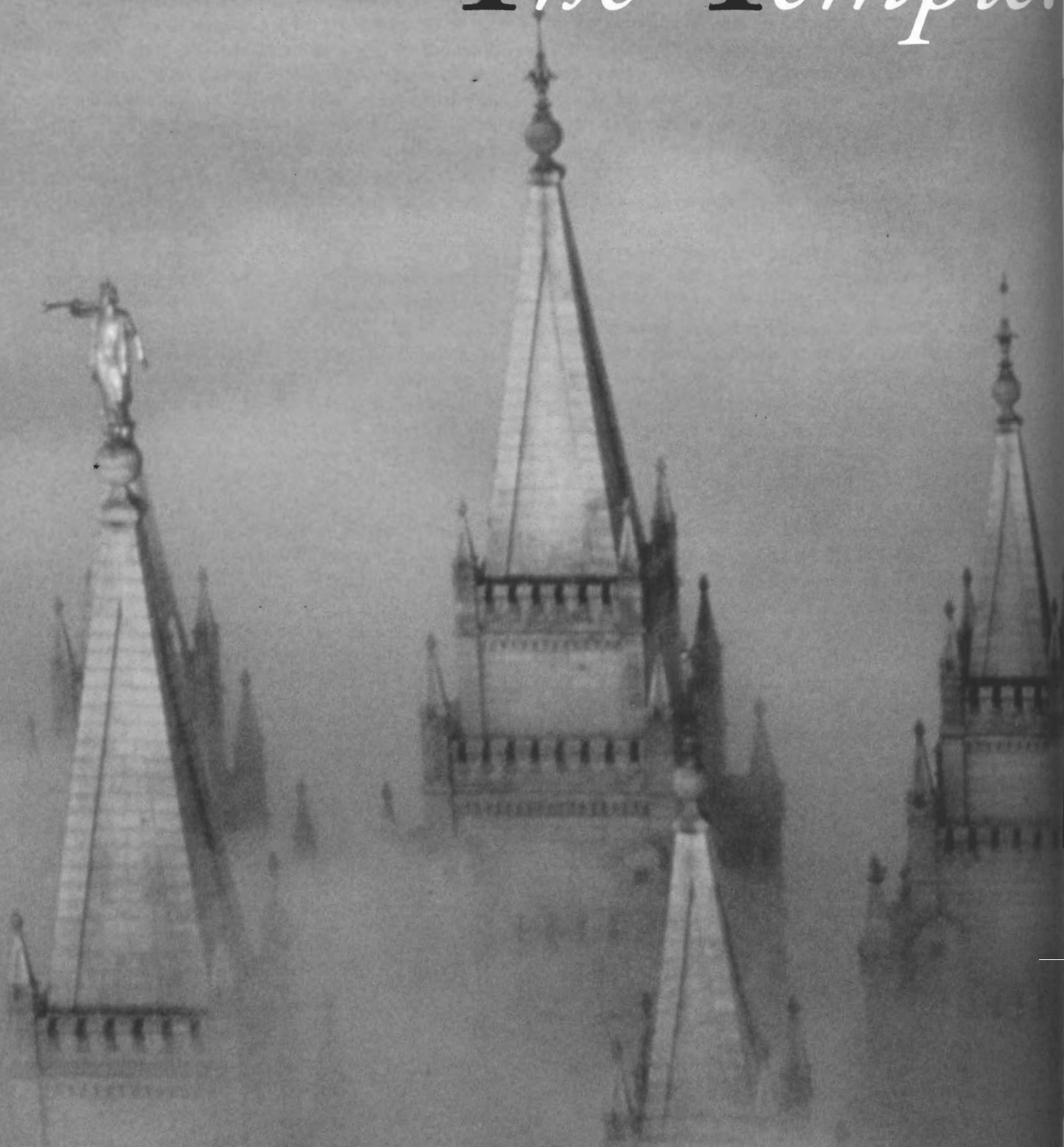


The Temple:



A Special Place

BY GEORGE I. CANNON

Joseph Smith, the great visionary prophet of the Restoration, taught us much about the temple. Just eight months after the Church had been restored, the Savior told Joseph: "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God; wherefore, gird up your loins and I will suddenly come to my temple. Even so. Amen." (D&C 36:8) I believe this is the first time the Savior talks about His temple. In the 97th Section, verses 10-16, He talks considerably about the temple — what it should be like, what things were to take place in the temple — and then concludes with these profound words: "And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it: Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into shall see God."

On April 26, 1834, four years after the Church was organized, Joseph Smith prophesied, "This people will go into the rocky mountains and there they will build temples to the most high God." How marvelous it is that the Lord would let the Prophet Joseph know, before any temples had been built, that the saints would go to the Rocky Mountains and there they would build temples.

On April 3, 1836, one week after the Kirtland Temple had been dedicated, great spiritual manifestations took place in the temple. These are recorded in Section 110 of the D&C. The Savior appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and said to the Prophet, "I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house." Following the Savior came Moses, Elias and Elijah, bestowing upon the Prophet the keys necessary to bring about the fullness of the gospel.

To Joseph Smith were revealed the sacred ordinances of the temple. A few weeks before the prophet Joseph's death, he made the statement, "We need the temple more than anything else." He was concerned that everyone possible receive the blessings of the temple.

Brigham Young was the one to see that the Nauvoo Temple was completed and the sacred ordinances performed. The first ordinances for the dead were baptisms, and they were initially performed in the Mississippi River. The first part of the Nauvoo Temple that was completed was the baptismal font, and baptisms for the dead were done in the temple before it was completed. Once the temple was finished, the living ordinances were per-

formed around the clock because the saints knew that soon they would be driven from Nauvoo.

A TEMPLE TO OUR GOD

Four days after Brigham Young arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, he came to where the temple now stands, put down his cane and said, "Here we shall build a temple to our God." Wilford Woodruff, then a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, drove a stake into the ground to mark the spot.

Although Brigham Young had only 11 days of formal schooling, he played an instrumental role in the architecture, design and building of this beautiful, sacred structure. President Gordon B. Hinckley pointed out to us that the Salt Lake Temple has not only six towers, but 52 spires as well.

The building of the Salt Lake Temple, like other early temples of the saints, often resulted in great personal sacrifice by its builders. The story of one early temple laborer illustrates this.

John Rowe Moyle was born in Cornwall, England, where he grew up a stone cutter. He joined the Church and emigrated to the valley and settled in Alpine, Utah, 20 miles south of Salt Lake City. Soon after, he was called to serve a mission to help build the Salt Lake Temple. Every Monday morning, he would walk to Salt Lake and work there until Friday. On Friday, he would walk back to Alpine, work on his farm and take care of his church duties on Sunday. On one occasion while milking his cow in Alpine, the cow kicked Brother Moyle's leg, causing a compound fracture, so that the ends of the bone broke through the flesh. As was customary at the time, it was decided he would have to have his leg amputated at the knee. After recovering from the amputation, Brother Moyle carved a wooden leg and commenced walking to Salt Lake each Monday and walking home each Friday. John Rowe Moyle is the one who climbed the scaffolding on the east side of the temple and carved that glorious inscription, "Holiness to the Lord."

After John Taylor came Wilford Woodruff, who was the prophet when the temple was dedicated on April 6, 1893, in the Assembly Room on the fifth floor. Thirty-one dedication sessions were held, providing opportunity for 82,000 saints to participate.

For President Woodruff, this occasion was the fulfillment of the dream he had several years earlier. President Woodruff had great spiritual gifts and spiritual experi-

ences. He confided in his journal: "Nearly 50 years ago while in the city of Boston, I had a vision of going with the Saints to the Rocky Mountains, building a temple and I dedicated it. Two nights in succession before John Taylor's death (1887), President Brigham Young (who had died 10 years earlier) gave me the keys of the temple, and told me to go and dedicate it, which I did."

Later President Woodruff told a congregation of saints, "The Heavenly Hosts were in attendance at the dedication ... and if the eyes of the congregation could be opened, they would have seen Joseph and Hyrum, Brigham Young, John Taylor and all the good men who had lived in this dispensation assembled with us, and also Elias, Jeremiah, and all the Holy Prophets and Apostles who prophesied of the latter-day work. They were rejoicing with us in this building which had been accepted of the Lord, and when the Hosanna shout had reached the throne of the Almighty, they too had joined in the joyous shout."

A most unusual event occurred the second day of the dedicatory services. A sister by the name of Emma Bennett had come from Provo to attend the services. She was in her last month of pregnancy. While waiting to enter the temple, Sister Amanda Cook noticed the young pregnant woman and wondered if she should have come in her condition. Emma admitted that she had been "so anxious to be at the dedication that she had taken the chance." Sister Cook, who was a midwife, assured Emma that if "she should need any help, she should call for her." After two hours, it became evident to Emma that the baby was not going to wait. She quickly signaled Sister Cook that her time had come. The young woman was escorted from the main Assembly Hall to a side room nearby by the experienced midwife. As she lay on the floor "fast in labor," another woman entered the room and exclaimed, "What is she doing here? She can't have a baby here!" Amanda Cook replied politely, but firmly, "She can and will, because she can't be moved now." James E. Talmage noted in his diary that a sister gave birth to a son just at the close of evening services.

"A Sister Bennett from Provo was taken with labor pains and gave easy birth to a son," Elder Talmage records. "She was removed from the Assembly Room to a small apartment in the temple. Some religious sects would hold that such an event desecrated the holy place, but the Latter-day Saints will take a directly opposite view."

Eight days later, Sister Bennett returned to the temple with her husband, Benjamin, and new son for a special blessing. They went to President Joseph F. Smith, who was the second counselor in the Presidency of the Church, and asked him if he would give the baby a name and a blessing. President Smith named the boy Joseph

Temple Bennett — Joseph after himself and Temple after his place of birth.

A PLACE OF REVELATION

The first president of the Salt Lake Temple was Lorenzo Snow, who was also president of the Quorum of the Twelve. For good reason, we talk very little about the many spiritual experiences people have in the temples of the Lord. They occur every day, often in the form of patrons being able to know the work they are doing is accepted on the other side. We do talk about an experience President Lorenzo Snow had in the temple because it is well publicized and because it is an important part of Church history.

After Wilford Woodruff died, President Snow was very concerned about becoming president of the Church. He went into the Holy of Holies, where he asked the Lord to guide him as to what he should do. He received no immediate answer, but as he left, the Savior appeared to him and said: "You are to become the president of the Church and it is to take place now. You are to call the same two brethren who are your counselors, to continue to serve with you in the presidency."

After that visit, he immediately gathered all the apostles together. As they commenced their meeting, Elder Francis R. Lyman, who was one of the junior apostles, stood and said, "I am probably out of line because I am a junior apostle, but I feel strongly that President Snow should be called now to be the prophet and president of the Church." President Snow then indicated he would like to hear from each member of the quorum. Each member spoke and confirmed what Brother Lyman had said. President Snow then told them of his experience with the Savior in the temple. He was ordained immediately as the prophet. Before that time, several years had elapsed from the time of the passing of the prophet and the new prophet was called. Now it is always done immediately, as we have witnessed with the passing of President Benson and President Hunter.

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the Church, was also president of the Salt Lake Temple. The first apostle called during his administration was his oldest son, Hyrum Mack Smith. Hyrum Smith was sent to England to preside over the European Mission when he was 44. Shortly after his return, his appendix burst and he died. It was a tremendous loss to his father. Elder M. Russell Ballard once told me of the beautiful letters President Smith and his son had written to each other while they were separated.

On Oct. 3, 1918, President Smith had a marvelous spiritual experience, wherein he was permitted to go beyond the veil and see what took place in the spirit world when the Savior was crucified and before his resurrection.

He was also permitted to see what was taking place with the members and those who were ready to receive the gospel. This vision of is recorded as the 138th section of the D&C, the final revelation in that book. President Smith presented that vision to the Church in the October, 1918 Conference and in November, he passed away.

TAKING TEMPLE BLESSINGS AROUND THE WORLD

In 1954, President David O. McKay called Gordon B. Hinckley into his office and said, “We need to do something to make it possible for people to hear the temple ordinances in their own languages. We are building a temple in Bern, Switzerland. We need to reduce the number of ordinance workers. We can’t have it like the Salt Lake Temple.” He asked Brother Hinckley to accept that assignment, and he did. For two years, he and a group of volunteers worked on the fifth floor of the temple, preparing the first film that is now part of the temples, except for the Salt Lake and Manti temples. In a recent devotional for the Salt Lake Temple workers, President Hinckley described how they had a scrim running from the ceiling to the floor, how they built an altar and even brought trees through the windows of the fifth floor. It took two years to do the film. It was completed on schedule and President Hinckley took the film to the Swiss Temple. It was presented in all four Scandinavian languages, and also in German and French. The temple ordinances are now available in more than 60 languages. The translation and recording is done in the Salt Lake Temple by faithful members of the Church who are brought from all over the world just for that purpose. Recently, a group of members from Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan completed the translation in Arabic.

TEACHING US TO LOVE THE TEMPLE

President Harold B. Lee loved the temple, and he shared that love. Often he would take the new missionaries, who had come to the temple for their endowment, to the Assembly Room and talk to them about the temple. Sometimes a missionary would ask President Lee, “Has the Savior ever been here in the Salt Lake Temple?” President Lee’s response would be, “He has been here many times, and maybe He is here right now.”

Following President Lee there was another great prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball. Though small of stature, he accomplished a great work. We all remember that wonderful revelation that came to President Kimball in the temple, bringing the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church. President Kimball was very desirous that the temples be taken to the people. The building of many new temples were commenced during his administration.

President Ezra Taft Benson also loved the temple, and

taught us to love it by his example. Almost without fail, he and Sister Benson went every Friday morning to the Salt Lake Temple. When it became difficult for Sister Benson to move from room to room, President Benson took his bride to the Jordan River Temple instead.

In nine short months, President Howard W. Hunter gave us such a vision of the blessings of the temple. He taught us the importance of always having a temple recommend and being a temple-worthy people.

There is no person on the face of the earth and in the history of the world that has had more to do with temples — the building, the dedication and all aspects of the work within the temple — than our present prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. He has been prepared in every way to lead the Church in this important work. He continually teaches us about the holy temple and the importance of the work which must be done therein.

Many years ago, President Hinckley took a group of Protestant ministers on a tour of the Mesa Temple during its public open house after extensive remodeling. While meeting with the ministers afterward, one of the ministers commented to President Hinckley that in no place could he see a cross, which to him was the symbol of Christianity. “Why is that, when you say you believe in Jesus Christ?” he asked.

President Hinckley responded, “For us, the cross is the symbol of the dying Christ, while our message is the declaration of the living Christ.” The minister asked, “If you do not use the cross, what is the symbol of your religion?”

President Hinckley replied, “The lives of our people must become the only meaningful expression of our faith and, in fact, the symbol of our worship.”

Truman Madsen once observed:

The temple is not just a union of heaven and earth. It is the key to our mastery of the earth. It is the Lord’s graduate course in subduing the earth, which, as only we understand, ultimately will be heaven — this earth glorified. We need to learn more about the earth, more about ourselves, and we need to learn to comprehend more deeply. The temple is a catalyst whereby the self is revealed to the self. It is intended that we not simply learn about Christ but that we get to know Him. The Bible says “Lord, Lord did we not do this and that.” Christ will respond “I never knew you. In the Inspired version it says ‘You never knew me...’

The temple is the House of the Lord. Take the opportunity as often as possible to visit His house and perform the ordinances there that are necessary for salvation in the kingdom of God.

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