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FIG. 1. St. George Temple, ca. 1877. The first endowments for the dead were performed in the St. George Temple. This view shows the temple as it was originally constructed, with a shorter spire than present. The spire was struck by lightning in 1878 and rebuilt with a higher, more majestic design.

“Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept”

Reflections on the 1877 Commencement of the Performance of Endowments and Sealings for the Dead

Richard E. Bennett

The first endowments for the dead in Latter-day Saint history were performed on January 11, 1877 in the St. George Temple (fig. 1). Seasoned Nauvoo Temple ordinance and Salt Lake City endowment worker, Alonzo H. Raleigh, wrote of the occasion:

Endowments commenced in the [St. George] Temple and for the first time Endowments for the Dead in this Dispensation. 72 persons received their Endowments. I took the lead in the washing and anointing and instructions in the same. Washed, anointed and clothed the first person and took the general lead of the same, all through by promptings by the direction of President Brigham Young through Elder Woodruff. We were late getting through. It was the most responsible and complicated day's work I [have] ever done, as most of the workmen were new in the labor and the prompting devolved almost entirely on me for nearly all the parts.¹

Surprisingly, in the modern temple-building and temple-conscious era, little, if anything, has been said or written about the beginnings of the endowment for the dead, either by way of quiet celebration or academic explanation. More attention has centered on the companion temple ordinance of baptism for the dead, which commenced in Nauvoo. While it is certainly not the purpose of this article to trespass upon the sacred precincts of temple covenants and worship, the purpose is, however, to explore those several impulses that led to the beginnings of endowments for the dead that winter day in St. George, Utah, in 1877. Considering the fact that this ordinance rewrote the nature of temple worship and vastly multiplied reasons for temple attendance, it is a topic worthy of reverent consideration and appreciation. As much an invitation for increased work

for the dead, it has been a call for increased consecration and obedience among the living.

The topic of endowments for the dead will be addressed through a series of questions. First, did the Prophet Joseph Smith teach the principle of performing ordinances for the dead, other than the ordinance of baptism, while he was alive in Nauvoo? Second, during the so-called “interregnum era” in Church history (1844–47), is there evidence for endowments for the dead in the Nauvoo Temple or during the Mormon exodus west? Third, what was the nature of temple work during the period without temples in the Great Basin from 1848 to 1877, and what were President

Richard E. Bennett

Professor Bennett points out the magnitude of the impact that temple endowments for the dead have had on Latter-day Saint modes of worship. “Before endowments for the dead, Latter-day Saints did not have a compelling reason to go back to the temple again and again,” notes Dr. Bennett. That all changed when the practice was instituted three decades after the Prophet Joseph Smith’s death. During his research, Dr. Bennett found that temple work



as we know it today was largely shaped through Wilford Woodruff’s visionary guidance. “One of the most interesting things I found about Wilford Woodruff was his unbending allegiance to revealed doctrine and prophetic direction coupled with his courage to proclaim new revelation and adaptations in policy.” Wilford Woodruff’s tenure as prophet saw many dramatic changes, from the Manifesto ending plural marriage to the way temple work was conducted. “As prophet, he was less tied to tradition and more attuned to change, where needed. His commitment to the development and growth of temple work is one of his most enduring legacies, one that changed profoundly the history of the Church.”

Brigham Young's views on the subject? Fourth, why did this ordinance work begin in the St. George Temple? And finally, what role did Wilford Woodruff play in the formative days of this new temple practice? As will become clear, it is far easier to explore where and when endowments for the dead began than to answer how or why.

“The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn to Their Fathers”

A review of the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith indicates at least two truths about his understanding of the doctrine of salvation for the dead: first, that he spoke long and often and with great interest on the topic; and second, that his views and teachings on the subject progressed as new revelation was received. In the angel Moroni's initial visit to the young Prophet Joseph in September 1823, he referred to the coming of Elijah who would “plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers” (D&C 2:2). During the ensuing annual interviews with his apprenticed prophet from 1824 to 1828, Moroni further gave Joseph Smith “instruction and intelligence . . . [on] what the Lord was going to do and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days” (JS-H 1:54). In his Articles and Covenants of the Church (D&C 20) presented at the organization of the Church in April 1830, Joseph Smith indicated that the first principles and ordinances of the gospel—faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the gift of the Holy Ghost—were necessary and available not only for those in this era but also for “all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he [Christ] came” (D&C 20:26), as well as for those who came after.

Joseph supervised the construction of the Kirtland Temple from 1833 to 1836, and in 1835 initiated a preliminary or preparatory endowment. In 1836 he saw in a vision his brother Alvin in the celestial kingdom and “marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom . . . and had not been baptized for the remission of sins” (D&C 137:6). Three months later, he recorded the visit of heavenly messengers including Elijah, who declared “the time has fully come . . . to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse.” Elijah went on to say, “The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands” (D&C 110:14–16). After the completion of the Kirtland Temple, the ordinances of washings, anointings, and sealing the anointings were performed there.²

Precisely when the revelation came to the Prophet Joseph defining and commanding baptism for the dead is not on record, but he first publicly

taught the practice on August 15, 1840, basing much of his discourse on the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians. One month later, on September 13–14, 1840,

Joseph assured his dying father that the Saints could now be baptized for the dead. Hearing this, his father asked Joseph to be baptized for Alvin “immediately.”

as his father lay dying in Nauvoo, Joseph assured him that it was now possible for the Saints to be baptized for the dead. Hearing this, his father asked Joseph to be baptized for Alvin “immediately.”³ On January 19, 1841, the Lord instructed Joseph Smith further on the importance of building the temple. From this revelation he learned that the ordinance of baptism for the dead had been “instituted from before the foundation of the world” (D&C 124:33).⁴ Later he taught that baptism for the dead was “the only way

that men can appear as saviors on Mt. Zion.”⁵ In 1842, Joseph Smith wrote two epistles comprising sections 127 and 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants in which he reemphasized the central place that work for the dead holds in Latter-day Saint theology. Said he:

It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what in that subject? It is the baptism for the dead. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. . . . Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead. . . . As the dews of Carmel, so shall the knowledge of God descend upon them! (D&C 128:18–19)

And how shall knowledge come? “Line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope” (D&C 128:21). Clearly, his understanding of baptisms for the dead had come very gradually.

Studies indicate that the early Saints in Ohio and Illinois experimented with the performance of the newly revealed ordinance. Some were baptized in rivers, men were baptized for women and vice versa, and records were not properly kept. It took further instruction to delineate the recording process. “When the Prophet Joseph had this revelation from heaven, what did he do?” Wilford Woodruff later asked,

There are witnesses here of what he did. He never stopped til he got the fulness of the word of God to him concerning the baptism for the dead. But before doing so he went into the Mississippi River, and so did I, as well as others, and we each baptized a hundred for the dead, without a man to record a single act that we performed. Why did we do it? Because

of the feeling of joy that we had, to think that we in the flesh could stand and redeem our dead. We did not wait to know what the result of this would be, or what the whole of it should be.⁶

Recent research has shown that baptisms for the dead were performed not only in Nauvoo, but also in the Chagrin River near Kirtland, Ohio, in 1841.⁷ Likewise, the Saints in Quincy, Illinois, performed the ordinance.⁸ And on April 4, 1848, at Winter Quarters, Wilford Woodruff performed nine baptisms for deceased persons in the Missouri River.⁹

Speaking shortly after Joseph Smith's death, Brigham Young reaffirmed the necessity of this ordinance while admitting to the process of adaptation and design: "When the doctrine of baptism for the dead was first given," he said in April 1845,

this church was in its infancy, and was not capable of receiving all the knowledge of God in its highest degree; this you all believe. . . .

The Lord has led this people all the while in this way, by giving them here a little and there a little, thus he increases their wisdom, and he that receives a little and is thankful for that shall receive more and more. . . .

Joseph in his life time did not receive every thing connected with the doctrine of redemption, but he has left the key with those who understand how to obtain and teach to this great people all that is necessary for their salvation and exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our God.¹⁰

As the doctrine of baptisms for the dead came line upon line, so too came the temple endowment. Early in 1842, while the Saints in Nauvoo were busying themselves with baptisms for the dead in the temporary font in the basement of the Nauvoo Temple, Joseph hinted that work for the salvation of the dead extended beyond baptism. "God will not receive them," he said in reference to the dead, "neither will the angels acknowledge their works as accepted, for they have not taken upon themselves those ordinances and signs which God ordained for man to receive in order to receive a celestial glory."¹¹

Joseph taught, however, that such ordinances, whether baptisms or endowments, were best reserved for the temple, which was then under construction. Said Wilford Woodruff on the subject:

Joseph Smith first made known to me the very ordinances which we give to the Latter-day Saints in our endowments. I received my endowments under the direction of Joseph Smith. . . . [He] himself organized every endowment in our Church and revealed the same to the Church, and he tried to receive every key of the Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthoods from the hands of the men who held them while in the flesh, and who hold them in eternity.¹²

In June 1843, Joseph Smith explained to an assembly at the Nauvoo temple grounds that the main object of the gathering

was to build unto the Lord an house whereby he Could reveal unto his people the ordinances of the house and glories of his kingdom and teach the people the ways of salvation. For there are certain ordinances and principles that when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. This was purposed in the mind of God before the world was and it was for this purpose that God designed to gather together the Jews oft but they would not. It is for the same purpose that God gathers together the people in the last days to build unto the Lord an house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointings.¹³

And in early 1844, he said, “We need the temple more than anything else.”¹⁴

Joseph’s instructions on the matter of the endowment were reflected well by his closest associates. In the fall of 1843, Brigham Young said that “the Lord requires us to build a house unto his name that the ordinances and blessings of his kingdom may be revealed and that the Elders may be endowed and go forth and gather together the Blood of Ephraim . . . from the ends of the earth. Can you get an endowment in Boston? No and only in that place that God has pointed out.”¹⁵ Just three months later, Brigham Young further elaborated on the subject. “When the temple is done I expect we shall be baptized, washed anointed [and] ordained, and offer up the keys and signs of the priesthood for our dead that they may have a full salvation and we shall be saviors on mount Zion according to the Scriptures.”¹⁶

In 1843 the Prophet introduced endowments for the living among a select few of his close friends, known as the Anointed Quorum.¹⁷ Indeed, temple work, or what Joseph referred to often as “the spirit of Elijah,” took on greater urgency during the waning months of his life. As one eyewitness put it: “His soul was wound up with this work before he was martyred . . . [it] was upon his mind more than most any other subject that was given to him.”¹⁸ Joseph asked in January 1844,

But how are [the Saints] to become Saviors on Mt. Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead . . . [to] be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah. . . . I would advise all the Saints to go with their might and gather together all their living relatives to this place that they may be sealed and saved. . . . “Can we not be saved without going through with all those ordinances, etc?” I would answer, No, not the fullness of salvation.¹⁹

Speaking ever more boldly on the topic, Joseph once again referred to the spirit of Elijah in a sermon given in March 1844:

The spirit, power and calling of Elijah is that ye have power to hold the keys of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the Earth and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God even unto the sealing of the hearts of the fathers unto the children and the hearts of the children unto the fathers even those who are in heaven.²⁰

Three months later, in April 1844, Joseph opened the door even wider on the doctrine of endowments for the dead. He declared, “When the House is done, baptismal font erected and finished and the worthy are washed, anointed, endowed, and ordained kings and priests, which must be done in this life, when the place is prepared you must go through all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, so that you who have any dead friends must go through all the ordinances for them the same as for yourselves.”²¹ Then on April 8, 1844, just weeks before his death at Carthage, Joseph said, “For every man who wishes to save his father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends, must go through all the ordinances for each one of them separately, the same as for himself.”²²

“We need not expect to do this last work for the dead in a short time; I expect it will take at least a thousand years.”

The dimensions of such a work appeared daunting, if not overwhelming, to those around him. Many wondered at the capability of the membership to accomplish such an enormous task. Said George A. Smith several years later:

The Twelve were then instructed to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel for the dead, beginning with baptism and the laying on of hands. This work was at once commenced. It soon became apparent that some had long records of their dead, for whom they wished to administer. This was seen to be but the beginning of an immense work and that to administer all the ordinances of the gospel to the hosts of the dead was no light task. Some of the Twelve asked Joseph if there would not be some shorter method of administering for so many. Joseph in effect replied: “The laws of the Lord are immutable; we must act in perfect compliance with what is revealed to us. We need not expect to do this last work for the dead in a short time; I expect it will take at least a thousand years.”²³

In summary, Joseph Smith unquestionably taught the doctrines of salvation for the dead, including baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, and related ordinances. Furthermore, he also introduced the need of the

temple endowment for the salvation of the living. And, although he did not refer to “endowments for the dead” in specific terms, the evidence points to his understanding of their necessity.²⁴

“With the Trowel in One Hand, the Sword in the Other”

If Joseph Smith anticipated the need for endowments for the dead, why is there no record of them in Nauvoo? One answer may lie in the premature death of the Prophet. Certainly he wanted to say much more to his people than he was able to do. Furthermore, as Illinois persecution increased, a forced timetable of exodus was imposed upon the Saints, leaving precious little time to understand and perform temple work for the living, let alone the dead. “Those who went through the Temple at Nauvoo,” Brigham Young recalled a few years later, “know but very little about the endowments. There was no time to learn them and what little they did learn they have most of them forgotten it.”²⁵ And on another occasion he said: “Everything at Nauvoo went with a rush. We had to build the Temple with the trowel in one hand, the sword in the other.”²⁶ Interest in temple work increased among the Saints in Nauvoo in direct proportion to the rising levels of persecution that eventuated in their forced exodus to the Rocky Mountains beginning in February 1846.

Designed to give, as Joseph once put it, “a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God,”²⁷ and to secure the fullness of divine blessings for the faithful Latter-day Saints, the endowment consisted of a ceremonial washing and anointing, a series of lectures and dramatizations on the purpose of earth life and the plan of salvation, the making of sacred covenants, and an enriching sense of the divine presence.²⁸ At the laying of the southeast cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple, Brigham Young publicly defined the endowment as follows:

Your *endowment* is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.²⁹

Thousands sought this blessing in the dying days of Nauvoo, even before the temple was fully completed. “The main and only cause for our tarrying as long [in Nauvoo],” said Brigham Young in March 1846 from somewhere west of the Mississippi, “was to give the brethren those blessings in the Temple for which they have labored so diligently and faithfully to build, and as soon as it was prepared we labored incessantly almost

night and day to wait on them until a few days prior to our departure.”³⁰ Between December 10, 1845, and late January 1846, the Quorum of the Twelve supervised three weeks of intensive temple ordinance work in which at least 5,200 members received their endowments.³¹

So far as is yet known, the nature of temple work in Nauvoo consisted of baptisms for the dead, endowments for the living, and marriage sealings for the living. Temple work, however, did not cease abruptly with the Latter-day Saint departure from Nauvoo. There is abundant evidence to show that during the Winter Quarters period of Church history, not only were baptisms for the dead performed by Wilford Woodruff in the Missouri River,³² but also marriages sealed for time as well as for eternity. These sealings were conducted in Willard Richard’s Octagon House in the winter of 1847–48.³³

Though anxious to preserve such ordinances within the walls of the temple, Brigham Young answered the pleas of his people, who were either about to march off to the Mormon Battalion, never perhaps to be seen again, or to confront the extremes and insecurities of a wilderness exodus. An immensely pragmatic religious leader, he knew that the priesthood and its keys were with them in the wilderness and that as important as temples were, wilderness exceptions could be made as directed by proper authority.

This same policy of exception can be seen during the exodus further west. In the mountain valleys east of Salt Lake, Church leaders, clothed in sacred temple vestments, sometimes assembled out of sight and in prayer circles to pray for direction, guidance, and most especially for Brigham Young, whose health was then precarious.³⁴

“We Administer Just as Far as the Law Permits Us to Do”

Brigham Young firmly believed that as Joseph Smith’s successor, to hold the keys of the priesthood meant, in part, to continue the kinds of temple work he ardently believed Joseph had initiated. Likewise, he believed the martyred Prophet had helped introduce missionary work in the spirit world.

When he died, he had a mission in the spirit world, as much so as Jesus had. Jesus was the first man that ever went to preach to the spirits in prison. . . . Joseph has not yet got through there. When he finishes his mission in the spirit world, he will be resurrected, but he has not yet

Though anxious to preserve ordinances within the temple, Brigham Young answered the pleas of his people and allowed wilderness exceptions to be made.

done there. . . . Joseph has restored those keys to the spirits in prison, so that we who now live on the earth . . . may go forth and officiate for all who died without the Gospel and the knowledge of God.³⁵

Once in the valley, a determined Brigham Young lost little time in identifying the spot on which to build a new temple. At five in the evening on July 28, 1847, though still sick and in a fragile condition from his recent bout with Rocky Mountain fever, Brigham identified a center spot between creeks and declared to his fellow apostles, as he waved his hands in the air, “Here is the 40 acres of temple lot.” He went on to give instructions on how to build the basement and the baptismal font of the new temple.³⁶ Two weeks later he indicated that work on the temple would commence as soon as possible: as important as the physical temple was in administering sacred ordinances, he would not delay certain temple blessings unnecessarily while the temple was being built. Also, he wanted to teach the temple, not just build it, to give himself and his people, now preoccupied with making a living from the wilderness, ample time to understand and implement temple work in its fullness. “As soon as we get up some adobe houses for our families,” he said, “we shall go to work to build another Temple and as soon as a place is prepared we shall commence the Endowments long before the Temple is built. And we shall take time and each step the Saints take, let them take time enough about it to understand it.”³⁷ Although the site was identified in 1847, the demands of the wilderness were apparent as the groundbreaking for the Salt Lake Temple would not take place for another six years. “We want a temple more than we want dwelling houses,” said Brigham Young in February 1853.³⁸

There was need for temple blessings long before the temple could be completed. Evidence shows that Brigham Young performed at least one endowment for a living person on Ensign Peak in 1849.³⁹ To further meet the Saints’ immediate needs, both civic and religious, Brigham Young determined to build another Council House somewhat similar to the rudimentary edifice by that name erected in Winter Quarters. This structure would double as a “state house” or seat of government, with chambers for both the general assembly and senate of the proposed state of Deseret, and as a place for temple work. Designed by Truman O. Angell and built in two stages, the Council House was a rather simple forty-five-foot-square, two-story building with walls of stone and adobe. It was located on the southwest corner of East Temple (Main) and South Temple Streets. Financed through tithing funds, building construction was superintended by Daniel H. Wells.⁴⁰ Originally intended to be of grand design, fitting for temple ordinances, the Council House ran into various obstacles, which eventually determined a less imposing structure.

Even before the completion of the Council House, its offices were doubling as places for sealings and endowments for the living.⁴¹ “Our Council House was so far completed during the fall,” the First Presidency wrote in 1851, “that the several apartments have been occupied through the winter, to the great joy of this people.”⁴² William Carter Staines refers to “Endowment rooms” specially set aside in the Council House.⁴³ According to official records, ordinance work in this “House of the Lord” (as it was called) began “about 11:00 a.m.” on April 16, 1851, with work continuing throughout the summer.⁴⁴ At least 2,220 endowments were administered in the Council House between 1851 and 1854.⁴⁵ Those wishing to attend had to be full tithe payers and in good moral standing. Prior to receiving their endowments, candidates “bathed in the bathhouse” and were then washed and anointed.⁴⁶

The Council House, however, was but a temporary steppingstone to something greater.⁴⁷ “It is absolutely necessary that we should have a Temple to worship the Most High God in,” said Brigham Young at the dedication of the Council House. “A tabernacle is to assemble the multitude for meetings but a Temple is to gather the priesthood in that they may do the work of the Lord. . . . Is there a place prepared to go and redeem our dead? No there is not. We give Endowments here, but it is like trying to step on the top round first. . . . We do these things until we have time to build a Temple.”⁴⁸ Alonzo Raleigh wrote, “I have in the last two years spent considerable time in the endowments, given in the Council House by Pres Heber C. Kimball. . . . By advice and council I entered into or received the Celestial Law of Marriage including Plurality of Wives on the 28th of Feb. 1852.”⁴⁹

The record shows that Brigham Young was mindful of endowments for the dead very early in the Salt Lake period, and likely well before. Similarly, he saw it as something that could be conducted only in a temple. Back in Nauvoo, in December 1843, he had sermonized as follows: “When the Temple is done I expect we shall be baptized, washed, anointed, ordained, and offer up the keys and signs of the priesthood for our dead that they may have a full salvation and we shall be as saviors on Mt. Zion.”⁵⁰ In 1852, he said, “There cannot be any baptism, endowments, or ordinances in the Spirit World performed but we shall be called to perform in a Temple of the Lord all the ordinances for the dead, the same as for the living. All things will be sealed to the end of all things.”⁵¹

Speaking in 1854 he asked his followers, “What are we trying to build a temple [in Salt Lake City] for?” His answer:

We shall not only build a Temple here, if we are successful, and are blessed and preserved, but we shall probably commence two or three

more, and so on as fast as the work requires, for the express purpose of redeeming our dead. When I get a revelation that some of my progenitors lived and died without the blessings of the Gospel, or even hearing it preached . . . I will go and be baptized, confirmed, washed, and anointed, and go through all the ordinances and endowments for them, that their way may be open to the celestial kingdom.⁵²

Further to the need for future temples, Brigham Young soon afterwards said, “To accomplish this work there will have to be not only one temple but thousands of them, and thousands and tens of thousands of men and women will go into those temples and officiate for people who have lived as far back as the Lord shall reveal.”⁵³

Whether the press of secular and political business in the Council House was interfering with this work, whether the building was too small, or whether they realized that the temple would take years to complete—whatever the reasons, in the spring of 1854 Church leaders decided, one year after the cornerstones had been laid for the Salt Lake Temple, to erect a separate structure on the temple lot to be used solely for temple ordinances. On August 4, 1854, foundation work began on what was first called the “Temple pro tem,” or temporary temple, which came to be later known as the Endowment House.⁵⁴ Designed by Church architect Truman O. Angell and completed in one year’s time, this rather small, rectangular 34’ x 44’ two-story building, located on the northwest corner of Temple Square, opened May 5, 1855.⁵⁵ In his dedicatory remarks, Brigham Young distinguished this facility from a temple, calling each by a different name: “The President remarked the house was clean and named it ‘The House of the Lord.’ Said the spirit of the Lord would be in it for no one would be permitted to go into it to pollute it. Also said, ‘when the temple is built, we will call that The Temple of our God.’”⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as an early worker carefully recorded, “President Young stated that all Sealings and Endowments would be valued as though they were in a Temple.”⁵⁷

Supervised directly by Heber C. Kimball, the Endowment House (fig. 2), like its predecessor the Council House, provided a place for baptisms and confirmations for the living and the dead, endowments for the living (including washings and anointings), and marriage sealings for both the living and the dead.⁵⁸ Those wishing to attend were required to have a recommend from their local leaders. Like many others, Charles Walker, a St. George resident, traveled the 350 miles one way to Salt Lake City just to attend. “D. H. Wells . . . cordially invited [me] to the Endowment House to witness the baptism for the dead,” he recorded in the summer of 1872.

I went with him to the font and acted as a witness, after which Br J F Smith very courteously asked me to assist in confirming. I spent the day



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FIG. 2. Endowment House, Temple Square, ca. 1885, photographed by F. I. Monson and Company. Endowments for the living were performed here for thirty-four years. The cut and numbered stones in the foreground are for building the Salt Lake Temple.

there and assisted in baptizing and confirming over 500. Never felt better in my life . . . and tho I had to travel 350 miles to attend to it, and 350 back again, I do not think it too much.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, it was always understood that the Endowment House was but another substitute for a temple, a precursor to something greater. “In the days of our poverty, and while we had no Temple in which to administer ordinances for the dead . . . the Lord permitted us to erect an Endowment House,” the First Presidency wrote in 1877 on the eve of the dedication of the St. George Temple. “This we have used for many years, and many ordinances have been administered therein; but there are other important ordinances which have not been, and cannot be, administered, except in a Temple built and dedicated to the Most High for that purpose.”⁶⁰

During the thirty-four-year lifespan of the Endowment House,⁶¹ the unofficial count of ordinances performed was 134,053 baptisms and confirmations for the dead, 68,767 marriage sealings of both living and deceased couples, and 54,170 endowments for the living.⁶² Apparently, however, no children, either living or dead, were sealed to their parents, and no endowments for the dead were yet performed.⁶³

As useful as the Endowment House proved to be, especially for marriage sealings, it was not a place of repeated and continuous attendance to most people. Temple work was not yet a staple in the worship of most Latter-day Saints, primarily because no temples were completed between

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1845 and 1877. Even during the zeal of the Mormon Reformation of 1856, the symbol of recommitment among the Saints was not increased temple worship but rather rebaptism. Emphasis was placed not on the law of consecration but on the payment of tithes.⁶⁴

Had there ever been a better time to introduce endowments for the dead, a practice which clearly would have demanded

more temple attendance, it would have been during these Reformation years. However, such was not the case. The Saints still waited on the Lord for the completion of a temple. Joseph Young, President of the Quorum of Seventy and older brother to President Brigham Young, speaking in conference in April 1857, called for a recommitment to build the Salt Lake Temple so “that we may have a renewal of our endowments.”

“Why,” says one, “the endowments are going on.” That is true, a portion of the endowments are going on, but there are other things that never will until the Temple is built; of which are . . . our endowments proxy for our dead friends. Are they going on? No. Will they before that house is built? No, not that I know of.⁶⁵

The Utah War, the coming of Johnston’s army, the evacuation of Salt Lake City, and the razing of the Salt Lake Temple postponed temple building in the “City of the Saints” even longer than anticipated. The conflicting feelings that the Saints held toward the United States at the time, coupled with the sounds and fury of America’s Civil War and the possibility of a national rupture, led Brigham Young and other Church leaders to reconsider the possible return of the Saints to Missouri and the building of the temple there. “If we do not hurry with this,” he said in August 1862, referring to the recurring problems encountered with building the Salt Lake Temple, “I am afraid we shall not get it up until we have to go back to Jackson County which I expect will be in 7 years. I do not want to quite finish this temple for there will not be any temple finished until the one is finished in Jackson County, Missouri pointed out by Joseph Smith.”⁶⁶

In 1863, during the height of the Civil War, Brigham Young reiterated his view that the Endowment House was but a temporary measure, an inadequate substitute for the temple—whether the one presently under construction in Salt Lake City or, as he dearly hoped, the one back in

Missouri.⁶⁷ “There are some of the sealing ordinances that cannot be administered in the house that we are now using,” he remarked in October of that year.

We can only administer in it some of the first ordinances of the Priesthood pertaining to the endowment. There are more advanced ordinances that cannot be administered there; we would, therefore, like a Temple, but I am willing to wait a few years for it. I want to see [it] built in a manner that it will endure through the Millennium. This is not the only Temple we shall build; There will be hundreds of them.⁶⁸

Speaking in conference the year following, George Q. Cannon addressed the same theme. “The Lord has not yet revealed to us all that is to be revealed. There are many great and glorious principles and truths pertaining to exaltation in the kingdom of God which we are not yet prepared to receive.”⁶⁹

On another occasion, Brigham Young differentiated even more clearly between what could and what could not be done outside the temple, although the precise reasons why were rarely spelled out. “We can, at the present time,” he said, “receive our washings and anointing, etc. . . . We also have the privilege of sealing women to men, without a Temple . . . but when we come to other sealing ordinances . . . they cannot be done without a Temple. . . . We can seal women to men, but not men to men”⁷⁰ [see discussion on Law of Adoption below].

It would appear that intergenerational linkages, at least further back than one generation, was the critical element of proxy work not available without a temple. Brigham Young said as much when referring to his own father who died and was buried in Quincy, Illinois.

My father died before the endowments were given. None of his children have been sealed to him. If you recollect, you that were in Nauvoo, we were very much hurried in the little time we spent there after the Temple was built. The mob was ready to destroy us. . . . Our time, therefore, was short, and we had no time to attend to this. . . .

Some brethren here are anxious to know whether they can receive endowments for their [deceased] sons or for their daughters. No, they cannot until we have a Temple. . . . A man can be baptized for a son who died before hearing the Gospel . . . but no one can receive endowments for another, until a Temple is prepared. . . . We administer just so far as the law permits us to do.⁷¹

“It Seems More Like the City of the Dead Than the Living”

Why was St. George selected as the place to build a temple, and why was it here that endowments for the dead began? Of early St. George, a once reluctant resident had this to say:

Here we have a fine view of the rocks and sands and barren desolation of sterile Dixie of southern Utah and a more forbidding aspect man never saw. . . . This place when contrasted with the bustle and business of Salt Lake seems very dull. A person can walk up and down this town for hours and scarce see a man—no business, no railroad nor locomotive whistle, nor express wagon, nor auctions, nor saloon, music, no theatres or circus or dances—all still and peace. In fact, it seems more like the city of the dead than the living.⁷²

And yet it was here that the first temple in the Great Basin was completed. How fitting that the temple in the “city of the dead” would be the first to administer endowments for the dead.

With the Civil War long over and an immediate return to Missouri not an option, Brigham Young moved forward with temple building. It was clear the Salt Lake Temple would take years to build. Not wanting, no doubt, to go down in history as the president who never completed a temple, Brigham Young considered his options. At a meeting held January 31, 1871, in the home of the resident Apostle and president of the Southern Mission, Erastus Snow, Brigham asked the local leaders in attendance “what they thought of building a Temple in St. George.” The record then says: “The bare mention of such a blessing from the Lord was greeted with: ‘Glory Hallelujah’ from Pres. Erastus Snow and all present appeared to share the joy. The brethren unanimously voted in favor of the measure.”⁷³

How well they were able to keep the secret is not known, but a few months later, on April 15, 1871, several other locals first heard the news at a meeting of the St. George School of the Prophets. “A letter was read from Br. Brigham,” reads Charles Walker’s account,

stating that the time had come that the Saints could build a Temple to the most high in St. George. A thrill of joy seemed to pass over the Assembly of Elders present, at the announcement. It is to be built of stone plastered inside and out. The length 196’, width 142, and 80’ high, two stories with a large hall on each story with room on each side, and a baptismal font in the basement. Br. Brigham and George A. Smith will be down next October to commence the work and give directions concerning its erection.⁷⁴

So again, why St. George? Certainly one reason was as a reward to the faith and perseverance of those who had sacrificed so much to settle the hard, arid country of southern Utah and northern Arizona. “This is a desert country,” Brigham admitted,

but it is a splendid place to rear the Saints. I regret to hear of any wishing to leave; these, however, are but few. . . .

We want to build a Temple here and we can do this. You may take the people of St. George, or you may take the little settlements of Washington, Harrisburg, and Leeds and I will say that the people of St.

George, or the people of these little settlements . . . are better able to build the contemplated Temple in St. George than the whole Church could build the Temple in Kirtland, or than the whole Church could build the temple in Nauvoo. I was there. I knew the circumstances of the Church at the building of the Temple at Kirtland and at Nauvoo. And I know the circumstances of the people in St. George and in these settlements named.⁷⁵

As one local poet put it:

Now boys pray don't get weary, there's plenty of work ahead.
 God says build ye a temple through Brigham Young, our head.
 In which we can go forth soon and baptize for our dead,
 And thus be rewarded in Dixie.⁷⁶

There were other equally compelling reasons for the red sands of Dixie. The leader of the Latter-day Saints had long recognized that for a battery of reasons—a faulty initial foundation, the Utah War, a host of transportation problems, his own “go-slow” attitude in case the Church should decide to move back to Missouri—he would not live to see the completion of the Salt Lake Temple. With the rising din over plural marriage and the inevitable squeeze upon the Church by a federal government determined to stop the practice, even if it meant the destruction of the Church, St. George would also provide an “asylum,” Zion’s Zion, a place of quiet refuge from the encircling storm. Furthermore, it was closer to the Lamanite missions, and for the improvement of his health, Brigham had spent his winters there.

If all these were reasons for announcing the *construction* of the temple, the catalyst for *completing* it as quickly as possible was Brigham Young’s determination to reestablish the united order among the Saints and with it, a return to living the law of consecration. Students of community, economics, and cooperation among the Saints in Deseret have long argued that Brigham consistently tried to revive the law of consecration and stewardship among his people. Such efforts occurred throughout the 1850s and were followed by the cooperative mercantile and manufacturing associations of the 1860s. Designed to ensure economic self-sufficiency, such efforts were based on the overriding conviction that for any individual to have or “acquire rights that would conflict with the best interests of the group was,” as historians Dean May, Feramorz Fox, and Leonard Arrington have argued, “repugnant to Mormon philosophy.”⁷⁷ At its core, the law of consecration took issue with the inequities of laissez-faire capitalism and rampant individualism. Money, at least the accumulation of such, was never to be the goal; rather, the building of the kingdom of

God upon the earth and of serving others selflessly were principles of far greater value.

Building upon the success of the cooperative movements of the 1860s, and convinced that the law of consecration and stewardship outlined by Joseph Smith forty years before was still an attainable goal, Brigham Young inaugurated the united order of Enoch in 1874, first in St. George and then in many of the northern Utah settlements. Unlike the cooperatives, the united order “contemplated the pooling of labor as well as capital

“This Temple in St. George is being built upon the United Order; and when we cease our selfishness we can then do anything that we want to.”

and would realize the economies theoretically possible by the pooling or joint use of capital and by the division or classification of labor.”⁷⁸

Far more than a self-sufficing economic system, the united order also called for the rededication of personal obedience, of following specific rules of conduct, and of living a better life. A ‘mini-reformation,’ the order’s aspect of personal rededication has perhaps been understudied. Although there are several other reasons for the adoption of the endowment for the dead in St. George, some of which have already been discussed, there also seems to have been a connection between it and efforts to reestablish the united order among the Saints. “There are many things which the Lord would have bestowed upon His people,” Brigham said in St. George in March 1874, “but they were not ready to receive them. He still wishes to do so, and will, just as soon as we prepare ourselves.”⁷⁹

Later he tied the temple and the united order even more tightly together: “You may not understand one fact that is before our eyes—that this Temple in St. George is being built upon the principle of the United Order; and when we cease our selfishness, and our whole interest is for the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth, we can then build Temples, and do anything that we want to, with united voice and hands.”⁸⁰ Clearly he hoped that those working in the temple and those attending it would be more consecrated than ever before in living the gospel.

Apostle George A. Smith, beloved by many in southern Utah, in speaking to the temple builders on Christmas Day in 1874, “warmly and most earnestly exhorted the people to energetically prosecute the work on the Saint George Temple so that President Young and the Twelve may have the opportunity of going therein to communicate the keys of knowledge and power which the Prophet Joseph had conferred upon them and which can only be conferred to others in a Temple.”⁸¹

Eventually, and for reasons beyond the scope of this paper, the united order failed as an economic system. However, the adoption of the endowment for the dead with its emphasis on obedience, sacrifice, and consecration coincided with and fulfilled the contemporary impulse to rebuild a Zion community and reestablish a consecrated people.

As much as this paper has endeavored to show that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and others anticipated endowments for the dead, preliminary research into the diaries of the time indicate that most members were as unprepared for the doctrine as they were unschooled in the practice. When talk was made of redeeming the dead, most referred to it in terms of baptisms for the dead. Conspicuously absent in contemporary literature among the Latter-day Saints from 1850 to 1877 was any mention of endowments for the dead.

For example, during the construction of the temple, Charles Walker listened to several sermons on work for the dead and commented often in terms as follows: “Went to meeting. . . . Brother [Erastus] Snow spoke very good on the ordinances of the Lord’s supper and baptizing for the Dead. Showed that by this ordinance that they [the dead] might be judged according to God in the spirit, and be judged according to the works done for them by men in the flesh.”⁸²

Precisely when and why Brigham Young determined to restore endowments for the dead into the fabric of temple work has not yet been determined. However, it was a matter of ascending importance to Brigham’s deepening understanding of both salvation and exaltation of the dead and of rededicating the living to the law of consecration.

“I Have Had This Spirit upon Me Since I First Entered This Church”

The final purpose of this study is to consider the influence Wilford Woodruff (fig. 3) brought to bear on the nature of temple work in St. George. We have already reviewed the influences of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other Church leaders, but what of this man? What role did he play? Pending further study, it would appear that his influence was pivotal. While some will ever associate him with missionary work, his most long-lasting contributions to the history of the Church may well have occurred within temple walls.

Since his conversion in 1833, he had viewed his membership as incomplete without the companionship of family and friends. Later, in July 1838 he returned as a missionary to his beloved Connecticut, teaching and converting members of his immediate family. There he baptized his father, Aphek, his stepmother, his uncle, and several others. As he left for Nauvoo,



Courtesy Church Archives, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

FIG. 3. Wilford Woodruff, ca. 1850, photographed by Marsena Cannon. President Woodruff was highly influential in establishing the practice of performing endowments for the dead. Inspired from his earliest days to seek after the spiritual welfare of his deceased mother and ancestors, President Woodruff had a profound impact on temple worship and modern Latter-day Saint temple attendance.

Woodruff recorded the following: “A peculiar charm was thrown around my soul as I left the threshold of my father’s house, having the confidence that if I never see my father in the flesh again I shall meet him in the first resurrection. I had a desire in my heart that all the ordinances of the fullness of the gospel might also be administered unto father and mother Carter that they may sleep in peace.”⁸³

Meanwhile, Woodruff harbored a special interest in his mother, who had died when he was but an infant. While in Nauvoo he was baptized in behalf of his mother, two of his brothers, both sets of grandparents, and many other deceased kin.⁸⁴

Wilford Woodruff was well aware that he possessed this interest in even greater measure than did his colleagues among the leadership circles of the Church. “I have had this spirit upon me since

I first entered this Church,” he once confided in his journal. Driven to record his feelings and the events of his life in the minutest detail, Woodruff knew this compulsion extended to family history and temple work as well. In 1875 he wrote,

This was the gift of God to me and the question has often rested [upon] me, ‘Why are these things so? Why has this subject rested upon me more than other men?’ . . . For I seem a marked victim for the devil from the day I was born. . . . [T]he devil knew if I got into the Church . . . I would write the History . . . and leave on record the doings, works and teachings of the prophets and Apostles, Elders and Saints in the latter days, and that I would attend to the ordinances of the House of God for my father’s household and friends, both for the living and the dead.

I am the only person in all the lineage of my father's household, either on my father or mother's side, who has been in the Church and in a situation to do anything for my father's house. I baptized my father and all his household that he had with him at the time including my step mother and half sister. I am the only person that has attended to any of the ordinances of the Church for my dead.⁸⁵

Wilford Woodruff shared many of the same views on salvation for the dead as did Brigham Young and, in some ways, Brigham deferred to him in such matters. A man of recurring dreams and numerous visions, Woodruff had long envisioned the preaching of the gospel to the dead in the spirit world beyond the grave and had called for the full blessings of the temple in their behalf. "I believe it will take all the ordinances of the gospel of Christ to save one soul as much as another," he said in 1868.

Those who have died without the gospel will have to receive the gospel in the spirit world from those who preach to the Spirits in Prison and those who dwell in the flesh will have to attend to all the ordinances of the gospel for and in their behalf by proxy and it will take 1,000 years . . . before the work will be finished attending to all the ordinances for all the dead who have died without the gospel.⁸⁶

No one was likely more excited about the completion of the St. George Temple than Wilford Woodruff and, in preparation for that event, he had busied himself in family history work throughout the summer and fall of 1876. "Glory, hallelujah," he confided in his journal for June 20, "for in spite of the Devil through the blessing of God I have had the privilege this day of going into the Endowment House and with my family have been baptized for 949 of my dead relatives." David, a son, was baptized for 305 of them alone, "the most," Woodruff noted, "any one person was ever baptized for in one day in this church and kingdom. . . . I felt to rejoice that after forty three years labor in the Church . . . that I had the privilege of going into a baptismal font with my eldest brother, Azmon Woodruff, and my children, to redeem our dead."⁸⁷

Little wonder that Brigham Young invited him to the dedicatory services in St. George in January and directed him to stay on after his return to Salt Lake in the spring of 1877 as the first president of the temple so as to oversee and implement such new practices as endowments for the dead.⁸⁸

On New Year's Day 1877, just as he had done at the Endowment House twenty-one years before, Wilford Woodruff dedicated the basement, lower level, foundation, and baptismal font of the new temple.⁸⁹ Some 2,000 people crowded into the basement for the noon meeting. Ten members of the Quorum of the Twelve were in attendance. Other dedicatory prayers were offered by Erastus Snow and Brigham Young Jr., before Brigham

Young, so lame from rheumatism in his feet that he had to be carried through the temple in a chair by three men, made several critically important remarks. It was as if he had willed himself to live long enough to see this day:

We that are here are enjoying a privilege that we have no knowledge of any other people enjoying since the days of Adam. . . . Brethren and sisters, do you understand this? It seems that a great many of the people know nothing about it. It is true that Solomon built a Temple for the purpose of giving endowments but from what we can learn of the history of that time they gave very few if any endowments. . . .

We as Latter-day Saints have been laboring for over forty years, and the revelations given us in the first were to establish the kingdom by gathering the Saints, building Temples, and organizing the people as the family of heaven here on the earth. We reared up a Temple in Kirtland, but we had no basement in it, nor a font, nor preparations to give endowments for the living or dead. . . . We built one in Nauvoo. . . .

Now we have a temple which will all be finished in a few days, and of which there is enough completed to commence work therein which has not been done since the days of Adam, that we have any knowledge of.⁹⁰

If baptism for the dead was the justifying ordinance for the dead, without which no one could be redeemed and enter the celestial kingdom, then endowments on their behalf was the sanctifying ordinance of exaltation within the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. All those who had been sealed together in years past and had not been endowed before they died, from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters to the Salt Lake Valley, would now receive this ordinance by proxy. Children of faithful Latter-day Saint parents who had lived beyond the years of accountability before dying would be similarly endowed and then sealed to their parents by proxy. Faithful men and their families

“All the angels in heaven are looking at this little handful of people. So are the devils in hell. . . . [for] now we are ready to give Endowments.”

would be endowed and then “adopted” into a faithful Latter-day Saint leader’s family line, pending further instruction. As Apostle Brigham Young Jr. put it, “We anticipate performing the ordinances of sealing women to men, children to their parents, and man to his fellow man that the bond may reach unto heaven.”⁹¹ While there was much yet to learn, the essential piece of the plan beyond mere baptism was now in place.

“What do you suppose the fathers would say if they could speak from the dead?” Brigham asked. “What would they whisper in our ears? Why if they had the power the very thunders of heaven would be in our ears if

we could but realize the importance of the work we are engaged in. All the angels in heaven are looking at this little handful of people. So also are the devils in hell. . . . Now we are ready to give Endowments.”⁹² It was determined that Tuesdays and Wednesdays would be reserved for baptisms and Thursdays and Fridays for endowments for the dead and sealings. The entire proceedings of this special day went off well with one observer concluding, “There was much good advice and counsel given which, if I can remember and put in practice in my life, I will be a good man.”⁹³

Baptisms for the dead began in the St. George Temple on January 9, 1877, when, according to one observer, Wilford Woodruff “went into the font and baptized Suzie Amelia Young Dunford for and in behalf of her friend, Mary Sheppard (an English girl). Brother Brigham, lame as he was, by the aid of his crutch and stick ascended the steps up to the font and witnessed the first Baptism. I stood near the font, and watched them baptize and could not refrain from shedding tears of joy on beholding the commencement of so great a work.”⁹⁴ Two days later, on Thursday, January 11, endowments for the dead were first administered in the St. George Temple. Likewise, the first sealings of deceased women to deceased men took place, Wilford Woodruff performing the sealing. The second sealing for the dead was performed by President Brigham Young.⁹⁵

What followed in the days and weeks thereafter was nothing less than a schooling in matters of the temple. One month later, on February 12, Alonzo Raleigh recorded that he was “engaged all day and evening with President Woodruff, [John D. T.] McAllister, and [L. John] Nuttall under the direction of President B. Young in reorganizing parts of the endowment”—a reference to their perceived need to make certain needed adjustments for proxy work.⁹⁶

Part of the adjustment unquestionably pertained to the logistics of handling so many patrons coming through at one time. “At work in the endowments,” Raleigh again confided, “136 persons were passed through. The house was tolerably crowded, though we got through in good season, having two vails to work at which doubles the capacity of the House in that respect, a thing not practiced before as far as we have any knowledge.”⁹⁷ A careful student of such things, Raleigh wrote, after noting further modifications made by the President, “I have endeavored to fully understand the principle as it has been revealed, having worked in them for over 25 years and the last half of that time constantly, when there was any endowments given, which no other person has in this generation.”⁹⁸

After several weeks of such work, supervised almost daily by President Young, Brigham instructed Raleigh and others to write out the revised

ceremony from beginning to end for consistency and accuracy in all future applications.⁹⁹ Recalled Wilford Woodruff:

President Brigham Young requested me to take charge of the temple, which I did. He also requested me to write all the ordinances of the Church, from the first baptism and confirmation through every ordinance of the Church. G[eorge] Q. Cannon assisted some in this writing. And when I had finished it to the satisfaction of the President, he said to me:—“Now you have before you an ensample to carry on the endowments in all the Temples until the coming of the Son of Man.” . . . I parted with Brigham Young for the last time in the flesh at 9:30 am on April 16, 1877 when he started for Salt Lake City. . . . When I left St. George I placed the Presidency of the Temple in the hands of John Daniel Thompson McAllister who was to preside over it in my absence.¹⁰⁰

Finally, by the first day of spring, the first winter temple semester was complete. Wrote a triumphant Wilford Woodruff, “President Brigham Young has been laboring all winter to get up a perfect form of endowments, as far as possible. They having been perfected, I read them to the company today.”¹⁰¹ Said a jubilant Brigham Young on April 7, “The Lord had accepted this Temple and the labors of the Saints. A great joy and rejoicing had been manifested in the Spirit World on account of the labors performed by the Saints for the Dead.”¹⁰²

Regarding his three month’s work in Dixie, Alonzo Raleigh stated: “I spoke to [Brigham Young] in relation to returning North immediately after conference. He remarked that we would both go and that he considered that we had done an excellent work since coming down. I realize it to be far the best winter’s work that I have ever done.”¹⁰³ Several lectures were given in the temple and many sermons in the St. George Tabernacle on temple matters.¹⁰⁴

The Law of Adoption

For which of the dead were these ordinances performed? Early patrons were anxious to perform proxy work for Latter-day Saint family members who had died without their endowment, including men and women who had been previously sealed but who were now deceased. Plural marriages or multiple sealings among the dead were likewise performed. In addition, they sought to seal deceased children to their parents.

Furthermore, a great many “adoptions” were performed in which faithful living men, their wives, and children were sealed not to their own ancestral families—for fear that they had rejected the gospel—but to leading General Authorities, living or dead. One example, of many, was the adoption of John D. T. McAllister, second president of the St. George

Temple, to Brigham Young on April 10, 1877.¹⁰⁵ The overriding principle was that family salvation lay in the keys and powers of the priesthood. Such priesthood adoptions had occurred frequently in Nauvoo and even more so at Winter Quarters and in the Salt Lake Valley. These adoptions had also had a social impact, and they often dictated social spheres of influence and one's circle of friends and associates. For instance, those adopted into Brigham Young's family lived close together and often shared resources. There was an expectation that in return for the spiritual blessings that came through adoption to Brigham Young, the adopted families would give physical help and assistance where needed. Although it eventually proved a failure as a social principle of organization, the law of adoption was emphasized at this time as a sealing practice among both the living and the dead.¹⁰⁶

This practice of sealing families to proven priesthood leaders was related to the doctrine of redemption for the dead—a fuller understanding of which would later mature into the current practice of intergenerational family sealings. The doctrine of adoption allayed some concerns about the daunting challenges involved in redeeming all of one's kindred dead before the millennial reign. Said Brigham Young in Winter Quarters some thirty years previously:

Before I close I will answer one question that has been asked me repeatedly. Should I have a father [who is] dead that has never heard this gospel, would it be required of me to redeem him and have him adopted unto some man's family and I be adopted [sealed] unto my father? I answer, No. If we have to attend [to] the ordinances of redemption for our dead relatives we then become their saviors and were we to wait to redeem our dead relatives before we could link the chain of the Priesthood, we would never accomplish it.¹⁰⁷

It was not yet clear that a modern priesthood-led generation could be linked to former priesthood-led dispensations through linking generations of families that had been dissipated and disrupted over the centuries of history when no priesthood was found on earth. Again, Brigham Young:

I have gathered a number of families around me by the law of adoption and sealed the covenant according to the order of the priesthood and others have done likewise, it being the means of salvation left to bring us back to God. But had the keys of the priesthood been retained and handed down from father to son throughout all generations up to the present time then there would have been no necessity of the law of Adoption for we would have all been included in the covenant without it, and would have been legal heirs instead of being heirs according to promise. . . . But man through Apostasy, which is entire disobedience, has lost or suffered the keys and privileges of the Priesthood to be taken

away from them and they [were] left to wander in darkness and practice all manner of wickedness until thousands became the vessels of wrath and were doomed to destruction. . . . Suffice it to say that I will extend the chain of the Priesthood back through the apostolic dispensation to Father Adam just as soon as I can get a temple built.¹⁰⁸

Between 1877 and 1894, thousands of living persons chose to be adopted into the families of general authorities or of temple presidents, living or dead. Many sought adoption into Joseph Smith's family.¹⁰⁹ In St. George a great many were adopted to Elder Erastus Snow, the area's long-standing and beloved Apostle-leader.¹¹⁰ It is estimated that between 1877 and 1893, slightly over 13,000 such adoptions occurred.¹¹¹

Proxy work went beyond family kinships; indeed, there was also much interest in doing work for deceased friends. Wrote one patron, "At night getting a recommend for my wife, Abigail, to go through the Temple for her mother and friends."¹¹² Temple workers completed work for their friends after having completed their immediate family names.¹¹³ Such deceased friends, though not Latter-day Saints, were seen as sympathetic to the gospel. Orson W. Huntsman, who lived twenty miles from St. George, recorded that on March 8, 1877, he and his family set off to the temple "for some of our dead friends and kin folks." For three days, they "attended to the endowments" for both family and friends.¹¹⁴

If Brigham Young spent his time perfecting the endowment ceremony itself, Woodruff focused on its scope and application. He attended the temple almost every working day throughout the winter, sometimes when sick, presiding over most sessions, instructing and lecturing on a wide range of topics from wording to clothing. On February 1, as an example to others, he arrived dressed in pure white doe skin from head to foot, white pants and vest, "the first example in any Temple of the Lord in this last dispensation."¹¹⁵

One month later on March 1 (his seventieth birthday) he recorded that several sisters joined him at the temple for the purpose of proxy endowments for several women who had been sealed to him in past years. Woodruff told the company that ever since he had been in St. George, his mind had been "exercised in behalf of the dead." Said he,

Ever since I have been working in this Temple my mind has been exercised in behalf of the dead and I have felt a great desire to see my dead redeemed before I passed away. A few days ago I went into the sealing room where I often go to pray for I consider there is no spot on this Earth more acceptable than this Temple. And while there I went before the Lord with this subject resting upon my mind. . . . And while I prayed the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me and conveyed the following testimony to me:

Let my servant Wilford call upon the [sisters] in Zion and let them enter into my Holy Temple . . . and there let them receive their . . . endowments for and in behalf of the wives who are dead and have been sealed to my servant, Wilford, or those who are to be sealed to him, and this shall be acceptable unto me, saith the Lord.¹¹⁶

The point was that whereas previously, with either baptisms or endowments, only family members could stand as proxy for family names, now others could participate as if family members. Furthermore, because the time involved in a single endowment could then take several hours, proxy work by others for family names greatly accelerated the process for a particular family. “This was merely a key to me,” Woodruff told the assembly. “Light burst upon my understanding. I saw an Effectual door open to me for the redemption of my dead. And when I saw this I felt like shouting Glory Hallalulah to God and the Lamb.” That night, Woodruff recorded in his journal that the day had been “among the most wonderful events of the last dispensation. . . . This door which is open for the redemption of the dead in this manner will accomplish great and important results. . . . By this labor in redeeming our dead, by proxy much can be accomplished.”¹¹⁷

Soon after Brigham Young’s departure for the north, during which trip he broke ground for both the Manti and Logan Temples, Wilford Woodruff assumed the presidency of the St. George Temple, a fitting tribute to his dedication to such work.¹¹⁸ During the summers that followed, Woodruff broadened temple work in yet another significant way. Well known in Church history is his vision in August 1877 of scores of famous seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women and men, including the signers of the Declaration of Independence and most of the deceased presidents of the United States, as well as writers, discoverers, and philosophers from Europe.¹¹⁹ Wilford Woodruff and John D. T. McAllister worked together on August 21 baptizing in behalf of 121 of these famous luminaries. Wilford Woodruff said of this experience: “It was a very interesting day. I felt thankful that we had the privilege and the power to administer for the worthy dead, especially for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, that inasmuch as they had laid the foundation of our Government that we could do as much for them as they had done for us.”¹²⁰ While this experience is often referred to in the spirit of American patriotism, in its time its significance lay in extending the parameters of salvation for the dead.

Speaking later that summer at a conference held in Salt Lake City immediately following the death of President Brigham Young, Woodruff elaborated on this experience.

We have labored in the St. George Temple since January, and we have done all we could there and the Lord has stirred up our minds, and many things have been revealed to us concerning the dead. President Young has said to us . . . if the dead could they would speak in language loud as ten thousand thunders, calling upon the servants of God to rise up and build Temples, magnify their calling and redeem their dead. . . .

Two weeks before I left St. George, the spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, “You have had the use of the Endowment House for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never apostatized from it, but we remained true to it, and were faithful to God.” These were the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and they waited on me for two days and two nights. I thought it very singular, that notwithstanding so much work had been done, and yet nothing had been done for them. The thought never entered my heart, from the fact, I suppose, that heretofore our minds were reaching after our immediate friends and relatives.¹²¹

Whereas much has been made in the past of the fact that baptisms were performed for these famous dead persons, the more significant

“We have not got through revelation. [Brigham Young] did not receive all the revelations that belong to this work; neither did President Taylor, nor has Wilford Woodruff.”

point for this study is that endowments were also administered in their behalf. Immediately after Lucy Bigelow Young had been baptized for Martha Washington and seventy other “eminent” women of the world, Wilford Woodruff “called upon all the Brethren and Sisters who were present to assist in getting endowments for those that we had been baptized for”—a work that consumed the following three days.¹²² Although baptisms for the

dead had been performed already for many of them, they had never been endowed—which blessing they were now afforded.¹²³

The importance of extending this higher ordinance to this particularly unique group of people, unconnected as they were to any families in the Church, reinforced the doctrine that all the “worthy dead,” whether family or friend, would be taught the gospel and the ordinances of salvation should be offered to all through proxy work. Woodruff’s 1877 vision of the dead anticipated his later revelation of 1894, which ended the practice of “adoptions,” and it also set the stage for Joseph F. Smith’s vision of the spirit world and of the redemption of the dead some forty-two years later (see D&C 138). Such understandings accompanied an increased application of temple work for the dead.

In his 1894 revelation ending the practice of adoptions in favor of sealing present to past families, President Woodruff attributed the change to continuous revelation. “We have not got through revelation,” he said. “[Brigham Young] did not receive all the revelations that belong to this work; neither did President Taylor, nor has Wilford Woodruff. There will be no end to this work until it is perfected.”¹²⁴ It is doubtful that he felt he was countermanding any of his predecessors; rather, he was fulfilling their vision. The law of adoption was, in Brigham Young’s words, “a school master to bring [the children of men] back into the Covenant of the Priesthood. . . . When it is necessary I will attain to more knowledge on the subject and consequently will be enabled to teach and practice more and will in the mean time glorify God. . . . We are all dependent one upon another for our exaltation.”¹²⁵

On April 21, 1894, Woodruff’s entire sermon was published in the *Deseret Weekly* and a few weeks later was printed in the *Millennial Star* in England. As Elder Boyd K. Packer has said, “This attests to the great significance the Brethren placed on the Sermon.” Quoting President Woodruff’s entire revelation, Elder Packer states that although not included in the Doctrine and Covenants, it is nevertheless of great interest to, and binding upon, the Church. “As Latter-day Saints we are under commandment to listen to the prophet. Not all revelation is yet in the standard works.”¹²⁶

Ever searching for more answers, Brigham Young had earlier admitted that more truth and knowledge on the topic would later be revealed at which time the work would accelerate. “After Joseph comes to us in his resurrected body,” he said, “he will more fully instruct us concerning the baptism for the dead and the sealing ordinances. He will say ‘Be baptized for this man and that man, and that man be sealed to that man, and such a man to such a man,’ and connect the Priesthood together. . . . I say to you ‘don’t hurry in the ordinances.’ Don’t do what you ought not. It is not time to hurry. We should not undertake to do now what we ought to do 50 years hence. What have we to do today? Purify [our] hearts that [we] may receive the manifestation of the Spirit of God.”¹²⁷

Conclusion

A final look at some of the St. George Temple’s first year statistics is revealing. By the end of 1877, 30,384 baptisms for the dead, 1166 living endowments, and 13,160 endowments for the dead had been performed.¹²⁸ Clearly the invitation and opportunity to attend the temple and renew the covenants of the endowments had struck a responsive chord among the Saints, with over ten times as many receiving endowments for the dead as per those for the living. Temple attendance noticeably increased.

By mid-1879, after just two and a half years of operation, almost 40,000 endowments for the dead had been performed.¹²⁹

Since then the pattern of temple attendance and devotion in behalf of the dead has only intensified. In mid-August of 1988 the combined total of all endowments for the dead throughout the Church had reached one hundred million, according to Temple Department estimates.¹³⁰ As Church membership has increased and temple construction worldwide has accelerated, the figures have increased dramatically.

It is impossible to fathom the profound influence increased temple attendance has had upon the pattern and degree of personal obedience, consecration, and righteousness in the lives of the Latter-day Saints. Statistics will ever fail as an accurate measure of the faith so greatly intensified through temple attendance. What happened in St. George over 125 years ago marked the arrival of the time when this part of the plan, envisioned by Joseph Smith, could be acted upon, as directed by those holding priesthood authority. It also prepared the membership of the Church to accept revealed changes in Church policy and practices. These temple matters have continued to hold great significance for the Saints as the years have passed, reaching to the heart and essence of the Church.

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1. Alonzo H. Raleigh, Journal, January 11, 1877, photocopy of original holograph, 1861–85, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).

2. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 2:379–80 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*). See also Donald Q. Cannon, Larry E. Dahl, and John W. Welch, “The Restoration of Major Doctrines through Joseph Smith; Priesthood, the Word of God, and the Temple,” *Ensign* 19 (February 1989): 11. Speaking of the Kirtland Temple, Brigham Young said that it had no basement, “nor a font, nor preparations to give endowments for the living or the dead.” See Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 18:303, January 1, 1877.

These ceremonies in the Kirtland Temple were not as complete as those administered in Nauvoo but were sufficient for their time in keeping with the commandments of the Lord. The Kirtland Temple was, in reality, a preparatory temple and as such pointed the way for more complete work in the years to come.

3. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor, eds., *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 432–33. That Joseph Smith may have explored the doctrine as early as May 1840, see Ronald O. Barney, “Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife: Brigham Young to Mary Ann Angell Young, 1839–1841,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 178–81.

4. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 308.

5. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 195. For a thorough review of this doctrine, see Robert L. Millet, *Life after Death: Insights from Latter-day Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 57–74. See also Richard E. Turley, Jr., “Latter-day Saint Doctrine of Baptism for the Dead,” *BYU Family Historian* 1 (Fall 2002): 23–39, and H. David Burton, “Baptism for the Dead,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:95–96.

6. Wilford Woodruff, *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, Fourth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, sel., arr., and ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 153.

7. Alex Baugh, “The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside of Temples,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 13, no. 1 (September 1998): 3–5.

8. See “A Record of the Branch in Quincy,” November 9 and 15, 1840, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives). See also B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 2:76, 92.

9. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–84), 3:336. See also Baugh, “Baptism for the Dead Outside of Temples,” 3–5; Richard E. Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846–1852: “And Should We Die . . .”* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 189.

10. Brigham Young, Speech, April 6, 1845, *Times and Seasons* (July 1, 1845): 954–55.

11. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:161, March 20, 1842.

12. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:131, May 14, 1882.

13. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:240, June 11, 1843.

14. *History of the Church*, 6:230.

15. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:289, September 9, 1843.

16. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:333–34, December 28, 1843.

17. Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982), 106–7.

18. Woodruff, *Discourses*, 156.

19. *History of the Church*, 6:184. See also Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:341–42, January 21, 1844.

20. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:361–62, March 10, 1844.
21. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:388, April 8, 1844. See also Wandle Mace, *Journal*, May 12, 1844, typescript, 358–59, Perry Special Collections.
22. *History of the Church*, 6:319.
23. George A. Smith, talk delivered December 25, 1874, St. George, Utah, in “Annals of the Southern Mission, 1869–1877,” comp. James G. Bleak. Also available in facsimile format at the Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. See also Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 6:390, January 24, 1868.
24. While some historians infer that the Latter-day Saints knew of endowments for the dead in Nauvoo (see James B. Allen, Jessie L. Embry, and Kahlile B. Mehr, *Hearts Turned to the Fathers: A History of the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1894–1994* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1995), 20–21, the evidence in general is not compelling.
25. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 4:6, January 19, 1851.
26. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 3:259, August 15, 1847.
27. *History of the Church*, 6:50.
28. Alma P. Burton, “Endowment,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:455. The endowment, as one leading LDS scholar has described it, “consisted of the ordinances of washing and anointing, followed by instructions and covenants setting forth a pattern or figurative model for life. . . . Participants were reminded that in addition to the Savior’s redemptive gift [of the atonement] they must be obedient to God’s commandments to obtain a celestial glory.” Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2002), 258–59.
29. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:31, April 6, 1853, emphasis in original.
30. Brigham Young to James Emmett, March 26, 1846, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives.
31. For more on the historical development of temple work, see Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances.”
32. Baugh, “Baptism for the Dead Outside of Temples,” 3–5.
33. See Joseph Grafton Hovey, *Journal*, typescript, 47, Perry Special Collections. See also Jacob Gibson, *Book of the Generations of Jacob Gibson*, September 19, 1848, Church Archives. Elder L. Tom Perry, during the dedicatory services of the Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple, referred to the fact that his own ancestors were sealed at Winter Quarters. Unpublished Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple dedicatory address. For more on Winter Quarters, see Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, especially 184–98.
34. One afternoon, “Elders Kimball, Richards, Smith, Benson, and others went onto a mountain to clothe and pray for President Young who continues very sick.” *William Clayton’s Journal: A Daily Record of the Journey of the Original Company of “Mormon” Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Salt Lake City: Clayton Family Assoc., 1921), 298, July 17, 1847. See also *Journal History of the Church*, July 18, 1847, Church Archives, microfilm copy in Harold B. Lee Library. The *Journal History* is a massive, unpublished, scrapbook-like compilation of events and happenings in Church history as compiled by the Church Historical Department. For an electronic version of the *Journal History*,

see *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), DVD 2:2.

Prayer circles began in the school of the prophets in Kirtland, Ohio, as early as 1833. They became a part of Nauvoo Temple worship in 1843 and were common in Utah for well into the twentieth century. Since 1978, prayer circles have been reserved only for temple worship. For more on the topic of prayer circles being an integral part of Nauvoo temple practices, see George S. Tate, “Prayer Circles,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3: 1120–21, and sources cited therein.

35. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:285, March 15, 1857; See also 7:288–89, October 9, 1859.

36. Theodore Bullock, *Journal*, July 28, 1847, Church Archives. See also Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 229.

37. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 3:259–60, August 15, 1847.

38. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 4:196, February 14, 1853.

39. Brigham Young notes that Ensign Hill was dedicated July 21, 1849, for the purpose of giving endowments. History of Brigham Young, 1849, 107, Church Archives. Brigham Young dedicated Ensign Peak as a “natural temple” where the endowment was first given to Addison Pratt and other missionaries prior to their departure to the Society Islands to preach the gospel. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:386. See also Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2d. ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), 37.

40. Truman Osborn Angell, Council House Blueprints, Church Archives. See Gilbert Bradshaw, “The Council House as a House for Sacred Ordinances in the Early Church,” 3–4, unpublished undergraduate research paper, in possession of the author.

41. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:13. The Council House was a \$45,000, two-story sandstone structure that was not entirely completed until 1855. It was used by the Church, city, county, and territorial officials until its destruction by fire in 1883. Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 54, 111.

42. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833–1964*, comp. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 2:65.

43. William Carter Staines, *Journal*, February 2, 1854, Church Archives.

44. “Endowment House Records 1851–1855,” Special Collections, Family History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. According to another source, endowments were being given in the Council House beginning January 26, 1852. See *Journal History*, January 26, 1852. According to yet another source, Staines began giving endowments as early as February 28, 1851. See William C. Staines, “Reminiscences of William C. Staines,” *Contributor* 12 (November 1890–October 1891): 123.

45. “Endowment House Records 1851–1855.” Two-hundred ninety more female names than males were recorded, as found in Bradshaw, “Council House,” 6.

46. “Living Endowments,” Family History Library; see Bradshaw, “Council House,” 6.

47. The Council House eventually burned to the ground in June 1883 in a fire that began from an explosion in a nearby wagon yard. Through the heroic action of William H. H. Sharp, who ran back into the burning building, many church and ordinance records were miraculously preserved. See Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff, His Life and Labors*, comp. Matthias F. Cowley (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1916), 546; see also Bradshaw, "Council House," 8.

48. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 4:123, April 9, 1852.

49. Alonzo Raleigh, *Journal*, September 25, 1853.

50. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:333–34, December 28, 1843.

51. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 4:148, September 12, 1852.

52. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:138, December 3, 1854.

53. Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:372, June 22, 1856.

54. Raleigh, *Journal*, August 4, 1854. See Lamar C. Berrett, "Endowment Houses," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:456. Very little else has been written on the Endowment House. James Dwight Tingen, "The Endowment House, 1855–1889," unpublished research paper written in 1974, Perry Special Collections, is one of the few meaningful studies on the topic.

55. Tingen, "Endowment House, 1855–1889," 5, 7, 9.

56. *Journal History*, May 5, 1855. It was not until early in 1855 that the phrase "the Endowment House" was used in reference to this building. See Tingen, "Endowment House, 1855–1889," 7.

57. Staines, *Journal*, August 15, 1855. The Endowment House was a slightly rectangular building. The first floor consisted of the Washing and Anointing Room, the Garden Room, the World Room and the Terrestrial Room. The Celestial Room and sealing rooms were located on the second floor. Tingen, "Endowment House, 1855–1889," 9–10.

58. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:231, June 16, 1875. Some deceased were sealed to living partners. See Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:280, July 26, 1876; see also Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 193.

59. Charles L. Walker, *The Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, ed. A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1980), 19.

60. First Presidency to the Church, October 25, 1876, cited in Kirk M. Curtis, "History of the St. George Temple" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1964), 106–7.

61. Although closed in 1876, the Endowment House re-opened for special prayer circle ceremonies in behalf of President Young who was then terminally ill. See Raleigh, *Journal*, August 29, 1877. Upon Brigham Young's death in 1877, at John Taylor's request, it was re-opened on a very limited basis to serve the needs of the youth who wanted to marry and the aged and infirm who could not make the trip south. By late 1879, the Endowment House had returned to its regular schedule but never enjoyed the patronage of earlier days.

A target of the antipolygamy raids and cohabitation trials of the 1880s and a symbol of what some perceived as continued permission to practice plural marriage, the Endowment House was finally torn down in November 1889 on order of President Wilford Woodruff. See B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 139–40.

62. These figures are given in Tingen, "Endowment House, 1855–1889", 15.

63. Said Brigham Young on this matter of children: “Children born unto parents before the latter enter into the fulness of the covenants [endowment], have to be sealed to them in a Temple to become legal heirs of the Priesthood. It is true they can receive the ordinances, they can receive their endowments and be blessed in common with their parents; but still the parents cannot claim them legally and lawfully in eternity unless they are sealed to them.” *Journal of Discourses*, 16:186–87, September 4, 1873.

64. As one careful student of the Mormon Reformation has observed, “Consecration was never a major consideration during the Reformation of 1856–57, the stress being placed instead on payment of tithes. This lack of emphasis on consecration was deliberate as Reformation missionaries were instructed . . . to be cautious and circumspect when discussing it with Church members.” See Paul H. Peterson, “The Mormon Reformation” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981; Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2002), 37–38.

As for the practice of rebaptism, it flowered during the Reformation and became a “binding directive.” Brigham Young set the pattern himself by being rebaptized on October 2, 1856, as was Heber C. Kimball. Peterson, “Mormon Reformation,” 66.

65. Joseph Young, Address, *Journal History*, April 18, 1857.

66. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 6:71, August 23, 1862.

67. In the fall of 1860, Brigham Young delivered a talk concerning the return to Missouri: “Brother Brigham showed how we should return to Jackson County, Missouri. The Lord would open the way before us. Said that he asked no odds of our enemies or their riches and expected to see the time when we should ride in our carriages while they were naked and barefoot. . . . [He] touched on the resurrection and ordinances pertaining to the Dead.” Walker, *Diary*, October 21, 1860, 177.

68. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:254, October 6, 1863. See also *Journal History*, October 9, 1863. On another occasion when referring to the building of the Salt Lake Temple he said that it “was for the use of the Priesthood for them to receive instructions in.” He said, “We were but babes and sucklings in the things of God. Said he wished to build a Temple to the Holiness of the Lord.” Walker, *Diary*, October 8, 1860, 175; see also Gordon Irving, “The Law of Adoption: One Phase of Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830–1900” *BYU Studies* 14, no. 3 (1974): 291–314, especially 308.

69. *Journal History*, October 23, 1864.

70. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:186, September 4, 1873.

71. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:187–88, September 4, 1873. Years later, Brigham said, “The Lord permitted us to erect an Endowment House in this city. This we have used for many years, and many ordinances have been administered therein; but there are other important ordinances which have not been, and cannot be, administered except in a Temple built and dedicated to the Most High for that purpose.” First Presidency and the Twelve, To the Bishops and Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Residing in the Various Settlements throughout these Mountains, October 25, 1876, St. George Temple Letter file, Church Archives, as quoted in Curtis, “History of the St. George Temple,” 106–9.

72. Walker, *Diary*, October 5 and 6, 1872.

73. James Bleak, *Diary*, January 21, 1871, Perry Special Collections.

74. Walker, Diary, April 15, 1871, 418. The groundbreaking of the St. George Temple took place November 9, 1871, with Brigham Young turning the first shovelful of earth and George Albert Smith offering the dedicatory prayer. Walker, Diary, November 9, 1871, 427.

75. Bleak, Diary, November 3–5, 1871. See also James G. Bleak, “Annals of the Southern Mission,” Book “B”, 1:175–80. As John Taylor put it, “It was found that our Temple in Salt Lake City would take such a long time to build, it was thought best to erect one down here. Why? Because there was a people living here who were more worthy than any others. Who were more worthy of the blessings of a Temple than those who had displayed the self-abnegation exhibited by the pioneers of the south?” *Journal of Discourses*, 23:14, November 9, 1881; see also Janice Force DeMille, *The St. George Temple: First 100 Years* (Hurricane, Utah: Homestead Publishers, 1977), 5.

76. Walker, Diary, December 29, 1871, 431. Sung to the tune “Marching to Georgia.”

77. Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 57.

78. Arrington, Fox, and May, *Building the City of God*, 146.

79. Brigham Young, March 18, 1874, in “Annals of the Southern Mission.”

80. Brigham Young to the Saints at St. George, January 16, 1876, in “Annals of the Southern Mission.” Evidence points to the fact that later temples would also be built on this premise. Speaking at the St. George Tabernacle in November 1876, Brigham Young said that “there was no difference between temporal and spiritual things in the Kingdom of God. Wished the people to engage in building temples—one in Logan, Cache Valley, and one in Manti, Sanpete County.” Walker, Diary, November 12, 1876, 555.

81. George A. Smith, talk given December 25, 1874, in “Annals of the Southern Mission.” In response, “the hands of the assemblage rose as the hands of one man in token that they were willing to use their powers and substance in building up the temple and the Kingdom of God on the earth.”

82. Walker, Diary, January 12, 1873, 455.

83. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:430–31, July 23, 1844, see also 1:264, July 1, 1838.

84. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:177, May 29, 1842.

85. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:55, January 20, 1875.

86. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 6:390, January 15, 1868.

87. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:277, June 20, 1876.

88. See Richard O. Cowan, “History of Latter-day Saint Temples from 1831 to 1990,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1450–52.

89. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:303–11, January 1, 1877. The Endowment House was closed in late 1876 to encourage temple attendance in St. George. Under John Taylor, however, it reopened until 1889.

90. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:303–4, January 1, 1877. See also Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:316–17, January 1, 1877.

91. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:314–15, January 1, 1877.

92. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:318, January 1, 1877.

93. Orson Huntsman, Diary, January 1, 1877, Perry Special Collections. Besides baptisms for the dead, rebaptisms of the living “for health” were occasionally performed. “Today my wife was baptized seven times in the font for her health.” Bigler, July 9, 1878, 129–30.

94. Walker, Diary, January 9, 1877, 569. Surely this brought back fond memories for Elder Woodruff, for on November 21, 1841, he had been in attendance in the Nauvoo Temple when the font was first used for baptisms for the dead. See Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 2:138–39, November 21, 1841.

95. Annals of the Southern Mission, Book “B”, January 11, 1877, 3:692; see also Journal History, January 11, 1877.

96. Raleigh, Journal, February 12, 1877.

97. Raleigh, Journal, February 15, 1877, 210. This particular vail had been brought down from Salt Lake City by Raleigh which D. H. Wells had intrusted to him especially for the occasion. Raleigh, Journal, November 29, 1876. A third vail was soon added which allowed a faster flow through.

98. Raleigh, Journal, February 16, 1877, 210.

99. Raleigh, Journal, February 24, 1877, 211. Wilford Woodruff refers to beginning the book of record as early as January 14, 1877. See Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:322, January 14, 1877. Refinements would, of course, be made over the years with Wilford Woodruff playing a central role. As late as 1893, as aging President of the Church, Wilford Woodruff and all four temple presidents of that time “spent three hours in harmonizing” aspects of the endowment. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 9:267, October 17, 1893; see also Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 192.

100. Wilford Woodruff, signed statement, March 26, 1883, entitled “History of the St. George Temple. Its Cost and Dedication and the Labor Therein,” in Letter File of David H. Cannon, Church Archives.

101. Journal History, March 21, 1877.

102. Walker, Diary, April 7, 1877, 584. Nine days later, Brigham Young left St. George for the last time and on the way back to Salt Lake City dedicated the site for a temple at Manti on April 25, 1877. Less than a month later, on May 18, he dedicated the ground for the Logan Temple.

By the end of January, Brigham Young was ready to make further temple assignments. On January 31, he appointed the following to officiate in the St. George Temple: Wilford Woodruff to preside and as workers John D. T. McAllister, Henry Eyring, David H. Cannon, James G. Bleak, Henry W. Bigler, John L. Smith, Anson P. Winsor, John Lytle, William Fawcett, John M. Moody, John O. Angus, William H. Thompson, Alonzo H. Raleigh, L. John Nuttall, Jesse W. Crosby, and Alexander F. MacDonald. Among the sisters, he called Minerva W. Snow, Lucy B. Young, Annie L. I. Ivina, Eliza S. Calkin, Eudora L. Young, Sarah A. Church, Hannah G. Perkins, Hanna E. B. Crosby, Susan A. Y. Dunford, Frances C. Brown, Elizabeth P. Bentley, Sarah P. Alger, Annie T. Wells, and Nariette S. B. Calkin. Journal History, January 31, 1877.

103. Raleigh, Journal, March 31, 1877, 213.

104. “At Sunday School in the A.M. P.M. at meeting Bro. [Erastus] Snow and Woodruff preached very powerful discourses on the importance of the Saints availing themselves of the opportunity now offered and do the work necessary for the dead.” Walker, Diary, January 21, 1877, 571.

105. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:344, April 10, 1877.
106. The practice was ended by Wilford Woodruff just seventeen years later with the instructions that all families were to be sealed solely to their own ancestors. For more on this topic, see Irving, “Law of Adoption,” 291–314. See also Bennett, *Mormons as the Missouri*, 191–95.
107. From a talk by Brigham Young as recorded in Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 3:136–37, February 16, 1847.
108. From a talk by Brigham Young as recorded in Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 3:130–32, February 16, 1847. LDS Church Archivist Gordon Irving, in writing on this topic, corroborates this view. “Inasmuch as the Priesthood had been lost through apostasy, a new and higher law of adoption was presented whereby Mormons could be ‘grafted’ into the patriarchal order, thus becoming ‘legal heirs’ and acquiring the ‘fathers in the Priesthood’ necessary to link each one to the chain of families built up in the days of the patriarchs.” Irving, “Law of Adoption,” 294.
109. Besides such work for themselves, patrons who performed endowments for their deceased kin would then proceed to have them adopted into priesthood lines. Many chose to have deceased relatives “adopted into the same family into which they had been adopted so all could be together in the celestial kingdom.” Irving, “Law of Adoption,” 308.
110. Irving, “Law of Adoption,” 309–10.
111. Irving, “Law of Adoption,” 309.
112. Walker, Diary, January 29, 1877, 573. This is one of the earliest references of the phrase “to go through the temple”—reference to proxy endowment work for another. Later, on March 21, Walker “went through the Temple for a friend of Brother Folsom. This is the first time I have been through the endowments for the Dead. Reuben Clark was the one I went through for. I felt happy and blessed.” Walker, Diary, March 21, 1877, 578. Walker and others performed such temple work often for friends before performing it for family members.
113. Raleigh, *Journal*, February 27, 1877, 211. Wrote Raleigh for March 16, 1877, 212: “Had four persons go through for my friends of youthful times.”
114. Orson Welcome Huntsman, Diary, March 8, 1877, p. 105, typescript, Huntington Library.
115. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:325, February 1, 1877.
116. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:331, March 1, 1877.
117. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:332–33, March 1, 1877. Confirming this point, Wilford Woodruff recorded six years later that “through the Blessings of God [I] have been Enabled in Connexion with my family, of being Baptized for about 3,000 of my Dead Relatives and Also through the Assistance of friend[s] I have been Enabled to get Endowments in the Temple of St George for about 2,500 of my relatives.” Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 8:156, March 1, 1883.
118. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:359, July 5, 1877.
119. See Brian H. Stuy, “Wilford Woodruff’s Vision of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence,” *Journal of Mormon History* 26 (Spring 2000): 64–90, for one of the best and most recent studies of this event.
120. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:369, August 21, 1877.
121. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:229, September 16, 1877.
122. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:369, August 21, 1877.

123. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 7:369, August 21–24, 1877. Whether or not Wilford Woodruff knew these men had been previously baptized, as Stuy argues, is incidental. The key point is that Wilford Woodruff “felt an anxiety about redeeming the souls of these distinguished figures and acted upon it.” Stuy, “Woodruff’s Vision,” 81.

124. Wilford Woodruff, 64th Annual Conference of the Church in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, April 8, 1894, found in *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, The Twelve Apostles, and Others (1894–1896)*, ed. Brian H. Stuy, 4 vols. (Burbank: BHS Publishing, 1991), 4:71–72.

125. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 3:134–35, February 16, 1847.

126. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 196.

127. Woodruff, *Journal 1833–1898*, 4:391, January 13, 1856.

128. Henry W. Bigler, *Journal*, December 29, 1877, Huntington Library. Other temple ordinances included baptisms for health, ordinations of deceased elders and high priests, marriages for both the living and the dead, sealings of living and of dead children to parents.

129. Bigler, *Journal*, June 27, 1879, Huntington Library.

130. “News of the Church,” *Ensign* 18 (November 1988): 111.