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**Constructing a Religious Paradox:
The Nauvoo Temple, 1841-1846**

by

Justin R. Bates

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Biblical Integration

The author's personal reverence toward sacred Christian spaces, including biblically-based temples, inspired the questions that have informed this research. The research is substantially useful both to curious Christians and religious groups, generally, as well as to Latter-day Saint Christians, specifically. For those who are not Latter-day Saints, a deeper understanding of the Saints' motivations for building the Nauvoo Temple helps to shed light on fundamental motivations that drive Christians, and other religious groups, to build astounding edifices in any era. While specific circumstances and motives may vary, a close study of this group can yield broadly applicable knowledge. The research is also useful to Latter-day Saint Christians, specifically, in that the Nauvoo Temple holds a central place in the doctrinal understanding of modern Latter-day Saints. Many of the Church's "most central doctrines and practices [including] celestial marriage, ... the character of God, ... understanding of the keys of the priesthood, premortal existence, ... ordinances for the dead, and the endowment" were either partially or comprehensively made known in Nauvoo, with the Temple at the heart of many of them.¹

¹ Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman, "Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo," *Brigham Young University Studies* 32, no. 1/2 (1991): 41-42.

Introduction

While still in poverty and fleeing heavy persecution in 1841, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints committed themselves to an unexpected architectural endeavor. They decided to construct a temple to their God in their newly christened frontier city of Nauvoo, Illinois.² What motivated these poor, homeless, persecuted Christians to start construction on such an ambitious project?³ Though they were being driven from the state, were about to lose the Temple, and had just lost their alleged prophet, they still chose to finish it.⁴

Despite significant financial and social challenges, the Latter-day Saints chose to build the Nauvoo Temple for at least three reasons: first, they believed in following the counsel of those they believed to be modern-day prophets; second, they wanted to emulate scriptural precedent for Zion societies, such as the City of Enoch; third, they possessed a sincere desire to obtain promised spiritual blessings.⁵ To narrow the focus of the project and allow for a more comprehensive study, the research focuses on the Saints' motivations for building the Temple and does not assess whether they achieved their desired outcomes.

Desire to Follow Living Prophets

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that, as was His pattern anciently with men such as Adam, Moses, Abraham, and Peter, the Lord still calls and authorizes prophets in each dispensation to speak for Him and lead His people. With that

² William Mulder, "Nauvoo Observed," *Brigham Young University Studies* 32, no. 1/2 (1991): 95-96.

³ Casualene Meyer, "Hymn for the Nauvoo Temple," *Brigham Young University Studies* 41, no 1, 2002: 64.

⁴ Bill Shepard, "The Nauvoo Temple as a Source of Controversy." *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, 2002, 101. This article discusses some of the more controversial conversation around the construction of the Nauvoo Temple. It highlights how the completion of the Nauvoo Temple was a source of controversy between several of the splinter groups formed in the wake of Joseph Smith's death.

⁵ Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman, "Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo," *Brigham Young University Studies* 32, no. 1/2 (1991): 41-42.

understanding, when those they believe to be living prophets authoritatively share formal teachings or invitations on the Lord's behalf, even if it is terribly difficult, the Saints feel a special responsibility to follow that counsel. They believed that the Lord had previously counseled the Saints to "give heed unto all his [the prophet's] words and commandments" with the understanding that "whether by mine own [the Lord's] voice or by the voice of my servants [the prophets], it is the same."⁶ In 1841, their leader Joseph Smith purportedly received a revelation from the Lord stating that the Saints were commanded to "build a house to my name" in which "the Most High [could] dwell."⁷

To truly understand the scope and difficulty of following divine counsel given through their professed prophet, it is necessary to appreciate the condition and context of the Saints at this place and time. Having been driven from their homes in Missouri in 1833, and recovering little, if any, of the value of their homes, farms, and businesses, most of the Saints were left with scarce financial resources. After a series of short stays in other cities, such as Clay County, MO, and having had to rely largely upon the generosity of others, the refugee Saints found an undesirable frontier swampland near Commerce, IL. The forsaken swamp seemed to suit them as no one else wanted the land and, similarly, no one seemed to want the Saints around either. They quickly drained the swamps and renamed the city, Nauvoo. Around this same time, the Saints were stricken with a malaria epidemic that would cost the lives of many and would further complicate their desperate situation and efforts to develop a new city.⁸ On top of this, the Saints

⁶ *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), section 21:4; 1:38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 124:26-27.

⁸ Jerrie Hurd, *Our Sisters in the Latter-day Scriptures*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1987), 73.

continued to be persecuted by their current neighbors in Illinois and their former oppressors from Missouri, which enmity would only increase until they were forcibly driven from the state.

Having reviewed the relevant contextual information regarding the temporal affairs and financial condition of the Church at that time, one scholar concisely described it as “not good.”⁹ Coupled with the understanding that the original Nauvoo Temple’s construction was estimated to cost approximately \$800,000 dollars in 1846 – approximately \$28 million in today’s money – reinforces the overwhelming nature of the task.¹⁰ While Nauvoo would eventually become a prosperous city under a speculative economy,¹¹ the commandment to follow their alleged prophet in building the ornate Nauvoo Temple was still a daunting one.

An example of the Saints’ attitude toward what they believed to be prophetic revelation and guidance can be found in Joseph Smith’s involvement in the Temple’s architectural planning, a field with which he had little to no personal experience. For example, Smith was heard to say to the Temple’s architect, William Weeks, “I wish you to carry out *my* designs. I have seen in vision the splendid appearance of that building illuminated, and will have it built according to the pattern shown me.”¹² Furthermore, one historian described how Weeks’ designs

⁹ Josh E. Probert, "An Epistle of the Twelve, March 1842," *Brigham Young University Studies* 47, no. 1 (2008): 119-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044616>. He also analyzes the content of the letter in its appropriate context, resulting in enlightening commentary and insights related to the Nauvoo period.

¹⁰ Richard Bennett, "Has the Lord Turned Bankrupt? The Attempted Sale of the Nauvoo Temple, 1846-1850," 1080, *Faculty Publications*, 2002: 237. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1080>; and “CPI Inflation Calculator,” <https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation>.

¹¹ Valeen Tippetts Avery and Linda King Newell, "The Lion and the Lady: Brigham Young and Emma Smith," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48.1 (1980): 96.

¹² Joseph Smith, Jr, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1932-1951), Vol. 7:197. For nearly one-hundred years, this seven-volume history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the primary source material for Church history topics and questions. While in the last decade, a series of recently published volumes of narrative Church history titled *Saints* have become the more dominant source for Church history, this is still a valuable reference material. The Church’s founding prophet, Joseph Smith, is the credited author, though he appears to have relied heavily on scribes, as well as noted Church historian B.H. Roberts, in the compilation and presentation of the history. Since this is a comprehensive treatment of the early history of the Church, it includes useful contextual

were subject to the approval of the “temple building committee, Church leaders, and ultimately by the Prophet himself.”¹³ This supports the idea that the Saints believed in following the counsel of those they believed to be modern prophets, even regarding where to put the windows in the Temple.

Shortly after the death of the Church’s founding leader and supposed prophet, Joseph Smith, in 1844, one of the leading councils of the Church produced a letter that sheds light on temple-building as an ongoing prophetic priority. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that produced the epistle had, by this time, taken over leadership of the Church during the Apostolic interregnum triggered by the previous prophet’s death. The source provides a good understanding of how passionately the Church leaders felt about the Temple’s construction, even after the death of Joseph Smith. It confirms that the prophetic priority of temple-building was not a temporary or passing interest but, rather, was seen as a divine mandate.¹⁴ As further evidence of this enduring prophetic priority, before fleeing Nauvoo, the Saints engraved the following invitation right on the building, “The Lord has beheld our sacrifice: Come After Us.”¹⁵ This statement clearly invites modern members of the Restored Church to follow in the footsteps of

information regarding its founding events, first prophet, and early members. With temples being of fundamental importance to the early saints, their construction and destruction also play a prominent role in the history. Particularly noteworthy are some helpful quotations from Church leaders during the Nauvoo period.

¹³ Joseph Earl Arrington. "William Weeks, Architect of the Nauvoo Temple." *Brigham Young University Studies* 19, no. 3 (1979): 337-59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044947>. Joseph Arrington, as previously noted, was a prominent student of Church History in the early twentieth century. Since he specialized in topics related to the Nauvoo Temple, and this article has to do with its architect, Arrington seems sufficiently expert to discuss the topic. This scholarly article describes a relatively unknown man named William Weeks who served as the architect of the Nauvoo Temple. The latter portion of the article relates what became of him in later life, including subsequent achievements and his eventual falling out with the Church.

¹⁴ “An Epistle of the Twelve,” *Times and Seasons*, 1 Oct 1844, 5:668 in *BYU Library Digital Collections*. <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/3782>.

¹⁵ Scott C. Esplin, *Return to the City of Joseph: Modern Mormonism's Contest for the Soul of Nauvoo*, Urbana, Chicago; Springfield: *University of Illinois Press*, 2018:1-2. muse.jhu.edu/book/62898. This article also includes some useful descriptions of the city and society of Nauvoo during the construction of the original Nauvoo Temple.

these early pioneers as they sacrifice to follow what they considered divinely authorized prophetic counsel.

Desire to Emulate Scriptural Precedent for Zion Societies

The early Saints often saw themselves as modern-day Israel and, consequently, modeled their behavior after those elect Zion societies they admired from the scriptural record. The Saints came to learn more about one of these societies, the City of Enoch, because of Joseph Smith's purportedly inspired efforts to translate the Bible. The Saints came to believe that not only had the biblical prophet Enoch been "translated,"¹⁶ but also his entire righteous city, "the Zion of Enoch" had been taken up "into mine own bosom [heaven]."¹⁷ This message of gathering Israel and building Zion, with the hope of welcoming the Lord at His second coming, excited the Saints and became a prominent message in early Church sermons.

As part of their efforts to build Zion, the Saints also studied other faithful societies throughout history and realized that construction of the Temple was a necessary part of building Zion. Just as wise King Solomon, the Book of Mormon Prophet Nephi, and even a traveling Moses in the wilderness built majestic temples of the finest materials available, the Saints spared no expense in trying to produce a beautiful house for their God. A detailed firsthand description of the original Nauvoo Temple by one who was clearly not a member of their church supports this idea. In fact, despite his feeling that the Latter-day Saints were robbers whose "detestable customs and practices" he hated, he describes the finished Temple as a "grand and magnificent spectacle" of "majestic proportions," that had evidently been crafted by "some of the most skilful

¹⁶ Heb 11:5, King James Version.

¹⁷ D&C 38:4.

[sic] architects and stone masons in the country.”¹⁸ This supports the notion that constructing the Nauvoo Temple was a significant challenge for a group of impoverished Christians in a frontier town. Despite this opposition, the Saints were determined to create Zion in Nauvoo.¹⁹

The Saints saw the Temple as a central part of their efforts to build Zion, and by extension, become a godly people. As part of the Saints’ efforts to build the temple, a young architect named William Weeks was contracted to design the Temple. One historian described how Weeks “helped translate the purposes and ideals of the early Latter-day Saints into architectural terms.”²⁰ One can clearly see in the majesty, craftsmanship and grandeur of the Temple’s design and construction a demonstration of the early Saints commitment to God. Furthermore, the Temple was “among priority building projects planned for the new city,”²¹ which demonstrates that it was not an afterthought but a central part of the Zion Nauvoo’s citizens were trying to build.

As geographical evidence of their feelings toward the Temple, an extant city map shows that the Nauvoo Temple was positioned high up on the hill where all, even those passing by on

¹⁸ "Recollections of the Nauvoo Temple." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 38, no. 4 (1945): 481-85. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40188178>. While the name of the author is unknown, he is apparently well-educated and familiar with architecture, by virtue of the language he uses to describe the Temple’s design and craftsmanship and his obvious appreciation for it. One of the unique aspects of this source is that the account is from one who was clearly not a member of their faith. For example, he perpetuates an apparently militarist rumor against the Saints that the “round windows” of the Temple “were to be used as portholes” for the “discharge of heavy ordinance” against their enemies. Incorporating perspectives of non-members regarding the scope of the Temple project, the public perception of the Saints and their motivations will provide a more balanced and holistic approach to the research. This will, presumably, also lead to more comprehensive and relevant conclusions.

¹⁹ Jed Woodworth, “The Center Place: D&C 52, 57, 58,” in Matthew McBride and James Goldberg, eds., *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 129.

²⁰ Arrington, “William Weeks,” 337-359.

²¹ *Ibid.*

the Mississippi River, could see it.²² That they would position the Temple at the pinnacle of their city, higher than their homes or businesses, says something about how important it was to them. When Church leaders invited Saints to gather to their new Zion, they described the Nauvoo Temple as a type of beacon, or rallying point, where like-minded Christians could gather to experience the light and truth of God in greater measure.²³

Nauvoo was intended to be: “for the Saints, ... a refuge; for strangers a retreat.”²⁴ Joseph Smith desired that “even those who came to scoff might stay to pray” in this budding Zion community. The Saints were not simply trying to construct a building, but rather a godly society, perhaps even “a city that is set on an hill” like other Zion societies that had gone before.²⁵ They felt that the construction of the Temple was essential to achieving that aim. As evidence of their success in building both a Temple and a godlier society, Joseph Smith described the Saints by saying, “Never ... have we seen manifested ... a more ardent desire to do the will of God, more strenuous exertions used, or greater sacrifices made than there have been since the Lord said, ‘Let the Temple be built.’”²⁶

²² Melinda Evans Jeffress, "Mapping Historic Nauvoo," *Brigham Young University Studies* 32, no. 1/2 (1991): 269-75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044974>. This article addresses the layout of Nauvoo as well as the reason for it. While it was intended to be an incredibly organized city, its rapid growth as a riverside frontier town necessitated some messier adaptation of their original plans. Of greater interest is the city map included with the article, which shows the geographic position of the Temple in the city.

²³ “An Epistle of the Twelve.”

²⁴ Mulder, “Nauvoo Observed,” 95-118. This article provides helpful context for what the town was like, what they were trying to do there, and how building a temple fit into that mission.

²⁵ Matt 5:14.

²⁶ “The Temple,” *Times and Seasons*, 2 May 1842, vol. 3, no. 13. Nauvoo, Hancock Co., IL: 775. <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-2-may-1842/9>.

Desire to Receive Promised Spiritual Blessings

Once Joseph Smith was killed in June of 1844 and the Saints knew that they would be driven out of Illinois and away from their Temple, perhaps their principal motivation to finish it was a desire to offer a consecrated gift to God and thereby obtain the promised spiritual blessings. For example, not only did they finish the Temple, but historian Jill Major describes “how carefully [the Saints] ... arranged every detail of the temple experience to make it meaningful and purposeful, even while they planned to abandon [Nauvoo].”²⁷ The Saints made innovative and intentional efforts to ensure the beauty of the Lord’s House that they were building. For example, due to the Saints’ limited resources, “portraits of prominent Nauvoo citizens were borrowed to adorn the temple walls.”²⁸ This uncommon practice, when compared to contemporary standards for temple décor, illustrates their efforts to beautify the Temple and remember the Saints who sacrificed to build it. In support of this idea, the 1844 “Epistle of the Twelve” includes the Church leaders’ petition that every member not only send funds to support the Temple’s construction, but that they join in the “work of God” and “come to Nauvoo” where they could gather with the Saints, participate in the Temple’s construction and, significantly, experience the promised blessings.²⁹

One might be led to ask, what were the promised spiritual blessings? The available evidence suggests that the blessings include essential priesthood ordinances, an endowment of

²⁷ Jill C. Major "Artworks in the Celestial Room of the First Nauvoo Temple." *Brigham Young University Studies* 41, no. 2 (2002): 47-69. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044321>. Jill C. Major is a professional researcher and biographer. She also happens to be married to the “great-great-grandson of [a] Nauvoo Temple artist,” which appears to have inspired her to pursue and produce the associated research. The article also describes how the “sisters were encouraged to donate one cent per week to buy glass and nails for the temple” and that there was a “large ... leather-bound record called ‘The Book of the Law of the Lord’” in which contributions were tracked.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ “An Epistle of the Twelve.”

greater spiritual power, and enlightening additional doctrine. Noted historian Lisle Brown summarizes what the Lord had in store for his faithful, temple-building Saints. In doing so, he references a supposed revelation received by Joseph Smith, now recorded in D&C 124:28, that, “the ordinances administered in the Nauvoo Temple would surpass those of the Kirtland Temple,” which had been built previously.³⁰ When one realizes the extent of the spiritual outpouring allegedly received by the Saints in the Kirtland Temple, and the promise of greater spiritual blessings available in the Nauvoo Temple, it makes sense why the Saints were motivated to complete construction of this new Temple. As magnificent as the “washing and anointing” ordinances of the Kirtland era had been for the Saints, they would simply be steppingstones to the greater ordinances or “ceremonies introduced by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo.”³¹

Similarly, in preparation for the 2002 dedication of the reconstructed Nauvoo Temple, Casualene Meyer wrote a poem that serves as a good illustration of the prevailing historiography surrounding the original Nauvoo Temple and those who built it. It describes one of the Saints’ potential motivations for finishing the Temple as a desire to stay to beg “the holy gift by faith” that would enable them “to follow the hardest trail.”³² This alludes to the endowment of

³⁰ Brown, Lisle G. "The Sacred Departments for Temple Work in Nauvoo: The Assembly Room and the Council Chamber." *Brigham Young University Studies* 19, no. 3 (1979): 363. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044948>. Lisle G. Brown was a respected historian, curator, and professor at Marshall University for over forty years. This article discusses, among other things, specific rooms within the Nauvoo Temple and their significance. In addition, it recounts some of the history of the Temple, including the First Presidency, a leading council of the Church, ‘calling upon the Church’ in August 1840 to “erect a temple at Nauvoo,” which proposal was ‘formally sustained’ by the rest of the Saints in October 1840.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Casualene Meyer. "Hymn for the Nauvoo Temple." *Brigham Young University Studies* 41, no. 1 (2002): 64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044304>. Casualene Meyer is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a graduate of the Church-owned Brigham Young University. While her graduate-level education and training are not in historical studies per se, but rather English, that would seem appropriate for a poet. While the author is clearly enamored with the Saints, she nonetheless, understands and helps to define some of their motivations.

priesthood power that they sought through the highest sacraments of the faith found in the Temple.

Furthermore, prior to its destruction, while the Temple was quite popular as a tourist attraction and widely admired modern marvel prior to its destruction, the Saints were not just building the Temple out of vanity or even for its long-term use; they clearly had other short-term spiritual goals in mind.³³ The highest sacraments of the faith were only available to them in the Temple and they needed to obtain that endowment of power and make those eternal covenants prior to their Exodus from Nauvoo and journey to the West.

Another of the promised blessings and principal motivations for the Saints to build the Temple included enlightening revealed doctrines. The Nauvoo Temple holds a crucial position in the doctrinal understanding of modern Latter-day Saints. For example, many of the Church's "most central doctrines and practices [including] celestial marriage, ... the character of God, ... understanding of the keys of the priesthood, premortal existence, ... ordinances for the dead, and the endowment" were either partially or comprehensively made known in Nauvoo, with the Temple at the heart of many of them.³⁴ These additional doctrines and promised blessings constitute the highest sacraments of the faith and provide unparalleled motivation for faithful

³³ Arrington, Joseph Earl. "Destruction of the Mormon Temple at Nauvoo." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 40, no. 4 (1947): 414-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40188923>. Joseph Earl Arrington was a prominent student of Church History born near the turn of the twentieth century. He specialized in topics related to the Nauvoo Temple, which provides some credibility on the subject and his treatment thereof in the publication. This article provides a valuable history of the Nauvoo Temple with information on a variety of subjects not easily available elsewhere. For example, he discusses in some detail the duration and method of the Temple's construction, which helps to explain the dedication of the Saints. He also discusses how long the Temple remained in use before its destruction. On a related note, he describes repeated attempts to burn it down, one of which ultimately succeeded.

³⁴ Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman, "Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo," *Brigham Young University Studies* 32, no. 1/2 (1991): 41-56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044964>. Having been students of early Church History throughout their careers as historians and professors at Brigham Young University, Larry Porter and Milton Backman are credible experts in their field and on this subject. They collaborated to produce this insightful article on the Temple the Saints constructed and the doctrines their prophets expounded during the Nauvoo period.

Saints seeking to become like God and live eternally with their families. The doctrines and ordinances related to uniting families together for eternity would be particularly important to those Saints who had lost, or worried they may lose, loved ones to past religious persecution or the hardships of the upcoming trek west.

While determining whether the Saints felt sufficiently compensated, or divinely blessed, for their efforts in constructing the Nauvoo Temple is not the primary purpose of this research endeavor, it is still useful to consider. In other words, if what they ultimately received was more than satisfactory to them, then that provides a solid indication regarding their expectations and motivations during the building process. Erastus Snow, who was one of the early Saints, demonstrates the attitude and feelings of faithful, early members of the Church. Especially noteworthy is his description of the Nauvoo Temple and the Saints' experience there, which reads, "The Spirit, Power, and Wisdom of God reigned continually in the Temple and all felt satisfied that during the two months we occupied it in the endowments of the Saints, we were amply paid for all our labors in building it."³⁵ The promised endowment of spiritual power, wisdom and revealed doctrine seems to have been part of the Saints' expectations of the Nauvoo Temple, which clearly helped motivate their consecration and dedication toward its construction.

Conclusion

Despite significant financial and social challenges, the Latter-day Saints chose to build the Nauvoo Temple for at least three reasons: first, they believed in following the counsel of those they believed to be modern-day prophets; second, they wanted to emulate scriptural precedent for Zion societies, such as the City of Enoch; third, they possessed a sincere desire to obtain promised spiritual blessings. The early Saints believed that the Lord still called and

³⁵ Andrew K. Larsen, "Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church" in *The American West* Vol. 5. Salt Lake City: *University of Utah Press*, 1971: 96.

authorized prophets in each dispensation to speak for Him and lead His people. Despite crushing poverty, ongoing persecution, a stupendously ornate and expensive temple design, the martyrdom of their founder, and little time in which to use the Temple before being driven out of Nauvoo, the Saints believed in following Joseph Smith's counsel to build the Temple. They followed that allegedly prophetic counsel with regards to the location, design, and even donations of time, money, and labor.

The Saints saw themselves as modern-day Israel and, consequently, modeled their behavior after those elect Zion societies they admired from the scriptural record. As part of their efforts to build Zion, the Saints studied other faithful societies throughout history with a desire to emulate them. They came to see the Temple as a central part of their efforts to build Zion, and by extension, become a godly people. In other words, the Saints were not simply trying to construct a building, but rather a godly society prepared to welcome the Savior at His return.

When they realized that they would not long have access to the Temple after its completion, perhaps their principal motivation to finish it was a desire to obtain the promised spiritual blessings. The available evidence suggests that these blessings included essential priesthood ordinances, an endowment of greater spiritual power, and enlightening additional doctrine. They anticipated priesthood ordinances that would bind them together as families for eternity, spiritual strength gained through faithfully keeping eternal covenants made in the Temple, and doctrines that would provide unparalleled motivation for faithful Saints seeking to become like God and achieve their divine potential. In short, while the reasons for building the Temple were varied, the available evidence most strongly indicates that their primary motivation

in building the Nauvoo Temple related to a sincere and burning desire to obtain promised spiritual blessings and become more like God.³⁶

³⁶ Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman, "Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo," *Brigham Young University Studies* 32, no. 1/2 (1991): 41-42.

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