Christ Manifested to His People

Marion D. Hanks

My thanks to Dr. Cowan for his kind and generous introduction. I have nurtured similar feelings of appreciation for him and his significant contributions to the work over many years.

I am truly delighted to be with you this morning and really somewhat surprised to see that so many of you have braved the splendid snowstorm to attend this seminar. The schedule of substantive scholarly presentations planned for you following these opening remarks bodes well for fulfilling your hopes and expectations in coming.

Your energetic and conscientious chairman, Dr. Parry, directed me to an appropriate parking space, noting construction problems in nearer parking lots but assuring me it would be only a five-minute walk or so for one so energetic and young as I. With deep snow on slippery sidewalks and with shoes suited to sliding, it turned into a more Book of Mormon-like day-and-a-half journey for a Nephite. I was retrieved from a snowbank or two by generous students and stand before you this morning slightly damp and a scant red-eye airplane ride from the South Seas, where a few hours ago I was gazing upon a peaceful blue ocean with banyan and palm trees framing a beautiful scene of water and sky blending in bright sunshine.

Nonetheless, I am grateful to be here to express my
appreciation for temples and the blessing of worshiping and learning in them. I am grateful for students and scholars who pursue matters relevant to temple history and purpose and meaning, and who couple their searching with consistent temple acquaintance and temple experience and temple worship. This each must do if anything of significant value personally or to the work is to be accomplished through these labors.

Rufus Jones, Quaker teacher and mystic, wrote once of "two ways of dealing with the nature of things." He spoke of (1) the method of observation and description, the "spectator method," and (2) the method of "vital experience, the discovery of reality by living your way into the heart of things."1

Your subject matter for the day is of great interest to me, and I sincerely wish I could enjoy participation in every session. There is no concern in my soul about such search and discovery; there is encouragement in my heart for honest inquiry. But I do mean to emphasize that I believe, consistent with Rufus Jones's declared principles, that we need to be personally in touch with the spirit and blessing of temple worship while we learn all we can about temples and their historical meaning and purpose and importance.

We must always keep this in mind about a temple: The temple is the House of the Lord. He has accepted it as his house and promised that his name, his eye, and his heart would be in his temple perpetually. His power and Spirit may be felt there.

Why is a temple so important to us? What blessing is there for those who are spiritually and mentally attentive and sensitive in temple worship?

It is not my purpose this morning to consider at any length or in detail the theme perhaps most frequently
related to the temple in the minds of many, the redemption of the dead. My special emphasis will be the blessings of the temple to the living who work and worship there.

Yet a thoughtful journey once more through the sense and sweetness of vicarious work in temples for the honored dead, particularly our own lineage, would be very good for the most knowledgeable or sophisticated among us. If commitment to Christ and his atoning love and his teachings is essential for all of God's children, and if God is loving and just, then some provision must be made in his plan for reaching and teaching those who died without knowing the truth and having a chance to comply with the commandments. The scriptures are clear and compelling. No other answer than gospel provision for family and temple work has been put forward by the religious world, the Christian "mainstream," to answer this critical question.

The effort to identify individually and do the work necessary to open the door for the dead to exercise their choices in matters of eternal progression is of great importance to us. But my attention this morning is centered in the value and blessing of temple work and worship for the living.

An excerpt from a well-known and honored statement from Elder John A. Widtsoe says:

There is a feeling abroad that the benefits of the temple are primarily for the dead. This is not so. While the dead, if repentant, are able through our efforts to enter into a larger salvation, yet the work itself has a most beneficial effect upon the living who serve as proxies for the dead. . . . The response of the spirit of man to the ordinances of the House of the Lord stimulates every normal power and activity and helps greatly in the accomplishment of our daily tasks; more joy enters into the daily routine of life, . . . spiritual vision . . . love . . . peace
tempers the tempests of life, and we rise to higher levels of thought and action.²

President Gordon B. Hinckley adds, “Surely these temples are unique among all buildings. They are houses of instruction. They are places of covenants and promises. . . . In the sanctity of their appointments we commune with him and reflect on his Son, our Savior and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who served as proxy for each of us in a vicarious sacrifice in our behalf.”³

It is in this setting of instruction and reflection concerning our Lord, and thus our Heavenly Father, that we can, if we will, come to know them and to begin to glimpse our own eternal possibilities and present imperfections. Many of us who come to a temple to receive our own blessings bring “shallow vessels” to dip in the deep wells of our Lord; we walk with a certain bewilderment, many of us, but as we return on repeated occasions to serve others vicariously, even as he served us in ways we could not accomplish for ourselves, we begin to comprehend the meaning.

He “manifests himself” to us in his house (see D&C 109:5), and we come to revere him the more and to accept his invitation, extended to us as well as to the ancient people of this continent as he visited them after his resurrection: “Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you. . . . Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:16, 24).

For me every proceeding and principle of the temple points to Christ, the only name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. Testimony is offered of the glory of the temple, of the transcendent and the supernal, and many experience some measure of the revelation, peace, thanksgiving, comfort, and faith to be enjoyed there.
Yet many who come turn away and never come again. That which is supposed to happen apparently, obviously, does not happen for them. Perhaps we could do more to prepare those who are missing the blessings.

**Temple Building Commanded**

In the dedicatory prayer of the first temple of this last dispensation, at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836, a prayer revealed by God to the Prophet, it was noted that the “Lord God of Israel” had “commanded” them to build a house to his name (D&C 109:1–2). As it is recorded in section 124, verse 31, he later commanded them to build “a house unto me” in Nauvoo. In that same revelation it is noted, “For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was” (verse 38).

The reference is, of course, (1) to the beautiful, small, portable structure fashioned under commandment in their wilderness wandering—a tabernacle, also called a “temple” and a “house of the Lord” in Samuel and elsewhere in scripture (1 Samuel 1:7, 9, 24; 3:3); and (2) to the first temple built by the Israelites in the promised land—called the Temple of Solomon. Other temple construction followed. Further, it is declared in the revelation that his people “are always commanded to build [temples] unto my holy name” (D&C 124:37–39). Temple work and worship are part of God’s eternal plan and thus of the restored gospel!

**The Order of the Temple Revealed**

The Prophet Joseph recorded the restoration of temple understanding in his history of the Church. He notes that
Figure 1. Top, the Tabernacle of Moses, also called the Tent of the Congregation. Bottom, the Temple of Solomon, which doubled the dimensions of the Tabernacle. (See Hebrews 8:5; 1 Chronicles 28:11–12, 19.)

he spent the day of Wednesday, May 4, 1842, in meetings in his private office above his store in Kirtland with a number of the brethren. He wrote that he was “instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments,” and teaching of the keys pertaining to the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood,
and "setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days [Adam], and all those plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days."

He wrote that the truths taught that day to the brethren had been received by revelation and would be shared by all the Saints as they were prepared to receive them, in a place prepared to communicate them. It was urged therefore that "the Saints be diligent in building the Temple, and all houses which they have been, or shall hereafter be, commanded of God to build."

Thus, in the day of restoration was declared anew the concern of the Almighty with temples and their availability and purposes. This was earlier expressed to Moses on the Mount (see Exodus 25:9, 40) and to David concerning the temple he intended and prepared to build but was prevented by the Lord from undertaking. His son Solomon was nominated to construct the temple instead, and David passed on to him the detailed pattern he had received "by the spirit" (1 Chronicles 28:12, italics added; see verses 2–3, 6, 11–12). Solomon’s Temple was the product of this appointment by the Lord and instruction "by the spirit."

Revelation of Symbolic Meaning

The scriptures themselves bear a fascinating account of the communication of certain commandments and understanding to Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the Garden. In Moses, chapter 5, it is recorded that

Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way
toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will (verses 4–9; italics added).

To this was added the exultation of spirit in Adam and Eve as they expressed gratitude for their new and treasured understanding of the plan and of their significant part in it (see Moses 5:10–12), and the affirmation that “thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning. . . . And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was” (Moses 5:58–59).

Thus temples do have strong historical roots; the building of them is commanded; and the meaning and even the detail of them revealed (see Exodus 25:9, 39; 1 Chronicles 28:12). And as with Adam and Eve, the elements of temple
worship are *symbolic*, they are *covenant-centered*, and they bless us, as Adam and Eve learned, with the wonderful privilege of *association and instruction and education in the mission and in the principles of eternal progression central in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ*. It is with this latter point that I desire to be chiefly involved this morning.

**House of Learning, Instruction, and Peace**

The classic language of scripture as the Lord instructed his Saints to “establish a house” is powerful. The temple is declared to be a “house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 88:119; 109:8; italics added). Then, in the revelation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 97, it is declared that the Lord’s House should be a “place of thanksgiving for all saints, and for a place of *instruction*” (verse 13; italics added). Anciently, the “Lord of Hosts” declared the temple to be a place where he “will . . . give peace” (Haggai 2:9).

As the scriptures *point us to the temple* and invite us to learn there, and what to learn, so does the temple *point us to scripture*. In the revealed dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple is this petition: “And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall *worship* in this house may be taught *words of wisdom out of the best books*, and that they may *seek learning even by study, and also by faith*, as thou hast said” (D&C 109:14; italics added).

In a magnificent scriptural teaching perhaps less well known than some others, the story of Jonah and his love for the temple and its meaning in his life (and in ours if we choose) is made clear. Jonah has been called on a mission, which he tries to evade. When Jonah flees on a ship headed for Tarshish, his purpose is made known as the ship is
about to founder, and he is cast into the sea and swallowed up by a "great fish," in which he remains for three days and three nights. The remarkable record in chapter 2 of Jonah is less known than this early story and the part that follows his being cast out upon dry ground and being called a second time to the mission that he has sought to avoid. I read to you the brief ten verses of Jonah chapter 2:

Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou hearest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, 0 Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:1-9; italics added).

It is then recorded that "the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (Jonah 2:10).

For Jonah the temple was a place where he, repentant, sorely repentant, could find comfort and forgiveness and mercy. It was to the temple that his thoughts turned in his dire need, and to his commitments to God in the temple, the vows that he had vowed. He looked to the temple for restoration and a spiritual future.
I love that whole story. I wish the moving part in it relevant to the temple were more broadly understood and shared.

A Place of Light

For my own self I add one other term of description and warmth to those noted: to me the temple is a place of light because it is the place, together with the scriptures, of our possibilities for a most fruitful relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus with his Father, whose will he came to do. He taught what he had heard from his Father, he said and did what he had seen his Father do, was sent in his Father's name, was perfectly unified in every way with his Father, and was one with the Father, even as he prayed that his disciples might be one with him and he with them. He declared that the Father was “in him” and prayed that in like manner he might be “in” the disciples: “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. . . . And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:23, 26; italics added).

Not only did he plead for those whom he had called to serve and sacrifice with him, but for all who should believe on him through them. His plea was that they all might be one as he and the Father were one (see John 17:20–23).

He was not, of course, praying for the loss of their individuality or identity, any more than he was suggesting that about himself. He was praying for them to have the perfect unity enjoyed by him and his Father. As he began the powerful petition to his Father that is sometimes called the “great intercessory prayer,” Jesus reaffirmed with his Father
that he had given him power to “give eternal life,” this “greatest of the gifts of God,” to those for whom he had stewardship. “And this is life eternal,” he said, “that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

One of the most significant and satisfying blessings of temple worship is the clear affirmation of the relationship of the Father and the Son. The *scriptures* teach this truth plainly. The vision of Joseph Smith clarified for us once and for all their uniqueness and individuality. And the *temple* fully attests this monumental truth and leaves no doubt about their complete unity. They are one in character and quality, in purpose, in their work and glory. So perfect is their spiritual maturity, so perfect their unity, that if one speaks, it is as if the other spoke. Thus Christ comes *in the Father’s name*, saying, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30); yet he declared that “my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

The First Presidency and Twelve in a doctrinal exposition in 1916, during the presidency of Joseph F. Smith, made a declaration that is helpful in our understanding: “In all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. . . . Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father’s name; and . . . His words and acts were and are those of the Father.”

**The Mission of the Church**

All of us are conscious I trust of President Benson’s forceful declaration at the conclusion of the April 1988 general conference of the mission of the Church “to invite all to come unto Christ.” His concluding statement was, “May we
all go to our homes rededicated to the sacred mission of the Church as so beautifully set forth in these conference sessions—to ‘invite all to come unto Christ’ (D&C 20:59), ‘yea, come unto Christ; and be perfected in him’ (Moroni 10:32).”

The mission of the Church is glorious, to invite all of us to come unto Christ through proclaiming the gospel, perfecting our lives, and redeeming our dead. As we come unto Christ, we bless our own lives, those of our families, and our Father in Heaven’s other children, both living and dead.

Recall the words of the Lord: “For I will raise up unto myself a pure people, that will serve me in righteousness” (D&C 100:16). In explanation of the process of purification and sanctification, the Lord gave these remarkably pertinent words for those who seek to understand the meaning and value of a temple:

Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will. . . . And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean (D&C 88:68, 74).

This responsibility to purify, to sanctify themselves, was wonderfully accomplished under difficult conditions of persecution and affliction in the time of Helaman and his son Nephi: “Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the
sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

As the mission of the Church is to “invite all to come unto Christ,” so I believe, in its clearest and loveliest sense, that this is also the mission of temples, where we not only undertake the sacred service of work for redemption of the dead, to open the door for them, but where the choicest of all opportunities exists to learn of Christ, and to come to know him and commune with him and to purify our own hearts.

It is also the setting where the messengers who go forth to proclaim the gospel are meant to be prepared: “And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them; and from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hand, to fulfil that which thou hast spoken by the mouths of the prophets, concerning the last days” (D&C 109:22–23).

The perfecting of the Saints is one of those functions through which we come unto Christ. I believe that the temple provides the best of all settings for the purification and sanctification process basic in the perfection of the Saints. Recall the moving direction of the Lord to the early leaders noted in the verses above and note also the power and promise of section 109:11–13:

In a manner that we may be found worthy, in thy sight, to secure a fulfilment of the promises which thou hast made unto us, thy people, in the revelations given unto us; that thy glory may rest down upon thy people,
and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house; and that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness (italics added).

Elder John A. Widtsoe blessed us with a beautiful statement about these verses and Doctrine and Covenants 110:7–8:

It is a great promise that to the temples God will come, and that in them man shall see God. What does this promised communion mean? Does it mean that once in a while God may come into the temples, and that once in a while the pure in heart may see God there; or does it mean the larger thing, that the pure in heart who go into the temples may there, by the Spirit of God, always have a wonderful rich communion with God? I think that is what it means to me and to you and to most of us. We have gone into these holy houses, with our minds freed from the ordinary earthly cares, and have literally felt the presence of God. In this way the temples are always places where God manifests himself to man and increases his intelligence. A temple is a place of revelation.

**Only through Christ**

I well recall one of the first anxious and earnest conversations with a temple attender after my service as temple president began in the Salt Lake Temple. A very thoughtful young lady had read through the relevant verses concerning the function of the temple as a house of learning and of instruction. She was perceptive enough to recognize that to know God and Christ, “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,” is “life eternal” (John 17:3). She knew also that we learn to know our Father and ultimately
return to him through Christ. All the standard works so teach. For instance:

Redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise (2 Nephi 2:6-8; italics added).

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6; italics added).

My testimony to her was that for me everything in the temple points ultimately to Christ and to our Father. The efficacy of the ordinances and covenants is in his atoning love and delegated authority—the authority of “the Holy Priesthood, after the order of the Son of God” (D&C 107:3). But she had not yet made a clear connection in her own mind and heart how temple worship can become a critical key to knowing the Lord.

Christ, Scriptures, Temple, Home

And where do we learn of Christ? It is written that all of the prophets understood and testified of him. For instance:

Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which
have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him (2 Nephi 11:4).

I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea.

And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophecied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ. And this is not all—it has been made manifest unto me, for I have heard and seen; and it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, I know if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost (Jacob 7:10–12).

Where do we learn of him and thus of the Father? My answer is through prayer, through the scriptures, and through the temple.

The first, prayer, is personal and can be understood only through the practice of prayer. The second, scripture study, is also personal, and can be realized only through earnest effort and searching and studying and pondering. The home, with the assistance of Church instruction and the sacrament, should offer the greatest assistance and strength in these undertakings. “Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again” (3 Nephi 17:3).

The temple is of utmost importance in providing the setting for purifying and therefore sanctifying ourselves, which, as we learn about Christ, can lead us to that personal knowledge of him and witness of him that lead to the most precious of life’s gifts. In learning and appreciating the principles upon which his holy life was based, the path of
principle which he trod, we can truly appreciate his sacred gift, his atoning death, and the pattern of his holy life.

How can this be accomplished in the temple? Note the yearning of the Psalmist thousands of years ago: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple” (Psalm 27:4).

The ancient worshiper wanted to be worthy of being in the temple—perhaps the equivalent of qualifying worthily for a temple recommend and being permitted to attend regularly in our time—where for him then there were two marvelous blessings and privileges: (1) to behold the beauty of the Lord and (2) to inquire in his holy temple. In complete consistency with this wish, and in fulfillment of it, was the declaration in the revelation of the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer that temples are provided in order that “the Son of Man might . . . manifest himself to his people” (D&C 109:5). Temple learning and worship can be the university of eternal life through Jesus Christ. In the prayer of dedication at Kirtland, this petition was offered to the Lord: “Do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom . . . ; and that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost (D&C 109:14–15).

Is this accomplished by ceremonies and ritual? Yes, in part, if we understand the purpose, the symbolism, even as Adam and Eve were brought to understand it in the earliest days of mortality. But basically we learn through the substance of the message, the principles of eternal progression, of eternal life. It is around a few simple principles that we make covenants with the Lord. All who understand the temple declare them to be of highest importance in our
eternal journey back into the presence of Deity. Recall Paul’s statement to the Romans that we are reconciled to God by Christ’s death, and saved “by his life” (Romans 5:10). To me this says that the principles of his holy life lead us to that fullness of salvation known as exaltation—loving, learning, serving, growing, creative life on a Godly level with loved ones and with the Father and the Son. In the temple we can learn to live as Christ lived on earth and as he and the Father live.

**Central Principles of Christ’s Life**

What are those principles which are central in his life that are taught in the temple and that relate to the covenants we make with the Lord? He came, he said, *to do the will of his Father*. Many times he repeated this concept, including those moments in Gethsemane, as he approached the cross, when he prayed that if it be possible, this cup might pass from him, but that nevertheless the will of the Father be done and not his own. His life was geared to giving, in the pattern of his Father. God so loved that he gave; Christ so loved that he gave. To serve, to share, to offer the supreme example of unselfishness, even at the cross—this was central in his life.

He *loved* in a way that perhaps only he and the Father really yet understand. But we are here to learn that, to learn to love enough to give. On battlefields and in hospital rooms and in the quiet heroic circumstances of unselfish devotion to parent or child, it has been demonstrated for me that there are people who have learned truly to love and sacrifice in his way.

Of his loyalty, his fidelity, the purity of his life, there is no question, nor is there any question about our own responsibility to be true and faithful, to learn through heartache
and heartbreak to purify our hearts as we purify our lives in order that he may save us. For him, to seek first the kingdom of his Father was the motivating and directing power of his life. He laid it all on the line, he who could have called legions of angels to his side, he who had all power given him in heaven and in earth.

_The Holy Exemplar_

These principles are taught in the temple; perhaps there remains only a question or two to be asked. Who of all who ever lived, of all whom we know, was the highest and holiest exemplar of these principles? Who in any measure, like he, faithfully did the will of his Father at all costs, served and shared and loved and gave without stint, was without sin, totally loyal to his commission and his commitments; who “being reviled, reviled not”; and who laid everything on the line for the work, for the Father and the Father’s children?

Ultimately in a temple we kneel at a sacred altar and there covenant and, in the manner of temple symbolism, once more have our attention pointed toward him and how he died, how much he had to love God’s children to suffer what he suffered for us.

For me there is no way to conceive a better and more glorious learning opportunity than the temple provides. The scriptures are full of these remarkable instructions and his holy example. Yet in the temple there is distilled in a simple way in a few moments the essence of the pattern of his holy life. We are in fact reconciled to God through his redeeming and atoning death, and we are saved in the highest and holiest sense by following the pattern of the pure and wholesome principles that were the heart of his life.

In Moroni 7 we read some of Mormon’s instructions to
his son: “Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:47–48; italics added).

What Outcome?

There is yet another question to be asked as we rejoice in what we learn about the Father and the Son and the plan of life. What should happen to us through the experience of temple going and temple understanding and temple worship?

In Doctrine and Covenants 109:15 is one powerful answer: through temple worship we can grow up in the Lord, receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost, organize our lives according to his laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing. Other answers relate to the first and second great commandments and our mature growth in them. The parable of the sheep and the goats taught in Matthew 25:31–46 and a host of consistent and supportive scriptures emphasize the vital place of our efforts to help those who have needs. The temple should strengthen our preparation to receive the gifts of his atoning love (see D&C 88:32, 33) and to follow his example in caring for the downtrodden and needy.

In short, in the temple we learn the path of principle of which he was the glorious Exemplar. “Ye shall pray for them, and shall not cast them out; and if it so be that they
come unto you oft ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name. Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Nephi 18:23–24; italics added).

The Kind of People We Are

What really matters is the kind of people we are, the kind of people we become as we return to the temple to serve others and to ponder our own progress in the principles that were critical in his life—to learn and do the will of the Father, to serve and share, to love and mercifully give and forgive, to be loyal, to be clean and pure, to give to his work whatever we are privileged to give. In short, the mature experience of temple worship ideally has the power to produce—and sometimes does—a new and different kind of person who knows the path of principles followed by the Savior and gives them application in his or her personal life.

Love is more than a word or a feeling: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). Brotherhood and sisterhood go beyond the desire to be kind and considerate. Good intentions, given light and life by association with the pattern of the Savior’s example, by the spirit of concern and kindness taught and felt in the temple, do make a difference in many lives.

The Heart of the Gospel

As we choose and follow a course of giving, of caring, of graciousness and kindness, we come to understand that this is not an optional element of the gospel, it is the heart of it. Decency and honor, unselfishness, good manners and
good taste are expected of us. What really matters, after all, is what kind of people we are, what we are willing to give and do “more than others.” This we decide daily, hourly, as we learn and accept the direction of the Lord.

After the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Savior, something happened to the surviving disciples, led by Peter, who in a time of stress had failed him. Pentecost occurred—the coming of the Spirit—and those who had wavered stood strong in testimony and testifying. Periodically they were detained and brought before the “council.” They were warned, threatened, beaten, and released. Chapters 1 to 5 of the book of Acts tell the story. The last verses of chapter 5 have dramatic impact. Gamaliel has intervened with his associates to give the disciples another chance, a little more time. So they are warned again to cease teaching and preaching Christ, are beaten once more, and released. The record says they departed the premises rejoicing that they were found worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake. Then, “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

In like manner something should happen to us as we depart the temple in the spirit of 3 Nephi 17:3: “Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.”

A purifying spirit can cause us, acquainted now in a special way with the path followed and lighted by the Lord—and loving him—to be new persons, practicing love and brotherhood, rallying to the will of the Lord, serving, sharing, loving, loyal to wholesome standards, seeking first the kingdom of God.
We need to purify our family lives and make our homes places where we “teach and preach” Jesus Christ daily but follow him always. Our homes, our families, our individual lives should become centers of learning, centers of unselfishness and service. In the words of Rufus Jones, “Saints are not made for haloes and for inward thrills. They are made to become focus points of light and power. The true saint is a good mother, a good neighbor, a good constructive force in society, a fragrance and a blessing. The true saint is a dynamic Christian who exhibits in some definite spot the type of life which is fully realized in heaven.”

To conclude, consider again what to me is a clear and forceful key to the meaning of temples and temple worship. The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1836 the prayer that was offered at the dedication of the Kirtland, Ohio, Temple. The prayer became section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants. For me it remains the standard and remarkable example of dedicatory prayers. One who sincerely desires to understand basic temple meaning could well read it over and over, especially its first touching, powerful two dozen verses. Verse 5 is a beautiful statement that merits deep consideration: “For thou knowest that we have done this work through great tribulation; and out of our poverty we have given of our substance to build a house to thy name, that the Son of Man might have a place to manifest himself to his people” (D&C 109:5; italics added).

How does he manifest himself to his people in the temple?

Chiefly, I believe, through the beauty and compelling cogency of temple principles, ordinances, and covenants, through temple worship—through the spirit of revelation and other blessings of the Spirit available there for those whose minds and hearts are in tune, and who are patient
and anxious to learn and to move their own lives toward Christlike ideals (see 3 Nephi 27:21, 27).

One example may suffice in illustrating the spiritual strength that comes to those who persevere in the service of the Lord in temples. I came into the temple one morning about 4:30 A.M., grateful to have been able to plow through heavy snow from our home to get there. In a secluded room, sitting thoughtfully as he leaned forward on his cane, I chanced upon an older, deeply admired friend. Like I, he was dressed in white, temple workers’ white. I greeted him cheerily and inquired what he was doing there at that hour of the morning.

He said, “You know what I am doing here, President Hanks. I am an ordinance worker here to fulfill my assignment.”

“I do know that,” I said, “but I am wondering how you got here through the snow storm. I just heard on the radio that Parley’s Canyon is closed to all traffic, indeed barricaded.”

He said, “I have a four-wheeler that will climb trees.”

I said, “So do I, or I would not be here, and I live only a few miles away.”

I then asked him how he had managed to get through the barricades that the news announcements had said were in place in the canyon. His answer was not atypical of this rancher/stake president whom I had first seen as a robust, strong man astride his horse when I spent an afternoon with him prior to stake conference meetings. Arthritis and age had literally shrunk him now and would soon take his life. He had much pain in moving about. His answer that morning was, “Now, President Hanks, I have known those highway officers, many of them, since they were born. They know I must get through and that if necessary I might try
to go overland! They also know my truck and my experience, and they just move their barricades if they need to.”

He was there, faithful and loyal at that hour of the morning, to begin his sacred work. It is such individuals with such faith and devotion that temples help to develop. For this all of us should be forever grateful.

Notes
4. HC, 5:1–2; italics added.
5. Ibid., 2.
9. Rufus Jones Speaks, 199.