

Conjectural Sketch of Stone Baptismal font, drawing, 1970, LDS Church Archives. This sketch was produced by J. C. Harrington, who worked for Nauvoo Restoration, and was published in 1971 in his book Rediscovery of the Nauvoo Temple, which was written with his wife, Virginia Harrington.

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The Nauvoo Temple was different from other religious buildings of its day. Some of its functions were singular to the Latter-day Saints. Use of the building,

CHAPTER FOUR PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE TEMPLE

though varied, was in the main of deep religious import. However, unlike other temples later constructed by the Church, the Nauvoo Temple was truly a multi-purpose building. These uses resulted in large measure from the lack of any





chapels or other large buildings in Nauvoo. The temple filled the role of a Church office building with many offices of Church authorities located in the attic story. It was used as an assembly hall for sacrament meetings, other large meetings, and even general conferences of the Church. The building was even utilized for some recreational purposes. But it was primarily used for the central purpose of its construction, the performance of sacred temple ordinances.

have lived on the earth. He invites all to come unto him and partake of his goodness. It makes no difference what their race, ethnic differences, gender, financial status, or any other conditions may be; all are alike unto God (Acts 10:34–35; 1 Pet. 4:6; 2 Ne. 26:33; Alma 26:37; Moro. 8:17). This implies that if God prescribes any conditions of belief, required patterns of living, or ordinances, all humankind must have equal opportunity to accept and live by these divine requirements.

The theology of temple ordinance of his children equally, no matter where or when they live on earth. He invites all to come

TEMPLE ORDINANCES IN NAUVOO

Temple ordinance work practiced today by Latter-day Saints in numerous temples throughout the world has most of its development and early practice in connection with the Nauvoo Temple. This is further explained in chapter 5 as it relates to the impact of the temple. The theology of temple ordinance work centers in the belief that God loves all of his children equally, no matter where or when they

Study of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ clearly illustrates that certain beliefs, ordinances, and qualities of life that should be lived by a disciple were plainly enunciated by the Savior. Acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, the Son of the Living God, is a fundamental precept. As he himself declared: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Salvation as explained in the New





Testament is attained only by acceptance of and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by following him and keeping his commandments.

Baptism for the Dead

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declares that baptism is a basic gospel ordinance essential to salvation. This ordinance required by the Savior and his Apostles is clearly attested by several New Testament scriptures (Matt. 3:13–16; Mark 16:15–16; John

enjoyed adequate opportunity of receiving the gospel when they lived on the earth in mortality (D&C 138). The doctrine and ordinance of vicarious proxy baptism by a living person in behalf of the dead was restored to earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. He enunciated the doctrine on several occasions during the Nauvoo period:

- “Jesus Christ became a ministering spirit (while His body was lying in the sepulchre) to the spirits in

work centers in the belief that God loves all
 ter where or when they have lived on the
 unto him and partake of his goodness.

3:3–5; 22–26; Acts 2:37–38, 41; 22:16; Rom. 6:3–6; Gal. 3:37; 1 Pet. 3:21). Another fundamental Church doctrine is that between Christ’s death on the cross and his resurrection, the Lord personally went into the postmortal spirit world and there “preached [his gospel] also to them that are dead” (1 Pet. 4:6; cf. 3:18–20; D&C 138). While there, he organized the faithful and commissioned them to take his gospel message to all the dead who had not

prison, to fulfill an important part of his mission, without which He could not have perfected his work, or entered into His rest. . . . It is no more incredible that God should save the dead, than that he should raise the dead.”¹

- “Aside from knowledge independent of the Bible, I would say that [baptism for the dead] was certainly practiced by the ancient churches. . . . The Saints have the privilege of being baptized for those of their relatives



It was Elijah who would restore the essential keys of authority necessary to begin work for the dead.



who are dead, whom they believe would have embraced the Gospel, if they had been privileged with hearing it, and who have received the Gospel in the spirit [world], through the instrumentality of those who have been commissioned to preach to them.”²

- “If we can, by the authority of the Priesthood of the Son of God, baptize a man in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, for the remission of sins, it is just as much our privilege to act as an agent, and be baptized for the remission of sins for and in behalf of our dead kindred, who have not heard the Gospel, or the fullness of it.”³

- “Every man that has been baptized and belongs to the kingdom has a right to be baptized for those who have gone before; and as soon as the law of the Gospel is obeyed here by their friends who act as proxy for them, the Lord has administrators there [in the spirit world] to set them free.”⁴

This Latter-day Saint concept of vicarious baptism by a living person in behalf of a dead ancestor is based not alone on latter-day revelation but also on biblical scriptures and clear evidence that such an ordinance was practiced by early Christians (1 Cor. 15:29).⁵ The first intimation of vicarious work for the dead in the latter days was given on the night

of 21 September 1823. On this occasion the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith. Among the items revealed was a reference made by the angel to a future visitation of the Old Testament prophet Elijah. It was Elijah who would restore the essential keys of authority necessary to begin work for the dead. Moroni stated that this would be in fulfillment of the promised coming of Elijah referred to by Malachi in the Bible (Mal. 4:5–6; D&C 2:1–3).

Though work for the dead was referred to in 1823, the doctrine was not understood nor practiced until some years later. Joseph Smith reported that on 3 April 1836 the prophet Elijah appeared to him at Kirtland, Ohio, and conferred on him the sealing power and keys of authority for this essential work (D&C 110:13–16). The concept was not taught publicly to the Church as doctrine until 10 August 1840 at Nauvoo, Illinois. It is quite likely that though Joseph Smith may have earlier understood the doctrine, its implementation became impossible before this time because of persecution. In a letter to members of the Twelve Apostles in England dated 15 December 1840, Joseph Smith explained: “I presume the doctrine of ‘Baptism for the dead’ has ere this

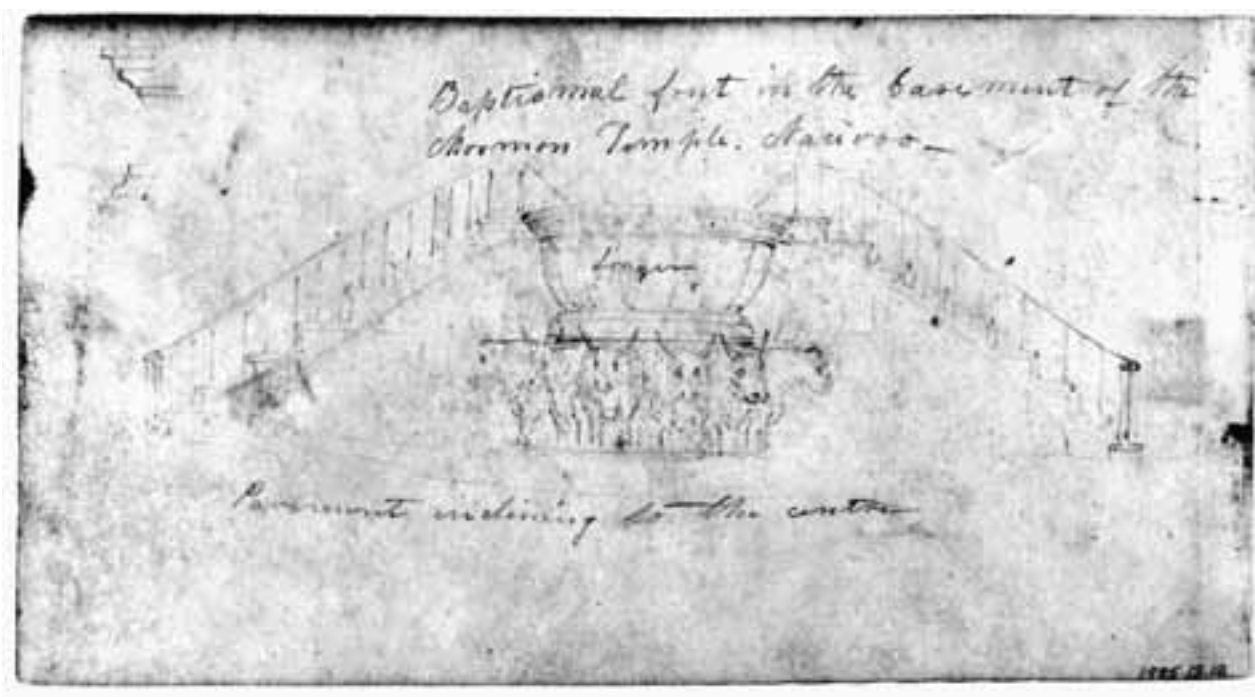


Figure 4.1 Baptismal Font in the Basement of the Mormon Temple, drawing, 1848, Henry Lewis, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri.

reached your ears, and may have raised some inquiries in your minds respecting the same. I cannot in this letter give you all the information you may desire on the subject. . . . I first mentioned the doctrine in public when preaching the funeral sermon of Bro Brunson [10 August 1840], and have since then given general instructions to the Church on the subject.”⁶

During a Church conference in October 1840, the Prophet delivered a discourse on the newly restored doctrine.⁷ In the fall of that year vicarious ordinances in behalf of the dead were performed temporarily in the Mississippi River at Nauvoo, Illinois.⁸ Other baptisms for the dead were performed in 1840 and 1841, but due to the fact that uniform procedures had not yet been outlined, some irregularities took place that later had to be corrected.⁹

President John Taylor, commenting on the development of the practice, said of Joseph Smith: “At first these things were only partially made known to him, and as they were partially developed he called upon the twelve that were then living . . . to commence and be baptized for the dead, and they were baptized in the Mississippi River. Immediately after these baptisms, the Prophet had a revelation which more clearly developed the order in relation to such baptisms.”¹⁰

The foundation of all ordinance work for the dead was clearly set forth on 19 January 1841 in a revelation to Joseph Smith at Nauvoo. In addition to the enumeration of the vicarious ordinances for the dead, the Lord commanded the building of a temple. This structure was to be the place wherein the sacred ordinances



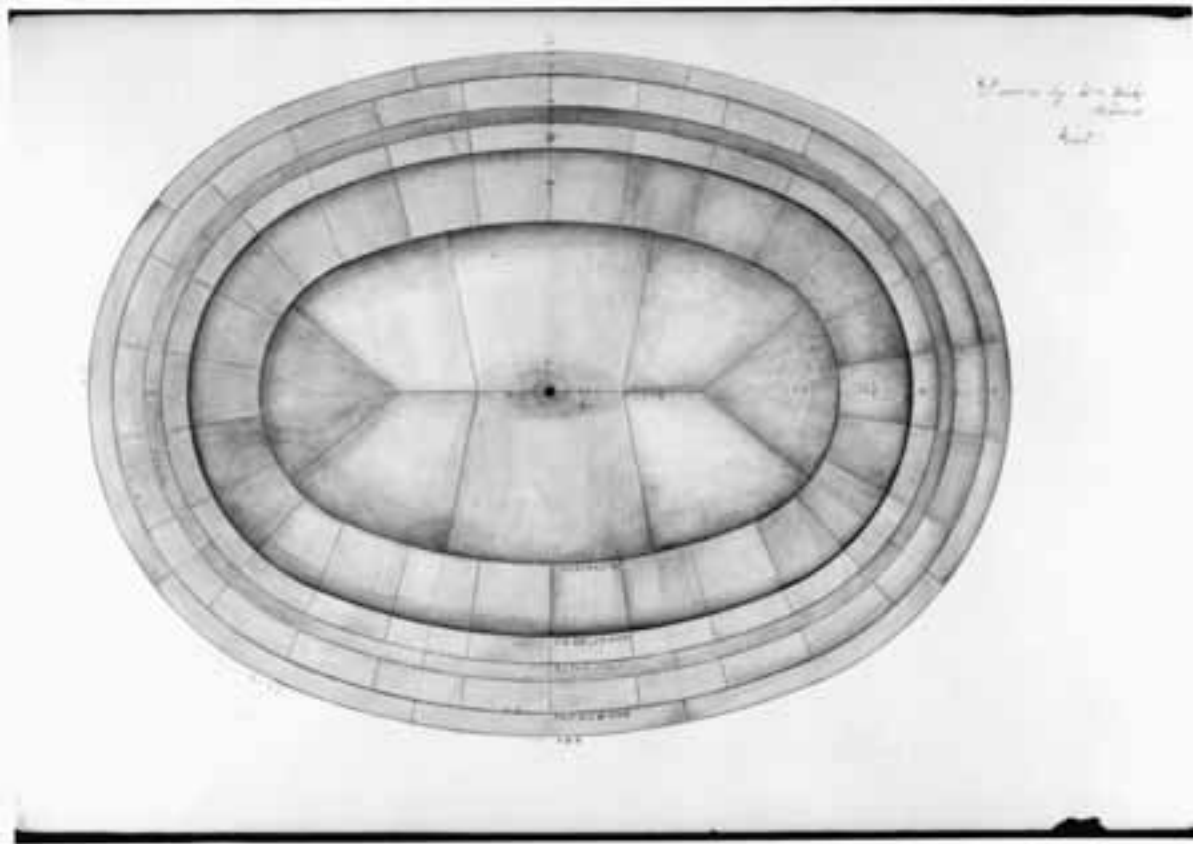


Figure 4.2 *Baptismal Font, drawing, 1845, William Weeks, LDS Church Archives. This is an original architectural drawing by architect William Weeks showing an overhead view looking down into the stone baptismal font.*

could be revealed in their fullness and performed (D&C 124:25–45). During September 1841, additional information was given regarding the subject (D&C 127:4–9; 128:1–19). These two inspired letters, written by Joseph Smith, provided clarification regarding the doctrine of work for the dead. They also outlined the necessity of keeping accurate records and the need for witnesses.

Baptisms in the river were discontinued by revelation on Sunday, 3 October 1841, when the Prophet announced: “There shall be no more baptisms for the dead, until the ordinance can be attended to in the Lord’s House; and

the Church shall not hold another General Conference, until they can meet in said house. *For thus saith the Lord!*”¹¹

During the summer and fall of 1841, measures had been taken by Church leaders to build a baptismal font in the cellar floor of the temple. This temporary font was dedicated by Brigham Young at 5:00 P.M. on Monday, 8 November. A thorough description of this temporary font and its purposes was recorded by Joseph Smith in his journal.¹² Ordinance work in the font began on Sunday, 21 November, when forty baptisms in behalf of the dead were performed.¹³ This temporary font was later





replaced by a permanent one made of stone. Elder Erastus Snow reported that the Prophet gave instructions to the effect that none should be allowed to participate in the privileges of the temple unless they could produce a certificate from the general Church recorder certifying that they were full tithe payers.¹⁴ It is reported that a total of 15,626 recorded baptisms for the dead were performed in and about the vicinity of the Nauvoo Temple while the Saints were in Nauvoo.¹⁵

The Endowment

The revelation calling for the building of the Nauvoo Temple clearly stated: “And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people.” Among the ordinances mentioned were anointings, washings, baptisms for the dead, and the endowment. The Prophet Joseph Smith was to be shown all things pertaining to the building and the priesthood thereof (D&C 124:39–42).

To *endow* means to enrich in some way. How the temple endowment enriches the participant is partially explained by John K. Edmunds, who served as a president of the Salt Lake Temple:

“*What is the endowment?*” Because of its sacredness and the prohibitions of the Lord established to protect its sanctity, many of the beautiful ordinances of the holy endowment and much of the detailed instruction involved cannot be disclosed or presented except to those who are worthy to receive the ordinances and instruc-

tion in the place where God has decreed they shall be administered and revealed—in his holy house. . . .

The endowment comprehends an enrichment not measured nor measurable in terms of money or other material treasures, which are subject to theft and the corrosion of moth and rust. To receive the endowment is to receive the riches of eternity—the knowledge, the power, the keys that unlock the door to the indescribable treasures of heaven and open the way to exaltation in the celestial world. To receive the endowment is to receive a course of instruction in eternal truth, together with all the keys, powers, and ordinances revealed and ordained of God to prepare his children for his greatest gift—the gift of eternal life.

The temple is an institution not only of higher learning but of the highest learning. In the temple, students are taught basic, changeless, everlasting truths applicable to time and eternity.¹⁶

Elder John A. Widtsoe offered this description of the temple ceremony: “The Temple endowment relates the story of man’s eternal journey; sets forth the conditions upon which progress in the eternal journey depends; requires covenants or agreements of those participating, to accept and use the laws of progress; gives tests by which our willingness and fitness for righteousness may be known, and finally points out the ultimate destiny of those who love truth and live by it.”¹⁷

Elder James E. Talmage provided further explanation of the endowment ceremony:





The Temple Endowment, as administered in modern temples, comprises instruction relating to the significance and sequence of past dispensations, and the importance of the present as the greatest and grandest era in human history. This course of instruction includes a recital of the most prominent events of the creative period, the condition of our first parents in the Garden of Eden, their disobedience and consequent expulsion from that blissful abode, their condition in the lone and dreary world when doomed to live by labor and sweat, the plan of redemption by which the great transgression may be atoned, the period of the great apostasy, the restoration of the Gospel with all its ancient powers and privileges, the absolute and indispensable condition of personal purity and devotion to the right in present life, and a strict compliance with Gospel requirements. . . .

The ordinances of the endowment embody certain obligations on the part of the individual, such as covenant and promise to observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,—the Lord Jesus Christ. With the taking of each covenant and the assuming of each obligation a promised blessing is pronounced, contingent upon the faithful observance of the conditions.

No jot, iota, or tittle of the temple rites is otherwise than uplifting and sanc-

tifying. In every detail the endowment ceremony contributes to covenants of morality of life, consecration of person to high ideals, devotion to truth, patriotism to nation, and allegiance to God.¹⁸

The concept of an endowment ceremony originated in the Church as early as 22 June 1834 at Kirtland, Ohio. In a revelation to Joseph Smith on that date, the endowment was significantly related to a temple, one that the Saints had been commanded to build in Kirtland. The revelation declared, “Verily I say unto you, it is expedient in me that the first elders of my church should receive their endowment from on high in my house, which I have commanded to be built unto my name in the land of Kirtland” (D&C 105:33).

The ceremony was first practiced in an incomplete form on 20 January 1836 at a council meeting held in the Kirtland Temple.¹⁹ President Brigham Young, commenting on the endowment as introduced in Kirtland, stated that those who assisted with the building of the temple “received a portion of their endowments, or we might say more clearly, some of the first, or introductory, or initiatory ordinances, preparatory to an endowment.”²⁰

On 3 April 1836 the Old Testament prophet Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith, restoring to him certain sealing powers of the priesthood. It is mentioned in the revelation given on the occasion of Elijah’s visitation that thousands would rejoice in consequence of the blessings that would come through the temple (D&C 110:9, 13–16). Joseph Smith and other



Church leaders connected the visitation of Elijah directly to the authority and nature of temple ordinances. Endowments conducted in Kirtland were limited both in scope and in number. Further development of these ordinances waited until the Church was established at Nauvoo.

The basic temple endowment ceremony, later common to Mormon temple ritual, was first performed by Joseph Smith on 4 May 1842 in the upper room of his brick store in Nauvoo.

I spent the day in the upper part of the store, that is in my private office . . . in council with General James Adams, of Springfield, Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchisedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days.²¹

John C. Bennett, former mayor of Nauvoo and apostate from the Church, published his

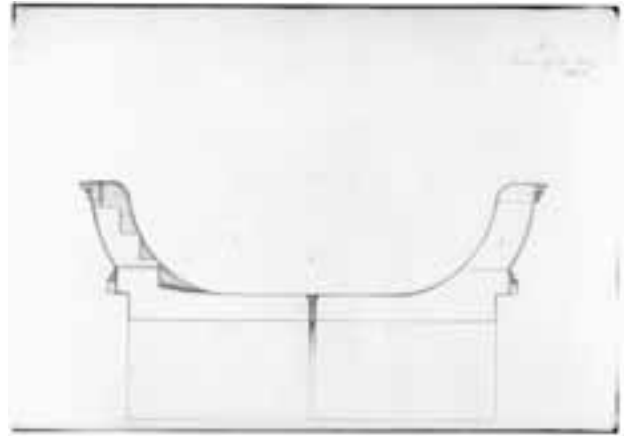


Figure 4.3 Cross-Sectional View of Baptismal Font, drawing, 1845, William Weeks, LDS Church Archives. This is an original architectural drawing by architect William Weeks showing a cross-sectional side view of the stone baptismal font.

History of the Saints in 1842, furnishing evidence of the endowment ceremony being practiced at this early date. Referring to the practice as a “Holy Order,” he provided a description of the room where ordinances were performed along with its symbolic decoration, and he unfolded a garbled account of the ceremony as then practiced. Bennett declared that the ceremonies were being conducted in consequence of a pretended special revelation to Joseph Smith respecting the practice.²²

Ebenezer Robinson, one-time editor of the *Times and Seasons* who left the Church at the close of the Nauvoo period, wrote that Joseph Smith established a secret order as early as 1843. They held their meetings and performed ordinances in the large room of the second story in Joseph’s brick store. Robinson described being a personal witness to the ceremony’s existence in June 1844.²³

Prior to his death, the Prophet Joseph was very concerned with the progress of the temple. As a stimulus to greater effort, he stated





that all members who were worthy would receive their endowments and that those recorded as assisting with completion of the temple would have first claim on the ordinances.²⁴ The following month at the conference of Church members, he commented that as soon as the temple was sufficiently complete, ordinance work would be started and the endowment given. He further declared the ordinances to be essential to exaltation in the celestial degree of glory.²⁵ Elder Orson Hyde

can confer them upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom as fast as you will be able to build it up.”²⁶

These actions were further explained by Elder Parley P. Pratt:

This great and good man was led, before his death, to call the Twelve together, from time to time, and to instruct them in all things pertaining to the kingdom, ordinances, and government of God. He often observed that



As a stimulus to greater effort, he stated that those who would receive their endowments and the ordinance of the temple would have

recorded that in April 1844 he and other apostles were given their endowments, had conferred upon them the sealing power as well as all the keys of the priesthood, and were then instructed in the ordinances by Joseph Smith: “He conducted us through every ordinance of the holy priesthood, and when he had gone through with all the ordinances he rejoiced very much, and says, now if they kill me you have got all the keys, and all the ordinances, and you

he was laying the foundation, but it would remain for the Twelve to complete the building. Said he, “I know not why; but for some reason I am constrained to hasten my preparations, and to confer upon the Twelve all the ordinances, keys, covenants, endowments, and sealing ordinances of the priesthood, and so set before them a pattern in all things pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein.”

Having done this, he rejoiced exceedingly; for, said he, the Lord is





about to lay the burden on your shoulders and let me rest awhile; and if they kill me, continued he, the kingdom of God will roll on, as I have now finished the work which was laid upon me, by committing to you all things for the building up of the kingdom according to the heavenly vision, and the pattern shown me from heaven. With many conversations like this, he comforted the minds of the Twelve, and prepared them for what was soon to follow.

He proceeded to confer on elder Young, the President of the Twelve,

blessing shall be administered pertaining to things of the resurrection and the life to come.

After giving them a very short charge to do all things according to the pattern, he quietly surrendered his liberty and his life into the hands of his blood-thirsty enemies, and all this to save the people for whom he had so long laboured from threatened vengeance.²⁷

Following the death of their Prophet, Church members rallied behind new leaders.

ted that all members who were worthy would
at those recorded as assisting with comple-
first claim on the ordinances.

the keys of the sealing power, as conferred in the last days by the spirit and power of Elijah, in order to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth should be smitten with a curse.

This last key of the priesthood is the most sacred of all, and pertains exclusively to the first presidency of the church, without whose sanction and approval or authority, no sealing

Renewing their efforts, they were unified in pushing the temple toward its completion. A letter of the Twelve Apostles on 17 April 1845 reported progress on the temple and declared a stated intention of having the building far enough along by the coming fall so as to “commence administering the ordinances of endowment according to the commandment.” Elder Lyman Wight, to whom the letter was addressed, was strongly urged not to depart for





the West before receiving his own endowment.²⁸

As the month of November 1845 drew to a close, the temple had been enclosed and outside work completed. Strenuous exertions were now being made to finish the interior, with priority given to the attic story. It was plastered, painted, and ready for use as the month closed. On 30 November at 12:00 P.M., the attic story was dedicated by Brigham Young in the company of the apostles and other Church leaders.²⁹ Finishing touches were then added; carpets were laid in the large central room as well as in the side rooms of the east attic. The large main room of the east attic was then divided into ordinance rooms by hanging canvas partitions. These partitioned rooms were then furnished and made ready for conducting the endowment ordinances. On 10 December at 4:25 P.M., President Young, Elder Heber C. Kimball, and others commenced administering the ordinances of the endowment. They continued officiating in the ordinances until 3:30 the following morning. After a brief rest, they had breakfast and returned to the temple.³⁰ Significant among those receiving ordinances the next day (11 December) were the temple committee, their wives, and the Prophet's mother, Lucy Mack Smith.³¹ As ordinance work continued over the next several weeks, members of the Twelve Apostles and other specially set-apart brethren officiated in administering the ordinances to others. Women were ministered to by Eliza R. Snow, Vilate Kimball, and Elizabeth Ann Whitney as well as by several

other women who were set apart and given authority to officiate in administering the ordinances to female patrons.³²

John D. Lee reported that as soon as circumstances allowed, Brigham Young organized the work, established rules for the preservation of order, and placed help in the different departments to accommodate large numbers who would come for their ordinances. Lee himself was set apart as a clerk to keep record of work as it was done.³³ He furnished interesting insights on what was expected of those coming to receive their endowments. "A list is made out the day previous. . . . Every person is required to wash himself clean, from head to foot. Also to prepare and bring a good supply of food, of the best quality, for themselves and those who labor in the house of the Lord. In the latter about twenty-five persons are required in the different departments to attend to the [ordinances]."³⁴

Typical of those called to assist was Erastus Snow, who recorded that he and his wife received their endowments on 12 December, following which they were assigned to assist others in the work. He continued to assist both day and night for about six weeks, and his wife continued in the female department for about a month.³⁵ Endowment work continued from its commencement with little interruption, and as time went on, experienced workers were able to work more rapidly, thereby accommodating increasingly larger numbers. William Huntington reported that by 21 December some 560 had received their endowments.³⁶ By



This may certify that David P. Rainey
 is entitled to the privilege of the Baptismal Font
 having paid his tithing in full to Oct. 25th 1845.
 City of Joseph
 Oct. 4th 1845
 Wm Clayton
 Recorder

This may certify that Henry Parker is entitled to
 to the privilege of the Baptismal Font, having
 paid his labor clothing in full to April 1846
 City of Joseph
 May 4. 1846
 Wm Clayton Recorder
 by J. Whitehead Clerk

Figure 4.4 (Top) Recommend—Privilege to Use Baptismal Font, photocopy of handwritten document, 25 October 1845, William Clayton, LDS Church Archives. Those who paid their tithing in full were provided with a note such as this, indicating their worthiness to use the baptismal font. Dated 25 October 1845, this certifies that David P. Rainey was entitled to use the temple font. This is a photocopy; the original could not be located.

Figure 4.5 (Bottom) Recommend—Privilege to Use Baptismal Font, photocopy of handwritten document, 4 May 1846, James Whitehead, LDS Church Archives. Acting in behalf of temple recorder William Clayton, James Whitehead, a temple clerk, issued this recommend to Henry Parker, certifying he was entitled to use the temple baptismal font. Note that this recommend was issued only three days after the temple dedication. This is a photocopy; the original could not be located.


the end of the month over one thousand had participated in the ceremony.³⁷

Heber C. Kimball gradually assumed the role of supervising all ordinance work.³⁸ As the pace of temple work accelerated, members assembled in increasing numbers. The work was going early in the mornings and very late into the evenings. Assigning and coordinating

the efforts of ordinance workers, laundering temple clothing, and providing food for officiators were not simple tasks. The urgency to provide endowments and sealing ordinances for those who had not yet received them was encumbered by members who wished to linger in the temple enjoying the spiritual blessings found there. It became necessary that steps be

taken to maintain proper order. At Elder Kimball's insistence, no one was allowed into the building without an official invitation.³⁹ Furthermore, strict order and decorum were to be maintained within its holy precincts. Ordinance work continued in the temple until 7 February 1846, when it was closed due to the migration of the Saints out of Nauvoo into the western wilderness. Brigham Young reported that by this time 5,634 had received their endowment ordinances.⁴⁰

In spite of threats and violence from enemies, Church members exhibited great faith and determination to have as many partake of temple ordinances as

 Ordinance work continued in the temple until 7 February 1846.



possible. The Church historian recorded on 20 January 1846: "Public prejudice being so strong against the Saints, and the excitement becoming alarming, the brethren determined to continue the administrations of the ordinances of endowment night and day."⁴¹ Church leaders were under great strain in preparing Church members and their own families for a prema-

ture departure. Their energies were also considerably taxed in taking care of the many requests for ordinance work. Brigham Young observed: "Such has been the anxiety manifested by the saints to receive the ordinances (of the Temple), and such the anxiety on our part to administer to them, that I have given myself up entirely to the work of the Lord in the Temple night and day, not taking more than four hours sleep, upon an average, per day, and going home but once a week. Elder Kimball and other apostles were in constant attendance but in consequence of close application some of them had to leave the Temple to rest and recruit their health."⁴² The orderly evacuation planned for April was hastened by events during the winter. An indictment issued against Brigham Young and eight other apostles (accusing them of counterfeiting) prompted a decision in late January to have several companies of pioneers ready and prepared to leave the city at a moment's notice. Following this, a warning came from Governor Thomas Ford and others that federal troops planned to intercept the Mormons as they left the city. This resulted in a decision on 2 February to begin the exodus. In spite of announcements that temple ordinance work would cease, members could not be dissuaded from seeking their temple blessings before they left Nauvoo. This was explained by Brigham Young, when on Tuesday, 3 February 1846, he reported:



Notwithstanding that I had announced that we would not attend to the administration of the ordinances, the House of the Lord was thronged all day, the anxiety being so great to receive, as if the brethren would have us stay here and continue the endowments until our way would be hedged up, and our enemies would intercept us. But I informed the brethren that this was not wise, and that we should build more Temples, and have further opportunities to receive the blessings of the Lord, as soon as the saints were prepared to receive them. In this Temple we have been abundantly rewarded, if we receive no more. I also informed the brethren that I was going to get my wagons started and be off. I walked some distance from the Temple supposing the crowd would disperse, but on returning I found the house filled to overflowing.

Looking upon the multitude and knowing their anxiety, as they were thirsting and hungering for the word, we continued at work diligently in the House of the Lord.

Two hundred and ninety-five persons received ordinances.⁴³

On 4 February 1846 the exodus from Nauvoo began. Early on that same morning, as “the sun shone brightly into the east windows of the Temple, . . . a new scene was being enacted. A number of persons were busily engaged removing articles of furniture, stoves, carpets and pictures etc., etc.”⁴⁴ These articles were removed from the celestial room of the temple as families packed belongings to depart

from the city. In spite of these events, ordinance work in the temple continued at a feverish pace. It appears that the large numbers of members desiring temple blessings along with the time factor may have made it impractical to give them the full endowment ordinances. Evidence indicates that members obtaining ordinances after the exodus began may have received only their washings and anointings, or the initiatory part of the endowment. This observation is sustained by the report of Joseph Holbrook, who received his ordinances on 6 February. “I went into the temple at Nauvoo and received my washing and anointing in the House of the Lord. There was a crowd. It being at the closing of giving endowments, so that near 500 passed through their ordinance in the last twenty-four hours, but I felt knowledge for me to improve upon until I could get more.”⁴⁵ Brigham Young reported that on this day “five hundred and twelve persons received the first ordinances [initiatory portion] of endowment in the Temple.” This procedure was likely followed on 7 February, the last day on which ordinances were given, when “upwards of six hundred received the ordinances.”⁴⁶ Church members felt that the main purpose of erecting the building had now been achieved, and thousands had been blessed by the performance of the promised endowment ordinances.

Celestial or Eternal Marriage

Another ordinance practiced in the Nauvoo Temple was that of celestial marriage. To Latter-day Saints, marriage and the resulting



family units are eternal unions, not dissolved by death but existing beyond the grave. Such a union or covenant, entered into righteously, sealed by proper authority, and confirmed by continued faithfulness is recognized as binding in the heavens as well as on earth in an eternal marriage and family relationship.⁴⁷ The eternity of the marriage covenant, as practiced in Nauvoo, had its application in the marriage of a man to one wife, and also to plural marriage, wherein a man was sealed in marriage to more than one wife.

The revelation authorizing such marriages was given to Joseph Smith, who is reported to have received the principle by revelation as early as 1831.⁴⁸ He introduced the doctrine to the Twelve Apostles in the summer of 1841.⁴⁹ The revelation was committed to writing on 12 July 1843, when the Prophet dictated it to William Clayton.⁵⁰ On or about 12 August 1843 it was read by Hyrum Smith to members of the high council.⁵¹

Celestial marriages—marriages for eternity—were performed in the Nauvoo Temple for the first time on 7 January 1846. Heber C. Kimball records that on that date four individuals and their wives were sealed to each other in a covenant of eternal marriage.⁵² An altar had been constructed for this purpose and installed in room 1 of the attic story. These and other eternal marriages were solemnized as couples knelt at the altar, as Samuel

Figure 4.6 View of Nauvoo from the West Bank of the Mississippi River, painting, date unknown (between 1848 and 1854), LDS Church Archives. This painting was painted by an unknown artist and was first printed by Herman J. Meyer in 1854 or 1855.







Whitney Richards records in his Journal: “Friday 23rd. By my interposition Father John Parkers family received their endowments his daughter Mary being my intended wife, after which I obtained permission of Pres Joseph [Joseph Young] for her to have the privelege of spending her time in the temple also, where she commenced her labours on the morn. of the 27th and in the evening of the 29th we were sealed upon the altar, Husband and Wife, for time and all Eternity, by Amasa Lyman, at 25

MEETINGS AND ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

Among the multipurpose functions of the temple was the use of the structure as a place of worship for numerous and varied Church meetings. In addition, the building was designed to serve as the administrative office building for the Church.

Meetings

During the time the Saints resided in Nauvoo, there were few suitable locations for

It is reported that there were 2,423 sealings of dead spouses and 71 performed in the Nauvoo Temple.

minutes to nine Witnessed by Phinehas Richards and C. W. Wandall and recorded by F. D. Richards.”⁵³

It is reported that there were 2,420 eternal marriages of living couples plus 369 sealings of dead spouses and 71 sealings of living children to their parents performed in the Nauvoo Temple.⁵⁴ The majority of these marriages were monogamous in nature, while others involved a plurality of wives.

conducting religious meetings, and none of those were of sufficient size to accommodate large groups. No chapels or stake centers were ever constructed in Nauvoo during this period. As a result, most Church gatherings of any size were held in the open air, subject to the capricious nature of the elements. The temple was designed to accommodate large audiences, and the Saints were pleased that they could meet indoors.





Meetings were held in the temple as early as October 1842, when congregations assembled on the temporary floor of the first story.⁵⁵ Since the building was not yet enclosed, those in attendance were exposed to the elements.⁵⁶ They met in the temple with some regularity on Sundays when weather permitted, and general conference sessions were convened there on 6 April 1843.⁵⁷ The ordinance of the sacrament was administered to the Saints for the first time in the temple during the afternoon of

eral conference of the Church in two and a half years. It was estimated that about five thousand people attended the services.⁵⁹ This must have been a solemn occasion with special announcements and votes taken, as reported by George Whitaker:

At the October Conference a great many people gathered together. We did not know until then what the authorities of the Church had done. We knew that some important busi-

0 eternal marriages of living couples plus sealings of living children to their parents

Sunday, 21 May 1843.⁵⁸ Church gatherings continued in the building until construction needs caused them again to be held outside. Meetings were then often held in the grove near the west end of the temple.

On Sunday morning, 5 October 1845, the temple was opened for the first assembly ever convened in the enclosed structure. This event, an important milestone in temple construction, marked the opening of the first gen-

ness would be transacted. We were told that the spirit of the mob was so bitter against us that we would have to leave the confines of civilization and go beyond the Rocky Mountains into Mexican territory. It was better to leave our houses, our lands, our temple, and our beautiful city than to stay there and fight the mob, and many of us perhaps would lose our lives. . . . This was put to a vote, and we all voted to leave; if they gave us anything for our property to help us out it was





all right, but if they did not we would go anyway. Counsel was given to go to work and finish the temple according to the revelation given to Joseph Smith, so that we might receive our washings and anointings and the keys and powers of the Holy Priesthood, and also the Holy Anointings and Sealings that the power of God might rest upon His servants. It was also prophesied that in less than five years we would be a great deal better off than we were at that time, and many more things were told us that came to pass according to the words that had been spoken. The name of the city of Nauvoo was changed and called the city of Joseph, being called after the Prophet Joseph Smith. A great many things were done at that conference that I cannot write. Suffice it to say, the Spirit of God was with the people and the blessings of the Almighty were upon them.⁶⁰

Meetings in the now enclosed temple continued each Sunday as Church members assembled for worship. This regular use of the structure for public meetings was interrupted during the first week in November 1845, when the first floor of the temple was taken up for the purpose of laying down permanent flooring.⁶¹ Gatherings were also held in other parts of the structure for the purpose of conducting Church business and worship services. Some of these were conducted in the attic story. Illustrative of this practice is the report of a sacrament meeting being conducted there at 10:30 A.M., 28 November 1845, with about two hundred in attendance.⁶² The temple was again opened for

public worship on Sunday, 1 February 1846, when those gathered met in the second story.⁶³ A new permanent floor was ready on the first story by 22 February 1846, and it accommodated a large congregation.⁶⁴ The main hall of this story was described in 1847 as having sufficient seating in it to accommodate thirty-five hundred people.⁶⁵ This figure, however, seems to be high for a space of 8,000 square feet, especially when considerable space would have been taken up by seats, aisles, and pulpits.

Besides general worship meetings, daily prayer meetings became a practice in 1846, as various-sized groups of priesthood members regularly met in the temple for this purpose. This practice continued even after the dedication of the building.⁶⁶

Administrative Functions

The temple was designed to furnish office space for the various officials and offices of Church government. Leaders of the seventies and high priests were allowed offices in the attic story, as were members of the high council.⁶⁷ This was also true of the Twelve Apostles, stake presidency, Presiding Bishops, and others. Numerous meetings and matters of Church business were conducted by those officials in the temple, including plans and organization for the exodus from Nauvoo.

OTHER USES OF THE STRUCTURE

The building was put to additional uses besides those already named. It is doubtful that some of these uses were intended in the begin-



ning, but circumstances relating to the forced exodus made some seem practical and others a necessity.

Residence

The temple became a temporary residence for some Church leaders in January and February 1846. There was great anxiety on the part of both members and leaders to allow as many as possible to receive their temple ordinances. This resulted in an almost round-the-clock activity at the temple. Members of the Twelve and other temple workers gave themselves entirely to the work, taking no more than four hours of sleep per day and going home only once per week.⁶⁸ They slept in the side rooms of the attic story, and later in late January and February they may have slept in the second mezzanine half-story or the second story. To accommodate those who stayed day and night in the building, a dining room was set up in the north end of the west front section of the attic story.⁶⁹

Recreational Functions

The need for a suitable building for recreational purposes was met in part by the temple. The practice was commenced on 30 December 1845. The labors of the day had been brought to a close at 8:30 P.M., and it was decided to enjoy a “season of recreation.” Brother Hansen played the violin, joined by Elisha Averett on the flute. Following a few lively musical numbers, the group danced for about an hour. This was followed by several of the group joining together in some songs. The activities were closed with prayer, and the group departed.⁷⁰ It was in the attic story where this initial dancing took place. The second floor was still under construction and not available for use until mid-January. The first floor, also under construction, was not usable until late February.

The practice of dancing and musical entertainment was repeated during the following month on various occasions by select groups of members. On one such occasion Brigham Young made a short address to the group. He talked about the privilege the Saints then had of meeting in the temple and stated

The Twelve and other temple workers gave themselves entirely to the work.





that they could worship God in dance as well as in other ways. “The way for us to grow and thrive is for us to serve the Lord in all we do. . . . No man is to be filled with lightness. . . . We will praise the Lord as we please. Now, as to dancing in this house—there are thousands of brethren and sisters that have labored to build these walls and put on this roof, and they are shut out from any opportunity of enjoying any amusement among the wicked—or in this world, and shall they have any recreation? Yes! and this is the very place where they can have liberty.”⁷¹ The practice evidently came into some question, and on 9 January 1846 Brigham Young issued the following instructions: “I observed to the brethren that it was my wish that all dancing and merriment should cease, lest the brethren and sisters be carried away by vanity; and that the name of the Deity should be held in reverence, with all the due deference that belongeth to an infinite being of his character.”⁷²

Following the closing of temple ordinance work and the start of the exodus from Nauvoo, the practice of using the temple for recreational functions was renewed. Samuel W. Richards reported that on 9 February 1846, a select company, including several of the Twelve, met in the temple for a dance. Music was provided by the brass band. The social was opened with a prayer offered by Orson Hyde.⁷³ The building was used for additional social functions in the ensuing weeks by the workmen who were laboring to complete it. Richards furnished interesting accounts of those activities. On 28 April “[at] about noon they ceased and all

hands with their wives repaired to the temple for the feast, a large company were gathered, a plenty of cakes with cheese, and Raisens was furnished by the bretheren and Sisters for the occasion.” On 29 April “in the afternoon [I] met in the attic story of the temple with the members who formed the prayer circle in No. 1 and a part of No. 2 with our wives and had a feast of cakes, pies, wine, &c. where we enjoyed ourselves with prayer preaching, administering for healing, blessing children, and music and Dancing untill near Midnight. The other hands completed the painting of the lower room.”⁷⁴

A similar social was held the next two days when the temple was dedicated. After the temple had been deserted by the journey of the Saints into the West, the building is reported to have been used for public balls, public meetings, etc., by the local citizens.⁷⁵ It is also reported that a fee of twenty-five cents was being collected in 1847 from those desiring a tour of the building.⁷⁶

Astronomical Observatory

An indictment was issued in December 1845 against Brigham Young and eight other apostles by the U.S. District Court in Springfield. “They were accused of instigating and harboring a Nauvoo counterfeiting operation actually conducted by transient river traffickers.”⁷⁷ Government officials attempted to serve warrants on those Church leaders but were unsuccessful. During this time, Elder Orson Pratt used some spot in the temple both





to hide and as a place for an observatory. He spent several nights alone in the temple “quietly camped inside the building taking astronomical measurements by night to prepare for the immense job of navigating the pioneers upon departure. He ascertained the latitude of Nauvoo at 40 degrees, 35 minutes, 48 seconds north on 27 December. From this established base he could later calculate the position of the pioneer wagons on the prairies. All this time the temple was under careful watch by officers.”⁷⁸

With the exception of the baptismal font, the building was put into effective use by its builders for the short period of only six to nine months. Though used such a short time, it was considered by the Church as worthy of the sacrifice. Most Church members felt as did their leader, Brigham Young: “This church has obtained already all they have labored for in building this Temple.”⁷⁹

NOTES

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2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 179.
3. *Ibid.*, 201; *Words of Joseph Smith*, 109–10.
4. *Ibid.*, 367; *Words of Joseph Smith*, 368.
5. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 145–56; Hugh Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen

- D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 100–67; Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Baptism for the Dead,” appendix C in *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 403–15; Robert L. Millet, *The Mormon Faith, a New Look at Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1998), 197–200; also, Millet, “Was Baptism for the Dead a non-Christian Practice in New Testament Times (see 1 Cor. 15:29), or Was It a Practice of the Church of Jesus Christ as It Is Today?” *Ensign*, August 1987, 19–21; Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:95–97.

6. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 486.

7. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:206.

8. Albert M. Zobell Jr., “If the Dead Rise Not,” *Improvement Era*, August 1940, 531.

9. Genealogical Society, “Introduction of Baptism for the Dead,” *Improvement Era*, April 1939, 251.

10. *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 25:183.

11. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:426; *Words of Joseph Smith*, 78.

12. *Ibid.*, 4:446–47.

13. *Ibid.*, 4:454.

14. *Journal of Discourses*, 19:337.

15. *Deseret News*, 26 November 1932.

16. John K. Edmunds, *Through Temple Doors* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978), 74–75.

17. John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 351.

18. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 83–84.





19. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953), 2:304; and Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:379; see also, 2:308–10.

20. *Journal of Discourses*, 2:31.

21. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:1–2; see also Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 380.

22. John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), 272–77.

23. *The Return* 2, no. 4 (April 1890): 252.

24. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 333.

25. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:319.

26. *Times and Seasons* 5 (15 September 1844): 651; also, *Millennial Star* 5 (December 1844): 104.

27. *Millennial Star* 5 (March 1845): 151.

28. B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period 2: Apostolic Interregnum* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 7:400.

29. *Journal History*, 30 November 1845, LDS Church Archives.

30. *Ibid.*, 10 December 1845.

31. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:543–44.

32. Elizabeth Ann Whitney, “A Leaf from an Autobiography,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7 (15 February 1879): 191; also, “Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9 (15 October 1880): 74.

33. John D. Lee, “Diaries and Official Records,” 59–60, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

34. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis: Vandawalker, 1892), 169.

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36. Diary of William Huntington, 43, typescript, 1952–53, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young

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37. *Journal History*, 29 December 1845.

38. Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball, Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 117.

39. *Ibid.*, 118.

40. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:541–80. These pages list the number of endowments performed on each respective day. Added together, the figures total 5,634.

41. *Journal History*, 20 January 1846.

42. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:567.

43. *Ibid.*, 579.

44. Helen Mar Whitney, “The Last Chapter of Scenes in Nauvoo,” *Woman’s Exponent* 12 (1 November 1883): 81; also, *Journal History*, 4 February 1846.

45. Joseph Holbrook, “The Life of Joseph Holbrook,” 75–76, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

46. Brigham Young, *The Journal of Brigham*, comp. Leland R. Nelson (Provo, Utah: Council, 1980), 129. This conclusion is also sustained by the report of Helen Mar Whitney, who described people removing the furnishings from the celestial room on 4 February 1845. “The Last Chapter of Scenes in Nauvoo,” 81; and, Thomas L. Kane, *The Mormons: A Discourse* (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1850), 21. If furnishings were indeed removed from ordinance rooms, then it raises questions about the full endowment ordinance being given after this date. The large numbers receiving ordinances after 4 February also indicate only a partial endowment being given.

47. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 444–46.

48. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1930), 2:95.

49. *Ibid.*, 2:102.

50. *Ibid.*, 2:106.





51. Leonard Soby as quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905), 96; also Nauvoo Expositor, 7 June 1844.

52. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes from Nauvoo and Incidents from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (15 October 1883): 74.

53. Diary of Samuel Whitney Richards, 2:1–2, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

54. Richard O. Cowan, *Temple Building Ancient and Modern* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1971), 29, quoting from a report prepared in 1912 (no source listed); also, Joseph Christensen (former Salt Lake Temple recorder) as quoted by J. Earl Arrington, "Story of the Nauvoo Temple," 24, LDS Church Archives.

55. *Journal History*, 30 October 1842.

56. *Ibid.*, 23 October 1842. Charlotte Haven, in a letter to her mother dated 19 February 1843, described the seating arrangements used in subsequent meetings. "Some boards are placed for seats, but not half enough to accommodate the people; so men, women, and children, take with them chairs, benches, stools, etc." As quoted by Richard Neitzel Holzzapfel and Jeni Broberg Holzzapfel, *Women of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 87; also, George W. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo, Everyday Life in the City of Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 145.

57. *Journal History*, 6 April 1843.

58. Jenson, *Historical Record*, 8 (June 1889): 864.

59. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:456.

60. George Whitaker as cited in Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Journey to Zion, Voices from the Mormon Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 51.

61. Jenson, *Historical Record* 7 (January 1888): 519.

62. *Ibid.*, 7:555–56.

63. *Ibid.*, 7:578.

64. *Ibid.*, 7:594.

65. J. H. Buckingham, "Illinois as Lincoln Knew It," in *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions* (Springfield, Ill.: Illinois State Historical Society, 1938), 172.

66. *Journal History*, 30 June 1846; 31 July 1846; also, Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:584.

67. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:542, 549, 555, 565.

68. *Ibid.*, 7:567.

69. *Ibid.*, 7:576.

70. *Ibid.*, 7:577.

71. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes from Nauvoo and Incidents from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (15 September 1883): 57–58; also, Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:561–62.

72. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:566.

73. Diary of Samuel Whitney Richards, 1:2.

74. *Ibid.*, 17–18.

75. *Valley Tan*, 15 February 1860.

76. Buckingham, "Illinois as Lincoln Knew It," 169.

77. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 220.

78. Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 108–9; also, Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:554.

79. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes from Nauvoo," 58. 5

