the term “plan of salvation” nor its derivatives are categorically mentioned in the Bibles in common use today, elements of the plan are discernible in the Bible, and those who know the plan from latter-day scripture can see it in the Bible.

Third, in this essay, the word *church* means The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Fourth, in this essay, biblical quotations are from the King James Version.

Fifth, the presiding officer of the Church is regarded as a prophet, and we speak of him as such, especially the Prophet Joseph Smith.

### *Philosophical Setting of the Plan*

A brief expression of the theological background of the plan of God will be helpful in recognizing the role of ordinances because they are a major feature of the plan. I think it appropriate to begin with a statement of the nature of the Godhead from the Doctrine and Covenants, an official collection of revelations and inspired documents

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for the governance and edification of the Church. I will read from section 130, verses 22 and 23: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us. A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him.” It is basic doctrine of the Church that all human beings are literal children of God the Father. He is the prototype and standard of perfection, and the plan is put in place to enable us to know God and become like Him. Everyone is a spirit daughter or son of God and has existed for ages as an intelligent, active, functional, and individual spirit in a premortal life. As an essential part of the plan, each spirit, when it is ready and when the Lord sees fit, comes to earth through the birth process to obtain a body of flesh and bones.<sup>1</sup> The physical body is necessary for the highest level of eternal progress, and since the Fall of Adam brought death, the plan provides for every person to regain his or her body in a literal, physical, permanent resurrection, made possible only by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The literal resurrection of the body is of the greatest importance.

It is not enough just to be alive forever, even with a resurrected body. Because of Adam and also because of our own sins, every mortal person is fallen and thus needs to be redeemed, purified, washed clean, and made holy. The gospel of Christ is redemptive. Salvation does not come by absorption or by osmosis. The cleansing, or rebirth, can come only because of the Father’s plan through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and by way of the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, all members of the Godhead are involved in the saving process. The plan provides everything necessary for the spiritual and physical redemption of the human family through the ordinances, covenants, and priesthood authority, if persons are willing to receive it. In this essay the focus is on *ordinances*, but it is understood that each person must also live a moral, honest, and faithful life in addition to receiving the ordinances.

Man’s eternal journey is symbolized by the ordinances. Fallen human nature cannot comprehend nor obtain the fulness of Christ’s Atonement without the ordinances that Christ Himself has provided

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for that purpose (see D&C 84:19–22). The ordinances and covenants are instruments of change, repentance, purification, and personal spiritual improvement. The ordinances are very important to us because the greatest benefits of Christ’s Atonement are administered to us only through those ordinances, and ordinances lead the participant to know God. All of the principles of salvation are illustrated in the ordinances: spiritual rebirth, death and resurrection, Lord’s Supper, authority, atonement, and so forth.

Another fundamental doctrine of the Church is that all humans carry their individuality as a woman or as a man throughout eternity. I quote from paragraph two of the official Proclamation on the Family issued September 23, 1995, by the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles: “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”<sup>2</sup> Eternity of gender places a particular focus and value on marriage as an eternal principle. Eternal marriage ordinances are performed by priesthood authority in a temple.

Knowing all things, our Heavenly Father provided an organized plan for the salvation and happiness of His children. The plan applies to every stage of human existence of all people, at all times, in all circumstances. Naturally, in our present state of mortality we are primarily concerned about how to use the plan with its ordinances to improve our lives by developing spiritual attributes, but we also have the perspective of our premortal and postmortal existence because we know the plan.

There is security to the human mind in knowing that our Father in Heaven loves us and has established the plan for our everlasting benefit if we are willing to abide by it. The plan is the Father’s, but it operates through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit. Willing participation in the plan is required if a person wishes to obtain the fulness of the Father’s blessings and become like Him. The Lord causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall and countless blessings to come upon both the just and the unjust, but complete salvation is reserved for those who follow Christ and obey the Father through His plan of ordinances.

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It is also basic to the plan that it is impossible for a person to be saved in ignorance of the plan (see D&C 131:6), and likewise a person is saved no faster than he or she gains knowledge of and participates in the plan.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps with this brief doctrinal background, we can investigate the role of specific ordinances of the divine plan to see their function, meaning, and eternal purpose, and to answer why they are considered indispensable by the Church.

*Ordinances Older Than This Earth*

It is stated in the revelations of God given through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the new and everlasting covenant (which is the entire gospel with all of its laws, ordinances, and covenants) was instituted by the Father and the Son before the foundation of this earth. Note Doctrine and Covenants 132:5, 8–12:

For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world. . . .

Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.

Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?

Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?

And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?

I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.

This matter is further underscored by Doctrine and Covenants 128:5, 8, which states that “God prepared” the ordinance of baptism for the dead even before the foundation of the earth. What is true of one ordinance is true of all of them. The entire plan was established by the Father and the Son before the world was framed.

*Salvation in Christ**The Holy Priesthood*

The plan is totally centered in the mission of Jesus Christ, and from the beginning all things were to be performed in His name. In the beginning (Adam's day), the priesthood was named "the Holy Priesthood, after the order of the Son of God" (D&C 107:3). The Book of Mormon explains that from the earliest times, priests were ordained after the order of the Son "that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to [the] Son for redemption" (Alma 13:2). Regarding ordinances we also read, "Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins" (Alma 13:16). Thus, not only the ordinances but the priesthood that is needed to perform the ordinances were named after, and in recognition of, the Son of God so as to direct the people's minds to Him.

Ordinances are designed to be instructive, illustrative, and symbolic of eternal truths, but they are more than that: ordinances are also implemental, dynamic, and causative. The symbolic nature of baptism by immersion in water is shown in Doctrine and Covenants 128:12–13:

The ordinance of baptism by water, to be immersed therein in order to answer to the likeness of the dead, that one principle might accord with the other; to be immersed in the water and come forth out of the water is in the likeness of the resurrection of the dead in coming forth out of their graves; hence, this ordinance was instituted to form a relationship with the ordinance of baptism for the dead, being in likeness of the dead.

Consequently, the baptismal font was instituted as a similitude of the grave, and was commanded to be in a place underneath where the living are wont to assemble, to show forth the living and the dead, and that all things may have their likeness, and that they may accord one with another—that which is earthly conforming to that which is heavenly, as Paul hath declared, 1 Corinthians 15:46, 47, and 48.

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This accords also with Paul's statements in Romans 6:3–5 and in Colossians 2:12, that baptism is a burial, signifying death and resurrection and a newness of life in Jesus Christ.

By personal participation in the ordinances we can experience this newness of life and begin to know God. The third article of faith of the Church states, "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

The fourth article reads, "We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander, one of those holding the priesthood office of Seventy in the Church, explained how these ordinances function in real life: "Sacred ordinances and knowledge of God are closely related. . . . One who has fully repented of his or her sins and with full purpose of heart receives baptism knows that God not only has the power to forgive and to take away the burden of guilt associated with sin, but that He [actually] does so. This person knows, through personal experience, something about God and His magnificent power and kindness. The only way to truly know these things is by participating worthily in the ordinance of baptism itself."<sup>4</sup> By being baptized the person obtains the knowledge that God does forgive sins, for he feels it in his own soul, which reminds us of Jesus's words in John 7:17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." After baptism he or she is eligible to partake of the Lord's Supper, which should be done frequently in remembrance of Jesus's flesh and blood.

What we each need the most, we are least able to accomplish on our own. People cannot save themselves—only Jesus Christ has the strength and the power to save anyone. And Jesus has sufficient for all humankind.

Other essential ordinances will be discussed later on, but we first must focus attention on the relationship of ordinances to the covenants of God that are also part of the plan. Ordinances are our

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access to the covenants. Although there are some ordinances that may not have an associated covenant, there are no eternal covenants that are not connected to an ordinance. A covenant is a binding agreement and commitment between God and an individual, and it carries a promised blessing if obeyed. These covenants are not optional if one wishes to receive the wholeness of God's blessing. God requires from His children the commitment of a stated covenant before He bestows His greatest blessings upon them. This is the point at which, in addition to being symbols, ordinances render a special function. It is in the performance of an ordinance that each covenant is implemented and activated in one's life.

For example, as noted earlier, baptism brings the promise and realization of forgiveness of sin. By ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood, a man receives the oath and covenant of the priesthood with the promise that he can inherit all that God has (see D&C 84:35–40). By the performance of the eternal marriage ordinance, the covenant of marriage for time and all eternity is conferred on a man and a woman with the promise of an eternal family and endless posterity.

The wonderful purpose and results of participating in ordinances and covenants is further explained by President James E. Faust of the First Presidency of the Church in a talk titled "Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart": "Ordinances and covenants help us to remember who we are and our duty to God. They are the vehicles the Lord has provided to conduct us into eternal life. If we honor them, He will give us added strength. . . . Our greatest hope should be to enjoy the sanctification which comes from this divine guidance; our greatest fear should be to forfeit these blessings."<sup>5</sup>

### *The Established Order of the Kingdom*

It soon becomes obvious to anyone who is taught the doctrine of the Church that the plan is a definite set of regulations, performances, directives, and covenants. A definite plan calls for well-defined ordinances and definite authority, and definite procedures with definite promises.



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To the question, “Can we not be saved without going through with all these ordinances?” Joseph Smith replied, “No, not the fulness of salvation.”<sup>6</sup> Jesus Himself said that life eternal is to know the only true God. To become like Him is the only way to really know Him. He has revealed the plan that is designed to get us there (see John 17:3; 1 John 3:1–3). It is a straight and narrow pathway, available only through Jesus Christ, and consisting of the ordinances, covenants, and requirements that God Himself has established. We know that God has both the knowledge and the power to save humankind. We have neither the knowledge nor the power to save ourselves and therefore need divine help and direction. Why, then, should it be thought a thing incredible that God should have a plan? And having a plan, why should it be thought incredible that it should have ordinances?

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that because the constitution of humankind has not changed since the Fall of Adam, the requirements for salvation have not changed.<sup>8</sup> All must be saved by the same principles and by the same ordinances, the same covenants and the same divine power. It is by Jesus and Jesus only that salvation is available, and our emphasis on ordinances is because we believe that these ordinances were established by Jesus and the Father for our salvation before the world was formed. If requirements varied from time to time and from place to place, God would be impartial and salvation would have its bargain days. Joseph Smith spoke of “fixed principles:”

Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. . . .

We are only capable of comprehending that certain things exist, which we may acquire by certain fixed principles. If men would acquire salvation, they have got to be subject, before they leave this world, to certain rules and principles, which were fixed by an unalterable decree before the world was. . . .

Hence the importance of embracing and subscribing to principles of eternal truth by all men upon the earth that expect eternal life.

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I assure the Saints that truth, in reference to these matters, can and may be known through the revelations of God in the way of His ordinances, and in answer to prayer.<sup>7</sup>

It is one thing to know that there is a heaven. It is quite another thing to know that you yourself are going there.

Thus, in the Church we find sacred ordinances, sacred covenants, sacred priesthood authority with which to perform those ordinances, sacred places such as temples where the most advanced ordinances are performed and the most sacred covenants are made, all in compliance with the divine revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I have endeavored to present the main features of the plan as understood in the Church so that everyone can see where the emphasis on ordinances is coming from. Since most of earth's inhabitants have not had the opportunity as mortals to accept or reject the plan, the Lord has made ample provision for all, either in this life or in the postmortal spirit world after death, to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. The ordinances are then performed in a temple on earth in behalf of the dead. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that the same ordinances of the living must be performed for the dead, and each ordinance for the dead must be performed separately and individually, the same as for the living.<sup>9</sup>

### *Specific Ordinances*

I have already mentioned the symbolism and purpose of baptism by water, but something more need be said about the laying on of hands for conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost, and also the laying on of hands for other purposes.

**Conferring the Holy Ghost.** Jesus, Peter, John, and Paul each give evidence that water baptism was to be followed with a baptism by the Holy Ghost, which was to be conferred by the laying on of hands (see John 3:1–8; Acts 8:14–19; 19:1–6). While speaking of the absolute need for the Holy Ghost to be conferred after baptism, Joseph Smith declared:

You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost.

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Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Savior says, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” “Though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,” according to Galatians 1:8.<sup>10</sup>

He also explained that entrance into the telestial or terrestrial glories can be obtained, after the judgment, without baptism, but entrance into the celestial glory in the presence of God the Father requires baptism of water and of the Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Joseph Smith taught that certain functions of the Holy Ghost may be received before baptism, but the gift of the Holy Ghost in its fulness can only be received after baptism and after the laying on of hands by authorized priesthood holders. He cites Cornelius of Acts chapter 10 as an example:

There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him. Until he obeyed these ordinances and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, according to the order of God, he could not have healed the sick or commanded an evil spirit to come out of a man, and it obey him; for the spirits might say unto him, as they did to the sons of Sceva: ‘Paul we know and Jesus we know, but who are ye?’ . . . I know that all men will be damned if they do not come in the way which He hath opened, and this is the way marked out by the word of the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

The Prophet said that the laying on of hands was the sign or key to receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and it could not be received in any other way.<sup>13</sup>

**The laying on of hands.** Many duties of priesthood leaders in the Church require the laying on of hands, and it is definitely a formal ordinal procedure spoken of frequently in the Old Testament (see

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Numbers 27:18, 23; Deuteronomy 34:9), the New Testament (see Matthew 9:18; Acts 8:14–17; 19:2–6; 1 Timothy 4:14), the Book of Mormon (see Alma 6:1; 3 Nephi 18:36–37), the Doctrine and Covenants (see 20:41, 43, 58, 68; 42:44), and the Pearl of Great Price (see JS—H 1:68–71; Articles of Faith 1:5). This practice is discussed by Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Special blessings, anointings, sealing of anointings, confirmations, ordinations, callings, healings, offices, and graces are conferred by the *laying on of hands* by the Lord’s legal administrators. As with all of the Lord’s prescribed procedural requisites, the proffered blessings come only when the designated formalities are observed.”<sup>14</sup>

It appears that the laying on of hands is a safeguard the Lord placed in the plan to protect the authority of the priesthood and also to point the way to salvation. It demonstrates that to gain the complete blessings of the gospel we must recognize and come to those persons who have the authority. It is a one-on-one experience between receiver and giver. The legal administrator represents the Lord. When a person receives an ordinance under the hand of a legal administrator, the ordinance is as valid as though the Lord Himself had performed it in person. This is stated in Doctrine and Covenants 36:2, when the Lord said to Edward Partridge in 1831, “I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon, and you shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter.”

Consistent with the established procedure, the fifth article of faith states, “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.” And in Doctrine and Covenants 42:11 we find the pattern for recognizing proper calling to leadership positions: “Again I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.” Thus, the laying on of hands by those holding authority in the Church is a major, essential, spiritually enlightening procedure, established before the foundation of the world for the benefit of the children of men at all levels of spiritual development and church office.

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**Sequence of ordinances.** The essential ordinances in the plan begin with baptism in water and follow a particular sequential pattern, continuing with laying on of hands to confer the Holy Ghost, ordination to the priesthood for men, temple endowment, temple marriage, and various sealings. These are performed once for each person individually, always in the above order, because they are progressive in their nature and spiritual level.

An important event in Paul's ministry at Ephesus, recorded in Acts 19:1–7, demonstrates that when a water baptism is improperly performed, due either to incorrect knowledge by the baptizer, or by a lack of proper authority, or both, the baptism must be done again, correctly, and be followed by the laying on of hands, before the gift of the Holy Ghost can occur. The account in the book of Acts shows that Paul perfectly understood this procedure in requiring a rebaptism of the people. Obviously, the same principle applies to all of the ordinances.

Other performances not directly essential for salvation, but which are for helps, government, work of the ministry, and edification, consist of various settings apart to specific callings, healing of the sick, special blessings, and so forth. These are received by the laying on of hands in any sequence, whenever necessary, and can be repeated as often as is prudent and appropriate.

*Dispensations of the Gospel on the Earth*

Based on latter-day revelation, the Church declares that dispensations of the gospel on this earth began with Adam and continued with Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and so forth. In every dispensation all of the ordinances and covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ (such as baptism, laying on of hands, endowments, and marriages) were administered to those who believed. I am aware that this is somewhat vague in the Bible, but it is very clear in latter-day revelation and is a cardinal doctrine of the Church.

With such a view, the prominence of the ancient patriarchs Adam, Enoch, Noah, and others becomes obvious. Adam especially stands in a leadership position as the patriarch of the human family, with priestal authority and stewardship over the whole earth. Joseph

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Smith taught that Adam, as the first man, holding the holy priesthood, “presides over the spirits of all men.”<sup>15</sup> He further explained that Adam’s role is more than just being the first human being and that he holds a position of high hierarchical priesthood prominence

not only by progeny, but the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity, unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ has been revealed from heaven, and will continue to be revealed from henceforth. Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of the dispensations that are to be revealed. . . .

And again, God purposed in Himself that there should not be an eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatsoever, that should be gathered together in one in those dispensations unto the same fullness and eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus; therefore He set the ordinances to be the same forever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from heaven to man, or to send angels to reveal them. . . .

These angels are under the direction of Michael or Adam, who acts under the direction of the Lord [Jesus Christ].<sup>16</sup>

*Every Dispensation a Gospel Dispensation*

Joseph Smith also commented on Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:8, that the gospel was preached to Abraham: “We would like to be informed in what name the Gospel was then preached, whether it was in the name of Christ or some other name. If in any other name, was it the Gospel? And if it was the Gospel, and that preached in the name of Christ, had it any ordinances? If not, was it the Gospel? And if it had ordinances what were they?”<sup>17</sup>

He then pointed out that the ordinances and the gospel were the same in Abraham’s day as they were in every other dispensation. He later added: “We have sufficient grounds to go on and prove from the Bible that the gospel has always been the same; the ordinances to

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fulfill its requirements, the same, and the officers to officiate, the same; and the signs and fruits resulting from the promises, the same: therefore, as Noah was a preacher of righteousness he must have been baptized and ordained to the priesthood by the laying on of the hands, etc.”<sup>18</sup> By way of explanation, I wish to say that from Adam until Jesus animal sacrifice was offered as a similitude of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (see Moses 5:5–8), and being fulfilled in Him it was discontinued. Even while animal sacrifice was an acceptable offering, it was done in addition to the ordinances of baptism. Likewise, the law of Moses, with its rituals and offerings, was “added,” says Paul in Galatians 3:16–25, as a schoolmaster to bring the people to Christ; that is, added temporarily to the regular ordinances until it was fulfilled in Christ and thus was discontinued.

Consistent with the perfection of God, the plan has no unnecessary ordinances. To be valid, ordinances need be performed by proper authority, in the proper manner, using the proper words; otherwise the intended meaning and purpose are lost.

*The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times*

In Ephesians 1:10 Paul spoke of a time future for his day that he called the dispensation of the fulness of times. It is a time in which all the purposes of God for this earth will come to final fruition in Christ Jesus. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that it is evident from Paul’s statement that “all things pertaining to that last dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the same ordinances, covenants, promises, priesthood, and procedures of previous dispensations are today functioning in the Church. These are not here today because we claim to be able to read the Bible better than others do. Instead, our message is that these ordinances, covenants, and priesthood are in the Church, being placed there by latter-day revelation and by the personal, literal, actual visitations of the ancient prophets and apostles to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Thus, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, and others came personally to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and personally ordained them, restoring the priesthood keys held in ancient times.

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### Notes

All biblical citations are from the King James Version.

1. It is beyond the scope of this essay to explain that in the premortal life, Lucifer, one of the spirits, rebelled against the Father and the Son, and with many other spirits of like mind, he was cast out of heaven and lost the privilege to obtain a physical body.

2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.

3. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 217.

4. Dennis B. Neuenschwander, "Ordinances and Covenants," *Ensign*, August 2001, 23–24.

5. James E. Faust, "Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart," *Ensign*, May 1998, 17–20.

6. Smith, *Teachings*, 331.

7. Smith, *Teachings*, 308.

8. Smith, *Teachings*, 324–25.

9. See Smith, *Teachings*, 330, 363.

10. Smith, *Teachings*, 314.

11. See Smith, *Teachings*, 12.

12. Smith, *Teachings*, 199.

13. See Smith, *Teachings*, 148, 199.

14. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 438.

15. Smith, *Teachings*, 157.

16. Smith, *Teachings*, 167–68.

17. Smith, *Teachings*, 60.

18. Smith, *Teachings*, 264.

19. Smith, *Teachings*, 168.