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## Passing Up The Heavenly Gift (Part Two of Two)

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# PASSING UP THE HEAVENLY GIFT (PART TWO OF TWO)

Gregory L. Smith

*Review of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Passing the Heavenly Gift, Salt Lake City: Mill Creek Press, 2011. 510 pp., no index. \$25.97.*

## Claims #4 and #5: The Source of the Authority of Brigham Young and the Apostles After Joseph's Death

Snuffer writes of the apostolic succession:

In 1847, Brigham Young publicly explained his understanding of the keys he obtained in these words: “an apostle is the Highest office and authority that there is in the Church and Kingdom [of] God on the earth. From whom did Joseph receive his authority? From just such men as sit around me here (pointing to the Twelve Apostles that sat with him.) Peter, James and John were Apostles, and there was no noise about their being seers and revelators though those gifts were among them. Joseph Smith gave unto me and my brethren (the Twelve) all the Priesthood keys, power and authority which he had and those are the powers which belong to the Apostleship” (87).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Snuffer cites Richard S. Van Wagoner, editor, *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2009), 1:241. The original is in the Woodruff diaries; see Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 3:257 (15 August 1857). Cited as WWJ hereafter.

Snuffer then delivers his killing stroke: “This explanation is misleading because Brigham Young was not ordained an Apostle by Joseph Smith” (87). A few pages later, he writes that “Brigham Young’s claim to have received the sealing power when he was ordained an Apostle is completely dependent on the Three Witnesses’ ordination in 1835. That ordination came a year prior to the 1836 visit of Elijah” (91).

*An Incomplete and Misleading Citation*

Snuffer, though, is putting words into Brigham’s mouth. Brigham did not say, “Joseph ordained me an apostle,” nor did he say, “I received all these keys when I was ordained an apostle.” He says, rather, that Joseph got his authority from apostles, and that “Joseph gave” all the power and keys “unto me and my brethren (the Twelve).” Here again, Snuffer is only giving us part of the story. In the very same talk, Brigham explained: “We do not recieve all at once but we recieve grace for grace. When Brother Joseph received the Preisthood He did not recieve all at once, but He was A prophet Seer & Revelator before He recieved the fulness of the Priesthood & keys of the kingdom.”<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that after receiving the Aaronic priesthood, Joseph

recieved the Patriarchal or Melchisedick Priesthood from under the Hands of Peter James & John who were of the Twelve Apostles & were the Presidency when the other Apostles were Absent. From those Apostles Joseph Smith recieved every key power, Blessing, & Privilege of the Highest Authority of the Melchezedick Priesthood ever committed to man on the earth which they held.<sup>3</sup>

But, this is not all. Brigham then says that

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2 WWJ, 3:257 (15 August 1847), emphasis added.

3 WWJ, 3:257 (15 August 1847).

Elijah spoken of in the Bible that He should Come in the last days to turn the hearts of the fathers to the Children & the children to their fathers. The fulfillment of this scripture is manifest in establishing the kingdom of God & Priesthood on the earth in the last days & those who hold the keys of the priesthood & sealing power have the spirit & power of Elijah & it is necessary in order to redeem our dead & save our Children. There is much more importance attached to this than Parents are aware of.<sup>4</sup>

Brigham has thus argued for a progression from Aaronic, to all Melchizedek keys and authority held by Peter, James, and John, and finally to the mission of Elijah. This may hint that Brigham knew of the basics of the Elijah visitation five years before the account from Joseph's journal was published in 1852 (we will see below that Willard Richards had made a copy for the *Manuscript History* in 1843, and may well have informed Brigham of it, if Joseph did not do so during his instruction in the higher ordinances).<sup>5</sup>

This supposition is strengthened by Brigham's concluding remarks, for he again invokes both Elijah and the keys associated with redemption of the dead: "A man that has embraced the gospel must [be?] some one who has the Priesthood & keys & power of Elijah & must attend to ordinances" for their kindred dead.<sup>6</sup>

It is, then, misleading for *PTHG* to pretend that Brigham lays claim to all priesthood keys and power from Joseph via his ordination by the Three Witnesses to the office of apostle. Brigham clearly understands this authority as something received in discrete steps, and one that ultimately encompasses

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4 *WWJ*, 3:258 (15 August 1847).

5 See note 36 herein.

6 *WWJ*, 3:259 (15 August 1847).

Elijah's power. His claim is simply that he got this power from Joseph, and that all such power rests with the apostles.

*PTHG* claims that

apparently all prior information, charges, ordinations, washings, endowments, sealings and instruction were not as clear to Brigham Young at the moment Joseph died as he would later make it appear. It was only as time went on that the accounts of Joseph passing keys to the Twelve grew to add detail and certainty" (70).

Still, 1847 was not Brigham's or the apostles' first articulation of their claim to possess the authority and power vouchsafed them by Joseph. (And, if *PTHG* viewed Brigham with even a hint of charity, he might be forgiven if his initial reaction at Joseph's death was a sudden confusion—the New Testament apostles were much slower to grasp the implications of Jesus' pre-crucifixion teachings.)

*Earlier Claims Made by Brigham Young and the Twelve*

In public discourse in 1843, Brigham Young made it clear that the government of the Church rested upon "the prophet" and "the Twelve":

Among other things said that a man or woman may ask of God & get a witness & testimony from God concerning any work or messenger that is sent unto them. But if a person asks for a thing that does not concern him, such as governing the Church what shall the prophet or the Twelve do &c? He will not get an answer. If he does it will not be from God.<sup>7</sup>

Joseph was still alive and did not rebuke or correct Brigham's claim. Within less than two months of the martyrdom, members of the Twelve and other witnesses were reporting the

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7 *WWJ*, 2:271 (6 August 1843).

same thing that Brigham claimed in *PTHG*'s truncated citation from 1847:

Elders O Hyde and P. P. Pratt testified that Joseph the Prophet and Seer had ordained, anointed, and appointed the Twelve to lead the Church. Had given them the Keys of the Kingdom of God for that purpose.

W. W. Phelps and R. Cahoon bore testimony to the same thing, saying that Joseph said unto the Twelve upon your sholdiers the kingdom of God must rest in all the world. Now round up your sholdiers and bear it.<sup>8</sup>

Heber C. Kimball likewise said that “when Jesus was upon the earth his time was spent in endowing the twelve apostles that they might do the things he had left undone and carry out his measures, and upon the same principle we carry out Joseph’s measures.”<sup>9</sup> Wilford Woodruff wrote:

And when they [the apostles] *received their endowment, and actually received the keys of the kingdom of God*, and oracles of God, keys of revelation, and the pattern of heavenly things; and thus addressing the Twelve, exclaimed, “upon your shoulders the kingdom rests, elders, and bear it; for I have had to do it until now. But now the responsibility rests upon you. It mattereth not what becomes of me.”...

[Brigham Young] has not only had much experience with President Smith, but he has proved himself true and faithful in all things committed to his charge, *until*

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8 WWJ, 2:455 (25 August 1844).

9 Heber C. Kimball, cited in “Conference Minutes, October Conference Minutes,” *Times and Seasons* 5/20 (2 November 1844): 693–694 (from 7 October 1844).

*he was called to hold the keys of the kingdom of God in all the world*, in connection with the Twelve: was the first to receive his endowment, from under the hands of the Prophet and Patriarch, who have leaned upon him in connection with the Twelve, for years, to bear off this kingdom in all the world.<sup>10</sup>

Again, the claim is clear that Brigham was faithful, and he was *eventually* ordained to all the keys by Joseph in conjunction with his receipt of the higher temple ordinances in Nauvoo. Woodruff would elsewhere write:

The prophet called the quorum of the twelve together several months before his death, and informed them that the Lord had commanded him to hasten their endowments; that he did not expect to remain himself to see the temple completed, but wished to confer the keys of the kingdom of God upon other men, that they might build up the church and kingdom according to the pattern given. And the prophet stood before the twelve from day to day, clothed with the spirit and power of God, and instructed them in the oracles of God, in the pattern of heavenly things, in the things of the kingdom, the power of the priesthood, and in the knowledge of the last dispensation in the fulness of times.

And as his last work and charge to the quorum of the twelve, that noble spirit rose up in all the majesty, strength, and dignity of his calling, as a prophet,

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10 Wilford Woodruff, "To the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, Greeting," *Times and Seasons* 5/20 (2 November 1844): 698–700 (from 11 October 1844), italics added. Snuffer quotes this statement (110), but acts as if this is a change in the apostles' stance—even though this statement predates the 1847 statement by Brigham Young upon the misrepresentation of which Snuffer hangs so much (87–88).



seer, and revelator... and exhorted and commanded the brethren of the twelve to rise up, and go forth in the name of Israel's God, and bear off the keys of the kingdom of God in righteousness and honour in all the world.<sup>11</sup>

Orson Hyde said:

Before I went east on the 4th of April last, we were in council with Brother Joseph almost every day for weeks, says Brother Joseph in one of those councils there is something going to happen; I don't know what it is, but the Lord bids me to hasten and give you your endowment before the temple is finished. He conducted us through every ordinance of the holy priesthood, and when he had gone through with all the ordinances he rejoiced very much, and says, now if they kill me you have got all the keys, and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom, as fast as you will be able to build it up; and now says he on your shoulders will the responsibility of leading this people rest, for the Lord is going to let me rest a while.<sup>12</sup>

Still less than a year after Joseph's death, Parley P. Pratt would explain:

We [the apostles] hold the keys of the ministry and ordinances of salvation in this last kingdom; and if the people choose to be benefitted by them, it is their own blessing; if not, it is their own neglect....

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11 Wilford Woodruff, "To the officers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British isles," *Millennial Star* 5/9 (February 1845): 136.

12 "Trial of Elder Rigdon," *Times and Seasons* 5/17 (15 September 1844): 651

This great and good man [Joseph] was led, before his death, to call the Twelve together, from time to time, and to instruct them in all things pertaining to the kingdom, ordinances, and government of God. He often observed that he was laying the foundation, but it would remain for the Twelve to complete the building. Said he, "I know not why; but for some reason I am constrained to hasten my preparations, and to confer upon the Twelve all the ordinances, keys, covenants, endowments, and sealing ordinances of the priesthood, and so set before them a pattern in all things pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein."

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

He proceeded to confer on elder Young, the President of the Twelve, the keys of the sealing power, as conferred in the last days by the spirit and power of Elijah, in order to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of

the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth should be smitten with a curse.

This last key of the priesthood is the most sacred of all, and pertains exclusively to the first presidency of the church, without whose sanction and approval or authority, no sealing blessing shall be administered pertaining to things of the resurrection and the life to come.<sup>13</sup>

Pratt clearly appeals to repeated meetings with Joseph in Nauvoo (i.e., well after their ordination to the apostleship) and to a deliberate bestowal of keys when Brigham was President of the Twelve (which he was not when first made an apostle).

Snuffer also ignores a vital document, which was likely prepared by the Twelve to articulate their leadership claim. (Snuffer relies heavily on D. Michael Quinn, and some have suggested that Quinn was unaware of this document—this may explain Snuffer’s silence concerning it.<sup>14</sup>) The document was published in 2005,<sup>15</sup> and was written between September 1844 and March 1845, likely in the fall of 1844.<sup>16</sup>

We were present at a Council in the latter part of the month of March last [1844]... and the greater part of the Twelve Apostles were present....

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13 Parley P. Pratt, “Proclamation to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Greeting,” *Millennial Star* 5/10 (March 1845): 151; dated New York, 1 January 1845.

14 Alexander L. Baugh and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, ”I Roll the Burthen and Responsibility of Leading This Church Off from My Shoulders on to Yours’: The 1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 49/3 (2010):6–7 and 7 n. 4.

15 Baugh and Holzapfel, 9.

16 Baugh and Holzapfel, 11, 12 n. 18.

In this Council, Joseph Smith seemed somewhat depressed in spirit and [said]...

Brethren, the Lord bids me hasten the work in which we are engaged. He will not suffer that you should wait for your endowment until the Temple is done. Some important scene is near to take place. It may be that my enemies will kill me, and in case they should, and the keys and power which rest on me not be imparted to you, they will be lost from the Earth.... Upon the shoulders of the Twelve must the responsibility of leading this church hence forth rest until you shall appoint others to succeed you....

After this appointment was made, and confirmed by the holy anointing under the hands of Joseph and Hyrum, Joseph continued his speech unto them, saying, while he walked the floor and threw back the collar of his coat upon his shoulders, "I roll the burthen and responsibility of leading this church off from my shoulders on to yours. Now round up your shoulders and stand under it like men; for the Lord is going to let me rest a while." ...

Joseph Smith did declare that he had conferred upon the Twelve every key and every power that he ever held himself before God.<sup>17</sup>

Snuffer distorts the apostles' claim and creates a straw man by writing that "if information in the endowment alone is sufficient to pass keys, then Mormon dissidents Jerald and Sandra Tanner, who have published the various endowment

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17 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church archives, cited in Baugh and Holzapfel, 13–19.

ordinances and versions would hold the keys” (111). This is extraordinarily obtuse—the Twelve did not claim that merely having received the endowment conferred keys. Rather, they claimed that they had received the endowment and all the higher ordinances and explicitly been given keys under the hands of Joseph and Hyrum. As one attendee later described the meeting, “‘the keys of power committed’ to the Twelve consisted of ‘Keys of Endowments to the Last Anointing & Sealing[,] Together with keys of Salvation for the Dead. with the eternity of the Marriage Covenant and the Powr of Endless Lives.’”<sup>18</sup>

Brigham Young and the apostles’ claims to possess all the keys via ordination from Joseph appeared very early and never wavered. *PTHG*’s hypothesis of a gradual evolution and solidification of claims about keys from Joseph simply does not match the accounts which predate Snuffer’s incomplete 1847 citation.

### Claim #6: Joseph Received Sealing Powers in 1829

It is disappointing to see Snuffer resort to an ancient anti-Mormon canard regarding D&C 84 (30). Church critics have long claimed<sup>19</sup> that Joseph Smith’s theophany cannot have occurred because priesthood is required to permit mortals to tolerate the divine presence:

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18 Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question,” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 163; citing Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets—An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1976), 35

19 The source for many seems to be Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 149–150. A more recent repetition can be found in Richard Abanes, *Becoming Gods: A Closer Look at 21st-Century Mormonism* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2005),

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live (D&C 84:19–22).

Snuffer, like the Tanners before him, misreads the scripture, declaring that “Joseph Smith... necessarily holds this higher priesthood. For without it, no man can see the Father and live. Since Joseph beheld the Father in the First Vision, it was necessary for him to have this higher priesthood even before the appearance of the angels who later conferred priesthood upon Joseph” (30, citations removed). But this is not what the scripture says.

“Without *this*,” it reads, “no man can see the face of God.” To what does *this* refer? Its antecedent is clearly “the power of godliness”—thus, without ordinances and the priesthood authority necessary to perform them—“the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh.” And, without the power of godliness, one cannot abide the presence of God.<sup>20</sup>

In most circumstances, the manifestation of that power would follow the receipt of and obedience to the ordinances, which require the priesthood. But God can by grace clearly grant the power of godliness to one who has been unable to receive the ordinances due to the absence of an authorized administrator.

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20 This reading is also followed by, among others, H. Dean Garrett and Stephen R. Robinson, *Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3 (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2004), entry for 84:20.

To solve the problem that he believes he has discovered, Snuffer follows Orson Pratt in declaring that Joseph held priesthood already from a pre-mortal ordination (30, 295). But this claim will not salvage other aspects of *PTHG*'s theory. Joseph Smith taught that "at the general & grand Council of heaven, all those to whom a dispensation was to be committed, were set apart & ordained at that time, to that calling. The Twelve also as witnesses were ordained."<sup>21</sup> Thus, if *PTHG* wishes to appeal to a pre-mortal conferral of priesthood for Joseph to meet his lack of mortal ordination, the Twelve could likewise appeal to pre-mortal ordination even if they did not receive it from Joseph in mortality.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Date of Plural Marriage Revelation(s) and Implementation*

*PTHG* claims that "beginning in 1831, Joseph obeyed the" command "concerning plural wives" (326). Here again, his grasp of the relevant history is lacking. There is no evidence that Joseph practiced plural marriage in 1831.

The first documented plural marriage was to Fanny Alger, whose marriage to Joseph has been dated by historians between 1832 and 1836.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Snuffer is not cautious enough in his use of the term "sealing" (e.g., 92, 326).

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21 Samuel W. Richards record, discourse of 12 May 1844; cited in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1980), 371, italics added. (This work cited as *WJS* hereafter.)

22 Orson Pratt taught that Joseph had a pre-mortal ordination to priesthood which allowed him to survive the First Vision ("The Divine Authority of the Holy Priesthood, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 22:29–30 [10 October 1880]). (*Journal of Discourses* hereafter cited as *JD*.) I think Pratt makes the same error in reading that Snuffer and the Tanners make. If, however, Pratt et al. are correct and I am mistaken, then by Joseph's statement, the Twelve were likewise ordained in the pre-mortal worlds (see note 21 herein)—a claim about which Pratt agrees in any case (*JD* 22:28). Neither scenario helps Snuffer's theory.

23 George D. Smith has suggested as early as 1832, Todd Compton argues for the date range of "early 1833," and Brian Hales inclines to "some point prior to 1837." [George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "...but we called it celestial marriage"* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2008), 38; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah:

During the Nauvoo period, *sealing* could involve the sealing of spouses. (The earliest references to marriages lasting beyond death are found in W. W. Phelps' 1835 letters to his wife.<sup>24</sup>) However, during the Ohio period, Joseph and others would be spoken of in the revelations as "seal[ing]... up unto eternal life" (D&C 68:12).<sup>25</sup> This usage of terminology may be compared to the Book of Mormon, which often speaks of "sealing up" for protection or security (e.g., title page, 1 Nephi 14:26; 2 Nephi 26:17, 27:8, 22; 30:3; Ether 3:22–28, 4:5, 5:1; Moroni 10:2). One sees the same usage in Snuffer's often-cited D&C 124, where Hyrum Smith is said "to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of promise, whereby ye are sealed up unto the day of redemption" (D&C 124:124). This blessing was given on 19 January 1841, i.e., prior to Hyrum's knowledge of or acceptance of plural marriage. However, despite D&C 124, Hyrum was severely rebuked by Joseph for performing an unauthorized *marriage sealing* in June 1843, since "there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred" (D&C 132:7).<sup>26</sup> Wilford Woodruff likewise sealed others up to eternal life in Joseph's lifetime, but he had not received the sealing power involved in the higher ordinances.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the two uses of "sealing" must not be confused if one is to understand Joseph Smith's thought.

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Signature Books, 1997), 4. Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 85.] Hales reviews all dating theories on pages 99–106.

24 W. W. Phelps Phelps to Sally Phelps, letter, 18 May 1835, 2–3. Phelps would mention the idea publicly about a month later: W. W. Phelps, "Letter No. 8," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1/9 (June 1835): 130.

25 See discussion in Hales, 1:119, 3:85–86.

26 See discussion in Ehat thesis, 66–70. See also Hales, 1:619–623.

27 Woodruff sealed William Clayton up to eternal life on 21 January 1840: "Thou art one of those who will stand upon the mount Zion with the 144,000.... and I seal thee up with eternal life...." [George D. Smith (editor), *An Intimate Chronicle; The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 8; see also James B.



Furthermore, Snuffer uses remarks made by Brigham Young in 1872 as the basis for his claim that Joseph received the plural marriage revelation found in D&C 132 in 1829. *PTHG* declares that this “makes the conclusion inescapable that the original revelation... was provoked during and because of the translation of the Book of Mormon, and not the work done revising the Bible” (80). This is not a sophisticated approach to the issue. Many LDS historians have considered the matter, and most have concluded that there is other evidence that argues against Brigham being correct.<sup>28</sup> It is ironic that Snuffer will reject Brigham Young’s account of his personal reception of priesthood keys from Joseph as a later elaboration or confabulation,<sup>29</sup> but insist that Brigham’s late remarks about an event that occurred before he was even a member of the Church leads to an “inescapable” conclusion. The only conclusion we are forced to accept is that Snuffer is not doing serious history, and that he employs double standards in his evaluation of evidence depending upon whether it can be shoe-horned into his thesis.

The date of the marriage sealing power’s receipt is important to Snuffer’s broader argument because “I do not believe that Elijah’s [3 April 1836] appearance conferred sealing power on Joseph Smith. Instead, I believe it came to Joseph just as it came to Melchizedek.... It is delivered by the calling of God’s own voice” (327). As we will now see, for Joseph to receive authority from God alone, without an ordaining intermediary, is vital to Snuffer’s project of disputing whether transmitted priesthood authority is needed to perform ordinances.

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Allen, *Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 29].

28 Snuffer is aware of these views (79) but does not engage them or even discuss their evidence. See Hales, 2:68–70 and references therein.

29 See Snuffer, 87–91, and discussion at notes 2–6 herein.

*Elijah and the Sealing Keys*

PTHG works tirelessly (326–327) to disprove the idea that Joseph received sealing keys in the Kirtland temple in 1836:

All the contemporaneous records kept by any party fail to record any mention by Joseph Smith of the Kirtland Temple visitation from Moses, Elias and Elijah. It was never taught by Joseph Smith, never mentioned in any sermon delivered by him, and was never mentioned in anything Joseph ever wrote (75).

This is excellent lawyering, since it is mostly true in a narrow, technical sense, but it hides several important points. One wonders, first of all, what a Snuffer-esque author in the first century would have written about Jesus' encounter on the Mount of Transfiguration with the same individuals. Jesus wrote nothing about it, and said nothing about it to anyone afterward either. He likewise ordered the other witnesses present not to say anything (Matthew 17:9; Mark 9:9–10). Only when Jesus was gone did the apostles “conveniently recall” (our Snuffer clone might argue) this theophany and have it written down decades later.

Second, as Dan Vogel pointed out, there are two contemporaneous documents penned just after the Kirtland temple dedication which invoke the Elijah theophany.<sup>30</sup> The first was written by a hostile source a week following the appearance of the Savior and those who bestowed keys:

They [the Mormons] have lately had what they term a solemn assembly. This was at the completion of the lower story of the Temple which is finished in a very singular order having four Pulpits on each

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30 Vogel demonstrated his expertise in early Mormon sources in a Facebook thread: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/themormonhub/permalink/580554425314552/> (14 October 2013). I'm grateful for Cassandra Hedelius bringing it to my attention, and for Vogel's industry regarding primary sources.

end of the House and curtains between each. Also, curtains dividing the house in the center. They have had wonderful manifestations there of late behind the curtains. This was in the night. Their meeting held for several nights in succession. None but the Prophets and Elders were admitted. The number of Prophets now amounts to twelve. Some can see angels and others cannot. They report that the Savior appeared personally with angels and endowed the Elders with powers to work Miracles.<sup>31</sup>

The second more explicit account comes from a member, W. W. Phelps, who wrote his wife:

On Sunday, April 3, the twelve held meeting and administered the sacrament. It was a glorious time. The curtains were dropt in the afternoon. And There was a manifestation of the Lord to Br Joseph and Oliver, [by?] which they [learned?] thus the great & terrible day of the Lord as mentioned by Malachi, was near, even at the doors.<sup>32</sup>

Malachi 4:5 promised the coming of Elijah, and the Joseph Smith journal account would record that Elijah declared Malachi's promise to be fulfilled (D&C 110:14), and said "the

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31 Lucius Pomeroy Parsons to Pamela Parsons, 10 April 1836, Family and Church History Department Archives, cited in Steven C. Harper, "Oliver Cowdery and the Kirtland Temple Experience," in *Oliver Cowdery: Scribe, Elder, Witness*, edited by John W. Welch and Larry E. Morris (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship), 263–264. Vogel cites Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH, as quoted in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816–1844* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 422.

32 William W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, 1–6 April 1836, William Wines Phelps Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, quoted in John W. Welch, *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (Provo, UT: BYU Press; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 349.

great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (D&C 110:16). When Snuffer claims there are no contemporary sources, he is wrong.

Thirdly, why would Joseph and Oliver have spoken about the event frequently, since the full temple ordinances for which the keys were necessary were not given to anyone until much later? A review of the Nauvoo-era discourses shows Joseph preparing the Saints for these ideas and lamenting their reluctance to accept anything new.<sup>33</sup> Extensive public teaching about such things would make little sense until the Saints were ready to participate in the ordinances. One wonders if even Joseph understood their full import initially.<sup>34</sup>

Fourthly, Joseph “wrote” very little, so his failure to write about Elijah is unremarkable. He would often dictate material, but seldom took up the pen himself. The account that we have of Elijah’s appearance is found in Joseph Smith’s journal, in the handwriting of Warren A. Cowdery. And so, Snuffer must dispense with that evidence: “So far as any preserved record exists, from April 1836, until their respective deaths in 1844 and 1849, neither Joseph nor Oliver ever mentioned this event to anyone. Only Warren Cowdery’s third person handwritten account mentions it” (75).

This borders on the absurd. Warren Cowdery was Joseph’s scribe, and made an entry in Joseph’s personal journal (the vast majority of which was always written by scribes, not Joseph himself). Where does Snuffer think the account came from, if not from Joseph or Oliver? And, why would he presume anyone but Joseph was the source, since it was placed in Joseph’s

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33 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1938), 91 (*TPJS* hereafter). See *WWJ*, 2:342 (21 January 1844).

34 See Hales, 3:86–89.

journal? Clearly, either Joseph and/or Oliver mentioned it to someone, and did so quite early on.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, we can narrow the time frame considerably—it need not stretch to 1844 or 1848 as Snuffer argues: “Warren Cowdery, who inserted the account of the vision in the... journal, could have written it at any time” (76). Technically true, but still misleading. An initial upper bound can be placed on its composition, since Willard Richards made a first person copy in 1843, which he inserted into the *Manuscript History of the Church*.<sup>36</sup> This demonstrates that the text existed by then, and that Richards (who by that date had received the Nauvoo temple ordinances from Joseph) likely understood the vision’s significance. Yet he did not speak or preach about it publicly either. Richards was preparing the *Manuscript History* under Joseph’s direction, and had reached 5 August 1838 before Joseph’s martyrdom.<sup>37</sup> Given that Joseph accorded a high priority to the history, and would periodically review it, Snuffer’s confidence that Joseph communicated nothing at all before his death about the vision seems misplaced (324). His claim that the vision was “unknown in the 1830’s and 40’s” is also shown to be false (77).

We can tighten the timeline further by noting that Warren Cowdery arrived in Kirtland 25 February 1836,<sup>38</sup> was writing editorials hostile to Joseph Smith by July 1837, and in 1838 would leave the Church never to return.<sup>39</sup> Unless Snuffer would

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35 The other option is that the event did not happen at all—but Snuffer does not accept that hypothesis: he insists that the visitation of Elijah was real, as we will see shortly.

36 Trever R. Anderson, “Doctrine and Covenants Section 110: From Vision to Canonization,” (Master’s thesis, Department of Religious Education, Brigham Young University, 2010), 76. See also Hales, 3:88 n. 6.

37 Anderson, 7–8.

38 Anderson, 5.

39 See W.A. Cowdery, [“Editorial”], *Messenger and Advocate* 3/10 (July 1837): 534–541. Compare with the more friendly article in *Messenger and Advocate* 3/8 (May 1837): 505–510.

have us believe that Cowdery somehow had access to Joseph's journals after his estrangement, and moreover that he would make an entry about a spectacular manifestation when he was at odds with the Prophet, we have a narrow window between April 1836 and July 1837 during which the text was written.

*PTHG* later uses the fact that Warren wrote a March 1837 article about the Savior's Mount of Transfiguration vision of Elias, Elijah, and Moses to argue "if Joseph and Oliver failed to mention the appearances of Moses and Elijah, the scribe who wrote the event displayed an interest in the subject" (77). But if Warren knew nothing in March 1837 (as opposed to simply having no permission to mention the event) this does not help Snuffer's case—it would narrow the writing of the vision to between March and July 1837. Warren's article may, on the other hand, have been stimulated by what he had already written for Joseph, but was to keep private.

*PTHG*'s account is also misleading when it claims that the Warren Cowdery account "was finally discovered and published in the *Deseret News* on November 6, 1852" (77). Willard Richards had placed the vision in the *Manuscript History* in 1843, and the serial publication of that history began on 15 November 1851.<sup>40</sup> The 1836 Elijah vision was not suddenly "discovered" and then published; it appeared nearly a year later when the on-going newspaper account had reached the events of 3 April 1836.<sup>41</sup>

Though he cites the Joseph Smith Papers project, Snuffer does not inform his audience of the editors' conclusions that hurt his thesis. For instance, the editors point out that "this account of visitations closes the journal. After more than six months of *almost daily* recording of developments in Kirtland,

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40 Anderson, 9.

41 Anderson, 9. British Saints would have the same material published from 5–12 November 1853.

entries ceased.”<sup>42</sup> This might push the record back to within days of the event. Furthermore, Snuffer claims again that “we [do not] know what source told Warren... about the event,” and notes simply that “it is written in the third person” (76). He does not tell his readers that the editors indicate that as Warren worked on Joseph’s history, he “also produced third-person accounts. In that endeavor, he had before him a first-person text (the earlier entries of [the] journal), which he changed to third person as he copied them into the history.... For this material, he must have relied on another original text—no longer extant—or on oral reports from either or both of the participants.”<sup>43</sup> It is thus unsurprising that Warren wrote as he did, and he likely did so on the basis of a first person account fairly soon after the event.<sup>44</sup>

Snuffer also claims that the language of D&C 110 proves that “rather than ordaining or conferring something, Elijah made a statement about what Joseph had previously received.... [T]he ‘keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands’ is a statement about what was already there. The sealing authority had been given to Joseph earlier” (92). This is quite a stretch—Moses and Elias had just appeared and “committed” their keys; why ought we to assume Elijah is simply there to point out what has happened years ago? Elijah speaks in the

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42 Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen (editors), *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of The Joseph Smith Papers, ed., Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 223, emphasis added.

43 Jesse, et al., *Journals*, 217.

44 Anderson likewise argues that the vision was written on “the day it occurred or soon after” (4, see also 15). Anderson’s research, like the Joseph Smith papers, is also cited by *PTHG* (75 n. 83), but Snuffer does not include these details for his readers, perhaps because they weaken his efforts to downplay the vision’s importance to Joseph’s thinking by claiming that we don’t know what role Joseph had in creating Warren Cowdery’s account of it. Given that the account was written into Joseph’s journal and then included in the *Manuscript History* while Joseph was alive, these claims are dubious.

present tense, not the past. He does not say, “The keys have been committed,” he says they *are* committed—and Elijah then said that his prophesied coming was foretold and is now fulfilled. And Moroni had long ago told Joseph Smith Elijah would have a role in restoring priesthood: “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah” (Joseph Smith History 1:38).

One does not often see such tortured efforts to dispense with data fatal to one’s thesis.

*Joseph’s Nauvoo Era Teachings About Elijah*

Joseph Smith likewise would not have agreed with *PTHG*’s claim that Elijah only appeared to announce that all keys had already been returned. On 5 October 1840, the Prophet taught:

Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of this priesthood, and who will, before the last dispensation, restore the authority and delive[r] the Keys of this priesthood in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness....

And I will send Elijah the Prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord &c &c.

Why send Elijah[?] [B]ecause he holds the Keys of the Authority to administer in all the ordinances of the priesthood and without the authority is given the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness.<sup>45</sup>

Joseph here explicitly rebuts two of Snuffer’s fundamental assertions by teaching that: (1) one must be authorized to perform the ordinances (see Claim #1); and (2) Elijah was

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45 Robert B. Thompson, original manuscript, discourse of 5 October 1840; cited in *WJS*, 43. See also *TPJS*, 172.



sent because he holds keys necessary “to administer in all the ordinances of the priesthood,” and not simply to announce that everything had already happened.

Later, in the *Times and Seasons* of 15 October 1841, Joseph would discuss the concept that “the dispensation of the fulness of times will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations, also other things that have not been before revealed. He shall send Elijah the prophet &c., and restore all things in Christ.”<sup>46</sup>

Joseph thus speaks twice of Elijah’s mission in the future tense even after April 1836. If this is not a mere rhetorical act (i.e., speaking for effect as if in the time of Malachi, looking forward to Elijah’s return) then it may undermine Snuffer’s claims even further. As Ehat and Cook noted,

Apparently in [Joseph’s] mind it was not sufficient that he alone had these keys and this power, but he intended by way of ordinances to confer a portion of this power on others who were faithful, thereby actually bringing about the restoration of all things.... It was not enough to Joseph Smith to be a king and a priest unto the Most High, but he insisted that his people be a society of priests “as in Paul’s day, as in Enoch’s day” through the ordinances of the temple (see 30 March 1842 discourse). Throughout the remainder of his Nauvoo experience, Joseph Smith taught and emphasized the importance of the temple ordinances, ordinances that would bestow upon members of the Church the knowledge and power he foreshadows in this discourse.<sup>47</sup>

This view is confirmed by an address given over three years later. Joseph declared, “The keys are to be delivered, the spirit

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46 *Times and Seasons* 2/24 (15 October 1841): 577–78, citing a speech of 3 October 1841; also in WJS, 76–79.

47 WJS, 54–55 n. 22.

of Elijah is to come, the gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up on Mount Zion.<sup>48</sup> We again note the future tense, which may be rhetorical, but seems here to also anticipate a culmination that was in the future. “But how are they to become Saviors on Mount Zion?” asks Joseph. He replies:

By building their temples erecting their Baptismal fonts & going forth & receiving all the ordinances, Baptisms, confirmations, washings anointings ordinations & sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all our Progenitors who are dead & redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection & be exalted to thrones of glory with us, & herein is the Chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the Children, & the Children to the Fathers which fulfills the mission of Elijah.<sup>49</sup>

The ordinances seem vital, Elijah’s keys seem vital, sealing powers are bestowed by mortal ordination, and there is no hint that the Saints are in danger of losing them (claim #9). In fact, as we will now see, it would be absurd for Joseph to act as if these things were in danger of being lost, since he had conferred these ordinances upon the Twelve and others already.

### **Claim #7: Necessary Authority Could Only Be Transmitted in a Completed Temple**

*PTHG* claims that D&C 124:28 proves that “by 1841, the fullness of the priesthood had been suspended or ‘lost’ from Joseph Smith. He was no longer authorized to use that fullness on behalf of the church. The details of how it was taken have not been preserved” (97–98).

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48 *WWJ*, 2:341 (discourse of 21 January 1844); cited in *WJS*, 317–319. I have here modernized the spelling, and added punctuation for ease of reading.

49 *WWJ*, 2:341–342 (21 January 1844).

Perhaps there is no record of the details because Snuffer is in error. When the verse is read in context, such suspicions seem well-founded:

Build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood. For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead (D&C 124:27–29).

Snuffer often complains about LDS historians starting with a conclusion and “reasoning backward” (97, 99, 319, 321). He gives us a specimen of that approach here. The scripture says that something has been lost and taken away—but the text then immediately says that this includes the ability to do baptisms for the dead.<sup>50</sup> But Joseph and the Saints had never done baptisms for the dead prior to August 1840, or had the privilege of doing them.<sup>51</sup> Clearly, when God says something has been lost unto you and taken away, he does not mean taken away *from the Church*, but rather that the doctrines and powers associated with vicarious work for the dead were lost to mortals during the Christian apostasy. God deigns to restore these, but they can only happen in a temple, “For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me, only in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me” (D&C 124:30). Meanwhile, *for now* “your baptisms shall be

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50 Note that Snuffer ends the citation before the line about baptism for the dead on 101–102, and it is also absent from his gloss on 97–98. Necessary context has been omitted, since the citation on p. 102 ends with verse 28, and then resumes with verse 31 on p. 104—the lines that make it most clear that baptism for the dead is the “lost” matter are here absent from Snuffer’s discussion.

51 H. David Burton, “Baptism for the Dead: LDS Practice,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., edited by Daniel H. Ludlow, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 1:95.

acceptable unto me” (D&C 124:31)—a clear sign that the Saints are not being deprived of a previous blessing or power. They are, instead, called to build a temple so that this work and the other ordinances associated with it can be restored and continue.<sup>52</sup>

“If a red brick store is an adequate substitute for a temple,” Snuffer archly observes, “then there must have been plenty of places that could be found for the Lord to come and restore again the fullness” (335). Yet, Joseph Smith specifically told the apostles and others<sup>53</sup> that the Lord had commanded him to administer the ordinances and all the keys: “He told us that the object he had was for us to go to work and fit up that room preparatory to giving endowments to a few Elders that he might give unto them *all the keys of power* pertaining to the Aaronic and Melchisedec Priesthoods,” wrote one participant.<sup>54</sup> After Joseph dedicated the upper room for this purpose,<sup>55</sup> “Joseph washed and anointed [us] as Kings and Priests to God, and over the House of Israel... [because] he was commanded of God, [to do so]... and [thereby] conferred on us Patriarchal Priesthood.”<sup>56</sup> Joseph told the Relief Society six days earlier, “the

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52 Baptisms were discontinued at the conference held between 2–5 October 1841 [Discourse of 3 October 1841, reported in *Times and Seasons* 2/24 (15 October 1841): 577–578; cited in WJS, 76–79]. The temple font was dedicated on 8 November 1841, and baptisms for the dead resumed there on 21 November [Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1922), 256–257]. See note 79 for a contemporary reading which accords with this view.

53 Ehat thesis, 272 n. 291 cites as examples: Joseph Smith, Jr, *Manuscript History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (*Documentary History*). 7 vols. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1978, 4: 608 (hereafter cited as *Manuscript History of the Church*.); Mills, “De Tal Palo Tal Astilla,” 120–21; WJS, 116; Bathsheba W. Smith, “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” 245; Lucius N. Scovil, letter to *Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, 15 February 1884; Justus Morse, affidavit, in Shook, *True Origins of Mormon Polygamy*, 170.

54 Lucius N. Scovil letter to Editor in “Higher Ordinances,” *Deseret News Semi-Weekly* (15 February 1884): 2; cited by Ehat thesis, 26, italics added.

55 Ehat thesis, 27.

56 George Miller to James J. Strang, 26 June 1855, from H. W. Mills, “De Tal Palo Tal Astilla,” *Annual Publications—Historical Society of Southern California*

keys of the kingdom are about to be given.”<sup>57</sup> Three days later, he preached on the “keys of the kingdom,” saying that there are “certain signs and words by which false spirits and personages may be detected from true, which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed.”<sup>58</sup> Brigham Young reported succinctly once all the higher ordinances were given: “Brother Joseph said he had given us all that could be given to man on the earth.”<sup>59</sup>

(This is a far cry from *PTHG*’s dismissive claim that “Joseph instituted a form of temple endowment in May, 1842” (266). According to Joseph, he instituted *all* the ordinances, and he did so at God’s command.<sup>60</sup>)

Willard Richards, keeper of Joseph’s journal and among the first nine to be endowed on 4 May 1842, would note that Joseph was “instructing them in the principles and order of the priesthood, attending to washings it [sic] anointings, & endowments, and the communications of keys, pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchisedec Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of days & all those plans & principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fulness of those blessings which has been prepared for the church of the firstborn, and come up into and abide in the presence of God.”<sup>61</sup> Observed Ehat:

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10 (Los Angeles: McBride Printing Company, 1917): 120–121; cited in Ehat thesis, 28.

57 Nauvoo Relief Society minutes, discourse of 28 April 1842, cited in *WJS*, 116–117. See Ehat thesis, 31.

58 *Manuscript History of the Church*, discourse of 1 May 1842, cited in *WJS*, 119–120. See Ehat thesis, 35.

59 Heber C. Kimball, journal, 26 December 1845; cited by Ehat thesis, 80.

60 See note 97 herein.

61 Draft sheet of the “*Manuscript History of the Church*,” in the hand of Willard Richards, 4 May 1842, Historian’s Office Church Records Group, Church Archives; cited in Ehat thesis, 29.

Though this priesthood order did not confer the fullness of the priesthood, it “pertained to the highest order” in that it presented all the “plans and principles” that would “enable” anyone “to secure” in this life or before the resurrection the fullness of the priesthood.<sup>62</sup>

Almost a year later, at subsequent meetings, the same participants were sealed in eternal marriage.<sup>63</sup> Joseph would then teach publicly:

If a man gets the fullness of God he has to get [it] in the same way that Jesus Christ obtain[ed] it & that was by keeping all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.... [I]t was one reason why Jesus said how oft would I have gatherd you (the Jews) together that they might attend to the ordinance of the baptism for the dead as well as the other ordinances the Priesthood Revelations &c.<sup>64</sup>

Ehat observed:

When Joseph spoke of “all the ordinances of the house of the Lord,” the “fulness of the Priesthood” and “revelations as God gives in the most holy place in his temple” regarding becoming gods in eternity, he had in mind the highest ordinance of the temple—the only ordinance he had not as yet introduced. It was the capstone of ordinances essential to full salvation. To the members of the Quorum—still only the original nine members—this seems to have been clear. On 6 August 1843, Brigham Young in public discourse said, “If any in the church [have] the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood [I do] not know it. For any person to have the fullness of that priesthood, he must be a king and

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62 Ehat thesis, 30.

63 Ehat thesis, 60–63.

64 *WWJ*, 2:230–231 (11 June 1843); cited in *WJS*, 213. See Ehat thesis, 77–78.

priest.” Brigham had in 1842 with the eight others of the Quorum received an anointing promising him he would, if faithful, eventually receive another anointing actually ordaining him a king and priest.<sup>65</sup>

The highest ordinances were first introduced on 28 September 1843:

These ordinances, depending on the person’s ecclesiastical position, made the recipient a “king and priest,” “in,” “in and over,” or (as only in Joseph Smith’s case) “over” the Church. Moreover, the recipient had sealed upon him the power to bind and loose on earth as Joseph explained in his definition of the fullness of the priesthood.<sup>66</sup>

And on 22 November 1843, Brigham Young became the first of the Twelve to “receive the fullness of the priesthood” with his wife, Mary Ann.<sup>67</sup> Joseph then instructed Brigham to perform the same rite for the other apostles.<sup>68</sup>

Snuffer also ignores the fact that the Saints continued to maintain that a temple *was* necessary for the fullness of priesthood practice—and not only because the rank-and-file of the Church were to be endowed and receive the other higher ordinances there. The proxy work of endowments and sealings for the dead (as opposed to proxy baptisms)—which Joseph insisted formed part of the fullness—could not be performed outside of a temple, and never was.<sup>69</sup> Joseph taught, however,

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65 Ehat thesis, 79–80. Citation for Brigham’s discourse is *WWJ*, 2:271 (6 August 1843).

66 Ehat thesis, 95.

67 Ehat thesis, 121–122.

68 Ehat thesis, 145–148. See also 122, citing George A. Smith discourse, *Millennial Star* 37 (2 February 1875): 66, reporting 25 December 1874 discourse.

69 See Richard E. Bennett, “Which Is the Wisest Course?: The Transformation of Mormon Temple Consciousness, 1870–1898,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 52/2 (2013): 5–43, especially 19–23.

that all the ordinances for the living and all keys and powers which he had been given could be and were bestowed on the apostles (see claims #4 and #5). In part, *PTHG* simply has too narrow a definition of the “the fullness,” and refuses to accept Joseph Smith’s statements about the legitimacy of what he did in the maligned upper room of the red brick store, and why he did it. Snuffer’s views are made to trump even Joseph’s, mostly by ignoring the relevant historical evidence.

#### **Claim #8: The Saints Sinned in Missouri and Joseph Offered His Life to Give Them Another Chance**

Snuffer discusses the difficulties in Missouri between the Saints and their neighbors, declaring, “Our pride wants us to be the innocent victims of unrighteous and wicked outsiders. But the events are not so one-sided” (98). Snuffer may know some who wish to see it that way, but he cannot charge such views to the Church. B. H. Roberts’ introduction to the official *Manuscript History of the Church* contains a lengthy discussion of the various causes of the difficulties in Missouri, and among these he cites “the unwisdom of the Saints.”<sup>70</sup> Roberts dates the Saints’ errors to at least November 1831,<sup>71</sup> and says that

it is very clear that the reason why the Saints were prevailed against by their enemies and driven from the center place of Zion, was because of their failure to live up to the high requirements made of them by the Lord. In subsequent efforts to redeem Zion, by attempting to return the exiles to Jackson county, the Saints in all parts of the land again failed to respond with sufficient promptness and fulness to the requirements of the Lord.<sup>72</sup>

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70 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xxxii.

71 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xxiii.

72 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xxxix.



Roberts goes on to describe the events of 1838—including Sidney Rigdon’s “salt sermon”—as “untimely, extreme, and unwise.”<sup>73</sup> Snuffer caricatures the views of generations of Latter-day Saints about these events, even in the official history. But he also ignores the clear implication of D&C 123—that the majority of Saints were more sinned against than sinners.

At any rate, Snuffer claims that because of the Saints’ sins in Missouri, Joseph “apparently offered his life in exchange for another chance. The Lord accepted both his acknowledgement [of sin] and his offer” (100–101). A look at the footnote reveals that this claim is not as sturdy as the main text would lead us to believe: “What was offered is not explained either in the revelation or by Joseph Smith” (101 n. 120). But, despite this lack of evidence, Snuffer declares that “subsequent events... make it clear what Joseph offered for this additional chance to complete the restoration and have the saints receive the fullness of the priesthood. He offered, and ultimately forfeited, his life” (101 n. 120).

This is a strange claim. *PTHG* admits that there is no evidence in the revelations or in Joseph Smith’s statements—and, as we have seen, Snuffer is exceedingly resourceful in finding dubious textual “evidence” to defend his theories. He claims that “subsequent events” make this reading obvious, but he does not cite any of this data, or demonstrate how it proves his case. He merely asserts it in a footnote. If Joseph made such an offer, why do none of his sermons in Nauvoo describe it? Why does he not explain these matters to the Saints so they understand the stakes? The text itself says merely:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, I am well pleased with your offering and acknowledgments, which you have made; for unto this end have I raised you up, that I might show forth my

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73 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xliv.

wisdom through the weak things of the earth. Your prayers are acceptable before me; and in answer to them I say unto you, that you are now called immediately to make a solemn proclamation of my gospel (D&C 124:1–2).

The answer to Joseph's offering and prayers is that he is to proclaim the gospel. The solemn proclamation calls for the gentiles to bring financial aid and religious observance to Zion. There were many other offerings and acknowledgements made by Joseph besides Snuffer's dubious claim about him offering his life for the Saints' sins—Joseph's letters from Liberty Jail, for example, instruct the Saints that they must set out the names of those who persecuted them, together with the costs (D&C 123:1–16). This is “a duty which we owe to God,” and the Saints ought to “waste and wear out [their] lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness” (v. 7, 13). When they have done “all things that lie in [their] power,” *then* they may “stand still...to see the salvation of God” (v. 17). It is at least as likely that these efforts have been accepted, so Joseph may now call on the world to either help them or suffer God's intervention. This off-the-cuff reading is at least as likely as *PTHG*'s, with more textual evidence.

Such speculation and tale spinning is great sport, but it simply isn't history.

#### **Claim #9: The Nauvoo Temple Was Not Built With Enough Speed; the Saints' Suffering Is Evidence of Punishment**

*PTHG* tells us that “the revelation [D&C 124] required the construction of the Nauvoo Temple.... There was a set time. If at the end of that time the temple was not constructed, the words are clear ‘ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God’” (104).

*PTHG* does not tell us that the First Presidency had already urged the Saints to build a temple in August 1840, and the

Saints had sustained this plan at an October 1840 conference.<sup>74</sup> The *Times and Seasons* announced temple construction had begun on 15 January 1841, four days *prior to the revelation*, which suggests the Saints were not particularly slack regarding the temple:

The Temple of the Lord is in process of erection here, where the Saints will come to worship the God of their fathers, according to the order of His house and the powers of the Holy Priesthood, and will be so constructed as to enable all the functions of the Priesthood to be duly exercised, and where instructions from the Most High will be received, and from this place go forth to distant lands.<sup>75</sup>

“In Nauvoo at the time of Joseph’s death,” Snuffer observes, “there were completed homes built, a Masonic Temple, and manufacturing and retail facilities, but the Nauvoo Temple had been neglected. It was nowhere near completed when Joseph and Hyrum died” (105).

It is certainly true that homes and commercial buildings had been built. Snuffer’s claim that the temple was “neglected” must be established from the evidence, not merely asserted because his theory demands it. The temple required much more labor to complete than homes or businesses. Furthermore, commercial structures were also necessary in order to provide the economic muscle to supply labor and materials for the temple, which could not be built in a void. Does Snuffer believe

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74 Lisle G. Brown, “The Sacred Departments for Temple Work in Nauvoo: The Assembly Room and the Council Chamber,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 19/3 (1979): 361.

75 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 4:269; citing Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, “A Proclamation of the First Presidency of the Church to the Saints Scattered Abroad, Greeting,” Nauvoo, [Illinois], 15 January 1841. It was also discussed by Joseph in a report in *Times and Seasons* 1/12 (October 1840):

the Saints were to have no homes until the temple was built? Joseph Smith evidently did not think so—the Heber C. Kimball family was living in a 14- by 16-foot log house about a mile from the Mississippi river, but in the summer of 1841, Joseph urged a move. Heber’s daughter recorded that “the prophet Joseph being anxious to have my father nearer to himself and his brethren our place was exchanged for one on the flat where father built us a more commodious house.”<sup>76</sup> The Prophet’s behavior is simply inconsistent with Snuffer’s theory that the temple was being neglected, or that improvements in housing were inappropriate with the Lord’s timetable. If Snuffer’s views were correct, Joseph would have surely urged one of his most obedient followers to dedicate still more labor to the temple, rather than a new home.

Absent from Snuffer’s entire discussion is the Nauvoo House, a hotel whose construction was commanded in the same revelation (D&C 124:22–24). The Saints were not, then, to focus on the temple to the exclusion of all else, and it would have been economically impossible to do so anyway.

#### *Joseph’s Discourses in the Relevant Period*

If Snuffer is correct, there ought to be evidence in the historical record—Joseph spoke often and frequently of the Nauvoo temple and its construction. Does Snuffer expect us to believe that God would allow his people to fail without first requiring the prophet to repeatedly warn them? Let us look at some of the historical evidence which *PTHG* does not provide.

#### *24 April 1842*

Joseph “pronounced a curse on the Merchants and the rich, who would not assist in building” the temple.<sup>77</sup> But he gives no warning that the Saints are in danger of losing their privileges

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76 Stanley B. Kimball, “Heber C. Kimball and Family, The Nauvoo Years,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 15/4 (1975): 454.

77 *Manuscript History of the Church*, discourse of 24 April 1842; cited in WJS, 114.

simply because a few wealthy folk are not helping. God does not punish the many for the inaction of a few. The day prior to Joseph's speech, Nauvoo's *Wasp* newspaper (operated by Joseph's brother) would note, "We passed by the Temple, and was delighted at the prospect that here presented itself. A scene of lively industry and animation was there. The sound of the polisher's chisel—converting the rude stone of the quarry into an artful shape—sent forth its busy hum: all were busily employed—the work was fast progressing."<sup>78</sup> Yet Snuffer claims that scant days later, "by May, 1842 Joseph could see the temple would never be completed in the time allowed" (285). Evidence that we will see below is not consistent with this hypothesis.

### *1 September 1842*

A revelation states:

Let the work of my temple, and all the works which I have appointed unto you, be continued on and not cease; and let your diligence, and your perseverance, and patience, and your works be redoubled, and you shall in nowise lose your reward, saith the Lord of Hosts. And if they persecute you, so persecuted they the prophets and righteous men that were before you. For all this there is a reward in heaven (D&C 127:4).

The audience is encouraged to continue, but no warning or chastisement is forthcoming. (Note that the transitive verb "redouble" does not mean to "double," but means "to repeat in return... to repeat often.... To increase by repeated or continued additions," such as in repeated blows.)<sup>79</sup> Less than a week later, Joseph Smith sent a letter:

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78 *The Wasp* (23 April 1842); cited in Don F. Colvin, *Nauvoo Temple: A Story of Faith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; printed by Covenant Communications, 2002), 22.

79 Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English language* (1828), q.v. "redouble."

6 September 1842

Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance (D&C 128:24).

Again, there is encouragement but no sign of condemnation. But in Snuffer's telling, Joseph had already decided that failure was inevitable (285).

29 October 1842

About 10 {in the forenoon I rode up and viewed the Temple. I expressed my satisfaction at the arrangements, and was pleased with the progress made in that sacred edifice}.<sup>80</sup>

Joseph here praises the Saints' progress and efforts.

15 November 1842

The *Times and Seasons* reported the enthusiastic response to the arrival of timber from Wisconsin for the temple. The temple committee made assignments by ward, and "requested all the carpenters to come together on the Thursday to prepare the timbers." The response exceeded their expectations:

We had a cheering assemblage of wagons, horses, oxen and men who began with zeal and gladness to pull the raft to pieces and haul it up to the Temple. This scenery has continued to the present date and the expectations of the committee more than realized.

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80 *Manuscript History of the Church* (material in braces from "Book of the Law of the Lord"), discourse of 29 October 1842; cited in *WJS*, 132.

On Thursday we had a large assemblage of carpenters, joiners &c. who succeeded in preparing the lumber and laying the joists preparatory to laying the temporary floor and fixing seats &c....

Whilst watching for a few moments the zeal and cheerful labors of the brethren to accomplish this thing we could not avoid feeling grateful to the great Jehovah, and to the brethren engaged in this noble cause. We are constrained to feel thankful to the Almighty for the many blessings we receive at his hands for the prosperity of the place-for the harmony and good feeling prevailing in our midst-and for the great and glorious privileges granted unto us as a people....

Now brethren, if so great and glorious have been the blessings realized in so early a stage of the work what may we expect when the building is completed, and a house prepared where the Most High can come and restore that which has been taken away in consequence of transgression; even the FULNESS of the priesthood.

Truly, no exertion on our part ought to be lacking but to double our diligence because great, yea very great are the consequences pending.

As we have already said, we feel thankful to the brethren for the interest they have taken, not only on the present, but on all former occasions. They have come forth like Saints of God and great will be their reward. Not long since they were naked, destitute, afflicted, and smitten having been twice plucked up by the roots; but again they lift their heads with gladness and manifest a determination to fulfil the revelations

and commandments of the Most High if it be at the expense of all their property and even their lives. Will not God reward them? Yea, verily!<sup>81</sup>

*21 February 1843*

Joseph urges both the temple and the Nauvoo House be built:

for I began it & will finish it. Not that public spirit here as in other cities dont deny revelation if the Temple and Nauvoo house are not finished you must run away.... every thing God does is to aggrandize his kingdom how does he lay the foundation? build a temple to my great name. and call the attention of the great. but where shall we lay our heads.... The building of N. House is just as sacred in my view as the Temple.

I want the Nauvoo House built it must be built, our salvation depends upon it. When men have done what they can or will for the temple, let them do what they can for the Nauvoo House. We never can accomplish our work at the expense of another.<sup>82</sup>

We note that Joseph urges that the temple be given priority, though both are important. A few months later, he will urge a shift of resources to the Nauvoo House, suggesting that the temple was not being neglected.<sup>83</sup>

*6 April 1843*

Joseph discusses using the Twelve to fund-raise for the Nauvoo House—something for which he would be unlikely to slight

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81 “The Temple of God in Nauvoo,” *Times and Seasons* 4/1 (15 November 1841): 10–11.

82 Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Diary, discourse of 21 February 1843; cited in *WJS*, 164–166.

83 See notes 84–85 herein.



the temple.<sup>84</sup> He notes, in fact, that “there has been too great latitude in individuals for the building of the Temple to the exclusion of the Nauvoo house.”<sup>85</sup> The Saints, then, can hardly have been slacking on the temple if Joseph wants them to put *more* emphasis on the Nauvoo House.

*11 July 1843*

He [Joseph] beautifully and in a most powerful manner, illustrated the necessity of the gathering and the building of the Temple that those ordinances may be administered which are necessary preparations for the world to come: he exhorted the people in impressive terms to be diligent—to be up and doing lest the tabernacle pass over to another people and we lose the blessing.<sup>86</sup>

Joseph encourages diligence—slackening would be unwise. Work on the temple had slowed over the spring, but this was due to the illness of a key craftsman, William W. Player. An English convert who was the temple’s principal stone setter, Player’s absence delayed the spring start on the walls. Technical problems with the crane needed to raise massive timbers and stones also slowed the work, but this cannot be blamed on a lack of zeal either.<sup>87</sup>

*9 October 1843*

“President Smith concluded with exhortations to the church to renew their exertions to forward the work of the Temple, and in walking before the Lord in soberness and righteousness.”<sup>88</sup>

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84 See note 82 herein, where he asks that the Nauvoo House be next in priority after one has donated to the temple.

85 Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Diary, discourse of 6 April 1843; cited in WJS, 175.

86 Eliza R. Snow Diary, discourse of 11 June 1843; cited in WJS, 215–216.

87 Colvin, 22–23.

88 “Minutes of a Special Conference,” *Times and Seasons* 4/21 (15 September 1843): 331–332, reporting discourse of 9 October 1843; cited in WJS, 254. Joseph

Joseph discussed temple business, but no report is made of a rebuke or warning for being behind schedule.<sup>89</sup>

*15 October 1843*

Joseph responds to some critics about the economic cost of the temple—clear evidence that work was proceeding and diverting significant resources:

some say It is better, say some to give [to] the poor than build the temple.—the building of the temple has kept the poor who were driven from Missouri from starving. as has been the best means for this object which could be devised

all ye rich men of the Latter Day Saints.—from abroad I would invite to bring up some of their money and give to the temple. we want Iron steel powder.—&c—a good plan to get up a forge[?]. bring in raw materials, & manu[f]act[ur]ing establishments of all kinds.—& surround the rapids—<sup>90</sup>

*1 January 1844*

The *Times and Seasons* noted:

Considering the many improvements that have been made, and the difficulties in many instances under which the committee have had to labor, the Temple has made great progress; and strenuous efforts are now being made in quarrying, hauling, and hewing stone, to place it in a situation that the walls can go up and the building be enclosed by next fall.

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Diary, kept by Willard Richards, notes “Hasten the work of the temple. and all the work of the Last Days. Let the elders & saints do away light mindedness and be sober” (255).

<sup>89</sup> “Minutes of a Special Conference,” 330–331; cited in *WJS*, 252.

<sup>90</sup> Willard Richards, Joseph Smith diary, discourse of 15 October 1843; cited in *WJS*, 257

There has not been much done at the Nauvoo House during the past season, further than preparing materials; most of the brick, however, and hewed stone are in readiness for that building; and the Temple and Nauvoo House committees, having purchased several splendid mills in the pineries, place them in a situation to furnish both of the above named buildings with abundance of excellent lumber, besides having a large amount to dispose of.<sup>91</sup>

We recall that delays had occurred in the previous year because a key tradesman was taken ill. There were also technical problems with the temple's crane.<sup>92</sup>

*21 January 1844*

Snuffer cites this discourse, and uses it as evidence that Saints were ignoring Joseph's warnings:

Interestingly, only Wilford Woodruff recorded the content of that talk. Willard Richards reports only that a talk was given, the weather was "somewhat unpleasant," and the subject was "sealing the hearts of the fathers to the children." Joseph's warning that there was a limited time to 'make use of the seals while they are on earth' seems to have gone unheard by those in Nauvoo, and later their descendants. Even the leadership of the church at the time were tone deaf to Joseph's alarm (106–107).

Unsurprisingly, this gloss distorts Joseph's message:

I would to God that this temple was now done that we might go into it & go to work & improve our time & make use of the seals while they are on earth & the

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91 "Editorial Address," *Times and Seasons* 5/1 (1 January 1844): 391.

92 See note 87 herein.

Saints have none to much time to save & redeem their dead, & *gather together their living relatives that they may be saved also*, before the earth will be smitten & the Consumption decreed falls upon the world & I would advise all the Saints to go to with their might & *gather together all their living relatives to this place that they may be sealed & saved* that they may be prepared against the day that the destroying angel goes forth & if the whole Church should go to with all their might to save their dead seal their posterity & gather their living friends & spend none of their time in behalf of the world they would hardly get through before night would Come when no man Could work & my ownly trouble at the present time is concerning ourselves that the Saints will be divided & broken up & scattered before we get our Salvation Secure for thei[r] is so many fools in the world for the devil to operate upon it gives him the advantage often times.<sup>93</sup>

Joseph's advice to the Saints is not "hurry up and complete the temple." Instead, he urges them to get all their living relatives in Nauvoo so they can be endowed (after all, most of the Twelve and some others had already been endowed and received all the temple ordinances). Joseph's "only worry" about the Saints is not their failure or unworthiness, but of them being attacked. This is a risk not because of *their* failure—rather, it is because there are "so many fools in the world" whom Satan can act upon.

Furthermore, when Joseph speaks of the Saints having "none to[o] much time" to redeem "their dead" and "their living relatives," this is not because the temple will not be done within God's time limit—rather, he is explicit that the time is short

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93 WWJ, 2:342 (discourse of 21 January 1844); cited in WJS, 317–319; Snuffer cites TPJS, 330–331.

because “the earth will be smitten & the Consumption decreed falls upon the world” and “the day that the destroying angel goes forth.” These are clearly eschatological concerns, “before night would Come when no man Could work” (see John 9:4)—the time before Christ’s second coming is short. Snuffer’s gloss abuses the text from start to finish.

It makes no sense for Joseph to encourage gathering to Nauvoo to receive living ordinances if his real message (as Snuffer claims) is that the members are being slothful in building the temple and are in danger of not being allowed to receive the blessings at all. It is likewise incoherent to argue, in light of this instruction, that Joseph had known since May 1842 that they would fail. The leadership is not “tone deaf”—they simply don’t hear what Snuffer’s bias and torture of the text creates out of thin air.

*5 February 1844*

The *Manuscript History of the Church* reports that Joseph told the Nauvoo Temple’s architect that

if he had to make the Temple ten feet higher than it was originally calculated; that one light at the center of each circular window would be sufficient to light the whole room, and when the whole building was thus illuminated, the effect would be remarkably grand. “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.”<sup>94</sup>

Joseph declares that he has seen the finished temple in vision. There is again no evidence that Joseph worries that they will be denied its blessings.

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94 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 6:196–197.

*4 March 1844*

at a meeting of the First Presidency, the Twelve Apostles, the Temple Committee and others, Joseph Smith announced that under the circumstances “he did not know but it was best to let the Nauvoo house be till the temple is completed. [W]e need the temple more than anything Else... we will let the Nauvoo house stand till the temple is done and we will put all our forces on the temple—turn all our lumber towards the temple.”<sup>95</sup>

Surely Joseph would tell the Twelve—nine of whom he had initiated into all the higher temple ordinances, including the “fullness of the priesthood”—if the Saints were slighting God with regard to the temple. But, he did not (compare 7 March 1844 below).

*7 March 1844*

A critic, Charles Foster, claims that the Saints cannot finish the Nauvoo temple due to the cost. Joseph therefore proposes that they prove him wrong: “who don[‘]t know that we can put the roof on this building this season? by turning all the means of the N[auvoo] House & doubling our diligence we can do it.”<sup>96</sup> Joseph has thus been content with the pace at which the temple and Nauvoo House are progressing (at times urging more effort to be diverted to the Nauvoo House) and now suggests diverting all effort to the temple. Again, there is no condemnation, nor any hint that the Saints’ chances are running out with Joseph’s death fast approaching (compare 4 March 1844).

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95 Ehat thesis, 154; citing Joseph Smith, Diary, 4 March 1844.

96 Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Diary, discourse of 7 March 1844; cited in *WJS*, 322.

*10 March 1844*

Joseph speaks extensively about election, and the spirit and power of Elijah, which

is that ye have power to hold the keys of the revelations ordinances, oracles powers & endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood & of the Kingdom of God on the Earth & to receive, obtain & perform all the ordinances belonging to the Kingdom of God even unto the sealing of the hearts of the hearts fathers unto the children & the hearts of the children unto the fathers even those who are in heaven.... Then what you seal on earth by the Keys of Elijah is sealed in heaven, & this is the power of Elijah, & this is the difference between the spirit & power of Elias and Elijah, for while the spirit of Elias is a forerunner the power of Elijah is sufficient to make our calling & Election sure.<sup>97</sup>

In all this, there is no sign that the Saints are falling behind, or that they are in danger of losing these blessings—and Joseph's death is less than four months away. He even takes time to assure the congregation that Christ will not come in 1844 as William Miller had predicted, and also prophesies that Christ will not come before 1890.<sup>98</sup> Why would he not address the much more pressing issue of an incomplete temple if Snuffer's fanciful historical reconstruction is correct?

*15 March 1844*

The Church's official newspaper praises the Nauvoo saints and encourages those not gathered to Nauvoo to be likewise faithful in building the temple. There is no sign that the Nauvoo Saints are slacking or risking condemnation:

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<sup>97</sup> Wilford Woodruff Journal, discourse of 10 March 1844; cited in *WJS*, 329–331. Also in *WWJ*, 2:361–362.

<sup>98</sup> *WJS*, 331–332; see *WWJ* 2:361–362.

We are also pleased that we can inform our friends abroad, that the saints here of late, have taken hold of the word on the Temple with a zeal and energy that in no small degree excites our admiration. Their united efforts certainly speaks to us, that it is their determination that this spacious edifice shall be enclosed, if not finished, this season. And a word we would say to the Saints abroad, which is, that the Temple is being built in compliance with a special commandment of God not to a few individuals, but to all. Therefore we sincerely hope you will contribute of your means as liberally as your circumstances will allow, that the burden of the work may not rest upon a few, but proportionately upon all.<sup>99</sup>

*12 May 1844*

It is not only necessary that you should be baptized for your dead, but you will have to go thro' all the ordinances for them, same as you have gone through, to save yourselves; there will be 144,000 Saviors on Mount Zion, and with them an innumerable host, that no man can number—Oh! I beseech you to forward, go forward and make your calling and your election sure—and if any man preach any other gospel with that which I have preached, he shall be cursed, and some of you who now hear me, shall see it & know that I testify the truth concerning them; in regard to the law of the Priesthood—there should be a place where all nations shall come up from time to time to receive their endowments, and the Lord has said, this shall be the place for the baptism for the dead—every man that

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<sup>99</sup> "Our City, and the Present Aspect of Affairs," *Times and Seasons* 5/6 (15 March 1844): 472.



has been baptized and belongs to the Kingdom, has a right to be baptized for those who are gone before, and, as soon as the Law of the Gospel is obeyed here by their friends, who act as proxy for them, the Lord has administrators there to set them free—a man may act as proxy for his own relatives—the ordinances of the Gospel which was laid out before the foundation of the world has been thus fulfilled, by them, and we may be baptized for those who we have much friendship for, but it must be first revealed to the man of God, lest we should run too far.<sup>100</sup>

Less than two months before his death, Joseph spoke again of both making one's calling and election sure and of performing ordinances for the dead—both of which he had insisted require the temple. He did not, however, rebuke them or tell them that they were being slothful. Why teach them of matters they cannot—in Snuffer's telling—have?

There is, in short, little or no evidence that the Saints were being slothful in building the Nauvoo temple. At various times, Joseph expressed his pleasure with their progress, encouraged them to diligence, asked that more resources be given to the Nauvoo House, declared he had seen the completed structure in vision, and then later moved full attention back to the temple. He encouraged members to bring all their family to Nauvoo so they would have time to receive their endowments before the wicked disturbed them—a strange command if he believed they would not be permitted to receive those blessings. The textual record simply does not match Snuffer's rather speculative reconstruction.

### *How Much Time?*

Snuffer argues that “it is critical to know when the time period of that ‘appointment’” with God in the completed temple

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100 Thomas Bullock report, discourse of 14 May 1844; cited in *WJS*, 365–369.

“ended” (104). It probably *would* be critical—which is why the silence of Joseph on this matter is so telling.

A look at some figures does not, however, suggest that there is an obvious problem. The Nauvoo temple was 60% larger than the Kirtland temple, with over three times the floor area.<sup>101</sup> The Kirtland construction was commanded on 27 December 1832 (D&C 88:119), and the Saints were severely rebuked for their lack of speed on 1 June 1833 (D&C 95:3, 11–17). The dedication took place on 27 March 1836.<sup>102</sup> From commandment to dedication was 1186 days.

From the commandment to the martyrdom at Nauvoo, 1255 days had elapsed. It would seem unreasonable for the Lord to expect a structure more than half again as large to be built within essentially the same number of days, while also building the Nauvoo House, settling a new city on malarial swamp land,<sup>103</sup> and developing all the infrastructure necessary to support both a city and temple construction.

Kirtland’s temple cost \$40–60,000;<sup>104</sup> Nauvoo’s was 16–25 times more, requiring a minimum of \$1,000,000.<sup>105</sup> Thus,

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101 Wikipedia lists the Kirtland temple floor area as 15,000 square feet, and Nauvoo as 54,000 square feet. See my conservative calculations in the appendix, which yield 14,400 square feet and 44,143 square feet respectively.

102 Milton V. Backman, *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 142–149, 157, 286, 286–294.

103 See Kyle M. Rollins, Richard D. Smith, M. Brett Borup, and E. James Nelson, “Transforming Swampland into Nauvoo, the City Beautiful,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 45/3 (2006): 125–157. “Drainage benefits were slow in coming [to Midwestern states’ swampland] and generally were not realized until after the Civil War.... [T]he drainage efforts in Nauvoo represent a rare early success story” (125). The city’s main drainage ditch alone “would have required at least 22,100 man-hours of effort to complete by hand,” and labor on drainage was a constant throughout the Mormons’ stay in Nauvoo (153).

104 Backman, 161; Eugene England, *Brother Brigham* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), 26.

105 Colvin, 44; citing Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 872 and *Deseret News Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, Utah: *Deseret News*, 1975), F4.

while Nauvoo had a population of 11,057 by 1845 (with a total of 15,000 Mormons in all Hancock County),<sup>106</sup> compared to Kirtland's 2,025 by 1836,<sup>107</sup> the cost of Nauvoo's temple was still three times greater on a per person basis: \$66.67/citizen compared to Kirtland's \$29.63/citizen. The construction times also favor Nauvoo over Kirtland: Kirtland did \$50.59 of work per day, while Nauvoo did \$518.94/day to its dedication on 30 April 1846.<sup>108</sup> To be completed by the martyrdom, the Saints would have had to do a staggering \$796.81/day.

Put simply, even with Nauvoo's larger population base, the cost per citizen was two to three times higher than Kirtland, with at least ten times more labor and materials expended per day of construction. Only someone committed to seeing the Saints as failures would condemn and downplay this accomplishment, especially as almost all had arrived in Nauvoo destitute. Even getting adequate food was an on-going issue:

“Even the best providers were often short of flour, milk, butter, eggs, and other staples. Almost every letter from this period deals with the great struggle for food.” On balance it should be reported that food

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106 Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 2002), Chapter 8. An earlier work [Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 17] estimated 25,000 Mormons in 1844. The calculations using these older estimates can be seen in the Appendix.

107 Marvin S. Hill, Larry T. Wimmer, and C. Keith Rooker, “The Kirtland Economy Revisited: A Market Critique of Sectarian Economics,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 17/4 (1977): 403, 408. The authors note (409) that their assumptions may lead to an underestimate of Kirtland's population. In all my calculations, I have used the largest estimate for Kirtland's cost (\$60,000), and used the estimate of 15,000 for all Mormons in Hancock County. I have assumed that the entire population was present throughout, which is an obvious over-simplification. My estimates are thus conservative, since these factors will underestimate the cost to individuals who helped throughout construction. Those living away from Nauvoo would also have been less able to provide volunteer labor, though monetary donations were solicited.

108 From 19 January 1841 to 30 April 1846 is 1927 days.

supplies were much better by the fall of 1845. Fruit trees planted earlier were now in production, and grain and vegetable products were plentiful. Distribution of these commodities now became the problem as farmers in outlying areas were driven from their farms by mobs, and crops were destroyed.<sup>109</sup>

It seems even more capricious for God to see the Saints fail without a single clear warning from the Prophet or the Lord himself. We can profitably compare the rebuke of June 1833 at Kirtland with the essential silence at Nauvoo:

For ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things, that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house.... Verily I say unto you, it is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it. If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness (D&C 95:7, 11–12).

### *The Saints Were Punished?*

*PTHG* claims that D&C 124:47–48 can be used to determine if the Saints failed at Nauvoo. It claims that “we know for certain”:

- A. “The spot was not consecrated by the Lord, or made holy by His or the angels’ presence. At least there is no record of it having occurred;
- B. “The church was moved out of the spot;
- C. “The temple was utterly destroyed;
- D. The migration westward was more than difficult and harrowing” (381).

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<sup>109</sup> Colvin, 44; quotation from Kenneth W. Godfrey, “Some Thoughts Regarding an Unwritten History of Nauvoo,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 15/4 (1975): 420.

We will consider each claim in turn.

*Point A: Spot not consecrated by divine or angelic presence?*

This claim is false. “Others also beheld angels and the glory of God,” reported one witness at the Nauvoo temple.<sup>110</sup> The research in *PTHG* is not adequate. This issue is treated in more detail below (claim #10). Even Strangite apostates saw the glory upon the temple, though they had a more prosaic explanation:

Uriel C. Nickerson (a Strangite) said that on Sunday night last the Temple was illuminated from the top of the Belfry to the ground and swore that he saw men passing back and forwards having candles in their hands and wanted to make the people believe that there was a visitation by angels, but they were the Mormons themselves. Thus has a Strangite born strong testimony of the glory of last Sabbath.<sup>111</sup>

*Point B: Church moved out of the spot?*

Snuffer here plays fast and loose with the text, though earlier he does cite the text that speaks of the Church being “moved out of their place” (380, 381). The scripture in question reads:

If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot [the temple site—see v. 43] that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place (D&C 124:45).

*PTHG* makes it appear that the Church was promised that because the temple (“that spot”) would be made holy they would not be moved out of a physical “spot” or “place”—i.e.,

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<sup>110</sup> See note 122 herein. See also note 118 herein.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas Bullock Journal, 17 March 1846; cited in Gregory R. Knight, “Journal of Thomas Bullock,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 31/1 (Winter 1991): 62–63.

Nauvoo (compare 267–270). This reading is not plausible. The Lord spoke in almost identical wording on 16 December 1833 in the wake of troubles in Missouri. He reassured the Saints: “Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered” (D&C 101:17, emphasis added).<sup>112</sup>

Thus, the heirs of Zion could be physically scattered or driven by wicked men, but this did not mean that they were “moved out of [their] place.”<sup>113</sup> This promise served to reassure the Saints that they would not lose their blessings or station before God—and, the condition placed on the commandment is an interesting one, given Snuffer’s hostility to the apostles: “If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people... they shall not be moved out of their place” (D&C 124:45).

And, finally, though forced from Nauvoo by armed men, the Saints were not “scattered.” They remained together in a body under apostolic direction, withdrew in a planned and orderly way, and a large majority followed the Twelve to the Great Salt Lake.

*Point C: The temple was utterly destroyed*

The temple’s destruction is an uncontroversial, if irrelevant, point. There is no promise in D&C 124 that the temple would endure forever, and *PTHG*’s textual contortions do not find one either (269). (Given that the Jewish temples were both destroyed, if consistent Snuffer would have to argue that they too were never holy spots.) Section 124 does, however, include important teachings on the allowances for the evil actions of others which the Lord will make:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their

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112 See similar eschatological imagery used in Revelation 2:5.

113 Similar usage can be seen in D&C 97:19.

might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings. And the iniquity and transgression of my holy laws and commandments I will visit upon the heads of those who hindered my work, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord God (D&C 124:49–50).

Were Snuffer not so dedicated to his theory, he might see the situation differently, as Brigham Young did:

I was thankful to see the Temple in Nauvoo on fire. Previous to crossing the Mississippi river, we had met in that Temple and handed it over to the Lord God of Israel; and when I saw the flames, I said “Good, Father, if you want it to be burned up.” I hoped to see it burned before I left, but I did not. I was glad when I heard of its being destroyed by fire, and of the walls having fallen in, and said, “Hell, you cannot now occupy it.”<sup>114</sup>

*Point D: Suffering during the exodus from Nauvoo*

In a way, this is the most disturbing of the charges because Snuffer presumes to condemn others, becoming an accuser of his brothers and sisters, declaring (based upon tendentious history and a distorted reading of scriptural texts) that the judgments of God were upon them. If he is wrong, then he condemns a noble group who sacrificed to the uttermost for their covenants.

One thinks again of Alma and his band of believers that fled from King Noah—they had to leave their homes to escape an army (Mosiah 18:34–35), settled a new land (Mosiah

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114 Brigham Young, “Funds of the Church,” *JD* 8:203 (8 October 1860).

23:1–4), suffered enslavement (Mosiah 24:8–12), had to flee again (Mosiah 24:20), reached another area of sanctuary, had to flee yet again (Mosiah 24:23), and ultimately had to return to Zarahemla for safety (Mosiah 24:25). Snuffer could doubtless distort this experience through his sin-seeking lenses—yet we are told explicitly in the scripture that the suffering was permitted despite their obedience: “nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21).

Snuffer could also doubtless find evidence for evil in the Christian martyrs of Rome, or in Ammonihah when those who believed were stoned, driven out, and had their wives and children burned alive (Alma 14:7–12). Sitting thus to arraign others appeals to some, but it is an easy game. There is enough tragedy in any life to provide fodder for such facile judgmentalism—but the scriptures warn against it:

Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them. But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves (D&C 121:16–17).

### **Claim #10: There Were No Pentecostal-Type Experiences in the Nauvoo Temple**

Here again, one wonders if Snuffer is simply ignorant of the historical record, or if he is willfully withholding information. Multiple accounts from the Nauvoo temple are extant:

- “After the dancing had continued about an hour, several excellent songs were sung, in which several of the brethren and sisters joined... I called upon Sister Whitney who



stood up and invoking the gift of tongues, sang a beautiful song of Zion in tongues. The interpretation was given by her husband, Bishop Whitney, and me, it related to our efforts to build this house to the privilege we now have of meeting in it, our departure shortly to the country of the Lamanites, their rejoicing when they hear the gospel and of the ingathering of Israel. I spoke in a foreign tongue; likewise, Brother Kimball. After a little conversation of a general nature I closed the exercises of the evening by prayer.”<sup>115</sup>

- “I stayed all night in the Temple of the Lord. The Spirit of God seemed to fill the House and cause every heart to rejoice with a joy unknown to the world of mankind, for the Lord manifested himself to his saints.”<sup>116</sup>
- “I labored in the Temple assisting in the endowments. The Spirit of the Lord filled the House insomuch that the brethren shouted for joy. Brother Orson Spencer said he could no longer contain himself. President Young told him to speak; and he opened his mouth and spake in power and demonstration of the Spirit of God.”<sup>117</sup>
- “At sundown went to the Temple. 14 partook of the Sacrament after which we had a most glorious time. Some of the brethren spoke in tongues. Bro. Z. Coltrin and Brown held a talk in tongues which was afterwards interpreted and confirmed. Some prophesied. Bro. Anderson related a vision. And all of us rejoiced with exceeding great gladness. A light was flickering over br. Anderson’s head while relating his vision, Phinehas Richards face shone with great brightness. Two men

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115 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 7:557–58. See George D. Smith, editor *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 244.

116 Jacob Gates Journal, 9 January 1846, cited in Joseph Heinerman, *Temple Manifestations* (Manti, Utah: Mountain Valley Publishers, 1974), 50.

117 Jacob Gates Journal, 15 and 16 January 1846; cited in Heinerman, 50.

arrayed all in priestly garments were seen in the n.e. corner of the room. The power of the Holy Ghost rested down upon us. I arose full of the Spirit and spoke with great animation, which was very cheerfully responded to by all, and prophesied of things to come. A brother testified that our meeting was accepted of God. And we continued our meeting until after midnight, which was the most profitable, happy, and glorious meeting I had ever attended in my life, and may the remembrance be deeply rooted in my soul for ever and ever. Beautiful day.”<sup>118</sup>

- “At sundown went to the Temple to pray. While there heard last night Chester Loveland was called out of bed by his mother in Law stating that the Temple was again on fire. He dressed as quick as lightening and ran out of doors and saw the Temple all in a blaze. He studied a few seconds, and as it did not appear to consume any, and there was no others running, he was satisfied it was the glory of God, and again went to bed. Another brother saw the belfry all on a fire at a 1/4 to 10. He ran as hard as he could, but when he came to the Temple he found all dark and secure.... Thus was the Spirit, power and glory to God manifest, not only at the Temple while we were there but also in our families for which my soul rejoices exceedingly.”<sup>119</sup>
- “About the same time Sister Almira Lamb while in her own room saw a vision of her dead child. It appeared to her in great glory and filled the room with light. She was afraid. It went away and after she was calmed down, her child appeared again to her and told the mother to remove her bones from where they were buried among

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118 Thomas Bullock Journal, 15 March 1846; cited in Knight, 61–62.

119 Thomas Bullock Journal, 16 March 1846, in Knight, 62.

the Gentiles, and bury them among the Saints, and again disappeared.”<sup>120</sup>

- “At sundown went to the Temple to pray.... The Spirit was upon me and we all had a most glorious meeting. The glory of God again resting on the Temple in great power.”<sup>121</sup>
- ”Sunday, March 22nd, 1846. I went to my Seventies Quorum meeting in the Nauvoo Temple. The whole Quorum being present consisting of fifteen members.... Dressing ourselves in the order of the Priesthood we called upon the Lord, his spirit attended us, and the visions were opened to our view. I was, as it were, lost to myself and beheld the earth reel to and fro and was moved out of its place. Men fell to the earth and their life departed from them, and great was the scene of destruction upon all the face of the land, and at the close thereof, there appeared a great company as it were of saints coming from the west, as I stood with my back passing to the east and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, ‘Come, see the desolation which the Lord hath made in the earth’; and the company of the saints who had been hid as it were, from the earth; and I beheld other things which were glorious while the power of God rested down upon me. Others also beheld angels and the glory of God.... The sacrament was administered. Our joy increased by the gift of tongues and prophecy by which great things were spoken and made known to us.”<sup>122</sup>

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120 Thomas Bullock Journal, 16 March 1846, in Knight, 62.

121 Thomas Bullock Journal, 18 March 1846, in Knight, 63.

122 *Journal Book of Samuel Whitney Richards*, 22 March, 1846, Book No.2, 7–8; cited in Heinerman, 50–51.

## Conclusion

I will give you one of the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom. It is an eternal principle that has existed with God from all Eternity that that man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly that that man is in the high road to apostacy and if he does not repent will apostatize as God lives[.] (Joseph Smith, Jr.<sup>123</sup>)

In sum, *PTHG*'s history is both selective and dubious. Where does all this lead the author?

### "Proud Descendants of Nauvoo"

Snuffer seems almost obsessed with the fact that so many current Church leaders are descended from those of the Nauvoo era. "The proud descendants of Nauvoo," he grumbles, "who have always retained control of the church's top leadership positions, claim to hold all the keys ever given to Joseph Smith. They teach that they can bind on earth and in heaven. They are the 'new Popes' having the authority the Catholic Pope claims to possess" (303, see also 66, 263). "The idea of men holding God's power is what led to the corruptions of Catholicism," (37) and "[w]hen it is believed a man can bind heaven, then it is believed that salvation is available by and through that man" (263).<sup>124</sup> This grouching about lineage is a constant refrain:

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123 Joseph Smith remarks made at Brigham Young Dwelling, Montrose, Iowa Territory (Tuesday, 2 July 1839), recorded in Willard Richards Pocket Companion; cited in *WJS*, 413. See also *TPJS*, 278.

124 As he often does, Snuffer distorts a text or the Church's teachings. In fact, the keys are said to bind "on earth and *in* heaven," not to bind heaven (i.e., God) against God's will (Matthew 16:19, 18:18; D&C 124:93). Surely Snuffer knows this. If such a claim is beyond the pale, then so were the New Testament apostles. Joseph Smith made the same claim, see note 97 herein.

- “Ever since the expulsion of church members from Nauvoo, the highest leadership positions in the church have been held by Nauvoo’s proud descendants” (113).
- “The proud refugees from Nauvoo and their descendants have always claimed they succeeded in doing all that was required” (381).
- “If [my] new view of history is more correct than the narrative offered by the proud descendants of Nauvoo...” (420; see also 116, 118).
- “The Nauvoo saints and their proud descendants would necessarily diminish. This view is unlikely to ever be accepted by a church whose leadership is filled overwhelmingly by those same proud descendants of Nauvoo. There hasn’t been a single church president without Nauvoo ancestors” (119).

It is difficult to escape the impression that on some level Snuffer resents not having opportunities in Church leadership. He berates members, claiming that “we envy those who fill leadership positions because we want the power granted through priestly office and position” (415). I do not think most Latter-day Saints of my acquaintance envy leaders or lust after power. One wonders if Snuffer is projecting his own struggles onto others. He lists *his* Church callings in the books he sells.<sup>125</sup> As a convert to the Church, one wonders if he feels unjustly boxed out of the leadership positions that purportedly go almost exclusively to “the proud descendants of Nauvoo,” since “Church leaders at the highest levels... most often have family ties to other church leadership. Almost all Apostles and members of the First Presidency are related by blood or marriage” (209). He invokes the figure of the prophet Samuel, who “was called

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125 “He has served on the High Council, taught Gospel Doctrine and Priesthood classes for twenty-one years... and instructed at the BYU Education Week for three years” (509). “I have taken assignments as a home teacher, gospel doctrine teacher, ward mission leader and high counselor [*sic*]” (3).

by God. Although he was not of the chosen family, he received the prophecy. Through him, God condemned the family of Eli, foretelling their destruction” (306).<sup>126</sup> The analogy is hardly a veiled one. The autobiographical element in many of his claims is not subtle:

[In] the Dispensation of Moses, there were two traditions that operated independent of one another. The one was official and priestly. The other was unofficial and prophetic. The priestly tradition held recognized office, and could be easily identified. The other was “ordained by God himself,” and those who possessed it had His word to them as their only credential... They were not merely regarded as unofficial. They were persecuted by both the leaders and followers of the official religion. They suffered for their testimony of the truth.... [I]n every dispensation the truth taught in purity must come from unheralded, questioned and reviled sources. Therefore, those who obtained this higher priesthood during the Dispensation of Moses were denounced, rejected and almost always came from outside the recognized hierarchy.... The “line of authority” consists of only one: God. (292, 296).

Snuffer seems to have almost returned to the Baptist upbringing of his youth—he has concocted a kind of LDS priesthood of all believers. His model does the Protestants one better, however, since only the elect, the truly saved—those whose calling and election is sure, those who receive priestly

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126 Snuffer also writes that “The family of Eli had filled the Lord’s House with corruption, extortion, and sexual perversion.... The end of Eli’s house came in a single day.... Thus ended the house of Eli. God’s judgments established Samuel as the new, presiding priest and prophet. When this happened, once again there was a man among the Israelites who could provide what Moses had earlier offered” (305, 307).

power from beyond the veil—have any real power or priesthood authority.

Snuffer discusses a change to the LDS temple ceremony: “As long as [these elements] remained as a part of the ceremony,” he says, “it was clear to those who participated that there were *no mortal sources who could claim they were ‘true messengers.’* Mortal men were universally depicted as false ministers in the ceremony Joseph restored. The only source of true messengers was God or angels sent by Him” (276, italics added).<sup>127</sup> But, if this is true, that rules Snuffer out as a true messenger, since he too is mortal.

“Unless the Spirit witnesses to the truth, or an angel comes bearing unmistakable signs, no teaching should be accepted,” he says elsewhere (340). So perhaps mortals *can* be true messengers if the Spirit bears witness? But if so, why does he complain when members bear testimony that the Spirit has borne witness of the reality of President Monson’s calling (488–489)?<sup>128</sup> In all this, the intent and effect is clear—to disqualify the prophets and apostles by any means necessary, and to insist upon Snuffer’s *bona fides*.

On 11 September 2013, Snuffer announced that he had been excommunicated for apostasy.<sup>129</sup> He reported that the Church’s action resulted from his refusal to cease promoting and distributing *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. The book was the subject of a letter from his stake president, which Snuffer posted online prior to his excommunication. His stake president writes, in part:

The issue for consideration to [your] disciplinary council is whether the continued publication of *Passing*

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<sup>127</sup> I have elided the more specific elements of the temple ceremony, which Snuffer mentions explicitly.

<sup>128</sup> These sections are examined in detail following note 141 herein.

<sup>129</sup> Denver Snuffer, “Yesterday,” *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 11 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/yesterday.html>.

*the Heavenly Gift* constitutes an act of apostasy and, if so, what the appropriate remedy should be....

Denver, I am not anxious to chase people out of the church. My goal is the opposite—to enable all to enjoy the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have tried to be open minded about the issues we have discussed. I am sympathetic with those who face crises of faith.

I cannot deny, however, the spirit's influence on me and the responsibilities I have to protect the interests of the Church. I have tried to persuade you that *PTHG* is not constructive to the work of salvation or the promotion of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The book's thesis is in direct conflict with church doctrine. In your effort to defend the restoration, you have mischaracterized doctrine, denigrated virtually every prophet since Joseph Smith, and placed the church in a negative light. The book is a misguided effort to [p. 2] attempt to bridge the gap between the church and its dissidents. *PTHG* will never be the solution to hard questions that you believe it is. Like every other such effort, it will attract only the attention of those whose spiritual eyes, ears and hearts are obscured from the truth. Your work pits you against the institution of the church and will lead to the spiritual demise of you and your family.<sup>130</sup>

Having read the book, I can vouch for the accuracy of this summary. Snuffer's attitude toward the counsel he was given

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130 M. Truman Hunt to Denver Snuffer, "Notice of Disciplinary Council," letter (21 August 2013), 1–2. Online at Denver Snuffer, "Don't call me. (Yes, that means you too!)," *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 23 August 2013, [http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/08/dont-call-me-yes-that-means-you-too\\_23.html](http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/08/dont-call-me-yes-that-means-you-too_23.html).



is made obvious both by his decision to post it, and his later comments:

- “I do not want [my audience] to attend [my speeches] thinking all is well between me and the powers in control of the church.”
- “The church must act in accordance with one law, and I must act in accordance with another for the purposes of the Lord to be fulfilled.”
- “Right now, I don’t think [Stake] President Hunt thinks he has any other choice. He probably doesn’t. That is fine. I bear no ill will toward him or any other member of my stake. No one gets ahead in the institution by disregarding instruction from above. Actually, I do the same. However, for me, ‘above’ has little to do with 47 East South Temple and the institution is not where I expect any future. I try to help the church regardless of its opinion of me. I simply have no axe to grind no matter the outcome on September 8th [the date of the disciplinary council].”<sup>131</sup>

“The authorities are to be respected and sustained,” Snuffer writes early on, later adding, “It is not the responsibility of church members to judge church authorities” (28–29, 422). But, when those authorities instruct *him*, he lashes out:

- “A temporary, corporate organization that is owned by a sole individual, which IS The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints won’t survive beyond the veil. There you leave behind your money. You can’t buy or sell in that better place. Since I’ve been there already, the turbulence here is of little moment to me.”<sup>132</sup>

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131 Denver Snuffer, “Current Events,” from the desk of Denver Snuffer (blog), 26 August 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/08/current-events.html>.

132 Denver Snuffer, “Contentment,” *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 7 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/contentment.html>.

- “The book brings to light the [B]abylonian methods church leadership uses to make rapid and dramatic changes. We are not now the same church restored by Joseph Smith. *Passing the Heavenly Gift* shows how that happened.”<sup>133</sup>

### *Disdain for Rank-and-File Members*

Snuffer claims he wants to help members,<sup>134</sup> but his attitude toward those who disagree is best described as contemptuous. His tone is more off-putting because of the air of sanctimony that attends some of his text—Snuffer dispenses homilies on what true religion and real belief are about: “Real saints always appreciate anything the Lord condescends to give them. They are never ungrateful, impatient, or demanding. They qualify by patience and obedience to receive more. Then they petition in humility and gratitude to receive it” (308). He paints himself as the long-suffering, respectful martyr, and says that his stake president told Snuffer and his children that he is “worthy of a temple recommend.”<sup>135</sup> Snuffer emphasizes to his children that he sustains his bishop and stake president.<sup>136</sup> However, he refuses to attend his disciplinary council if his children cannot

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133 Denver Snuffer, “Compliance (So Far As Possible),” *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), September 4, 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/compliance-so-far-as-possible.html>.

134 “If the church has been condemned, rejected and cursed, it may be a blessing for you. If a new narrative acknowledging this, allows us to avoid inappropriate adoration of men, I may save your soul” (467).

135 It is not clear how an accusation that he persists in teaching false doctrine is consistent with the stake president agreeing that Snuffer qualifies for a temple recommend. If Snuffer’s account is accurate, I presume the stake president meant that Snuffer was not charged with “immorality, dishonesty, or some serious moral transgression,” not that his leaders felt they could issue him a recommend. See Denver Snuffer, “Last Night’s Family Home Evening - Don’t call me,” *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 9 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/last-nights-family-home-evening-dont.html>.

136 Snuffer, “Last Night’s Family Home Evening - Don’t call me.”

attend. He left his council without learning of its decision.<sup>137</sup> He will not honor his leaders' instructions to cease teaching that which Church leaders have declared to be false doctrine, and only days earlier was jabbing Church leaders in Salt Lake:

I'm not sure if that meets the requirement for "repentance" in this current predicament, but that's what I can do. If the church wants to make me another offer, then let the stake president know and I'm sure he'll pass it along. Given how little time remains I thought I'd skip the middleman and put this up here because you guys downtown read this blog (as we can tell from the blogmeter).<sup>138</sup>

Actions speak louder than mere words. "It is not for me to say," he observes piously, "when such a line [to priestcraft] has been crossed" (211). But he has said it and implied it over and over again, and continues to do so.

Thus his irenic pose is frequently undercut by his switch to caricature and attack upon members and leaders of the church for not measuring up to his standards (all while denying that this is what he is doing).<sup>139</sup>

- "When [the temple ritual] becomes a substitute for actually receiving the heavenly gift offered by the Lord, it can make those who participate think they are better than others who cannot" (287).
- "The saints still claim we fulfilled everything required by the revelation in January, 1841 (Section 124)... According to their account of the historical narrative, all

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137 Denver Snuffer, "Don't Know," *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 9 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/dont-know.html>. See also Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Did Mormons boot writer? Church isn't saying and he doesn't know," *Salt Lake Tribune* (10 September 2013, 9:29 a.m.).

138 Snuffer, "Compliance (So Far As Possible)."

139 Compare his written claim that Church "authorities are to be respected and sustained" (28–29) with his attack on prophets and apostles below.

is well in their Zion. They intend to build Zion some day, when they get around to it” (303);

- “The gentiles<sup>140</sup> will be prideful, taught by false teachers, and learning false doctrine....False religions offer everything but worship of Christ. They will use good ideas, virtues, even true concepts as a distraction to keep followers from coming to Christ.<sup>141</sup> The way to prevent souls from receiving redemption is to distract them.... So long as they are kept occupied with hollow virtues and sentimental stories they cannot come to Christ, enter His presence, and gain salvation. The stories urged by false teachers are filling, but not nourishing to the soul” (336–337).
- “We have moved further away from Zion since the time Joseph Smith was Prophet... until [the Lord] sends someone who can teach what is necessary... we will continue to lose light, discard, truth, forget what is expected, and dwindle in unbelief” (402).
- “The gentile church will be secure with false teachings that tell them Zion is intact. Everything is fine. The power to redeem, to bind on earth and in heaven is with them. Zion is prospering and enjoys God’s favor. There is no need to repent and return to Christ, because everything is well with the church. But these ideas are not only false, they come from the devil” (338).
- “The gentiles will console themselves with the thought that ‘there is no hell,’ instead only varying degrees of glory. In the end all will be saved to some state of glory. Repentance can be postponed. So, also, can study of

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140 Snuffer’s interpretation requires that “the church restored through Joseph Smith [be] referred to throughout the Book of Mormon as the ‘gentiles’” (331).

141 It is ironic that this tactic is precisely that adopted throughout by *PTHG*—true principles are mixed with false claims.

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no hurry.... Follow the broad mainstream of the institution, and all will be given in the Lord's own time as we are prepared to receive more" (339).

As is so often the case, Snuffer's self-appointed jeremiad mixes truth with error. He warns about the very real risks of mistaking mere sentimentality for the Holy Spirit, but in the next breath implies that the current church ("the gentiles") all make the mistake: "The effect of the Holy Ghost is not sentimental. Moving someone to tears or thrilling them is a false emotional tool, employed by storytellers, writers, film makers, and composers. The gentiles could avoid errors if they had the Holy Ghost. But they confuse sentiment for the gift" (340).

Snuffer is perhaps most offensive when he decides to attack mainstream members' testimonies or expressions of belief:

- "Each week these gentiles will declare to one another 'I know the church is true' as a mantra to console them. Yes, 'All is well' with this imitation Zion" (339).
- "In Mormon 'testimonies' each Fast Sunday for many years now... Mormons praise the church president by reciting a mantra. ('I know President Monson is a prophet of God' and also confirming 'I know the church is true.') Seldom does Christ's name get mentioned in Mormon testimonies anymore, other than as an appendage to the 'testimony' confirming the exalted status of the president of the church, and the truthfulness of the church itself. The church has become a substitute for Christ, and in that sense has become the modern idol of the gentile church, just as Nephi, Christ, Moroni, and Joseph Smith predicted" (488–489).

Snuffer's witness and claims, then, are to be praised and accepted. Others' testimonies are to be ridiculed. I think it a pernicious slander to claim that Christ's name is "seldom"

mentioned in Mormon testimonies. Perhaps Snuffer's ward is some type of anomaly. But one cannot reason with this kind of blind prejudice. He will notice only those things which prove his point, even if they are exceptions rather than the rule, or only in the observer's jaundiced eye.

### *Disdain for Modern Apostles*

The misrepresentation and criticism is also prelude and justification for the disdain Snuffer exhibits toward the modern apostles. He sometimes tries, I think, to hide it, but it tends to show itself anyway.<sup>142</sup> His attitude is perhaps best summarized by his chapter title, "Prophets, Profits and Priestcraft" (185). Apostles are chosen, he insists, because of "proven management talent," (209) and "talented business, civic, and education backgrounds, according to leader's [*sic*] own explanations, outweigh religious backgrounds" (210). "In place of prophecy and revelation, church management focused on an effort to gain uniformity and control" (241).

He thus refers to the Church's current leaders as "modern administrative Apostles" (61):

Today, testimonies of the presiding authorities, including the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve, assert only vaguely they are "special witnesses" of the Lord.... A great number of active Latter-day Saints do not notice the careful parsing [*sic*] of words used by modern administrative Apostles. They presume a "witness of the name" of Christ is the same as the New Testament witness of His resurrection. The apostolic witness was always intended to be based upon the dramatic, the extraordinary... Without such visionary encounters with the Lord, they are unable to witness about Him, but only of His name (62).

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142 See, for example, the claim that, for him, "instruction from above... has little to do with 47 East South Temple" in note 131 herein.

*PTHG* also claims that there are “two different kinds of Apostles”—“one is an administrative office in the church. The other is a witness of the resurrection, who has met with Christ” (34). Thus, Snuffer sees himself as an “apostle” (and not a mere administrative one either). He repeatedly accuses leaders of the Church of fostering a “cult of personality” (241, 264, 352, 359–360), claiming the prophets believe “they are entitled to the adoration of followers” (359–360). His treatment of Brigham Young and blood atonement is simply vintage anti-Mormonism (132–141).<sup>143</sup> He even has a preemptive warning should disciplinary action be taken against him:

For us [the Church] the coming sifting will be done by the Lord, not by us diving ourselves into splinters. Of course, the church can judge and reject true believers. If it elects to do so, and to thereby cause a separation, the responsibility for that will lie with the church leaders. Leaders have already been warned about persecuting the saints, as this will result in them forfeiting whatever priesthood remains with them (317).

#### *Snuffer and Quinn on David O. McKay*

*PTHG* does some persecution of its own. Snuffer quotes D. Michael Quinn: “A First Presidency secretary acknowledges that [David O.] McKay liked his ‘celebrity status’ and wanted ‘to be recognized, lauded, and lionized’” (349). He cites Quinn’s *Extensions of Power* volume, which gives as its source a book by secretary Francis M. Gibbons.<sup>144</sup> A check of these references is discouraging, but not surprising for those familiar with

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143 “Murder was allowed,” reads one representative sentence, “but only when President Young thought it was needed for the salvation of the victim” (223).

144 The citation is from D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1997), 363. Quinn cites Francis Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1986), 347, 263.

Quinn's methods.<sup>145</sup> The actual text of Gibbons' volume for the pages cited reads:

[263] The encroachment on [McKay's] private life that celebrity status imposed... was something President McKay adjusted to with apparent difficulty. He was essentially a modest, private person, reared in a rural atmosphere, who at an early age was thrust into the limelight of the Mormon community. And as he gained in experience... as wide media exposure made his name and face known in most households, he became, in a sense, a public asset whose time and efforts were assumed to be available to all. This radical change in status was a bittersweet experience. *To be recognized, lauded, and lionized is something that seemingly appeals to the ego and self-esteem of the most modest among us, even to David O. McKay.* But the inevitable shrinkage in the circle of privacy that this necessarily entails provides a counter-balance that at times outweighs the positive aspects of public adulation. This is easily inferred from a diary entry of July 19, 1950.... The diarist hinted that it had become so difficult to venture forth on the streets of Salt Lake City that he had about decided to abandon the practice. For such a free spirit as he, for one who was so accustomed to going and coming as he pleased, any decision to restrict his movements about the city was an imprisonment of sorts. But the only alternatives, neither of which was acceptable, were to go in disguise or to ignore or to cut short those who approached him. The latter would have been especially repugnant to one such as David O. McKay, who had cultivated to the highest degree the qualities of courtesy and attentive listening.

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145 See Part 1, note 44.



It was ironic, therefore, that as the apostle's fame and influence widened, the scope of his private life was proportionately restricted.... [347]

Everywhere he traveled in Australia, or elsewhere on international tours, President McKay received celebrity treatment. Enthusiastic, cheering, singing crowds usually greeted him at every stop, sometimes to the surprise or chagrin of local residents. A group of well-known Australian athletes, about a flight to Adelaide with President McKay's party, learned an embarrassing lesson in humility. Seeing a large, noisy crowd at the airport, and assuming they were the object of its adulation, the handsome young men stepped forward to acknowledge the greeting [348] only to find that the cheers and excitement were generated by the tall, white-haired man who came down the ramp after them (*italics added*).

It takes a certain talent to transform an account that praises McKay as a "modest, private person," (whose privacy and personal convenience suffered because of how unwilling he was to appear rude or short with anyone) into an "acknowledgment" that McKay "liked" his celebrity. The original line about being "recognized, lauded, and lionized" is obviously intended to point out that such things are a danger to anyone because they appeal to the ego, and all would be tempted by them—but it is likewise clear that Gibbons does not think that McKay succumbed to that temptation. Snuffer is helping Quinn bear false witness against both McKay and Gibbons.<sup>146</sup> He is credulous, using unreliable sources that reinforce what he wants to believe.

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146 Snuffer uses similar tactics to distort (210–211) the meaning of Jeffrey R. Holland, "Prophets in the Land Again," General Conference, October 2006.

*A Closed Mental System*

Snuffer clearly sees himself as one called by God to straighten out Church members, prophets, and apostles.<sup>147</sup> He has created a hermetically closed mental system, in which any disagreement with his ideas is simply evidence that he is correct and fulfilling prophecy. “Prophetic messages can be suppressed, censored or discarded,” he declares without a hint of irony, “They can be ignored or condemned” (273):

We [the Latter-day Saints] claim to hold keys that would allow men filled with sin to forgive sins on earth and in heaven, to grant eternal life, or to bar from the kingdom of God. Using that false and useless claim, we slay the souls of men, thereby committing murder. We are riddled with priestcrafts (414).

Snuffer even manages to persuade himself that a call to reform the Church must come from someone who is not a leader, because Nephi condemns “those who ‘lead’” since Satan “leadeth them away carefully down to hell” (337–338, citing 2 Nephi 28:11–14):

Those who claim repentance is necessary will be accused of looking beyond the mark. They will be thought of as false messengers, with a false message, trying to steady the ark. They will be asked by what authority they preach repentance, because they are not called to lead. However, Nephi condemned those who “lead” because they “teach by the precepts of

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147 “I have an assignment given to me I intend to discharge. It is because I love God and therefore love His children. It will cost me a great deal to accomplish that. Not only ire of the organization, but the money I will spend to accomplish the task” – Snuffer, “Contentment,” (note 132 herein). Such a claim violates D&C 42:11: “It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.”

men,” and not by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, a call to repentance cannot come from a leader. It must come from elsewhere. When it does, the result will be anger, even rage, as Satan stirs up the hearts of men (338).

(If this argument were valid, one could argue that because the Good Shepherd “leadeth me beside the still waters,” one *should* follow leaders. This is simply sophistry or desperation.)

Thus, Snuffer *must* be believed, because to accuse him of being a false messenger is to fulfill prophecy and to confirm his association with past prophetic figures. Like conspiracy theories, no evidence or argument can penetrate this kind of self-referential thinking. Snuffer claims that the absence of miraculous experiences at the Nauvoo temple proves its bankruptcy—but I do not expect that my having demonstrated that there were miraculous events reported will change his mind (claim #10).

Snuffer repeatedly casts himself in the role of beleaguered prophet, crying in the wilderness:

- “If any dare to criticize the false Zion and its corrupt teachings, they will be met with anger, even rage” (337).
- “If a gentile follower of this false Zion encounters an inspired view of their own awful state, they can awaken.... Unfortunately, that is unlikely because anger and rage at the truth will keep them from seeing it” (339).
- “The call to repentance will be painful, difficult to bear, and unpopular” (340).
- “The gentiles will be in a state of awful darkness. They will not know revelation when it comes, and reject it when offered to them. They will say they have a body of doctrine and trusted leaders, and they do not need anything more” (341).

- “Any voice crying repentance is labeled a dissenter, and their words are condemned and attacked. They are thought to be ‘of the devil.’ By stirring up strife we succeed in making people fear truth. We close our minds, become deaf and blind” (415).
- “The latter-day gentiles will be unenlightened by the Holy Ghost, rejecting the Spirit’s condemnation of them, and unwilling to receive anything more from God” (342).
- “As to the messengers sent [after Moses to rebellious Israel]... they all held higher priesthood. Their power and authority came directly from the Lord, not from a priestly hierarchy which perpetuated authority” (406).
- “False prophets benefit from their claims. True ones are never popular, and always preach repentance.... any time a true prophet is sent, all who reject him become part of ‘the world.’ Those who are of ‘the world’ fail to receive the messengers God sends, preferring the false ones that men admire. The result of their false religion is damnation alongside the liars, adulterers and whoremongers” (409–410).

One is reminded of Carl Sagan’s rejoinder to physics cranks who cry, “They laughed at Galileo, you know!” Replied Sagan: “They also laughed at Bozo the Clown.” One is not automatically right or inspired simply because others disagree.<sup>148</sup>

Now that Snuffer has been excommunicated for apostasy, that too will likely provide him with more evidence that he is right.<sup>149</sup> If others’ testimonies disagree with him, they will be said to be deceived, corrupted, and lacking the true insight

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148 “The fact that some geniuses were laughed at does not imply that all who are laughed at are geniuses. They laughed at Columbus, they laughed at Fulton, they laughed at the Wright brothers. But they also laughed at Bozo the Clown.” [Carl Sagan, *Broca’s Brain* (New York: Random House, 1979), 64.]

149 See notes 129, 131–133 herein.

that he has been vouchsafed. To reject his “revelation” is to be unwilling to receive more from God.

All this is, to be sure, his privilege. But, Snuffer is not entitled to his own historical data. And, given how wrong he is about those things, one can only hope that he and his audience pause to wonder if he could be equally confused about matters of even greater import. “False messengers always imitate the true ones, claiming to be what they are not,” he warns. “They seek, of course, to deceive the very elect if it is possible” (276–277). This is a caution that cuts both ways—if we let it.

*In this paper, I speak only for myself and not for any person or group. I'm grateful for discussions, references, and advance readings from Russell Anderson, Connor Boyack, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Cassandra Hedelius, Bryce Haymond, Dennis Horne, Ted Jones, Daniel C. Peterson, Stephen O. Smoot, and S. Hales Swift. Special thanks are due Matthew Roper of the Laura F. Willis Center for Book of Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University for pointing me to several primary sources. Any errors remain my own.*

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## Appendix 1 — Square Footage of Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples Compared

*Kirtland.* Heber C. Kimball wrote that the Kirtland temple “was 80 x 60 feet, and 57 feet high to the eaves. It was divided into two stories.”<sup>150</sup> The temple also had a full attic. Thus: 3 levels x 80 feet x 60 feet = 14,400 square feet.

*Nauvoo.* Nauvoo had a basement baptistry, and a first and second floor. Each of the first and second floors had a half floor or “mezzanine” on either side (labeled “a” and “b” in the table below). The temple was crowned by an attic, and a multi-level tower. A bill for temple construction reports 2,225 square feet of flooring used for the entire tower, and so I have used that value here.

Level	Length (ft)	Width (ft)	Total Area (ft <sup>2</sup> )	Source
Basement baptistry	80	120	9,600	Colvin, 182
1st Floor	80	120	9,600	
2nd floor	80	120	9,600	
1st Floor Mezzanine (a)	18.5	100	1,850	Colvin, 207
1st Floor Mezzanine (b)	18.5	100	1,850	
2nd Floor Mezzanine (a)	18.5	100	1,850	Colvin, 210
2nd Floor Mezzanine (b)	18.5	100	1,850	
Front attic section	86	37	3,182	
Main east attic	88.2	28.75	2,536	Colvin, 214
Tower (multi-level)	-	-	2,225	Colvin, 213
			44,143	

The ratio between Nauvoo and Kirtland is thus conservatively  $44,143 \div 14,400 \approx 3.1$

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150 Whitney, 100.

## Appendix 2 — Temple Costs Compared to Population

Estimates of the Kirtland temple costs vary from \$40–60,000. As discussed in the main text, the 1845 Mormon population in Hancock County is estimated at 15,000. An older work estimates 25,000 Mormons in and around Nauvoo in 1844. The tables below allow readers to compare these figures:

Temple	Cost	Population	Days to Construct	Cost/Citizen	Cost/Day
Kirtland	\$40,000	2,025	1186	\$19.75	\$33.73
	\$60,000	2,025	1186	\$29.63	\$50.59
Nauvoo	\$1,000,000	15,000	1927	\$66.67	\$518.94
	\$1,000,000	25,000	1927	\$40.00	\$518.94

### *Costs Per Citizen*

Nauvoo	Compare to Kirtland at \$40,000	Compare to Kirtland at \$60,000
Nauvoo pop 15,000	3.4	2.3
Nauvoo pop 25,000	2.0	1.4

Even reading the data with the most favorable slant for Snuffer's thesis, the Nauvoo temple cost 1.4 times as much per citizen as Kirtland.<sup>151</sup>

### *Costs Per Day*

Nauvoo	Compare to Kirtland at \$40,000	Compare to Kirtland at \$60,000
Nauvoo at \$1 million	15.4	10.3

The most advantageous reading of the data for Snuffer's thesis still shows the Saints spending ten times as much.

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151 Estimates for both temples typically include labor and materials. See William Edwin Berrett, *The Restored Church: A Brief History of the Growth and Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, fifteenth edition revised and enlarged (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1973), 125; and Colvin, 44.

