



*Portraits in Diligence.* Temple workers at the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple arrive for their assignments early in the morning after braving a heavy rainstorm and formidable transportation obstacles, 2022.<sup>1</sup>



*A Congolese Family Is United Through Sealing Ordinances. Front: Kabange Christian (son), Nkulu David (son), Nkulu Ilunga Fridon (son). Back: Mwenze Monga Vianney (friend), Nkulu-Mwepu-Matongo Hermens (son), Nkulu Kazadi Raisa (daughter), Nkulu-Mwepu-Mwana Donatien (father), Nsenga-Ndala Bibiche (mother), Bilesi (friend), Nkulu Ngoy Alliance (daughter), Godefroid (friend), Kaseka Milambo Solange (friend). Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple, 2022.<sup>2</sup>*

## **Bounded Flexibility in Adjustments to Temple Ordinances**

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

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**I**n the spring of 2019, my wife Kathleen and I arrived in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo as full-time missionaries to help with the opening of the first temple in the country. Not long before our arrival, on 2 January 2019, the First Presidency had issued the following statement on temples:<sup>3</sup>

Whenever the Lord has had a people on the earth who will obey His word, they have been commanded to build temples. Scriptures document patterns of temple worship from the times of Adam and Eve, Moses, Solomon, Nephi, and others.

With the restoration of the gospel in these latter days, temple worship has also been restored to bless the lives of people across the world and on the other side of the veil as well.





*Sophie waits outside the temple, 2022.*

Over these many centuries, details associated with temple work have been adjusted periodically, including language, methods of construction, communication, and record-keeping. Prophets have taught that there will be no end to such adjustments as directed by the Lord to His servants.

A dedicated temple is the most holy of any place of worship on the earth. Its ordinances are sacred and are not discussed outside a holy temple.

We wondered what kinds of adjustments might be coming our way.

During the first few weeks of temple operation, patrons and newly called temple workers struggled with some of the logistical complexities of the ordinances. Many of the workers had only attended the temple once, for their own ordinances, before they were called. Some had received their temple blessings many years before in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple when the ordinances were available only in English and, at the time, they could understand little or nothing of what they experienced.

Sophie had diligently collected the names of her ancestors and began performing ordinances one by one in their behalf.<sup>4</sup> One day, she approached a member of the temple presidency and said longingly, “Now that I’ve performed these ordinances for my deceased family, I hope that someday when I die, there will be someone to seal me to my parents.” When the presidency member explained that she could be sealed to her parents now, with two others standing in for them as proxies, she shed grateful tears. Logistical and procedural questions of many sorts were common during the first months.

Soon, consistent with what had been announced in the First Presidency letter, instructions began to arrive telling us about new procedural adjustments. With each new set of instructions, we experienced great relief, feeling that these surely must have been made with the needs of our temple in mind. We were grateful for inspired leaders who prayerfully made these changes and saw firsthand how they blessed temple worshipers and workers alike.

## **Broad Considerations**

President Russell M. Nelson has testified that that “temple rites are ancient.” He regards this fact as “thrilling and another evidence of their authenticity.”<sup>5</sup> When we accept the witness of ancient and modern scripture that individuals have participated in this same “sacred and ageless work”<sup>6</sup> from the beginning of time, it shapes the way we approach our participation in temple worship.

While, as Joseph Smith taught, the “order of the house of God”<sup>7</sup> must remain unchanged, the Lord has permitted authorized Church leaders to adjust the details of temple work to meet the needs of

different times, cultures, and practical circumstances. Indeed, such adjustments “are continuing evidence that the Lord is actively directing His Church.”<sup>8</sup> With respect to this subject, two broad considerations come into view:

1. Latter-day Saints understand that the primary intent of temple ordinances is to teach and bless the participants, not to provide precise matches to texts, symbols, and modes of presentation from other times. Because this is so, we would expect to find Joseph Smith’s restored temple rites deviating at times from the wording and symbolism of ancient ordinances in the interest of clarity and relevance to modern disciples.
2. In a similar spirit, we would expect various adjustments in the presentation of the ordinances to be made to reflect the physical and practical circumstances in which temple ordinances are administered and to accommodate (insofar as possible) the needs and capacities of temple worshipers.

While avoiding specific mention of things that “are not discussed outside a holy temple,”<sup>9</sup> I will elaborate on each of these two considerations in turn below.

## **Adjustments in the Wording and Symbolism of Ordinances**

Doctrine and Covenants 1:24 explicitly recognizes the need for bounded flexibility in adapting divine communication to accommodate mortal limitations, asserting that God always speaks to humans “in their weakness,” choosing a language of revelation that is “after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding.” In this regard, Latter-day Saint historian Richard L. Bushman commented that:<sup>10</sup>

all sorts of cultural baggage of worldly culture, human culture, is loaded into the communications that we’re receiving from God. And there’s always going to be a filter, a screen, that’s going to obscure what God truly is and what He wants to communicate to us, because He’s dependent—He *has* to use the language we can understand. ...

[Thus,] the vocabulary that the Lord uses to communicate through His prophets is not just “pure” or “biblical” or “religious” vocabulary, but whatever best serves His purpose. ... [However,] what we must remember is that even though these languages are borrowed and bring cultural baggage with them, we revise that language, we make it our own. It soon assumes a Mormon, or we would say, perhaps, a more godly form because it is used in the context of other revelations and of all the practices that Mormons use. And that is particularly true ... with the temple.

Building on Bushman’s insights, it is arguable that the revelatory process by which Joseph Smith received the temple ordinances was similar in some respects to his work on the translation of scripture. In the translation of ancient records, the Prophet was required to render God’s word in a fashion that contemporary readers could both understand and relate to the previous scripture they had encountered in the Bible. Thus, it is not<sup>11</sup> surprising that wording like that of the King James Version appears frequently in the English translation of scriptural passages from the Old Testament included on the Book of Mormon plates.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, the revelation of temple ordinances was a matter of “translating” divine truths—doctrinal and ritual components of temple ordinances that Joseph Smith had previously encountered as he received and translated scripture, in his personal revelatory experiences, and through his encounters with Freemasonry—into words and actions that the Saints could readily understand because their intuitions had already been primed by their upbringing in a particular culture and language, their life experiences, and their exposure to the Bible.

Importantly, even in those instances where the Prophet’s translations and revelations seems to have reproduced archaic literary features, the historical record suggests that ensuring adequate English expressions of the ideas was an exhausting effort that is better described in terms of active, immersive spiritual engagement than as passive reception and recital. In that light, it may be significant that the Book of Mormon itself refers to the process of rendering a text from one language to another under divine direction—whatever the exact nature of that process ultimately turns out to be<sup>13</sup>—more frequently as “interpretation” than as “translation.”<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Flake argues that Joseph Smith did not see himself merely as “God’s stenographer. Rather, he was an *interpreting* reader, and God the confirming authority.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, Joseph Smith’s production of the temple ordinances should not be seen simply as a choice between borrowing from Freemasonry and the Bible or passively receiving divine revelation. Throughout the revelatory process, prophets contribute their own talents into the mix.

In both scripture translation and the “translation” of revelations about the ordinances into their concrete manifestation in temples, the use of elements already familiar to the early Saints would have served a pragmatic purpose, favoring acceptance and understanding of specific aspects of ancient teachings better than if a whole new and foreign textual or ritual vocabulary had been introduced. In following the divine direction, the Prophet received as he translated, wrote, and taught, he took great pains to make his continually expanding knowledge of heavenly things available and accessible to the Saints. Most importantly, he encouraged them to gain greater light and knowledge for themselves directly from God.<sup>16</sup>

As an instructive instance of change and continuity within the ordinances, note that the current English wording of the baptismal prayer differs from the examples given in the English translation of the Book of Mormon.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the specific wordings of Latter-day Saint ordinances in their non-English translations have been updated from time to time when better translations were found. Such changes in wording do not undermine the requirement for uniformity in the ordinances across cultures and dispensations, but rather are intended to give contemporary Saints clearer views of their ageless meaning.

With respect to symbols used to illustrate the eternal truths of the ordinances, Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted that three different ordinances—baptism, the sacrament, and animal sacrifice—were instituted at different times, using different tangible symbols, and in different types of settings. However, all three are associated with one and the same covenant.<sup>18</sup> Though these three ordinances vary significantly in their expressions of relevant symbolism, each of them “is performed in similitude of the atoning sacrifice by which salvation comes.”<sup>19</sup> What is important is that any adjustments to ordinances made in light of different times, cultures, and practical circumstances take place under

prophetic direction. This practice ensures that the results of any alteration remain true to the essential nature of the ordinance itself as well as to divinely inspired pedagogical purposes that govern the way a particular ordinance should be introduced and administered at a given time and for the instruction of a specific people.

### **Adjustments in the Presentation of the Ordinances**

As an illustration of the constrained circumstances under which temple ordinances often have been performed, recall that in the time of the patriarchs and early prophets, they were enacted in open air on the “mountain top”<sup>20</sup> or in a tent dedicated to that purpose.<sup>21</sup> Long after the exodus from Egypt, when Israel was settled in the land and dwelt in peace, King David grieved that he lived in a palace of cedar while the ark of God humbly languished within the curtains of a portable Tabernacle, as it had since the wanderings of his people in the wilderness.<sup>22</sup> It was not until the days of Solomon that a permanent and gloriously fitting House of the Lord was finally dedicated<sup>23</sup>—only to be destroyed a few centuries later by the Babylonians.



Roland L. Lee (1949—): *Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store*, 2008.<sup>24</sup>

The conditions under which temple work was performed among the early Saints in our day have also varied due to changing circumstances. When the Nauvoo Temple was still under construction, Joseph Smith was prompted to hasten<sup>25</sup> the introduction of the temple ordinances “in an improvised and makeshift way”<sup>26</sup> to a select few in the attic story of the Red Brick Store. In one account, he is remembered as lamenting: “Brother Brigham, this is not arranged right. But we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed.”<sup>27</sup>





Frederick Hawkins Piercy (1830–1891): *Ruins of the Temple at Nauvoo*, 1853.<sup>28</sup>

After the death of Joseph Smith, the Saints continued their labors to bring the Nauvoo Temple into a form suitable for the administration of the fulness of temple blessings. However, after only brief use in its hastily completed state, the body of the Church was compelled to leave for the West. Shortly thereafter, the Nauvoo Temple was destroyed by fire and wind.



*Ensign Peak, the Council House, and the Endowment House.*<sup>29</sup>

Because the Salt Lake Temple would not be finished for forty years, temple ordinances were administered for a time in a variety of temporary settings, including the top of Ensign Peak, Brigham Young's office, the Council House, and the Endowment House.<sup>30</sup> Finally, decades after the Saints' arrival in Salt Lake City, temples began to dot the landscape in Utah and, eventually, in other places. At last, modern temple ordinances could be carried out in surroundings that matched their majesty.

A significant adjustment in the presentation of temple ordinances was made through a cinematic version of the endowment produced for the Swiss Temple.<sup>31</sup> This development allowed the endowment to be presented “in a single ordinance room and in more than one language with far fewer than the usual number of temple workers.”<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the bare recitals and repeated conventions of ancient ritual,<sup>33</sup> in which, for example, the creation drama could only be “conveyed by dialogue offstage,”<sup>34</sup> Hugh Nibley has described how the lush visuals, the heightened dramatic portrayals by actors, and the powerful emotional impact of a continuous musical score have enhanced the presentation of the endowment for participants who have become accustomed to the techniques and production values of commercial filmmaking.<sup>35</sup>

Though recognizing the value of these advances, Nibley worried that overuse of sophisticated theatrical components aimed at enriching the sensory and emotional experience sometimes might distract temple-goers from a focus on the rich meaning conveyed in the words and forms that have functioned traditionally as centerpieces of authentic temple ritual.<sup>36</sup> Being too caught up in the

experience of a visually and auditorily rich film could actually make it more difficult for some participants to focus on receiving the personal inspiration they need to understand and apply temple teachings. The current presentation of the filmed endowment narrative enhances the participants’ experience with background music and visuals without letting these beautiful enhancements overwhelm the core messages.

The advantage of the variety of interpretations experienced in live presentations of the endowment has often been preserved to a degree by the rotation of multiple films. For example, in 2014 *The Deseret News* reported that three different films for temple instruction had been released within the previous year. According to the news article: “The script in each of the films is the same. The films are shown in a rotation to provide variety to temple instruction.”<sup>37</sup> The similarities and differences between presentations help temple-goers distinguish essential instruction from cinematic



Stephen T. Whitlock (1951–): *Bern Switzerland Temple*, 2008.

artistry. Concrete details could be generalized by viewers to a more universal application, thus minimizing the possibility that incidental particulars may be mistakenly magnified into doctrinal imperatives. For instance, without some variety in the different presentations, a given version of the endowment that included a few measures of moving music or a powerful expression of emotion at a



strategic story juncture might lead to overinterpretation, thus eclipsing the explicit message of the endowment narrative itself.

## Earthly Ordinances as Reflections of Heavenly Ordinances

Hugh Nibley has described how the instructional approach of the temple endowment provides needed flexibility while affording remarkable stability:<sup>38</sup>

The ... endowment ... is frankly a model, a presentation in figurative terms. As such it is flexible and adjustable; for example, it may be presented in more languages than one and in more than one medium of communication. But since it does not attempt to be a picture of reality but only a model or analog to show us how things work, setting forth a pattern of man's life on earth with its fundamental whys and wherefores, it does not need to be changed or adapted greatly through the years; it is a remarkably stable model.



Linda McCarthy (1947–): *The City of Enoch*, 2002.<sup>39</sup> This elegant digital watercolor depicts the heavenly and earthly cities of Zion as they are about to meet and merge, mutually reflecting their serene splendor. Likewise, in accord with the principle of “on earth as in heaven,”<sup>40</sup> earthly and heavenly ordinances—identical in purpose but different in form—reflect the same “realities that prevail throughout the universe.”<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, consistent with the idea that the temple is a model or analog rather than a picture of reality, is the distinction that Elder John A. Widtsoe made between earthly and heavenly ordinances:<sup>42</sup>

Great eternal truths make up the Gospel plan. All regulations for man's earthly guidance have their eternal spiritual counterparts. The earthly ordinances of the Gospel are themselves only reflections of heavenly ordinances. For instance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and temple work are merely earthly symbols of realities that prevail throughout the universe; but they are symbols of truths that must be recognized if the Great Plan is to be fulfilled. The acceptance of these earthly symbols is part and parcel of correct earth life, but being earthly symbols they are distinctly of the earth and cannot be accepted elsewhere than on earth. In order that absolute fairness may prevail and eternal justice may be satisfied, all men, to attain the fulness of their joy, must accept these earthly ordinances. There is no water baptism in the next estate nor any conferring of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of earthly hands. The equivalents of these ordinances prevail no doubt in every estate, but only as they are given on this earth can they be made to aid, in their onward progress, those who have dwelt on earth.

## The Perpetual Unfolding of Temple Ordinances

The rich sequence of temple ordinances administered to the Saints in Nauvoo should not be regarded as a novel or surprising development so much as the full-fledged blossoming of ideas and priesthood authority that had already budded in Kirtland—or even, arguably, when Joseph Smith experienced his First Vision.<sup>43</sup> As Don Bradley perceptively observed:<sup>44</sup>

The faith [Joseph Smith] preached at the close of his career undeniably differed from the faith he preached at its opening. Yet eminent Yale literary critic Harold Bloom has asserted that Smith's "religion-making imagination" was of the *unfolding* rather than the *evolving* type, that his religious system did not transform so much by the incorporation of others' ideas but by the progressive outworking of his original vision.

To members of the Church who know and love the temple, the results of the perpetual unfolding of that original vision are palpable. Indeed, Kathleen Flake has written that the temple ordinances revealed by the Prophet, like the scripture that came through him, "gave his believing [followers] a sense of what was experientially real, not merely philosophically true."<sup>45</sup> For example, unlike the allegories of Masonic ritual, which contain beautiful truths while eschewing salvific claims, modern temple ordinances provide a power in the priesthood that belies their simple forms. Like the sixteen stones of the brother of Jared,<sup>46</sup> earthly elements of temple worship are transformed into divine instruments of salvation and revelation through the touch of the living God. Thus, as Bradley writes:<sup>47</sup>

We have absolutely nothing to fear from the prophet Joseph using "earthly elements," like aspects of Freemasonry, as a vehicle for conveying sacred truths and experiences in temple worship (or for any other purpose). In the Book of Mormon, the Lord tells us that He "doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes." And the "means" He chooses don't have to be those we think of as profound or transcendent—"by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls."<sup>48</sup>

The “very small means” of the temple ordinances are not simply a *part* of the plan of salvation, they are at the *heart* of the plan of salvation. In an 1832 revelation, Joseph Smith was told:<sup>49</sup>

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. 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.

These verses make it clear that for the Prophet, like for John the Apostle,<sup>50</sup> “the specific gift of the power of knowing God is to be equated with eternal life itself.”<sup>51</sup> However, as Nibley reminds us, “You comprehend others only to the degree you are like them.”<sup>52</sup> This is the whole purpose of the temple: Through the divine influence that flows into all those who learn and live the truths that are made available through participating in temple ordinances and keeping the associated covenants,<sup>53</sup> the priesthood becomes a channel of personal revelation<sup>54</sup> and a power that ultimately enables one to become like God, experiencing “the power of godliness.”<sup>55</sup>

It is my witness that the temple ordinances are, as Elder John A. Widtsoe affirmed, “earthly symbols of realities that prevail throughout the universe.”<sup>56</sup> They point to heavenly meanings beyond themselves—meanings that can be revealed through our “minding true things by what their mock’ries be.”<sup>57</sup> The ordinances perform an essential earthly function, providing “the means both of receiving instruction and demonstrating obedience,”<sup>58</sup> helping make us ready, someday, to “behold the face of God,”<sup>59</sup> as did Moses. Those who participate in the ordinances of the temple are shown a pattern in ritual of what Moses and others throughout ancient and modern history have experienced in actuality.

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## Endnotes

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- 1 Photograph by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, 15 April 2022. Image ID: IMG\_0187.jpg.
- 2 Photograph by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, 20 April 2022. Image ID: IMG\_0714.jpg.
- 3 First Presidency Statement on Temples, First Presidency Statement on Temples. For a collection statements by Church leaders on this topic, see T. Holyoak, First Presidency Statement. See also Adjustments to Temple Work, Adjustments to Temple Work; R. E. Bennett, Temples Rising.
- 4 Photograph by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw. Image ID: IMG\_0186.jpg, 15 April 2022.
- 5 R. M. Nelson, *Becoming Exemplary*, p. 114.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- 7 J. Smith, Jr., *Papers 2008-*, *Journal 1835-1836*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/35> (accessed May 17, 2019); J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings 2007*), p. 419; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 12 November 1835, p. 91. In *Doctrine and Covenants 88:127-128*, the term "order of the house of God" is used in reference to certain formalities of the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, however "order" is used more broadly in relation to temple and priesthood matters elsewhere in the revelations (for example, *Doctrine and Covenants 85:7; 132:8, 19*).



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8 R. M. Nelson, *Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation*, p. 95.

9 Elder David A. Bednar has given the following guidelines about discussion information related to the temple (D. A. Bednar, *Prepared*, pp. 103-104):

[M]any Church members are unsure about what appropriately can and cannot be said regarding the temple experience outside of the temple.

President Ezra Taft Benson described why this uncertainty exists (E. T. Benson, *Teachings 2000*), p. 174, emphasis added; E. T. Benson, *What I Hope*, p. 8):

I believe a *proper understanding or background* will immeasurably help prepare our youth for the temple ... [and] will foster within them a desire to seek their priesthood blessings just as Abraham sought his.

Two basic guidelines can help us achieve the proper understanding emphasized by President Benson.

Guideline #1. Because we love the Lord, we always should speak about His holy house with reverence. We should not disclose or describe the special symbols associated with the covenants we receive in sacred temple ceremonies. Neither should we discuss the holy information that we specifically promise in the temple not to reveal.

Guideline #2. The temple is the house of the Lord. Everything in the temple points us to our Savior, Jesus Christ. We may discuss the basic purposes of and the doctrine and principles associated with temple ordinances and covenants.

President Howard W. Hunter counseled (H. W. Hunter, *Teachings 2000*), p. 184): “Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord.”

Across the generations, from the Prophet Joseph Smith to President Russell M. Nelson, the doctrinal purposes of temple ordinances and covenants have been taught extensively by Church leaders (see, for example, J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord* (1912), pp. 99-101). A rich reservoir of resources exists in print, audio, video, and other formats to help us learn about initiatory ordinances, endowments, marriages, and other sealing ordinances (ibid., pp. 89-109; R. M. Nelson, *Personal Preparation*; B. K. Packer, *Holy Temple*, pp. 153-155). Information also is available about following the Savior by receiving and honoring covenants to keep the law of obedience, the law of sacrifice, the law of the gospel, the law of chastity, and the law of consecration (E. T. Benson, *Teachings 2000*), p. 101; J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord* (1912), p. 100; *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (pamphlet), 2002). All Church members should become familiar with the excellent materials available at [temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

President Russell M. Nelson emphasized the vital balance between the sacred nature of temple ceremonies and the valuable information about temples published by the Church that is accurate, appropriate, and available publicly. He explained (R. M. Nelson, *Prepare for the blessings of the temple*, p. 47): “I recommend that members ... read entries in the Bible Dictionary that are related to the temple, such as ‘Anoint,’ ‘Covenant,’ ‘sacrifices,’ and ‘Temple.’ One may also wish to read Exodus, chapters 26–29, and Leviticus, chapter 8. The Old Testament, as well as the books of Moses and Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price, underscores the antiquity of temple work and the enduring nature of its ordinances.”

So, imagine that your son or daughter asks, “Someone at school told me that strange clothing is worn in the temple. Is that right?” A short video is available on [temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) entitled “Sacred Temple Clothing” (Sacred Temple Clothing, Sacred Temple Clothing). This excellent resource explains how from ancient times men and women have embraced sacred music, different forms of prayer, symbolic religious clothing, gestures, and rituals to express their innermost feelings of devotion to God. Thus, the Church supports home-centered preparation for the glorious blessings of the temple through basic instruction and

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remarkable resources such as this video. Much useful information is available to you. (For example, watch a video tour of the Rome Italy Temple, or study prophetic teachings on temples [see [temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)]).

As we strive to walk in the meekness of the Lord's Spirit (Doctrine and Covenants 19:23) we will be blessed to understand and achieve in our homes the necessary balance between what is and what is not appropriate to discuss about sacred temple ordinances and covenants.

10 R. L. Bushman, Response, 35:59–40:11, cited with permission.

11 See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9.

12 See, for example, B. A. Gardner, Gift and Power, pp. 215–225.

13 Note that Joseph Smith declined to relate the specifics of the translation process himself even in response to direct questioning in private company from believing friends. For example, in response to a request in 1831 by his brother Hyrum to explain the translation process more fully, Joseph Smith said that “it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and ... it was not expedient for him to relate these things” (J. Smith, Jr., Documentary History, 1:220).

14 Within the Book of Mormon, “translate” and “translation” are mentioned in Mosiah 8:11, 12 (twice), 13; Alma 9:21; and Ether 5:1. By way of contrast, we find the following terms used to describe the process of rendering a text in an unknown language into a familiar tongue: “interpret” (Omni 1:20; Mosiah 8:6, 11; Mosiah 21:28; and Ether 3:22), “interpretation” (Introduction (twice), Mormon 9:34 and Ether 2:3, 4:5, 15:8), “interpreters” (Mosiah 8:13, 19; Mosiah 28:20; Alma 37:21, 24; and Ether 4:5). In addition, there is a reference to the “interpretation” of the symbolism of the tree of life (1 Nephi 11:11), and to the gift of “interpretation” of tongues (Mormon 9:7).

15 K. Flake, Translating Time, pp. 507–508, emphasis added. Compare G. Underwood, Revelation, 76–81, 83–84.

16 Doctrine and Covenants 88:118 exhorts the Saints to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” The implication of scripture, however, is that learning spiritual matters from book study is ultimately a poor cousin to learning by faith—that is, study “out of the best books” is only necessary because “all have not faith.” Though himself a great advocate of schools for the teaching of practical subjects in Kirtland and Nauvoo, on matters of learning for the eternities Joseph Smith wanted the Saints to gain knowledge by direct revelation—to come to the point where they could throw away their crutches, take up their beds, and walk: “The best way to obtain truth and wisdom is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer, and obtain divine teaching” (J. Smith, Jr., Teachings, 3 October 1841, p. 191). Note that the original source reads “the only way” (J. Smith, Jr., Papers 2008-), History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/401>; J. Smith, Jr. et al., Words, 3 October 1841, p. 77, emphasis added).

17 Compare Mosiah 18:13; 3 Nephi 11:25; Doctrine and Covenants 20:73.

18 See B. R. McConkie, New Witness, pp. 294–295.

19 Ibid., p. 294.

20 Joseph Smith taught: “The rich can only get [the keys given in the endowment] in the Temple, the poor may get them on the mountain top as did Moses” (J. Smith, Jr., Papers 2008-), Discourse, 1 May 1842, as Reported by Willard Richards, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-1-may-1842-as-reported-by-willard-richards/1>; J. Smith, Jr. et al., Words, 1 May 1842, pp. 119–120, spelling, grammar, and punctuation standardized).

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21 See J. M. Bradshaw, *Ark and Tent*. For a detailed study of biblical allusions to temple themes and practices in historical settings that are presented as prior to the construction of the Tabernacle, see L. M. Morales, *Tabernacle Pre-Figured*.

22 2 Samuel 7:2.

23 See 2 Chronicles, chapter 6.

24 By permission of Roland L. Lee Gallery, with thanks to Roland L. Lee and Nathan Wotkyns.

25 In 1884, President John Taylor related (J. Taylor, 18 May 1884, p. 183):

Joseph Smith, before his death, was much exercised about the completion of the Temple in Nauvoo, and the administering of ordinances therein. In his anxiety and for fear he should not live to see the Temple completed, he prepared a place over what was known as the brick store ... where to a chosen few he administered those ordinances that we now have today associated with endowments, so that if anything should happen to him—which he evidently contemplated—he would feel that he had then fulfilled his mission, that he had conferred upon others all the keys given to him by the manifestations of the power of God.

26 Cited in T. G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith*, p. 97.

27 See the journal of L. John Nuttall, vol. 1, 7 February 1877, pp. 18–19, Special Collections, BYU Library, cited in *ibid.*, p. 98. The Prophet continued: “I wish you to take this matter in hand and organize and systematize all these ceremonies.” Then, according to Brigham, “I did so. And each time I got something more [meaning that each time he worked on systematizing he had not only his memory and the records kept by Wilford Woodruff and others but also the light of revelation], so that when we went through the temple at Nauvoo [and without Joseph] I understood and knew how to place them there. We had our ceremonies pretty correct” (*ibid.*).

28 Springville Museum of Art. Gift of Brent Ashworth. Accession number: 2021.046.

<https://webkiosk.springville.org/objects-1/info/8757> (accessed July 20, 2022).

29 <http://ldspioneerarchitecture.blogspot.com/2018/04/> (accessed 13 November 2021).

30 Richard Cowan writes (R. O. Cowan, *Design*, p. 50. See also R. O. Cowan, *Dot*, pp. 63–64):

Because the great temple would not be completed for forty years, temporary facilities needed to be provided where the Saints could receive temple blessings. During the pioneers' early years in the Salt Lake Valley, these blessings had been given in various places, including the top of Ensign Peak and Brigham Young's office. By 1852, endowments were being given in the Council House, located on the southwest corner of what are now South Temple and Main Streets. This facility also accommodated a variety of other ecclesiastical and civic functions, so a separate place was needed where the sacred temple ordinances could be given. The Endowment House, a two-story adobe structure dedicated in 1855, was located in the northwest corner of Temple Square. It continued to bless the Saints until it was torn down in 1889 after other temples were finished in the region and as the Salt Lake Temple itself neared completion.

31 Courtesy of Stephen T. Whitlock. Image ID: Switzerland-Berne-2.jpg.

32 R. O. Cowan, *Dot*, p. 159. On the history of this new development, see *ibid.*, pp. 159–160; R. O. Cowan, *Latter-day Houses of the Lord*, pp. 212–213; R. O. Cowan, *Pivotal Swiss Temple*, pp. 133–135; S. L. Dew, *Hinckley*, pp. 176–184.



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33 For example, “it was long debated among Egyptologists whether the Pyramid Texts were recited by a priest or acted out, following instructions held in the hand or written on the walls. (H. W. Nibley, *Drama*, p. 17).

34 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

36 H. W. Nibley, *House of Glory*, p. 334.

37 T. Walch, *LDS Church Begins*.

38 H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. xxix.

39 With kind permission of the artist.

40 See Matthew 6:10.

41 J. A. Widtsoe, *Work*, p. 33.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

43 D. Bradley, *Acquiring an All-Seeing Eye: Joseph Smith’s First Vision as Seer Initiation and Ritual Apotheosis*, 19 July 2010, cited with permission.

44 *Ibid.*

45 K. Flake, *Translating Time*, p. 525. Of course, this is only one of many kinds of knowledge that can be gained in the temple. See, for example, J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 1–5, 11–18.

46 See chapter 3 of the book of Ether.

47 D. Bradley, July 24 2022.

48 Alma 37:7. Going further, Bradley writes (*ibid.*):

In parallel to the Lord transforming the brother of Jared’s sixteen stones into vessels of divine light on Mt. Shelem—alongside giving the brother of Jared the interpreters He had made Himself—consider what the Lord did for Moses on Mt. Sinai. Moses gets the commandments on two different sets of stone tablets. One set the Lord makes for him, by His own hand. The other Moses makes for God, and God sanctifies it by the touch of His hand. Both sets of tablets convey God’s commandments. What matters is not the vehicle, but the divine purpose to which it is put and its divine sanctification to that purpose.

Another thought: The great anthropologist of religion Mircea Eliade observed that a culture’s cosmogony establishes its ideals for human action. In the same way that God created the world, we humans are to create within the world. Similarly, it would stand to reason that God’s actions in the creation of the world would establish the template for how He continues to create within the world. So, as Philip Barlow has argued, just as in our Book of Abraham and temple cosmogonies, God creates the world using pre-existing materials, so in this same way God, collaborating with his prophets, creates revelations within the world using preexisting materials available to them. For instance, the Book of Mormon was given in the pre-existing language of the King James Version of the Bible. On the model of these creation accounts, we should expect revelation to make use of such materials, recreating ancient and primordial patterns using modern materials. If an inspired painter were to perfectly depict the symbols of the ancient Jewish temple, without having any adequate human way of knowing this symbolism, would it be sufficient to dismiss the inspiration of his work on the grounds that although his symbolism was perfect his paints were modern? I would argue that this is sharply analogous to what we see in Joseph Smith using modern materials to restore ancient patterns of faith and worship.

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49 Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22.

50 John 17 :3.

51 S. E. Robinson et al., *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, 3:31–32. See John 17:3.

52 H. W. Nibley, *Unrolling*, p. 165. See also 1 John 3:2. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 35.

53 Elder D. Todd Christofferson, in L. T. Perry et al., *Gospel Answers*.

54 See J. Smith, Jr., *Papers 2008-*), *Instruction on Priesthood*, 5 October 1840,

<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-on-priesthood-5-october-1840/1>; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, October 1840, p. 167.

55 Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.

56 J. A. Widtsoe, *Work*, p. 33.

57 W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4:Prologue:53, p. 955. In other words, “representing to yourself the truth of what we imitate so badly” *ibid.*, p. 955 n. 53). Nibley often used this line from Shakespeare to describe the limitations of our mortal efforts to represent the sublime scenes and themes of temple drama (for example, H. W. Nibley, *Drama*, p. 11)—especially in light of his view that the earthly temple ordinances are not “a picture of reality but only a model or analog to show us how things work” (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. *xxix*).

In the context of the play, Shakespeare’s narrator implores the audience to forgive his feeble efforts to represent the glories of the battle of Agincourt “with four or five most vile and ragged foils ... in brawl ridiculous” (W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4:Prologue:50–51, p. 955), reminding them of the impossibility of cramming the “vasty fields of France” (*ibid.*, Prologue:12, p. 935) into the confines of their small stage.

58 H. W. Nibley, *Treasures*, p. 178. With respect to the purpose of the ordinances as a means of demonstrating obedience, President Brigham Young explained (B. Young, 23 October 1853, pp. 3, 4):

Will the bread administered in this ordinance [of the sacrament] add life to you? Will the wine add life to you? Yes; if you are hungry and faint, it will sustain the natural strength of the body. But suppose you have just eaten and drunk till you are full, so as not to require another particle of food to sustain the natural body ... In what consists [then] the benefit we derive from this ordinance? It is in obeying the commands of the Lord. When we obey the commandments of our Heavenly Father, if we have a correct understanding of the ordinances of the House of God, we receive all the promises attached to the obedience rendered to His commandments. ...

It is the same in this as it is in the ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins. Has water, in itself, any virtue to wash away sin? Certainly not, ... but keeping the commandments of God will cleanse away the stain of sin.

59 Doctrine and Covenants 84:23.