



10-1-1996

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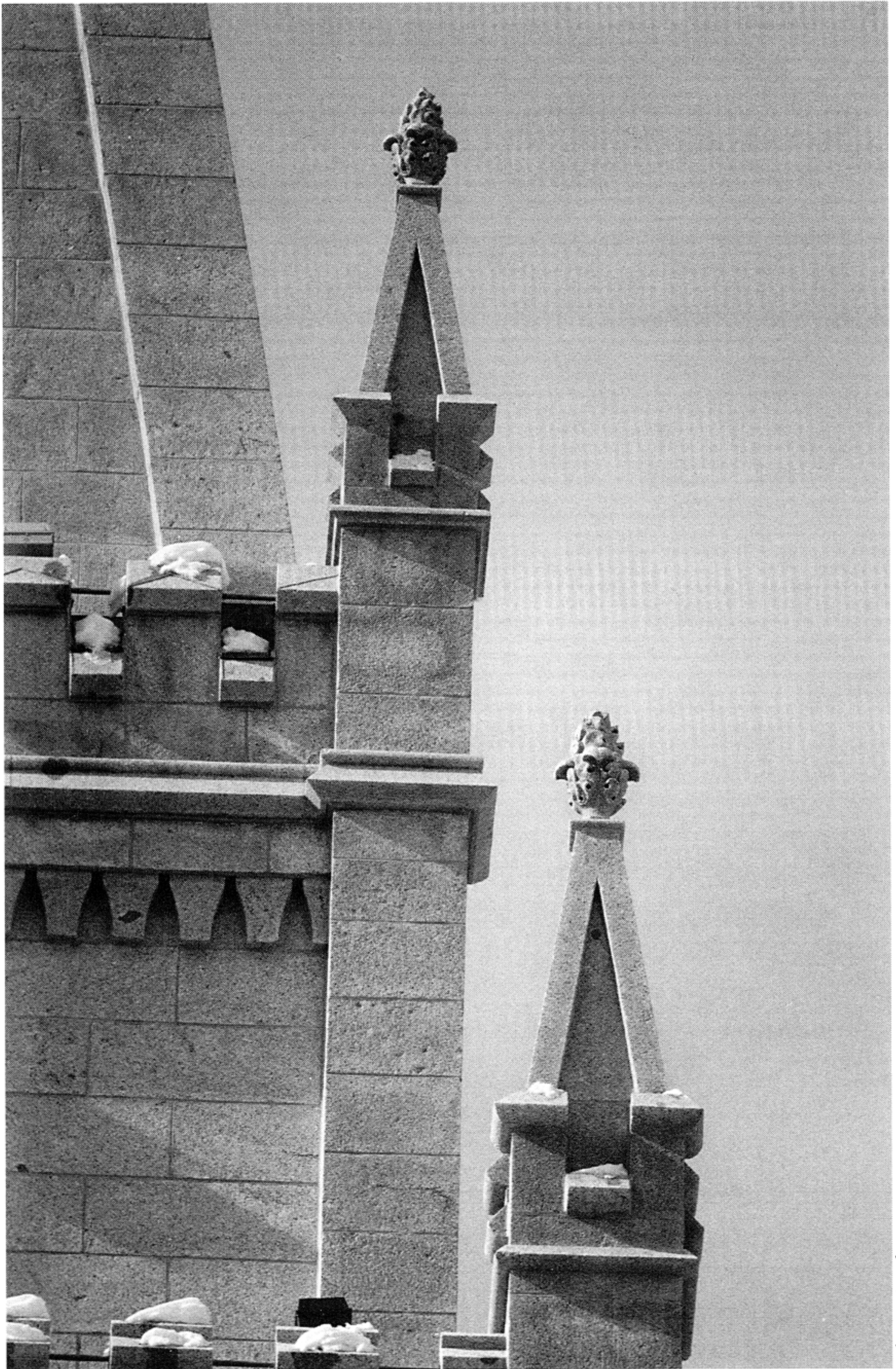
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Recommended Citation

Oman, Richard G. (1996) "Exterior Symbolism of the Salt Lake Temple: Reflecting the Faith That Called the Place into Being," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 36 : Iss. 4 , Article 2.

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John P. Snyder

Fig. 1. Pinnacles on the Salt Lake Temple are among the symbols representing aspects of the priesthood. Sources disagree on the nature of the ornament capping the pinnacles, which may be a torch representing the Holy Ghost or may be acanthus leaves similar to those found on Corinthian capitals.

Exterior Symbolism of the Salt Lake Temple: Reflecting the Faith That Called the Place into Being

Exterior stonework on the Great Temple masterfully represents the Latter-day Saint understanding of the universe, time, the priesthood, and Jesus Christ and his gospel.

Richard G. Oman
with photographs by John P. Snyder

Shortly after World War II, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps wrote a book called *Man's Search for Meaning*.¹ This title captures one of humanity's deepest yearnings. Temples answer some of the most important aspects of that search for Latter-day Saints; many of those answers are expressed visually on the exterior of the Salt Lake Temple. This paper represents my personal reflections on the visual symbolism of this temple as informed by the scriptures, the LDS historical record, and statements from General Authorities.²

Interpretative Framework

Because the temple is a place sacred to the Latter-day Saints, it must be studied within the framework of the tradition of faith that called that place into being. When scholars see sacred places and traditions through the lens of modern secularism, they usually deceive themselves regarding those institutions: "Examine the institutions of the ancients without thinking of their religious notions, and you find them obscure, whimsical, and inexplicable."³ Such scholars miss the spirit that drives and animates. Their work would be like studying Joseph Smith as simply a collection of chemical compounds—interesting chemistry perhaps but not a very useful way to study Joseph Smith's contributions to religious thought and history.

Therefore, I have done my best to see the Salt Lake Temple with the “eye of faith” (Ether 12:19) and to describe the meaning of the temple exterior from within the Latter-day Saint tradition.⁴ Nevertheless, this exposition is in no way an official statement of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,⁵ nor am I claiming completeness.⁶

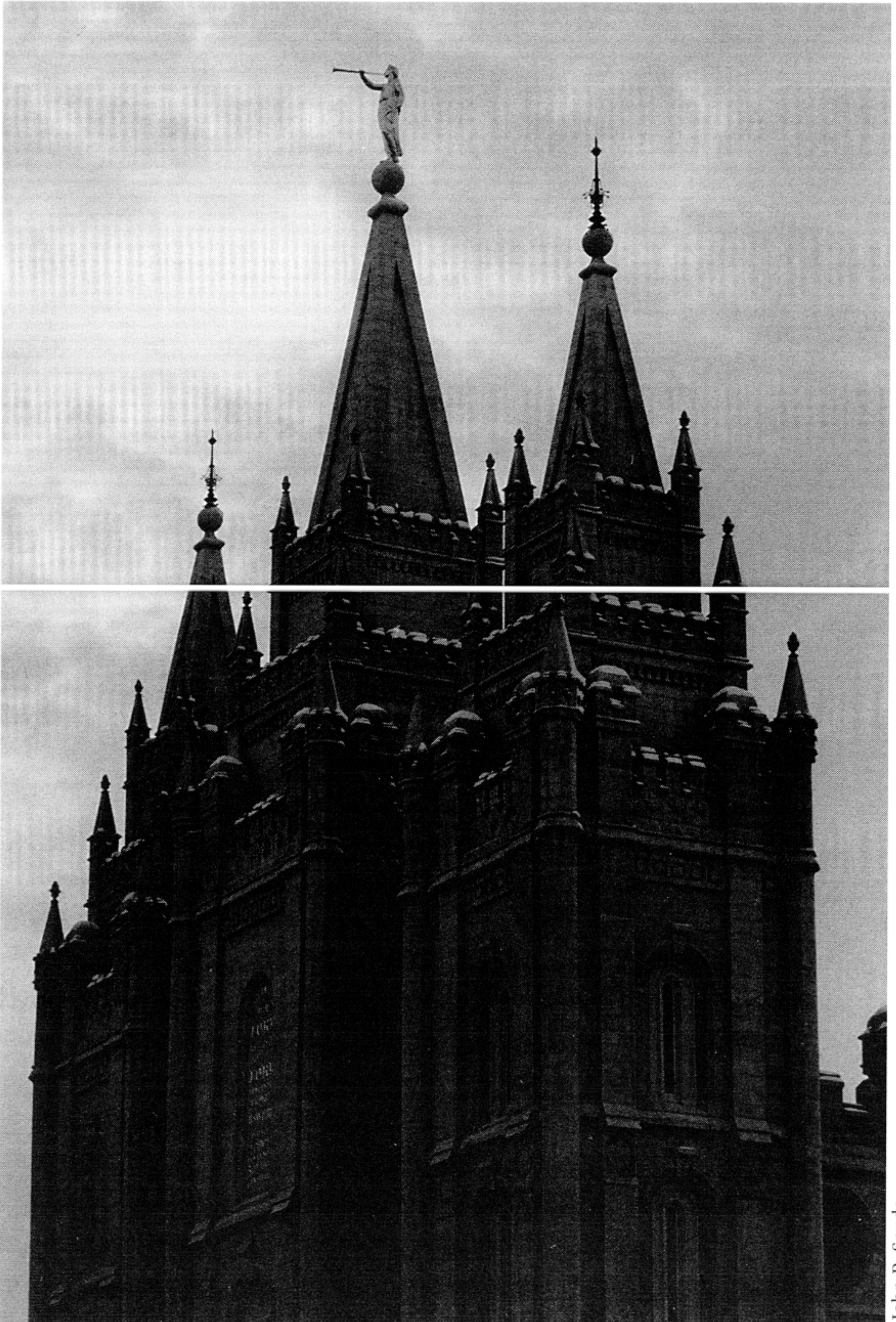
Symbolism in Relationships

Attempting to analyze the exterior of the temple led me through a series of challenges. I first tried to create a simple equation list; sunstones equal this, starstones equal that. It was like reading a dictionary instead of Shakespeare. I discovered that it was the *relationships* between the symbols that contained much of the iconographical meaning. Like most complex symbolic creations, the temple has multiple layers of meaning (figs. 1, 2). This layering and connectedness of meanings forced me to broaden my interpretive framework as I tried to make sense of the complexities of the symbolic relationships. The temple exterior must be taken as a series of wholes for its iconographical messages to be understood.⁷

A symbol can function in one set of relationships and mean one thing. In another set of relationships, it can have another meaning. For example, the symbol of the moon, which repeatedly appears on the temple, was usually associated during Renaissance and Counterreformation Catholicism with the Virgin Mary.⁸ For much of the Moslem world, the moon symbolizes Islam. One of the symbolic uses of the moon in LDS scriptures is to delineate a degree of heavenly reward (1 Cor. 15:41; D&C 76:71, 97). On the temple, the moon symbol has yet other, multiple, religious meanings because it functions in different relationships of symbols.⁹ And because it and other temple exterior symbols derive meaning from more than one group of relationships, they must be discussed in more than one context.

Ignoring relationships, then, would trivialize and sometimes even eliminate rich spiritual meanings. In fact the word *symbol*

comes from the Greek noun, *symbolon* derived from the verb, *symbollein*, which means to bring together, to collect or compare. Visible forms are gathered, collected, and compared to demonstrate or represent things not readily available to the senses. . . . Symbols form



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Fig. 2. The exterior symbolism of the temple has multiple levels of meanings.

bridges between the material experiences of the senses and that which lies or reaches beyond. . . . Religious symbols express a divine or heavenly reality through things taken from the created world. They possess a profound capacity to reveal the meaning of something that outstrips our capacity to frame neatly in words.¹⁰

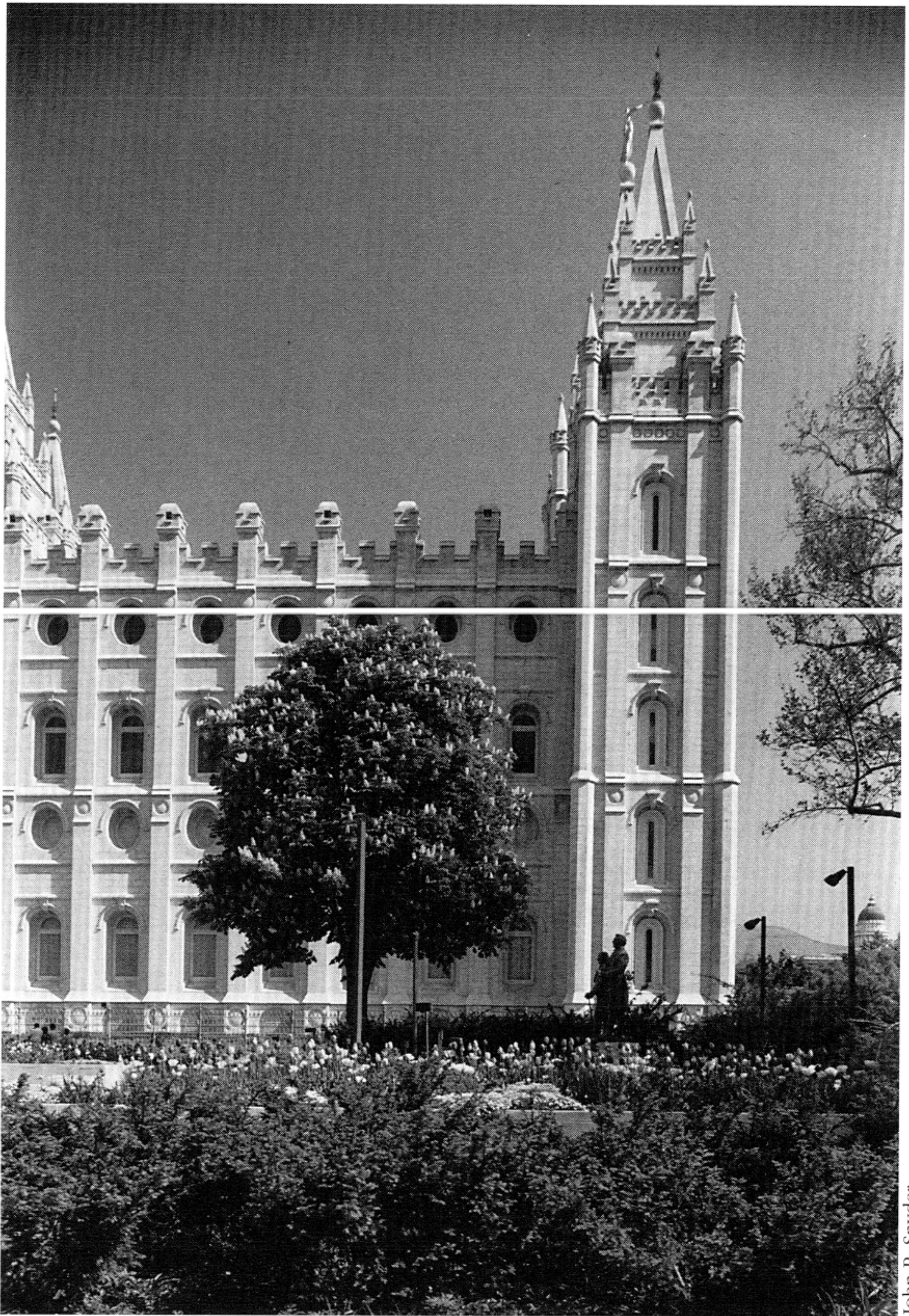
Symbolism of Guardedness

Some may see symbols, with their veiled meanings, as exclusionary. And, indeed some are. The Lord says, “For it is not meet that the things which belong to the children of the kingdom should be given to them that are not worthy” (D&C 41:6; see also Matt. 7:6; 3 Ne. 14:6). Many symbols relating to the temple, both physical and functional, communicate that the teachings and rituals of the temple are guarded and exclusive. The very architecture and physical orientation of the temple express this aspect. For example, narrow doorways and solid granite walls up to sixteen feet thick crowned with battlements and crenellated towers (fig. 3) manifest protectiveness toward the sacred functions that take place within the building.

The space of Temple Square is set off from the bustle of a busy city by a high wall and iron gates (fig. 4). The temple itself faces away from the main pedestrian traffic on Temple Square. The south side of the temple is set apart by thick plantings, an iron fence, and a dry moat (figs. 3, 7). Other sides have high retaining walls and iron fences. Access to the temple is through yet another layer of physical and visual sentinels. To enter, the worshiper must go through nonpublic spaces and past guards. Entry is permitted upon presentation of a temple recommend.¹¹ The temple is “the place in the kingdom most differentiated and excluded from a secular society.”¹²

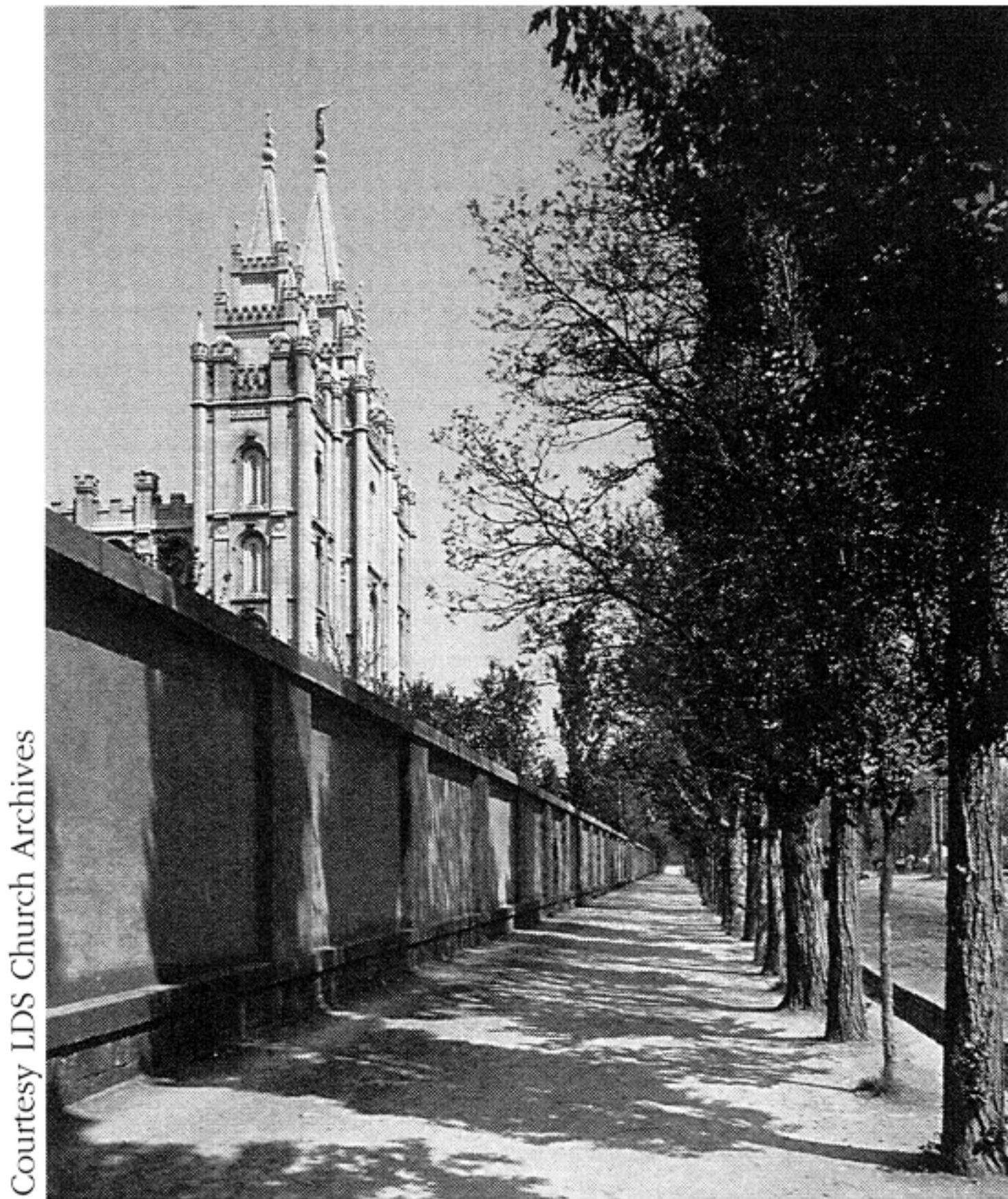
Symbolism Representing the Priesthood

In the early years of temple construction, Brigham told the Saints that this was to be a temple for the priesthood: “We have often told you that we want to build a Temple, but not for convening promiscuous congregations. I inform you, long before you see the walls reared and the building completed, that it will be for the



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Fig. 3. The thick walls, battlements, crenellated towers, thick plantings, and iron fence manifest protectiveness toward the sacred functions of the temple.



Courtesy LDS Church Archives

Fig. 4. The high wall protecting the temple as seen in 1900. Deirch Photographic.

purposes of the Priesthood, and not for meetings of the people: we shall not hold public meetings in it.”¹³ Unlike the Kirtland or Nauvoo Temples, which regularly functioned as large meeting halls for the Saints, the Salt Lake Temple would be “for the endowments—for the organization and instruction of the Priesthood.”¹⁴

The Big Dipper.

Many elements on the exterior of this temple reflect that priesthood orientation. On the face of the west central

tower, the Ursa Major (the Big Dipper) is depicted pointing upward to the heavens and the North Star. Truman O. Angell, the temple architect, said that the Big Dipper was to remind the Saints that the lost may find their way by the aid of the priesthood (fig. 5).¹⁵

The Towers. The structure and organization of the various priesthood quorums is also expressed by the exterior of the temple. William Ward,¹⁶ an associate architect with Truman Angell, recounts a visit from Brigham Young to the architect’s office at the inception of the design phase of the temple. While there, Brigham Young drew a sketch on a slate and described it as follows:

There will be three towers on the east, representing the President and his two Counselors; also three similar towers on the west representing the Presiding Bishop and his two Counselors; the towers on the east the Melchisedek priesthood, those on the west the Aaronic preisthood [*sic*]. The center towers will be higher than those on the sides, and the west towers a little lower than those on the east end.¹⁷

The drawing was basically a simple rectangle with three circles at each end.

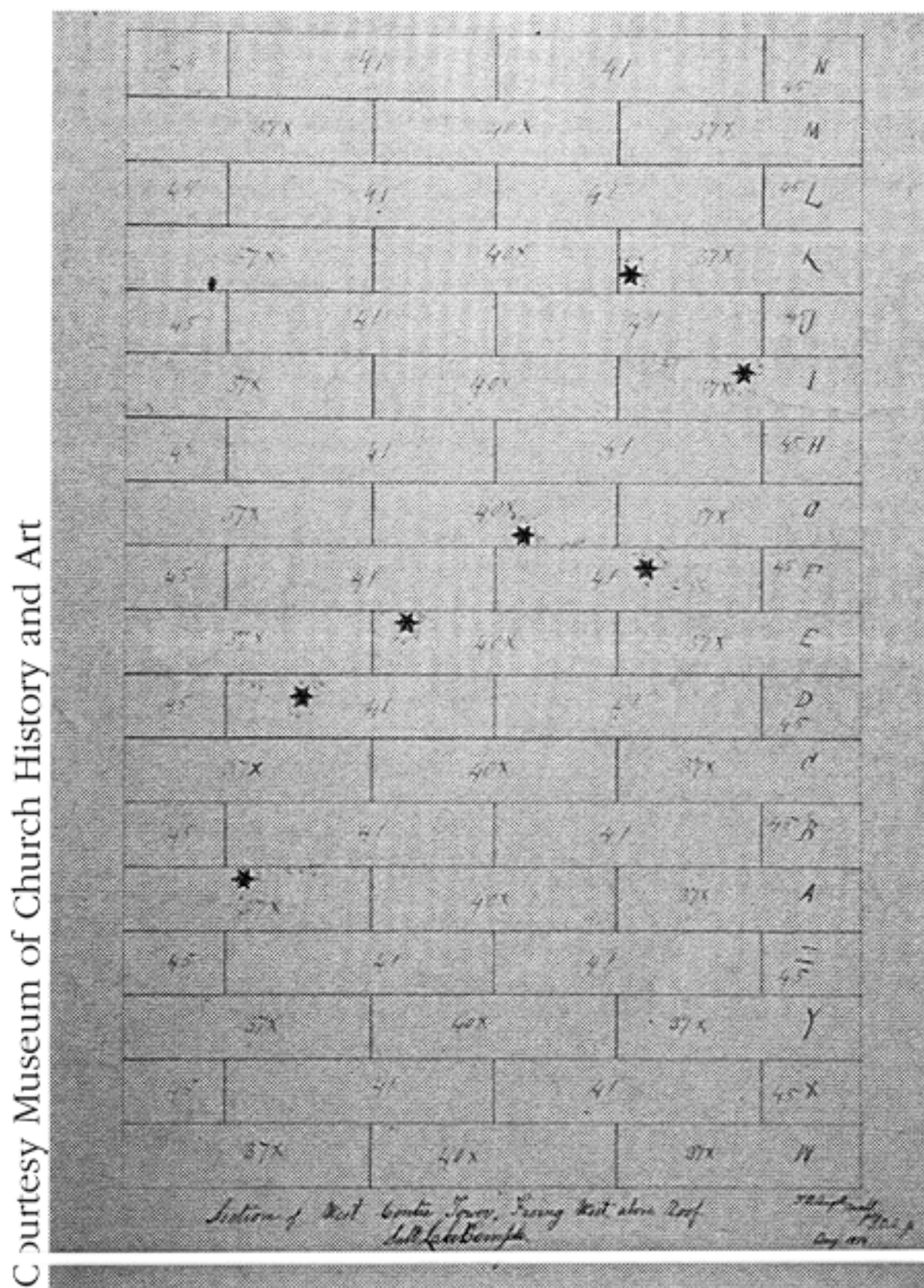


Fig. 5. Truman O. Angell's plan for the Big Dipper stones. 1884.

During general conference on the day that the temple cornerstone was laid, Brigham Young explained where he obtained the basic idea of what the temple should look like:

Five years ago last July I was here, and saw in the Spirit the Temple not ten feet from where we have laid the Chief Corner Stone. I have not inquired what kind of a Temple we should build. Why? Because it was represented before me. I have never looked upon that ground, but the vision of it was there. I see it as plainly as if it was in reality before me. . . . It will have six towers, to begin with, instead of

one. Now do not any of you apostatize because it will have six towers, and Joseph only built one. It is easier for us to build sixteen, than it was for him to build one.¹⁸

Brigham Young knew that the Salt Lake Temple would be a visual departure from the single-towered Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples. However, the use of multiple towers at opposite ends of the temple representing the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods and their presiding officers (fig. 6) had an interior architectural precedent in the Kirtland Temple. In this temple, the main meeting rooms had three tiers of three pulpits at each end (the fourth and lowest level was designed with a drop-leaf sacrament table rather than a breastwork of pulpits). One set of pulpits was for the presiding officers of the Aaronic Priesthood, and the other for those of the Melchizedek Priesthood.¹⁹ Part of Brigham Young's inspired architectural genius was to make the symbolism of tiered pulpits externally visible in the form of the three multilevel towers at each end of the Salt Lake Temple.²⁰ This design reinforced President Young's statement about the Salt Lake Temple being for priesthood purposes rather than for public meetings.

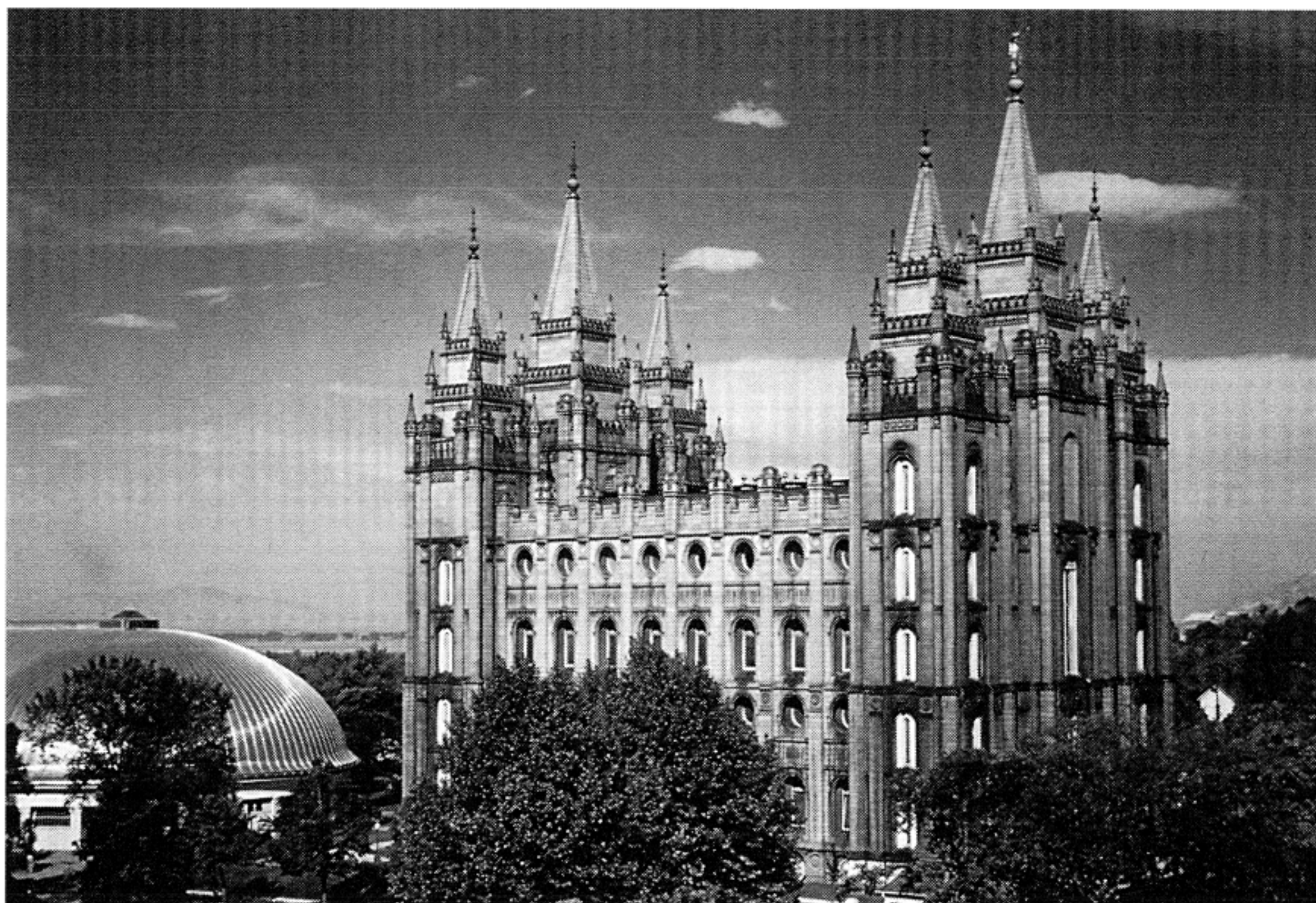
This priesthood tower symbolism has continued beyond the Salt Lake Temple. A highly simplified form of contrasting priesthood towers is expressed on the Manti and Logan Temples. More recently, the priesthood iconography of six towers has been utilized in the design of such temples as those in Boise, Frankfort, Johannesburg, Lima, Portland, San Diego, Santiago, Stockholm, Taipei, and Washington, D.C.

The Cornerstones. The temple symbolically communicates the order of organization and priesthood authority as evidenced in the April 6, 1853, ceremony of the laying of the temple cornerstones. The southeast cornerstone was the first one placed and thus became the chief cornerstone, another name for Christ. Thus Christ and his plan of salvation become the symbolic foundation of the temple. The metaphor of the construction of the temple as an expression of the organization of the Church goes back to the New Testament:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. (Eph. 2:19-21)

Aware that starting from the southeast corner was a departure from the world's norm of starting at the northeast corner, Brigham explained that "we commence by laying the stone on the south-east corner, because there is the most light."²¹ "Light" may be another reference to Jesus Christ, who declared, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Furthermore, "the glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). Since much of the teaching in the temple is about God and his plan for us, associating light with truth and intelligence works well with temple symbolism.

Brigham used the cornerstone-laying ceremony to teach the assembled Saints about the order of the priesthood. The laying of the four cornerstones in the foundation was done in a clockwise direction. The first cornerstone was laid by the First Presidency and three members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles because Apostles hold the keys of the priesthood: "Now recollect that the



Courtesy LDS Church Archives

Fig. 6. The six towers, the higher ones on the east representing the Melchizedek Priesthood and the lower ones on the west the Aaronic Priesthood, were a departure from the single-towered Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples.

High Priesthood, and the Lesser Priesthood, and all the Priesthood there is, are combined, centered in, composed of, and circumscribed by, the Apostleship.”²² The authority of an Apostle was the foundation of the governing authority:

I speak thus to show you the order of the Priesthood. We will now commence with the Apostleship, where Joseph commenced. Joseph was ordained an Apostle. . . . After he was ordained to this office, then he had the right to organize and build up the kingdom of God, for he had committed unto him the keys of the Priesthood, which is after the order of Melchisedec—the High Priesthood, which is after the order of the Son of God.²³

The previous nine years had seen some confusion among the Saints concerning the succession of Church leadership. The cornerstone-laying ceremony and the strong priesthood symbolism of the exterior of the temple provided a spiritual and intellectual articulation of the legitimacy of the governing foundation of the Church and of the succession of Church leadership through Brigham

Young and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Men such as James Strang, William Smith, Sidney Rigdon, David Whitmer, and Lyman Wight, none of whom had the support of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, had unsuccessfully made their claim to lead the Church. The Salt Lake Temple, with its foundation symbolically resting on the Apostles and prophets, helped to solidify the Church pattern that, on the death of the President of the Church, the First Presidency is dissolved and leadership of the Church reverts to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This relationship between Church governance, the Twelve Apostles, and the First Presidency is symbolized on the exterior of the Salt Lake Temple.

The Melchizedek Priesthood is symbolized by the east end of the temple. But, Brigham Young declared, “the Aaronic Priesthood belongs in the West; consequently the Presiding Bishop laid the second stone.” The third, or northwest cornerstone, was laid by the high priests and elders. With the Twelve laying the fourth, or northeast cornerstone, the priesthood leadership again returned to the Apostleship, which “circumscribes every other Priesthood, for it is the Priesthood of Melchisedec, which is after the order of the Son of God. . . . The Lesser Priesthood then, you perceive, comes within the purview of the Apostleship. . . the beginning and the end, the height, depth, length, and breadth of all that is, that was, and ever can be to all eternity.” Brigham also informed the Saints in the conference, “This is the order of the Priesthood, brethren. . . . I have endeavored to carry it out before you, that you all might know hereafter, what is the true order, as far as it can be exhibited in the laying of Corner Stones.”²⁴

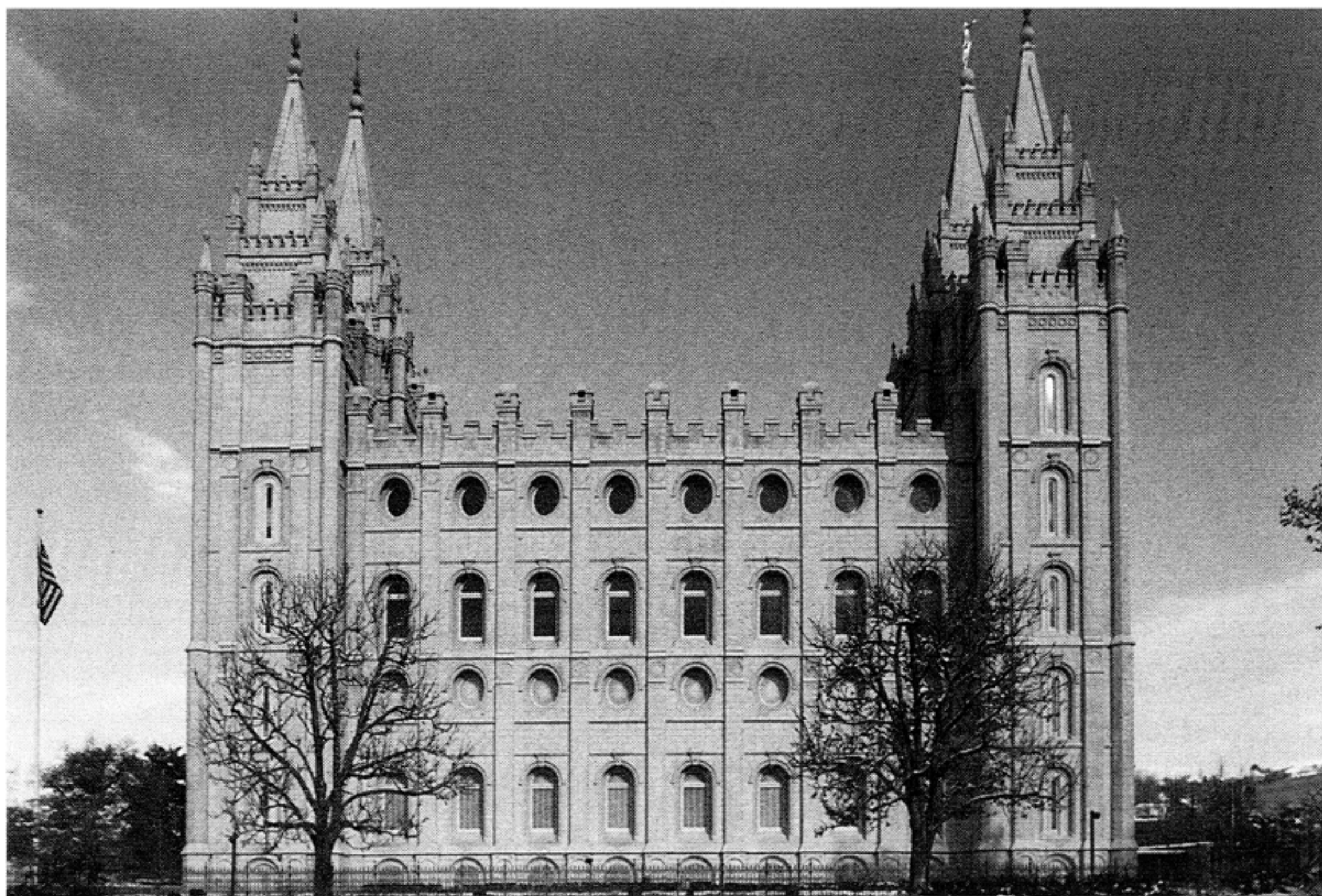
Governing councils of the Church are expressed in the design of the towers. The spires of the towers represent the governing councils such as the First Presidency and the Presiding Bishopric. The twelve pinnacles on each tower represent other councils such as the Twelve Apostles and the twelve members of stake high councils.²⁵

The East and West Sides. The use of cornerstone location to symbolize priesthood order communicated two messages. The special witnesses of Jesus Christ and the two leading governing councils of the Church were associated with the east face of the temple, thereby reinforcing the primacy of the east. The west end is associated with the Aaronic, or lesser, Priesthood. As we look at

the completed eastern and western towers today, subtle differences reinforce this priesthood symbolism. The east towers are six feet taller than the corresponding west towers. This difference in height is more than a statement of organizational hierarchy. It also relates to the increased knowledge and responsibilities associated with the Melchizedek Priesthood.

In addition, there are five windows on the external walls of the east towers, but only four windows on those same walls of the west towers (fig. 7). Originally the same number of windows was planned for each corner tower, with the west towers having an oval window in the top story to compensate for that story's lower height. When the walls reached the level to put in the top windows, Truman Angell decided to eliminate the top window in the western towers. He explained to President John Taylor the reasons for this change:

The original design was to represent the greater priesthood with the east end, and the lesser with the west end, therefore the difference in height. With more mature reflection it was observed that the lesser priesthood depended entirely upon the greater, and it would be more strikingly typical with the windows left out, especially as their only object was for exterior appearance.²⁶



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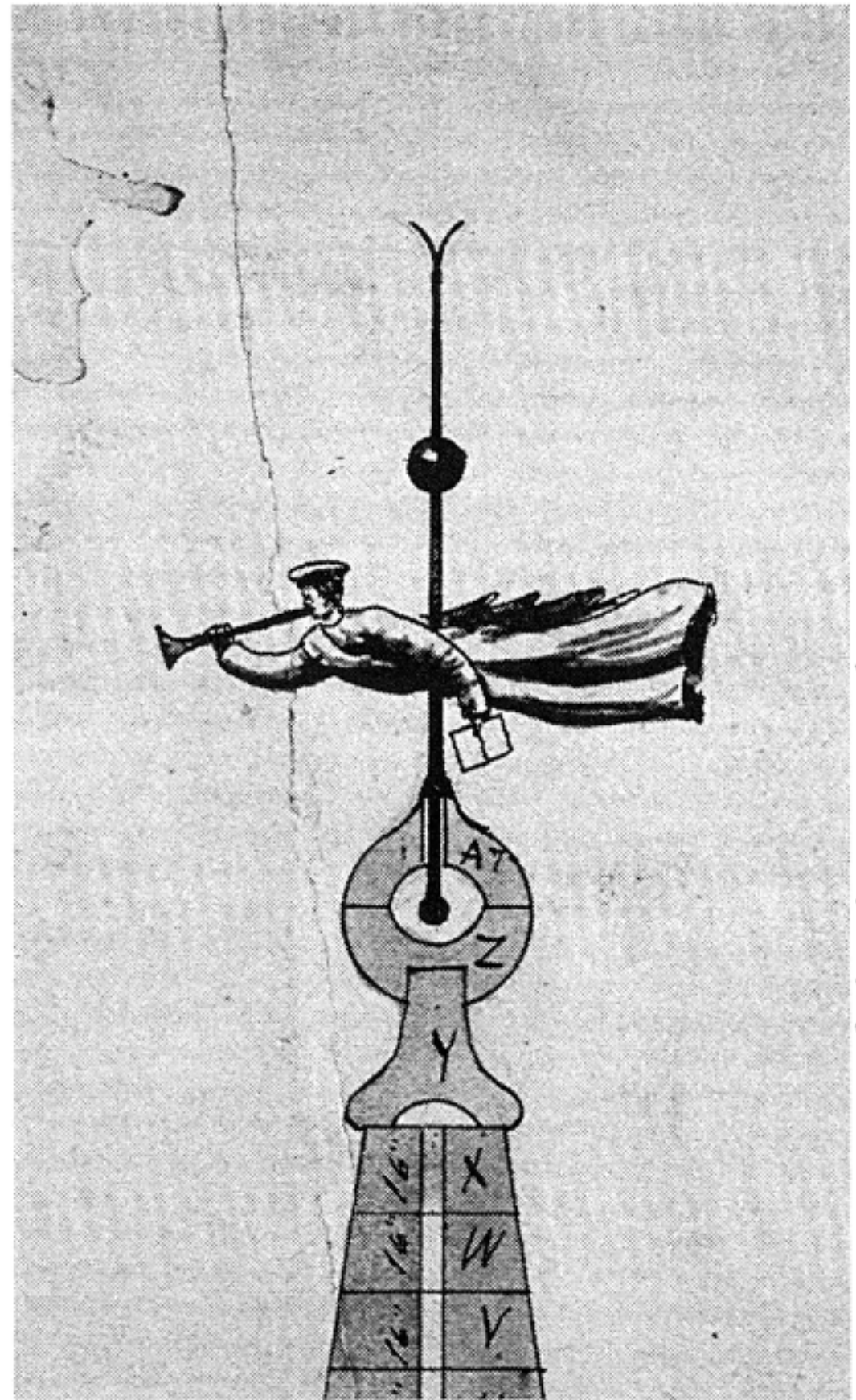
Fig. 7. The tower on the east (right) has five windows; the tower on the west has only four.

Several other elements distinguish the east and west towers from each other. The west towers do not have a dedicatory plaque. This plaque identifies the building, briefly sketches out its history and maker, and lists the owner. It also clearly indicates that the almost symmetrical temple faces east.

The original design called for each center tower to have an angel weathervane similar to one that had been on the Nauvoo Temple (fig. 8). By the time the Salt Lake Temple neared completion, however, weathervanes had gone out of style, and monumental figurative sculpture had taken its place on major public buildings.²⁷ When the temple was finally complete, a large sculpture of an angel was placed only on the tower at the east end.

Another element demarcating the difference between the east and west towers is the use of starstones. The starstones are placed in a row just under the first level of the battlements on the east towers. The center east tower has four stars on each side (fig. 9) while the two other east towers have three stars per side for a total of forty stars, a scripturally propitious number.²⁸ The west towers have no row of stars under their battlements.

The stars make a fine allusion to the higher spiritual ordinances, revelatory responsibilities, and presiding position of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the Pearl of Great Price, the Lord draws a parallel between priesthood governance and the governance of heavenly bodies. The prophet Abraham said, "And I saw the stars, that they were very great, and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; and there were many great ones which were near unto it; And the Lord said unto me: These are the governing



Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art

Fig. 8. Originally, the plan for the Salt Lake Temple called for an angel weathervane, similar to the one on the Nauvoo Temple, to top each central spire. 1887.

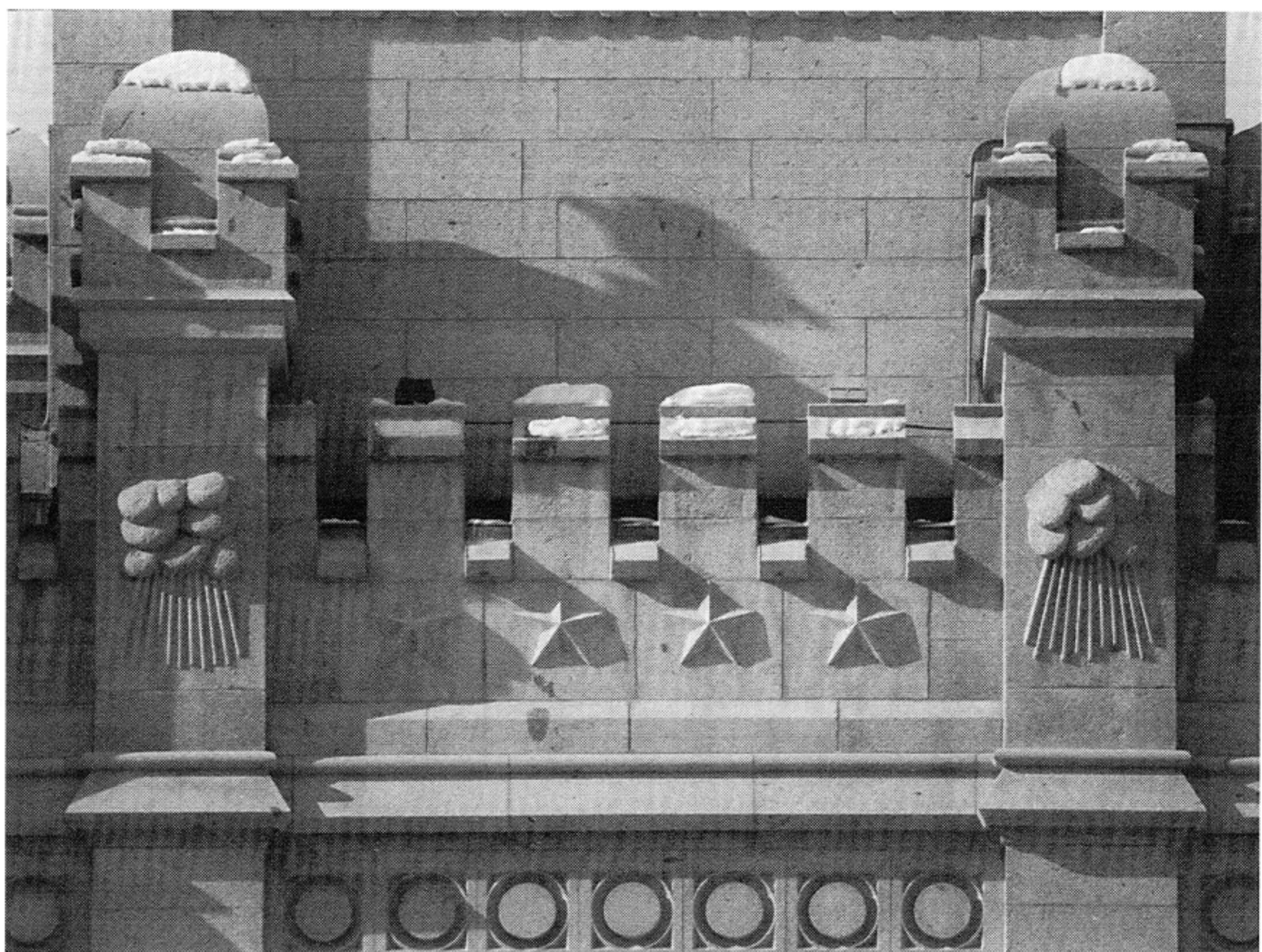


Fig. 9. Starstones under the first level of battlements on the east central tower.

ones” (Abr. 3:2-3). The absence of stars on the west towers reinforces the fact that the Aaronic Priesthood is not a governing priesthood and cannot administer most of the ordinances of exaltation.

Stars are also symbolic of God’s children in the heavens (Job 38:7; Isa. 14:12-14; Rev. 12:4; D&C 29:36; Abr. 3:22-24). The preeminent spirits in the premortal existence are referred to as morning stars; these were “the noble and great ones,” those who served valiantly and who were “chosen” before they were born to perform mighty works here in mortality.²⁹ Wilford Woodruff made this comment about preearthly callings for spiritual leadership on the earth:

In every dispensation the Lord has had those who were fore-ordained to do a certain work. We all dwelt in the presence of God before we came here, and such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the ancient Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles received their appointments before the world was made. They were ordained before the foundation of the world to come and tabernacle here in the flesh and to work for the cause of God, and this because of their faith and faithfulness.³⁰

The prophet Daniel refers to the valiant spiritual leaders as stars: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). Lehi received a vision of the future in which he saw the coming of Christ and the Twelve. He compares the brightness of the one to the sun and the other twelve to the stars (1 Ne. 1:9-10). The depiction of stars below the battlements of the Melchizedek priesthood towers would seem to reinforce the connection between leaders of the Church and divine callings.

The complete name of the Melchizedek Priesthood is “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God” (D&C 107:3). What better technique to emphasize this priesthood than to focus on the birthday of the one after whom the priesthood is named? Because LDS scripture suggests that Christ may have been born on April 6,³¹ two moonstones depicting the moon’s phases in early April appear on the east central tower (fig. 10).

At the opposite end of the temple, the moon phase of early October is found on the buttresses of the west center tower.³² We know from the New Testament that John the Baptist was born six months before Jesus (Luke 1:36). John the Baptist holds the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood and returned to the earth as a resurrected being to confer this priesthood on the head of Joseph Smith on May 15, 1829 (D&C 27:7-8; 13:1). What better personage to represent the Aaronic Priesthood than John the Baptist, who brought it back to the earth? How better to integrate him into the exterior symbolism of the temple than to commemorate his birthday?

In summary, priesthood order appears to be expressed on the temple in the following ways. The towers represent the Melchizedek Priesthood on the east and the Aaronic Priesthood on the west. The position of the towers and their heights reinforce this distinction. In the laying of the cornerstones, Brigham Young spells out the order of the priesthood. The spires represent the governing councils of the Church with the First Presidency on the east and the Presiding Bishopric on the west. The pinnacles on the corners on the east towers represent the Apostles. The stars emphasize the leadership and the ordinances that come through the Melchizedek Priesthood and the guidance of the presiding officers of the Church. The sequence of the moonstones reinforce the Melchizedek Priesthood on the east and the Aaronic Priesthood on the west.

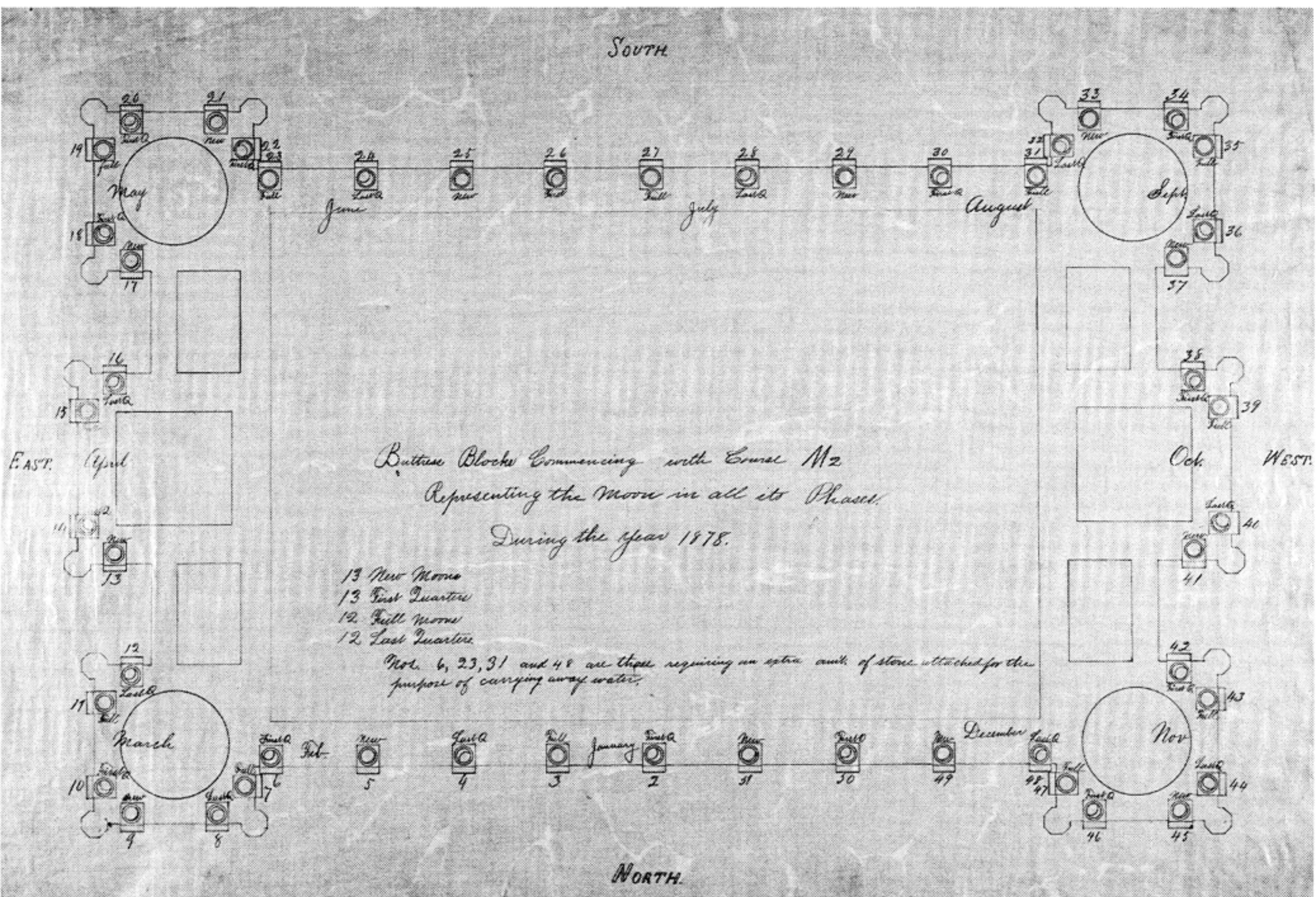


Fig. 10. “Buttress Blocks Commencing with Course M2 Representing the Moon in All Its Phases. During the Year 1878.” This diagram specifies that the moon phases for March, April, and May appear on the east towers and the phases for September, October, and November on the west. It calls for thirteen new and first quarter moons and twelve full and last quarter moons.

Priesthood symbolism is only one of several iconographical programs on the temple exterior. Several of these same images appear in other configurations to imply quite different messages. This layering of symbolic meaning is one of the glories of the temple.

Space

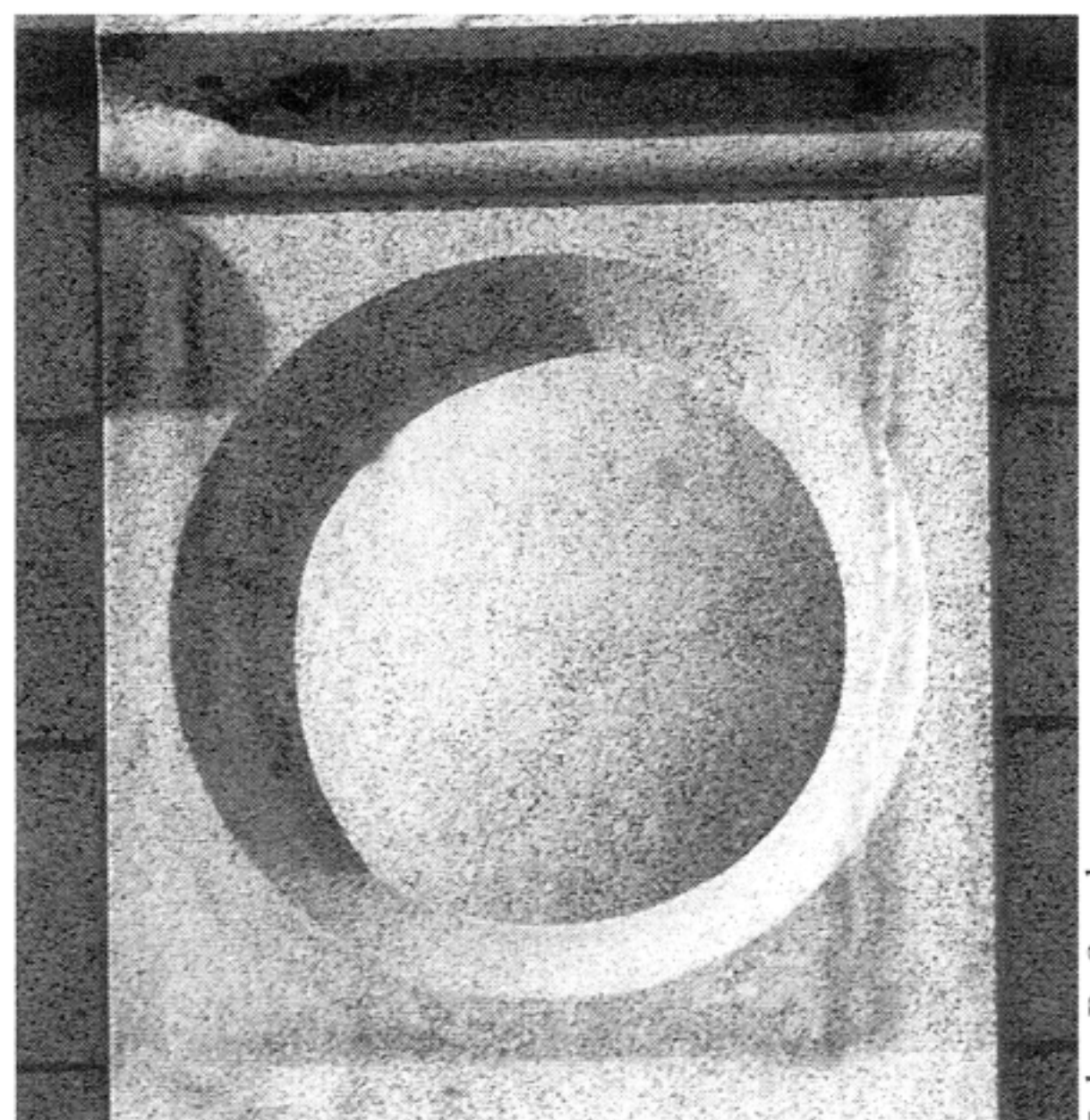
Most of the symbols on the temple are heavenly bodies. This emphasis is not coincidental—Truman Angell pointed out that “the whole structure is designed to symbolize some of the great architectural work above.”³³ Hugh Nibley makes this link between the cosmos and the temple: “A temple, good or bad, is a scale-model of the universe.”³⁴ According to the great religious scholar Mircea Eliade,

such patterning is an ancient religious concept.³⁵ The ultimate pattern is God himself: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Being the most expansive of the Lord’s creations, the heavens are a visual metaphor for the Lord. Orson F. Whitney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Do I err, then, in believing that the universe is built upon symbols, to the end that it may bear record of its all-wise Architect and Builder? God teaches with symbols; it is his favorite method of teaching. The Savior often used them.”³⁶

The heavens testify of the reality of God.³⁷ In the Book of Mormon, Korihor, the antichrist, challenges Alma to show him a sign that there is a God. Alma replies, “All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, . . . and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator” (Alma 30:44). The Lord tells us that the Spirit of Christ is in and through all things (D&C 88:7-13).

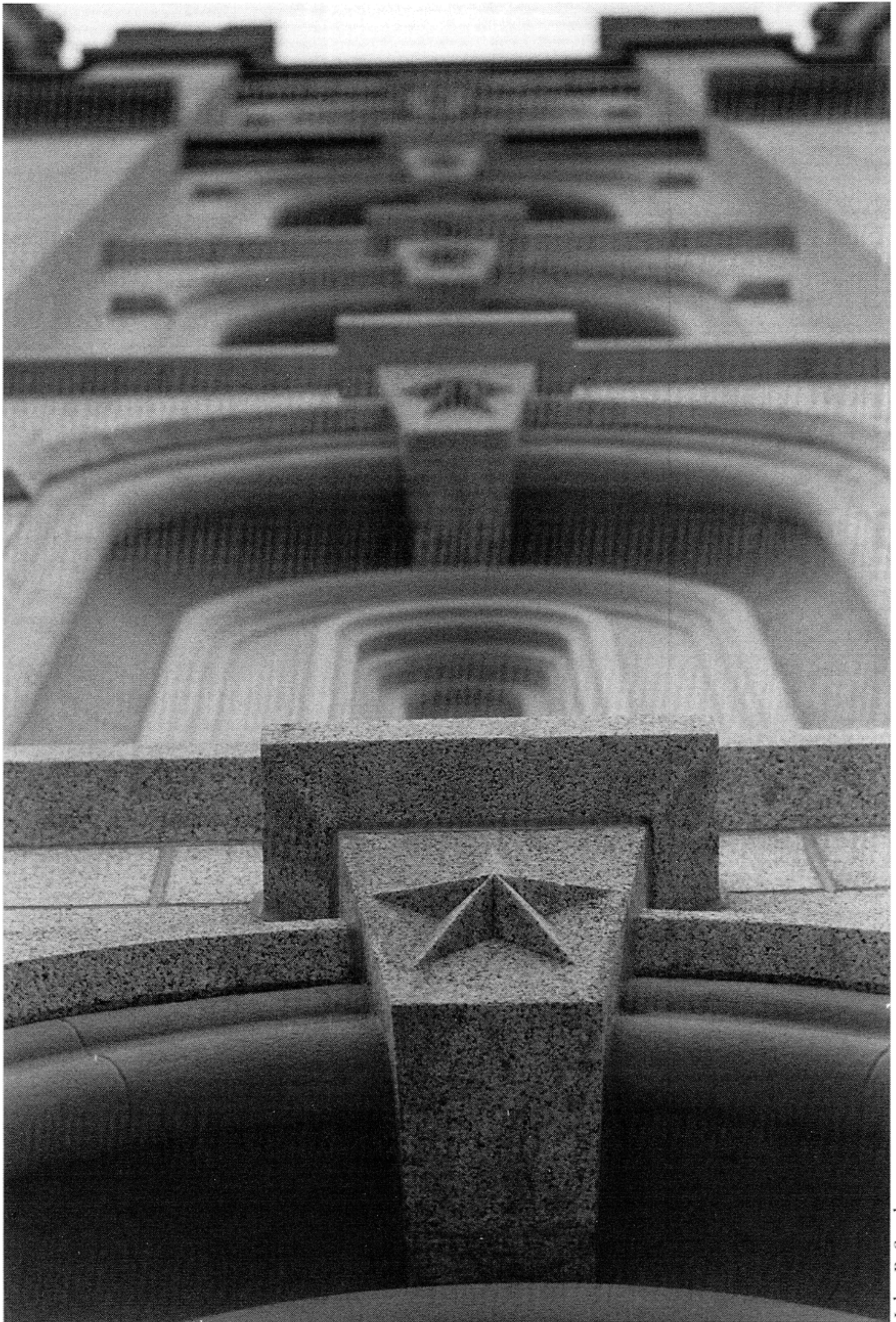
The temple’s symbolic heavenly bodies testify of the Lord’s existence by orienting us toward the order and vastness of his heavenly creations. Some of the symbolic stones on the temple accomplish this task by literally moving our vision from the earth toward the heavens. At the base of the temple are huge cut stones with a square, raised pattern surrounding a convex circle (fig. 11). These are the earthstones. Above them are the moonstones, then the sunstones, and finally the starstones on the east towers³⁸ and the Ursa Major figure on the west central tower. The Ursa Major is itself pointing directly into the heavens to the approximate location of the actual North Star.

The iconography of the temple exterior moves the viewer to a heavenly referent (fig. 12) to teach us that the Lord’s ways are on a different plane. We are told, “For my thoughts [are] not your



John P. Snyder

Fig. 11. Earthstone.



John P. Snyder

Fig. 12. The temple exterior moves the viewer to a heavenly referent.

thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8–9). Here the Lord uses the heavens as a referent for his wisdom, righteousness, and actions.

When we gaze into the heavens, we see the vastness, brilliance, and ordered movements of the heavenly bodies created by the Lord. These three elements of the heavens—vastness, brilliance, and order—give us a glimpse of the Lord, for the Lord reveals much of himself through his majestic creations. His power and glory give them light and order. As a metaphor, the heavens teach us much about Christ, the “bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16).

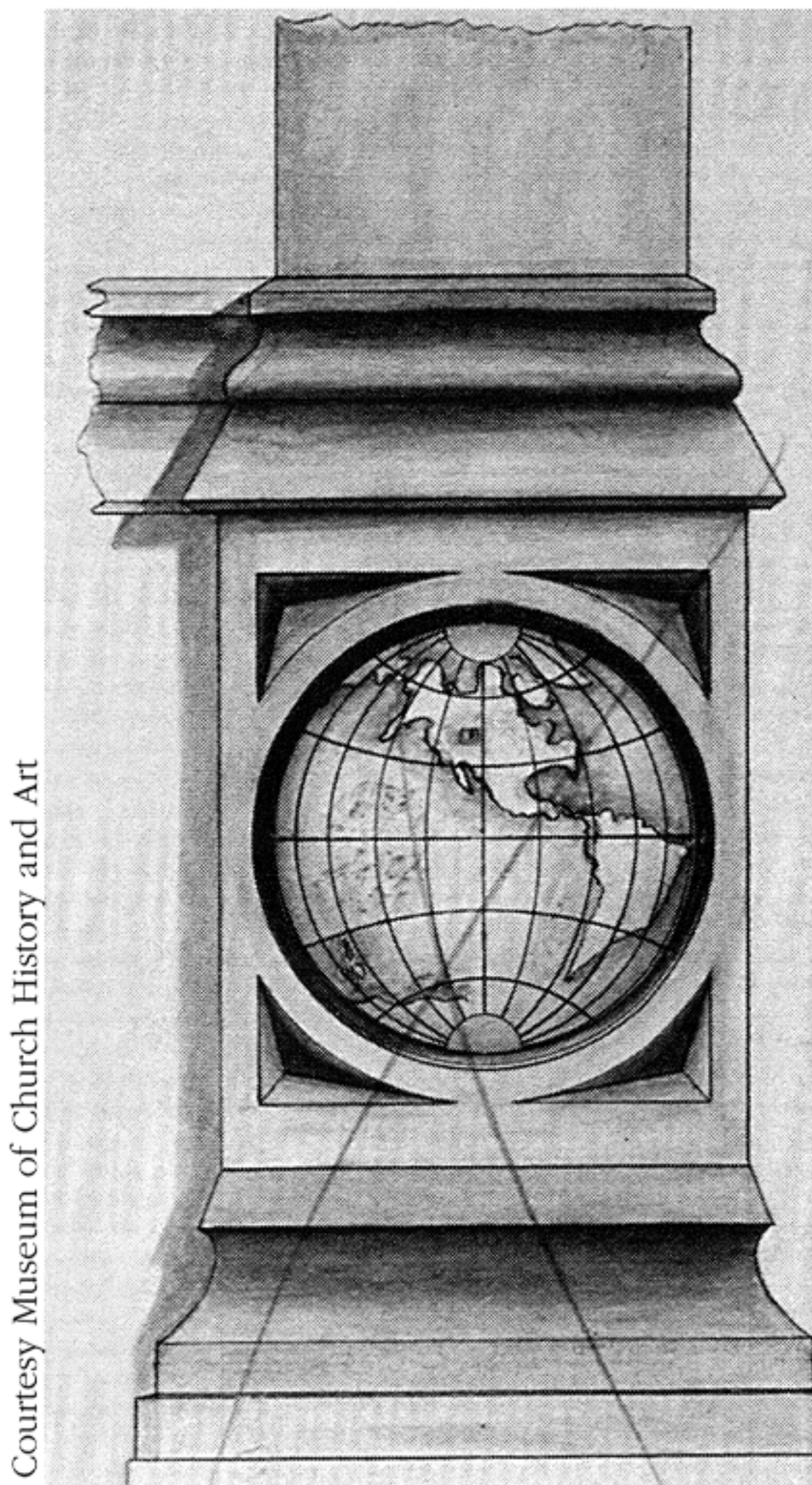
Just as the heavens testify of their creator, so do their symbols on the temple. Our understanding of the Lord is increased when we both see and begin to apprehend the spiritual component of the heavens. Building on this comprehension, the temple’s symbolism attempts to expand our vision and actions to more closely approximate those of the Lord.

Axis Mundi

The temple represents the *axis mundi*, the center of the world around which the earth pivots.³⁹ As the *axis mundi*, the temple is the earthly end of a great shaft connecting the center of earth to the center of the heavens.

End of a Vertical Pole around Which All Revolve. At the base of each of the temple’s buttresses is an earthstone. Truman O. Angell’s 1853 drawing of an earthstone shows the earthstones with longitudinal and latitudinal lines and the continents all standing out in bas relief (fig. 13). The original plan was to have the earthstones represent the earth as though it were revolving on its axis as one walked around the temple. This scheme visually reinforced the interpretation of the temple as the center of the earth.

The clarity of the original earthstones’ symbolism was lost when hard, course-grained granite was used in building the temple. This change made carving fine detail on the stones very difficult. So the stones were simplified, losing the detail of a rotating earth. Brigham Young’s original intention was to build the



Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art

Fig. 13. Plan for an earthstone with longitudes and latitudes. Truman O. Angell, 1853.

Salt Lake Temple out of adobe.⁴⁰ Since dried mud and straw would not hold detail, the symbolic stones were to be carved of “freestone” and applied to the exterior at key places. “Freestone” was a term used for a fairly soft, easy-to-carve stone such as limestone or sandstone. The use of freestone would have made it possible to incorporate more intricate detail on the carved stones.⁴¹ Since the original elevation drawings and overall renderings of the temple were done when the intention was still to build out of adobe and “freestone,” the early drawings show symbolic stones with much more detail than we see in the completed temple and help illuminate the original iconographical intentions.

As the earthstones revolve around the temple (fig. 14), above them, the moonstones also revolve around the temple, depicting the moon going through its four phases over and over again. Above the moonstones, the sunstones circle the temple. The starstones of the Ursa Major point to the North Star, around which all the heavenly bodies appear to rotate. The actual North Star in the heavens, of course, does not appear to move at all. Thus the temple not only sits at the center of the earth but is also linked to the center of the heavens. In the temple, sacred ordinances are performed and covenants made that can connect worshipers on earth to the heavens and their home with God.

Conduit to God. As an axis mundi, the temple fulfills its essential role as the conduit between heaven and earth, God and man—a place where the Lord communicates with his children. At



Fig. 14. Earthstones encircle the temple.

the temple's cornerstone-laying ceremony, Parley P. Pratt spoke of the connecting role of the temple:

Ye are assembled here today, and have laid these Corner Stones, for the express purpose that the living might hear from the dead; and that we may prepare a holy sanctuary, where "the people may seek unto their God; for the living to hear from the dead," and that heaven, and earth, and the world of spirits, may commune together.⁴²

Another name for the temple is "Mountain of the Lord's House" (Isa. 2:2). This temple metaphor alludes to the many sacred contacts between heaven and earth that have taken place on mountains. For example, Moses went up on Mount Sinai to commune with the Lord (Ex. 19). The Savior appeared in his glory to Peter, James, and John upon the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8). Christ suffered for the sins of the world on the Mount of Olives and Mount Calvary. These experiences, among the most important in the spiritual history of the earth, have communicated the Lord's will to his children and have shown us his power and glory.

The Lord's Dwelling Place. Eliza R. Snow referred to the temple as "a portal for angels—a threshold for God."⁴³ Deity and

mankind meet in the temple,⁴⁴ the Lord's earthly abode. In response to the question Would the Lord himself dwell in the temple? Brigham Young answered straightforwardly:

He may do just as He pleases; it is not my prerogative to dictate to the Lord. But we will build Him a house, that if He pleases to pay us a visit, He may have a place to dwell in, or if He should send any of His servants, we may have suitable accommodations for them. I have built myself a house, and the most of you have done the same, and now shall we not build the Lord a house?⁴⁵

Spiritual Bearings. The temple is the “meeting point of the three cosmic regions”: heaven, earth, and the abode of the dead.⁴⁶ From the earliest times, temples have been built as scale models of the universe:

There are three temples: one in heaven, one on earth, and one beneath the earth. . . . These three are identical, one being built exactly over the other, with the earth temple in the very middle of everything, representing “the Pole of the heavens, around which all heavenly motions revolve, the knot that ties earth and heaven together, the seat of universal dominion.” . . . Here the four cardinal directions meet, and here the three worlds make contact.⁴⁷

The idea of the three vertical levels and four horizontal regions dominated temple plans and orientation in the Old World and the New in ancient times and gave spiritual meaning and guidance to the societies that built those temples.⁴⁸ Through participation in temple worship, humanity can meet its thirst for meaning by becoming oriented to the earth, the heavens, time, and God. The horizontal connecting point of the four cardinal directions is established, bringing the earth together as one whole; the vertical “pole” connects the whole earth to the heavens.

The temple is “the center . . . pre-eminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality.”⁴⁹ The temple ultimately teaches us what is real—what is eternal and significant. We are taught how the Lord organizes time, space, and relationships. The significance accorded organization was observed by Eliade, who notes that the “divine act of creation” transformed “chaos into cosmos.”⁵⁰ By taking us back to the time of creation, Latter-day Saint temples repeat this preeminent time connecting God and the cosmos.

In the temple, we are taught how we should live. We learn about authority and responsibility in the Lord's kingdom and the central role that Christ plays in our lives. And we learn something about our spiritual potential. In short, the temple is about understanding the sacred through obtaining our physical and spiritual bearings.

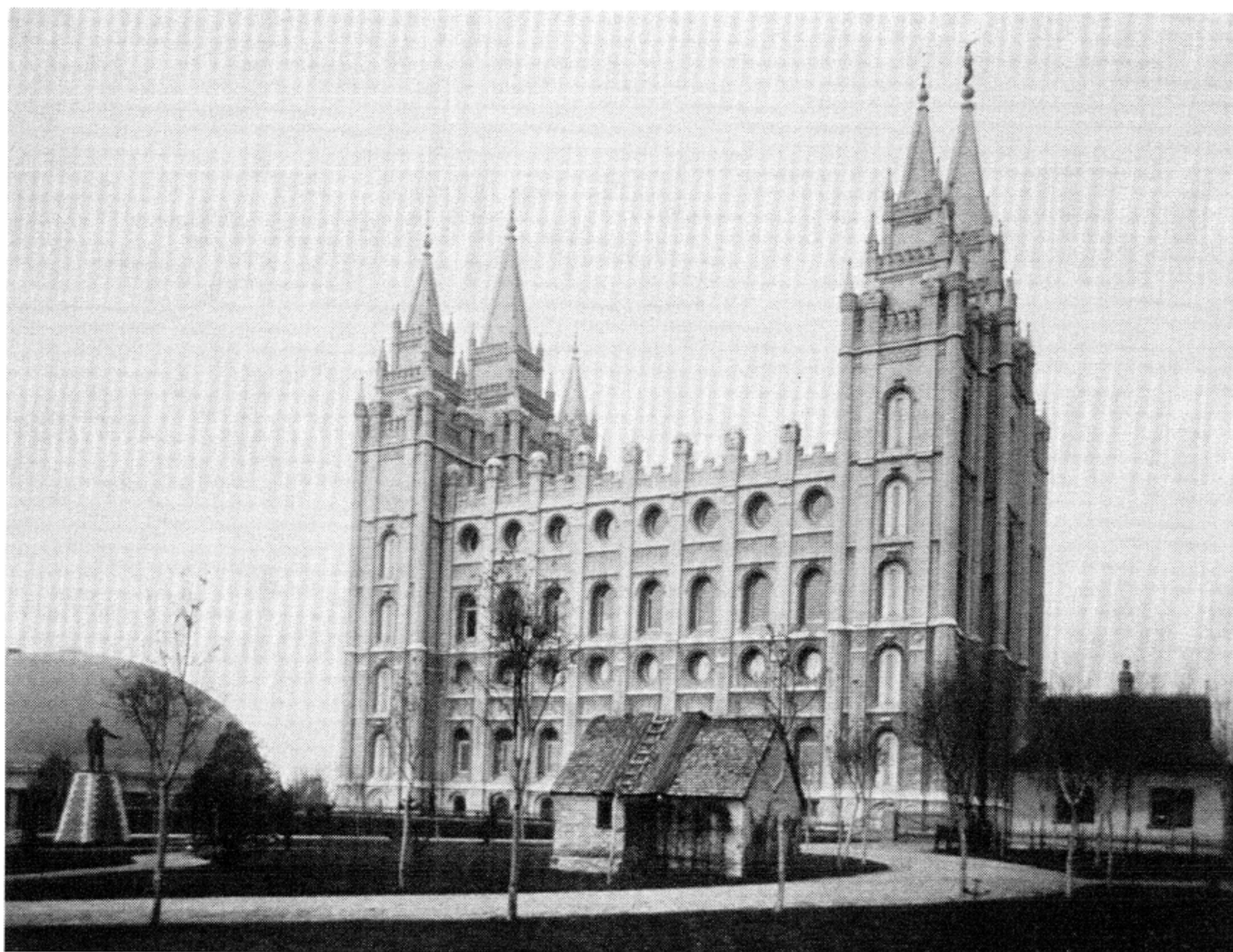
Facing directly east, the temple is placed foursquare to the compass. This alignment creates a line from east to west and north to south with the two lines crossing directly in the center of the temple. The Latin word for temple, *templum*, means the point where two lines cross. Among the ancient Romans, the *templum* was the site where the signs from heaven were interpreted. The word *plum*, meaning a straight vertical line leading from earth upward, also comes from the root word *templum*, as does *tem-plate*, which is a pattern, just as the temple is the pattern for universe. This is the center from which we see the image of what is most real. The temple gives us our bearing here on earth and connects us with the heavens.⁵¹

Orientation of Salt Lake City to the Temple. On July 28, 1847, shortly after Brigham Young's arrival in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, Wilford Woodruff witnessed Brigham's first visit to what came to be known as Temple Block and later gave this account:

We walked along until we came to this Temple Block. It was covered with sagebrush. There was no mark to indicate that God ever intended to place anything there. But while walking along Brother Brigham stopped very suddenly. He stuck his cane in the ground and said, "Right here will stand the great Temple of our God." We drove a stake in the place indicated by him, and that particular spot is situated in the middle of the Temple site. . . . He then went to work and laid out this city. . . . He laid out these streets, these sidewalks, these blocks. He laid out this Temple block here.⁵²

This account identifies the early centrality of the temple in the literal laying out of the Latter-day Saints' new Zion in the "heart of the everlasting hills." The actual point from which the geological surveys are measured is the stone base for a telescope that was in an observatory just south of the temple (figs. 15, 16). It seems appropriate that Utah's earliest observatory should have been placed next to the temple that spiritually unites heaven and earth.

"The psychological space, the cultural, the juridical, the religious," Rykwert comments, should be "treated as aspects of the



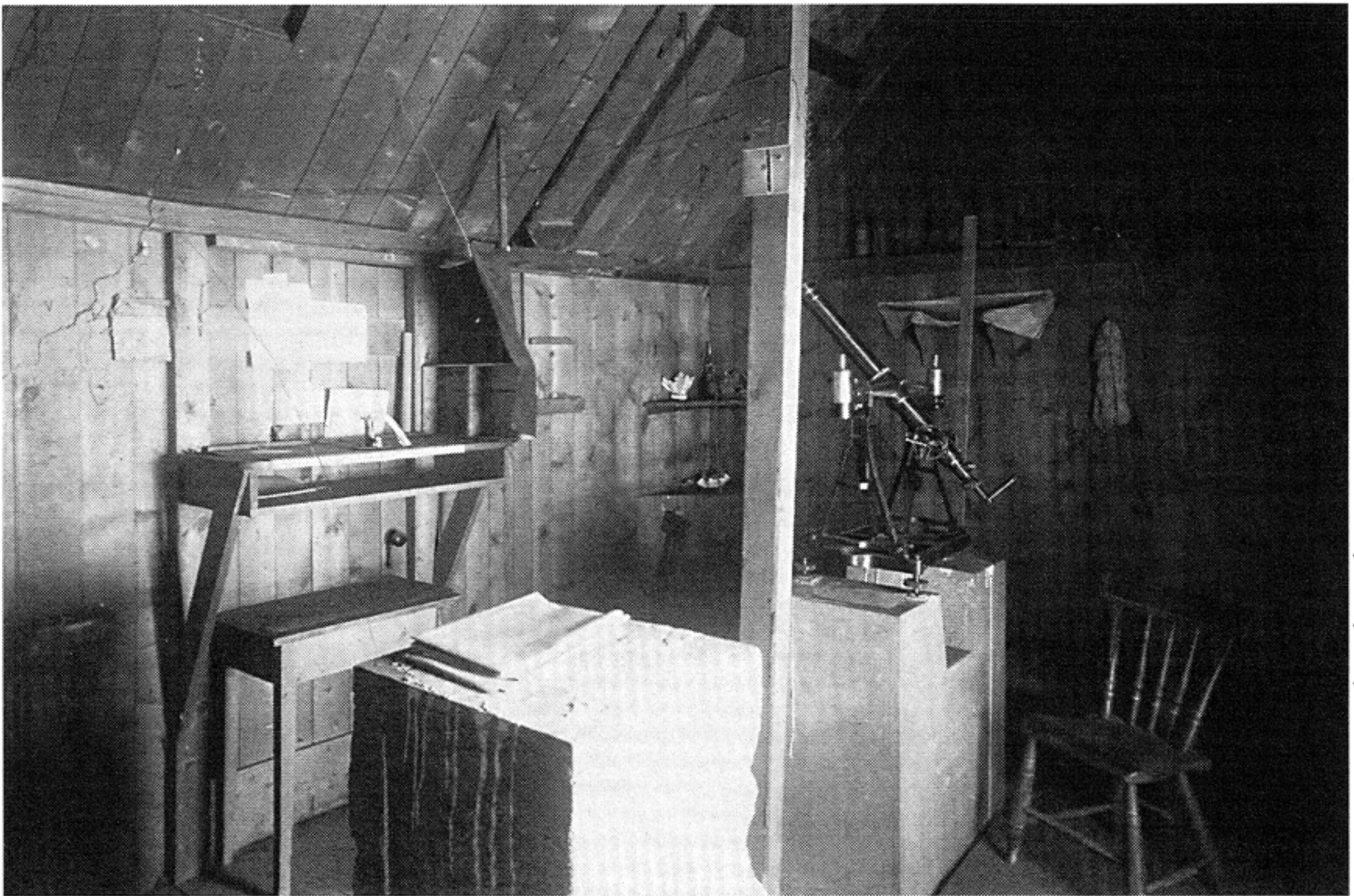
Courtesy LDS Church Archives

Fig. 15. Salt Lake Temple with the observatory in front of it. Ca. 1896.

ecological space. . . . Some consideration must be given to the [urban] model [frequently religious and spiritual], which its inhabitants construct mentally.”⁵³ The starting point for beginning to understand Salt Lake City is the temple.

The temple quite literally orients Salt Lake City in terrestrial space. It is the survey measuring point:

To survey the city, Apostle Orson Pratt began at the southeast corner of Temple Square. This point became the origin of the city’s street naming system. Streets immediately surrounding Temple Square are called respectively North, East, South, and West Temple. Streets one block from the temple are named First North, East, South, and West, respectively. Two blocks from the temple are Second North, East, South, and West, and so on cardinally throughout the city. The southeast corner of Temple Square is also the origin for the survey of the Great Basin, begun under Pratt’s direction and completed by the federal government after the 1870 Federal Land Survey. In short, every location in the Mormon West, whether in the capital city or in the vast hinterlands, has Temple Square as its ultimate reference point.⁵⁴



Courtesy LDS Church Archives

Fig. 16. Observatory interior. Charles E. Johnson, ca. 1900.

This survey is marked by the base meridian stone that was placed just outside the wall on the southeast corner of Temple Square. It is from this point that all the streets are numbered in Salt Lake City. Thus every street address in the older part of Salt Lake City acknowledges the centrality of the temple.

Time

Elder Boyd K. Packer has told us that “it is at the temple that we may begin to see into the eternities.”⁵⁵ It is there that we can get our bearings about time. Some of the symbolic stones on the temple very literally move us toward an understanding of a place where we can escape the tyranny of mortal time. We more clearly understand the Lord’s concept of and relationship to omnipresent, eternal time, which are described this way:

Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I AM, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made; The same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes. (D&C 38:1; see also Isa. 44:6; Ps. 93:2; 90:2; 102:24; and D&C 39:22)

Expository verbal communication is not very useful in unifying time. And for the Lord, time is unified and omnipresent. Joseph Smith attempted to communicate this reality by comparing time to a ring: “The elements are eternal. That which has a beginning will surely have an end; take a ring, it is without beginning or end—cut it for a beginning place and at the same time you have an ending place.”⁵⁶ But it is still difficult for us to understand the Lord’s view of time because we are largely metaphysical captives of a Newtonian physics, logical positivism, and phenomenology. As a result of our world view, we see time as linear.

It is necessary for our epistemological parameters to broaden and become more layered in order for our understanding of time to expand and more nearly parallel the Lord’s. Taking on this challenge matters because we are told, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). John Taylor, the third president of the Church, eloquently articulated the significance of an eternal perspective:

When we speak of time and eternity, they are only relative terms which we attach to things that are present, and things that are to come, and things that are past. But in relation to ourselves as individuals, we are eternal beings, although *we occupy a certain space of eternity called time*; in relation to the Gospel we preach, it is eternal; in relation to the Priesthood, it is eternal; in relation to our covenants and obligations, they are eternal; in relation to our promises, prospects, and hopes, they are eternal.⁵⁷

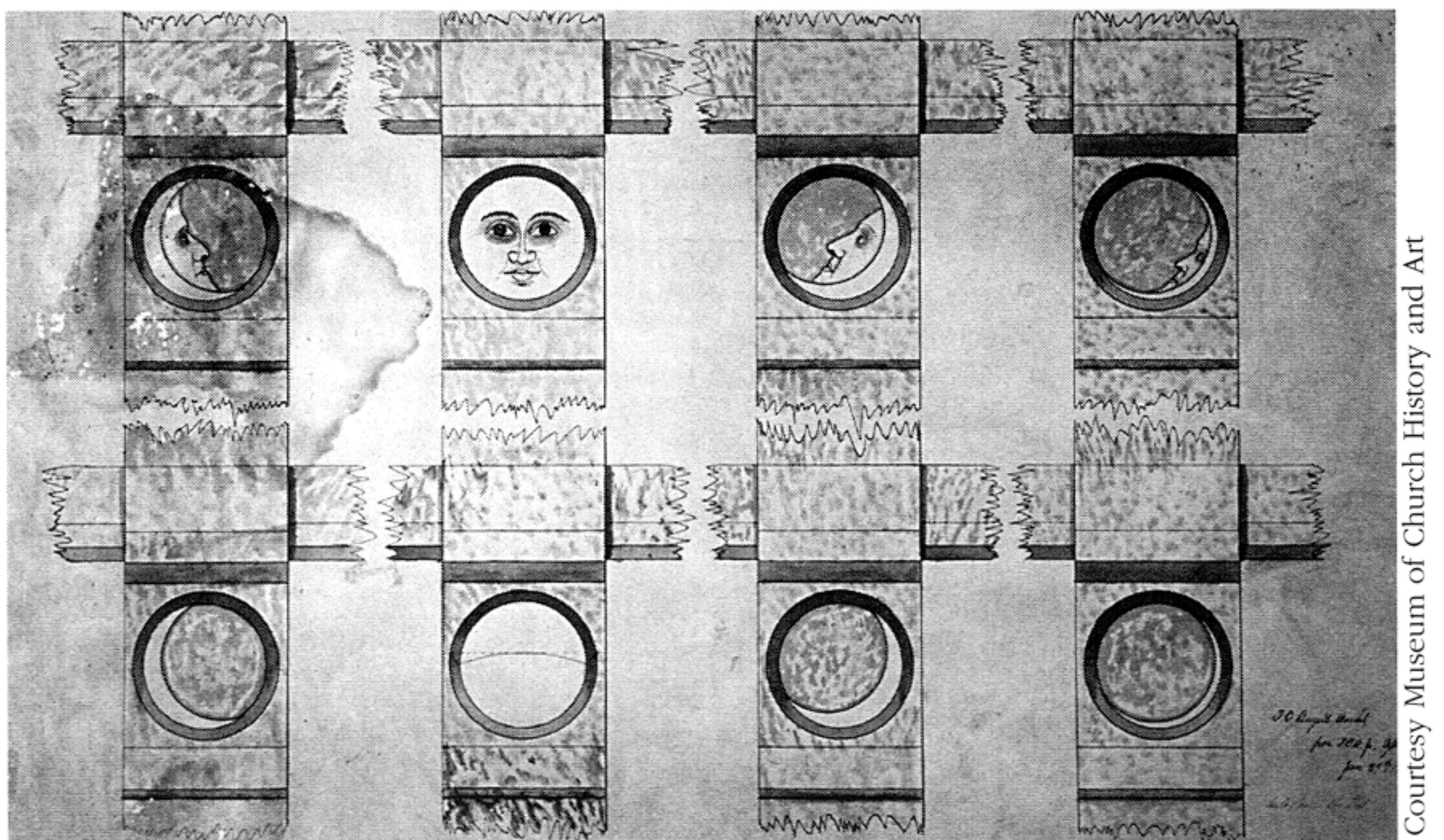
Visual symbolism is one way for humans to transcend their verbal limitations in dealing with time. Elder Orson F. Whitney said, “The universe is built on symbols whereby one thing bespeaks another; the lesser testifying of the greater, lifting our thoughts from man to God, from earth to heaven, from time to eternity.”⁵⁸

The symbolic stones on the temple that refer to time also refer us to the heavens. Of the connection between the heavenly bodies and the reckoning of time, the prophet Abraham wrote:

And the Lord said unto me: The planet which is the lesser light, lesser than that which is to rule the day, even the night, is above or greater than that upon which thou standest in point of reckoning, for it moveth in order more slow; this is in order because it standeth above the earth upon which thou standest, therefore the reckoning of its time is not so many as to its number of days, and of months, and of years (Abr. 3:5).

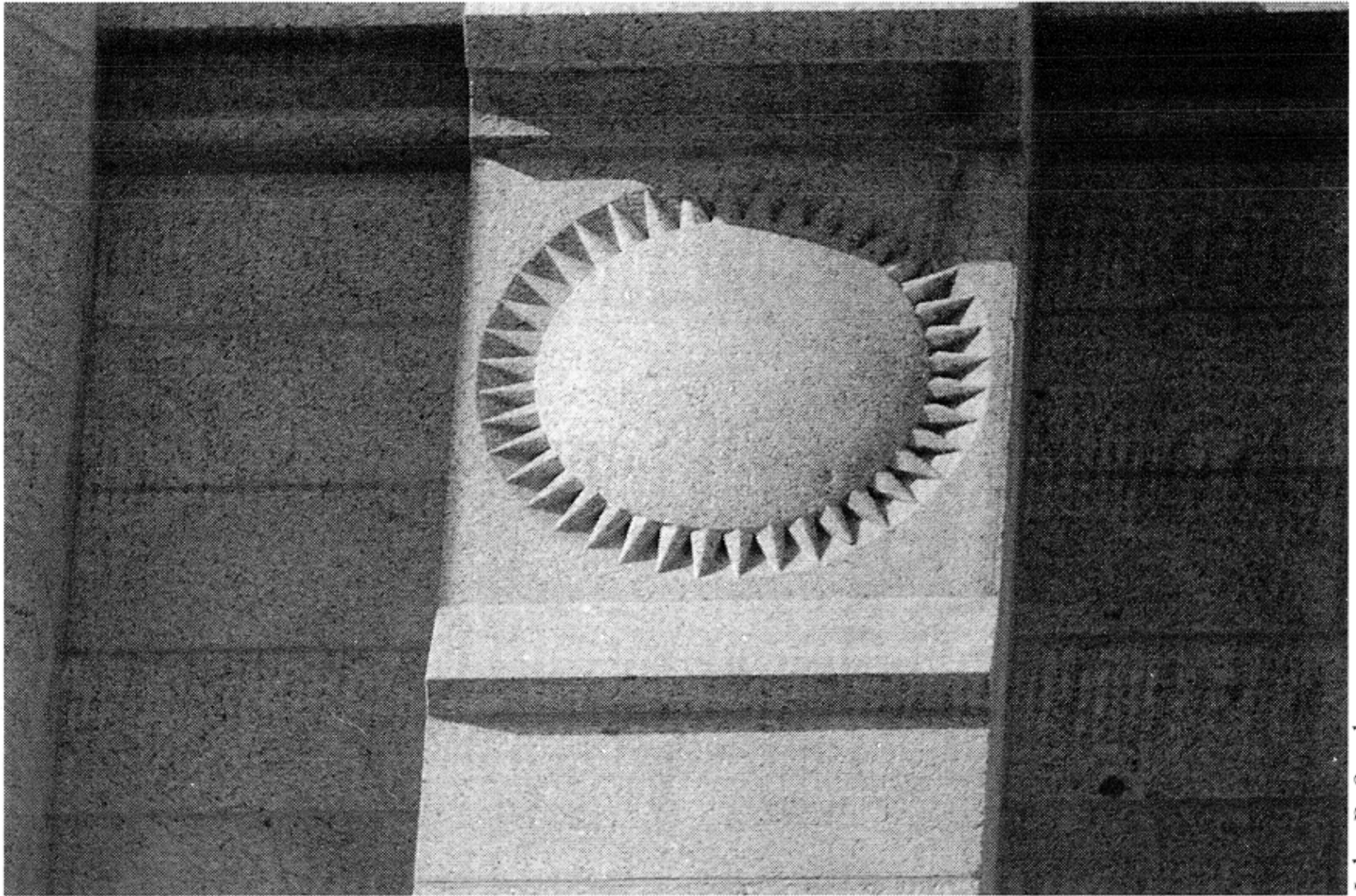
As we move upward into the heavens, the time sequences become longer. Likewise, the temple stones that communicate time begin with a short period of time, the day, and move toward the eternal present, where time almost ceases to move. Representing days, the earthstones rotate on their axis as they go around the temple. The original concept of sequential carvings on the stones required seven stones to depict one complete revolution, thus necessitating forty-nine stones for one week. In this fashion, the fifty earthstones on the temple could represent both days and weeks.⁵⁹ In addition, some of the earthstones are shown tipped off-center on their axis, thus making it possible to also allude to the seasons engendered by the earth's tipped position. The moonstones show the moon going through its four distinct phases, each complete sequence recording a lunar month (fig. 17). The sunstones are carved with forty rays, representing the length of the biblical generation (fig. 18).

On the west center tower, the Ursa Major literally points toward the heavens and the North Star (fig. 19). Thus the most important symbol about time, the North Star, is not even on the temple, but we are led to it through the symbolic stones on



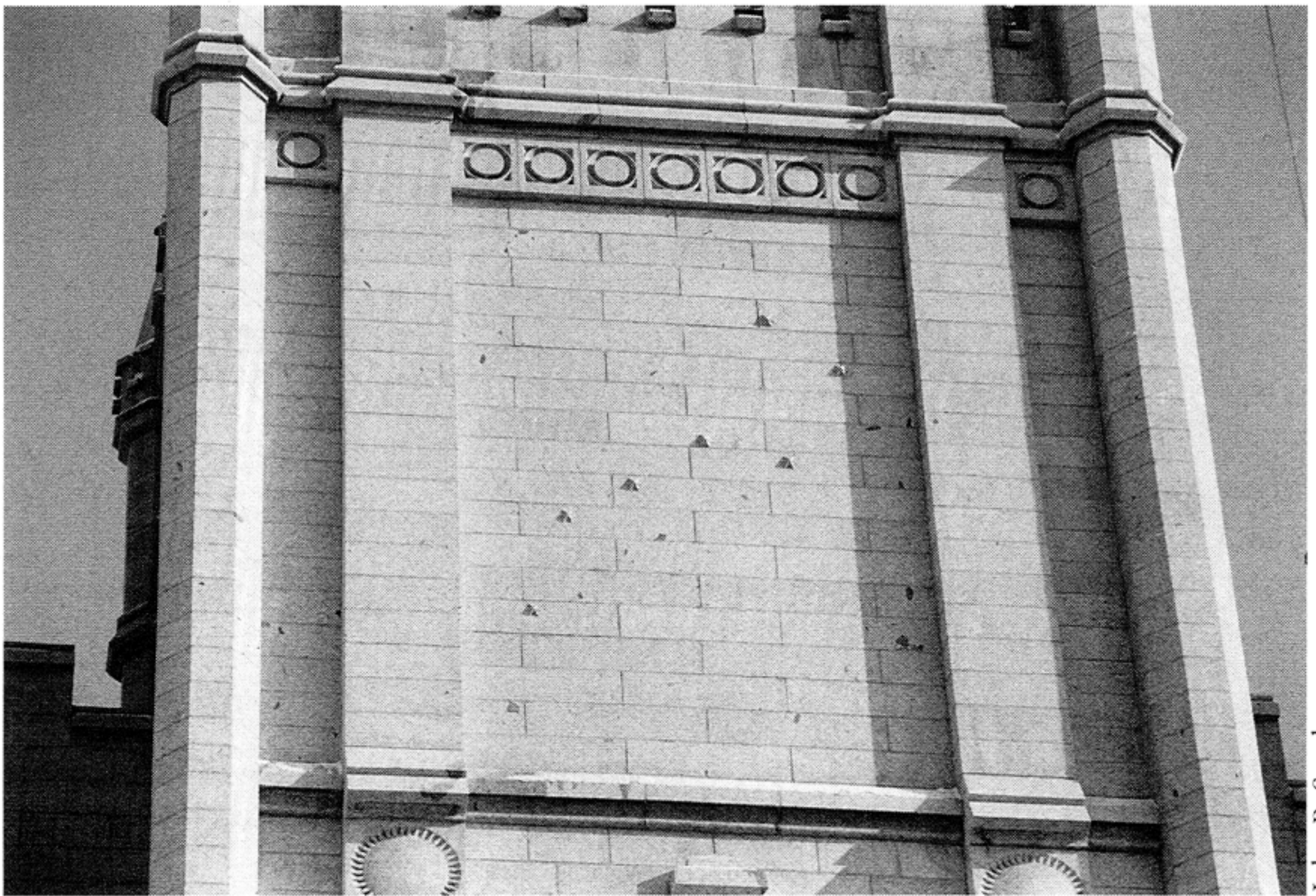
Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art

Fig. 17. Diagram of the moon's phases. Compare with figure 24.



John P. Snyder

Fig. 18. Each sunstone has forty rays.



John P. Snyder

Fig. 19. On the west central tower, the Big Dipper points toward the North Star.

the temple. The North Star, or pole star, has served as the pilot star because it is a fixed place in the heavens that does not move. For purposes of temple symbolism, it represents the victory over movement, change, and time—since time is measured by movement. With the symbol of the North Star, time ceases and we focus on eternity.

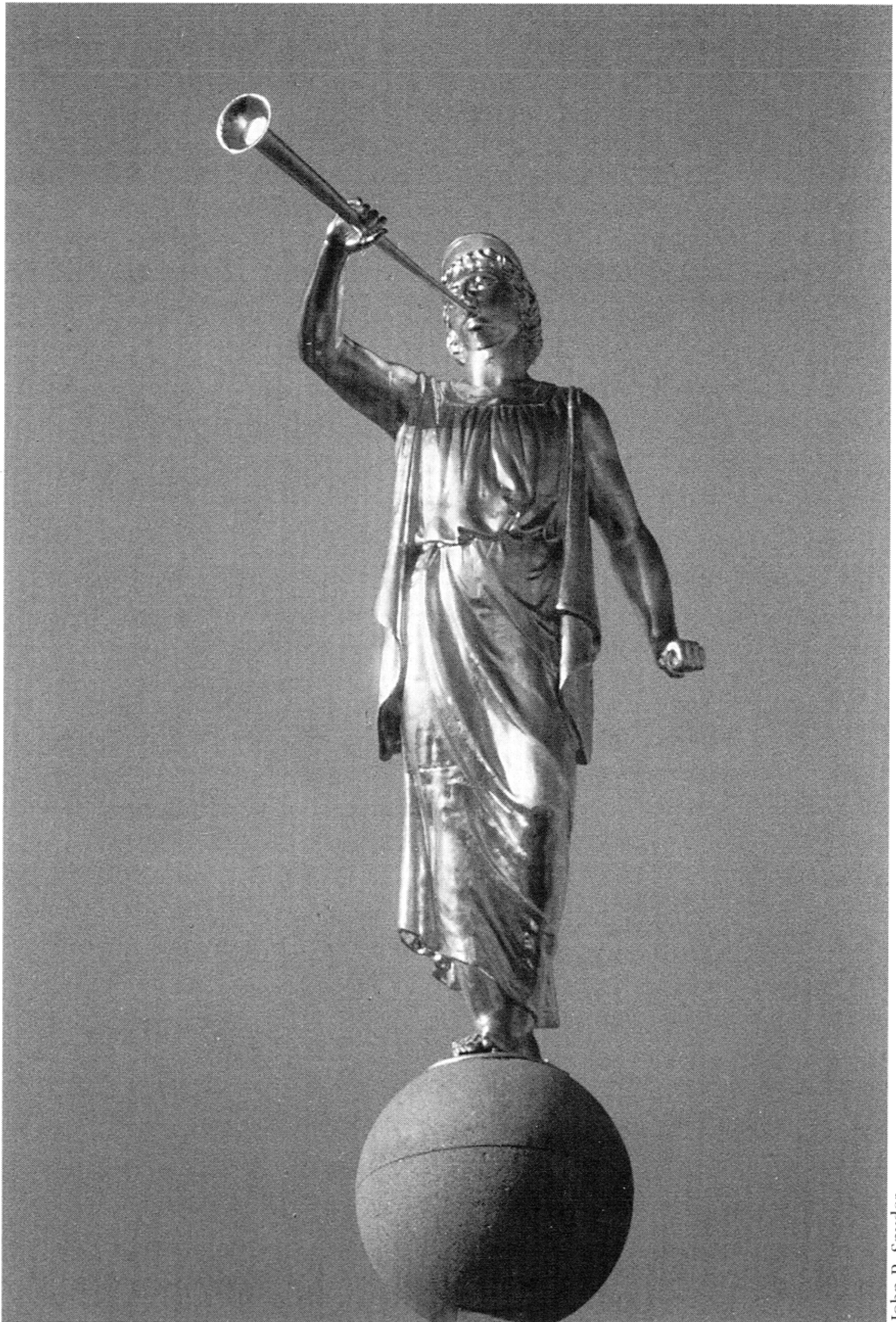
The symbolic stones remind us that the temple sits in the center of time and transcends it, making time an endless eternal round. This relationship to time matters for temple worshipers, who can perform sacred ordinances vicariously for departed ancestors. These ordinances can seal together a family chain that goes back to the beginning of human history and forward into the future (see front cover, Elijah holding symbolic keys for sealing families). The endowment, the sacred ordinances performed in the temple that are essential to return to dwell with the Lord, links us with the future. The ability of time to fragment the human family is thus overcome. Past, present, and future become one in eternity. Time is collapsed into an omnipresent:

Here [in the temple] time and space come together; barriers vanish between this world and the next, between past, present, and future. Solemn prayers are offered in the name of Jesus Christ to the Almighty. What is bound here is bound beyond, and only here can the gates be opened to release the dead who are awaiting the saving ordinances. Here the whole human family meets in a common enterprise; the records of the race are assembled as far back in time as research has taken them, for a work performed by the present generation to assure that they and their kindred dead shall spend the eternities together in the future.⁶⁰

The Restoration

The existence of the Salt Lake Temple and the authority to perform the ordinances therein are possible only because the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth. This great Restoration is also part of the symbolism of the temple's exterior.

The Angel Moroni. Crowning the east central tower is a gold-leafed statue of an angel blowing a trumpet (fig. 20). This is Moroni, a resurrected prophet who brought the sacred record of his people to Joseph Smith at the beginning of the Restoration.⁶¹ James Talmage



John P. Snyder

Fig. 20. The statue of the Angel Moroni on the Salt Lake Temple.

refers to this sculpture as a representation of the angel mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Revelation:⁶²

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Rev. 14:6-7)

The Cloudstones. At the top of the eastern buttresses on the east central tower are cloudstones with rays of light streaming down (fig. 21). The early architectural renderings of the temple have cloudstones on all the buttresses of all the towers. Truman Angell described these stones as “clouds and rays of light descending downwards.” Elaborating on this symbolism, James Anderson said the cloudstones are emblematic of the rays of gospel light piercing downward from heaven to earth, dispelling the clouds of superstition and error that had engulfed the world.⁶³ In some nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint sermons, a cloud is linked with darkness, which is variously dispelled by faith, the restored priesthood, the light of restored truth, and, ultimately, Christ’s presence (prepared for by the Restoration).⁶⁴ In 1840, Parley P. Pratt drew upon the same metaphor in the words to his well-known hymn “The Morning Breaks,”⁶⁵ in which the verbal symbolism parallels the exterior temple symbolism:

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Lo, Zion’s standard is unfurled!
The dawning of a brighter day,
The dawning of a brighter day
Majestic rises on the world.

The clouds of error disappear
Before the rays of truth divine;
The glory bursting from afar,
The glory bursting from afar
Wide o’er the nations soon will shine. ⁶⁶

Charles W. Penrose wrote a series of popular missionary tracts titled *Rays of Living Light*, the covers of which also referred to this metaphor.⁶⁷ This restoration image was captured by Lambourne in two paintings for the temple’s interior that were commissioned by the First Presidency. Both works depict a great storm cloud being pierced and displaced by a sunburst over Hill Cumorah.⁶⁸



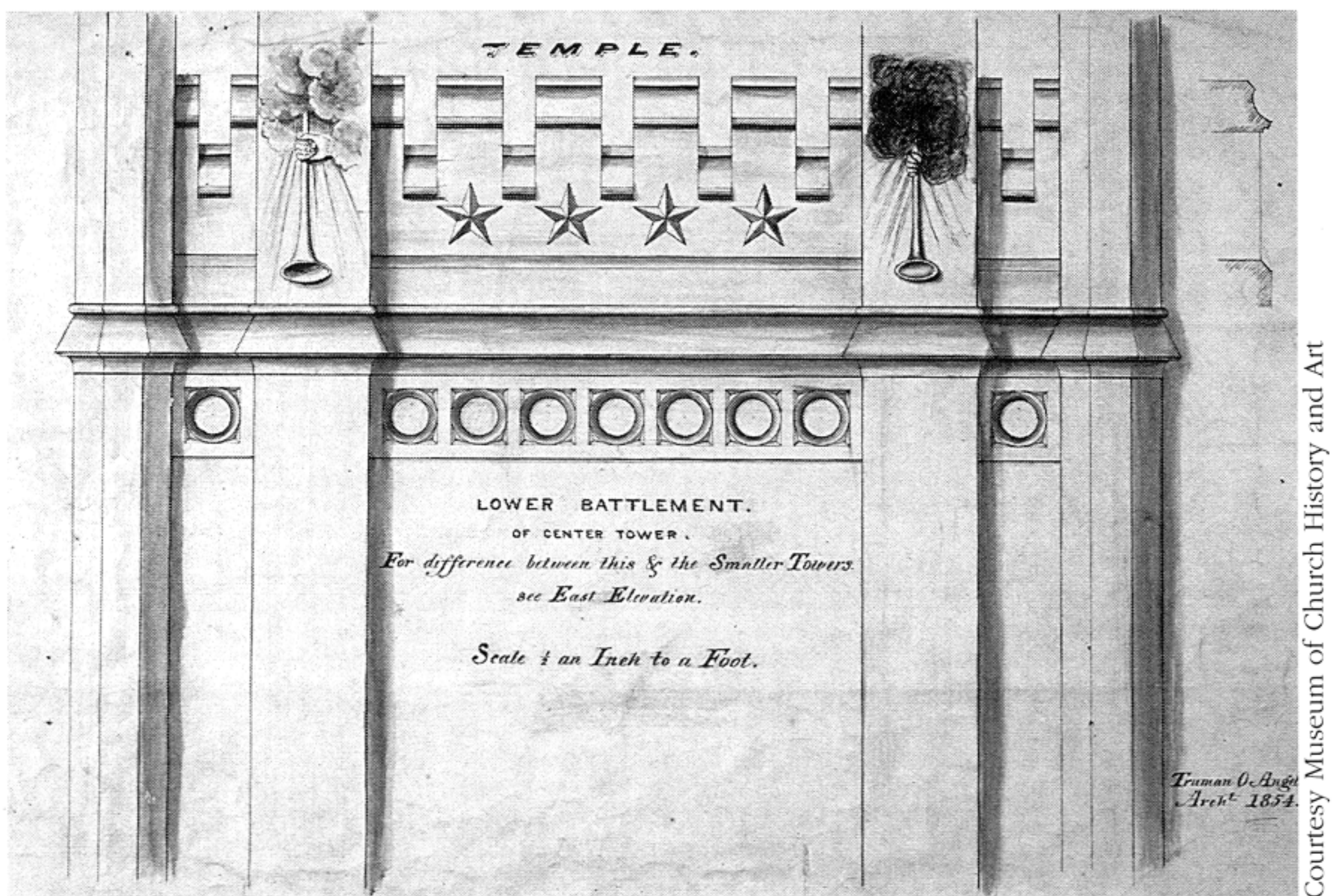
John P. Snyder

Fig. 21. Cloudstone on one of the eastern buttresses.

An early architectural drawing of the temple shows the cloudstones with an arm holding a long trumpet pointing downward as if to declare the restoration of the gospel with the sound of a trump to the whole earth (fig. 22):⁶⁹ “And ye shall go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two, in my name, lifting up your voices as with the sound of a trump, declaring my word like unto angels of God” (D&C 42:6).

Some interesting similarities between these early cloudstone renderings and the sunstones on the Nauvoo Temple probably indicate that some of the Nauvoo elements were carried over to the Salt Lake Temple. Both sets of images have hands holding trumpets. Both show clouds with the sun shining through. On the Nauvoo Temple, the entire face of the sun is visible shining above the clouds. On the Salt Lake Temple, the face of the sun is hidden behind the cloud but the rays are shown flowing down.

Second Coming Symbolism. The conjoining of the sun’s rays dispelling the clouds and the trumpet announcing the Restoration relates also to the imminence of the Lord’s second coming,



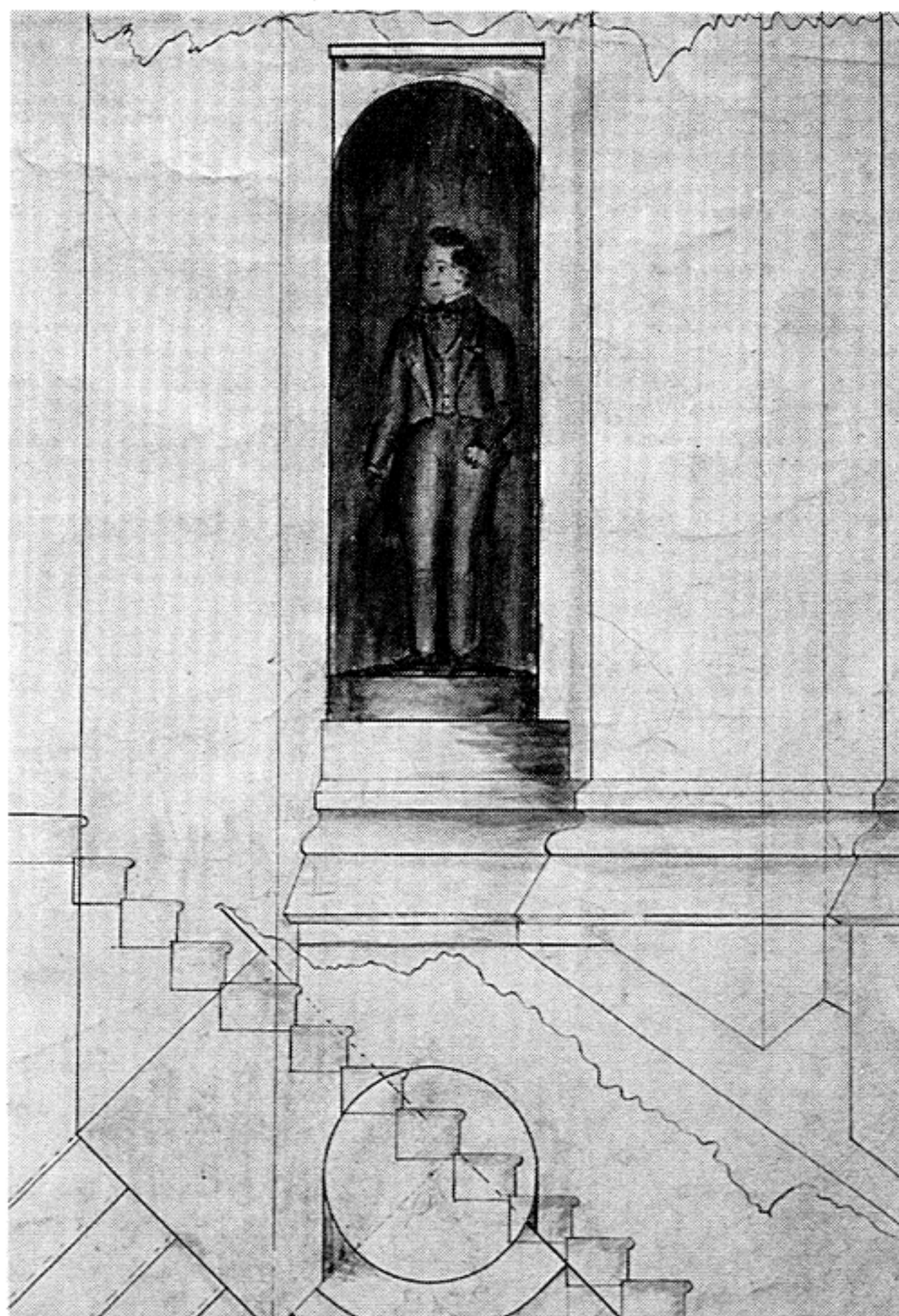
Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art

Fig. 22. An 1854 rendering by Truman O. Angell of trumpets and cloudstones.

which will be announced with a trumpet (Joel 2:1).⁷⁰ For the Second Coming symbolism, the cloudstones, earthstones, and towers form a symbolic unit.⁷¹ The earthstones represent missionary work around the globe preparing the world for the Second Coming. In this regard, Truman Angell says the motto of the earthstones is “The Gospel has come for the whole earth.”⁷² Since the towers represent the priesthood, we have a visual depiction of an imperative for the priesthood to carry the message of the Restoration throughout the world and “warn the people” (D&C 88:81) of “the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (D&C 128:17). An additional missionary message of helping others discover the way to correct their course is symbolized by the depiction of Ursa Major.⁷³

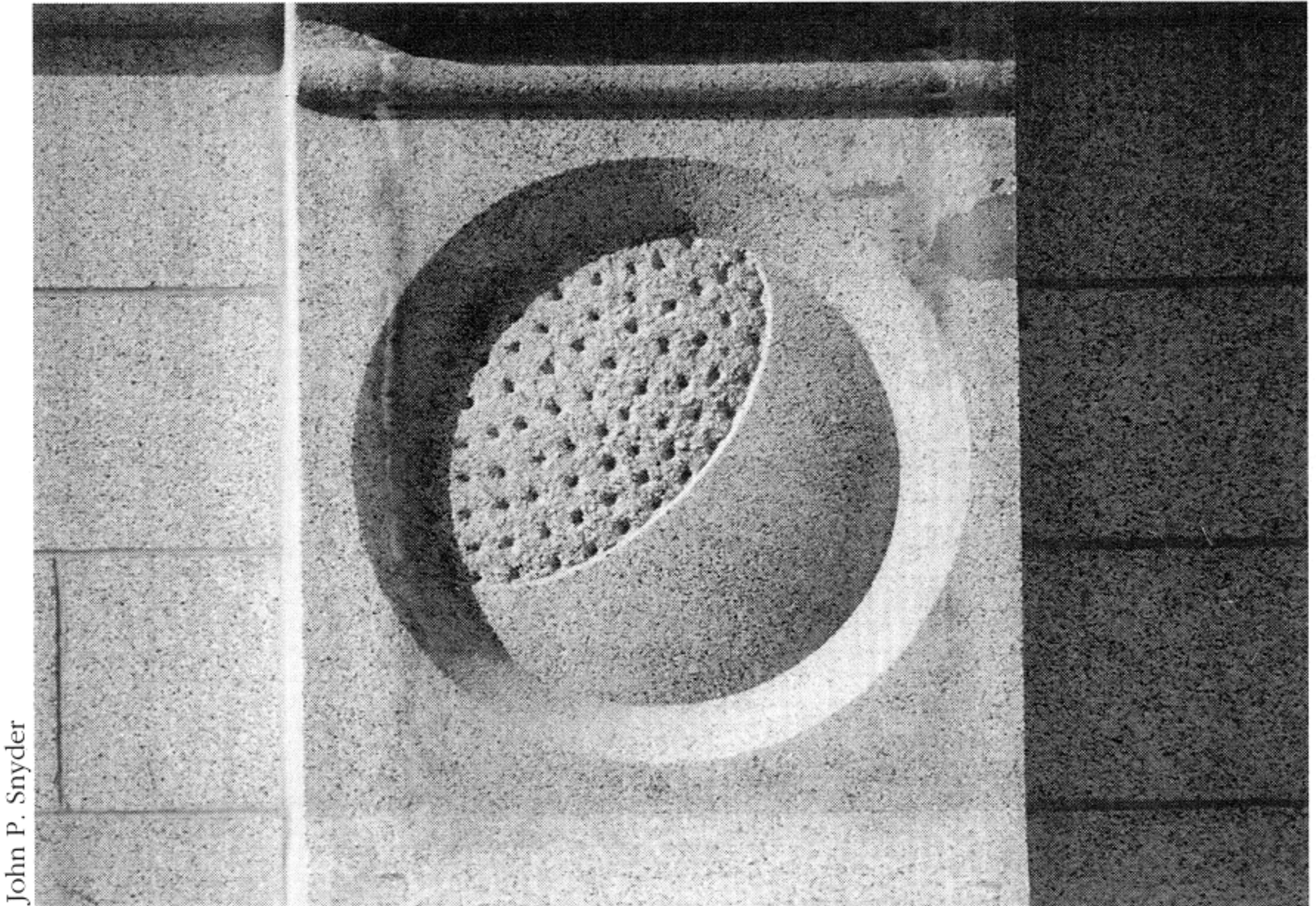
Sculptures. Other symbols of the Restoration are Mahonri Young’s sculptures of Joseph Smith, the prophet through whom the gospel was restored, and Hyrum Smith, his brother; both stand as sentinels who hold the keys of the restored priesthood (D&C 13; 24; 27). For a short time, these statues were placed in exterior niches of the temple (fig. 23) before being moved to the temple grounds in the early part of this century (fig. 3).⁷⁴

The Moonstones. The calculated ordering of the moonstones (fig. 24) creates one of the most powerful, yet subtle, sets of symbols concerning the Restoration. Four sequential moonstones would represent each lunar month (fig. 17). The moonstones are placed in the wall so that January would start in approximately the middle



Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art

Fig. 23. Plan for a sculpture in an exterior niche by the great eastern door.

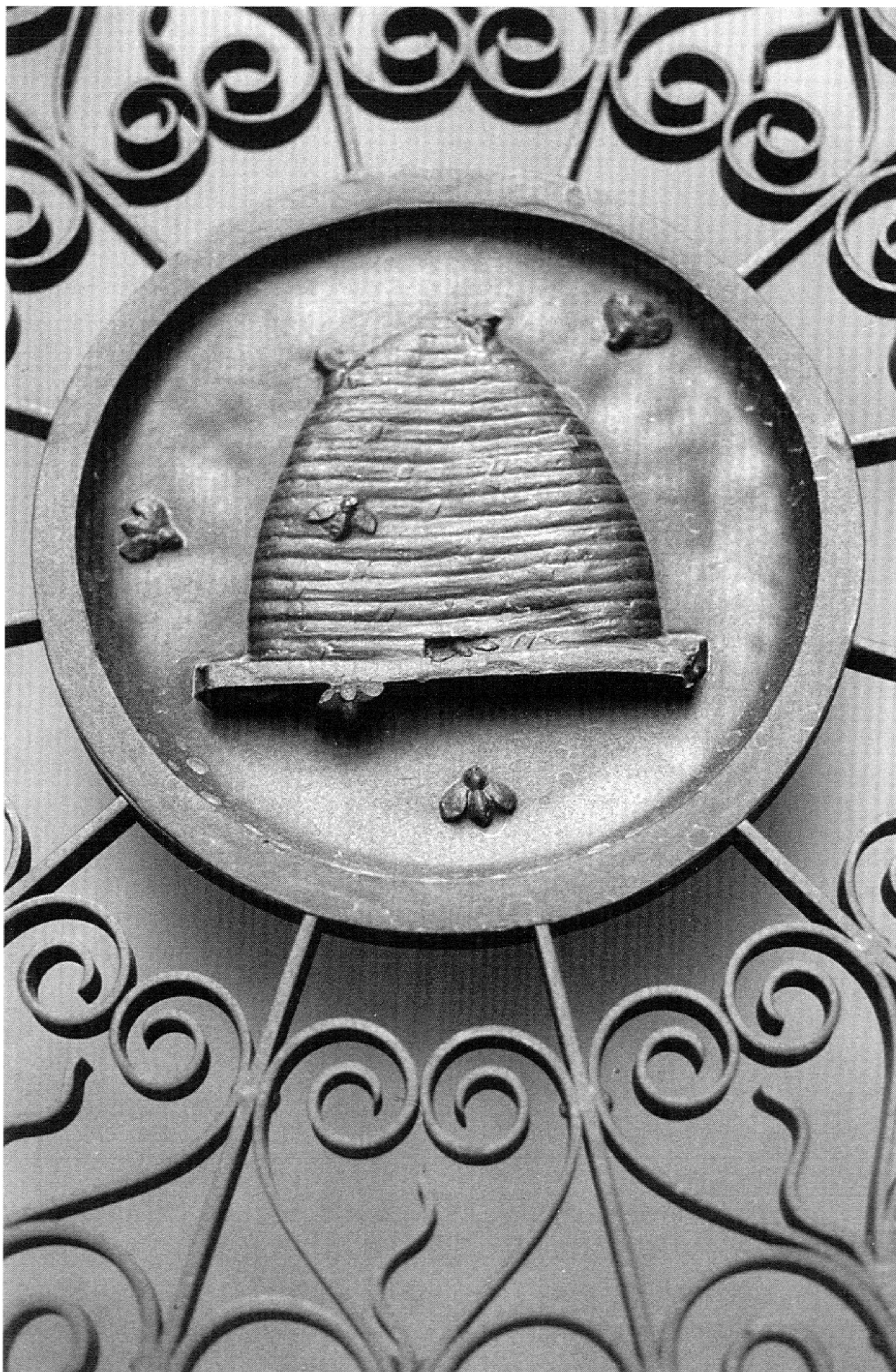


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Fig. 24. Close-up of a moonstone.

of the north wall of the temple,⁷⁵ the wall that used to be the most visually obscure. Usually one would not begin a major iconographical sequence at such a place unless the intention was to feature some other point in the sequence by having it fall at a much more prominent place. This was apparently the intention. The positioning of the moonstone phases made it possible for the two buttresses on the east side of the east central tower, the most prominent tower on the temple, to be decorated with the two phases of the moon for early April, commemorating not only Christ's birth, but also the official organization of the Church on April 6, 1830.⁷⁶

The Beehive and Motto. Another important aspect of the Restoration is the building of Zion. A symbol often used for Zion is a beehive,⁷⁷ representing industry, hard work, and cooperation. Beehive medallions are at the center of two roundels on each of the great exterior doors (fig. 25). Two nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints wrote, "The hive and honey bees form our communal coat of arms. . . . It is a significant representation of the industry,



John P. Snyder

Fig. 25. Beehive medallion on the eastern door.

harmony, order and frugality of the people, and of the sweet results of their toil, union and intelligent cooperation.”⁷⁸ Beehives were on early flags that flew over Utah Territory.⁷⁹ The beehive is frequently used on Church logos. It is on the seals of both the University of Utah and Brigham Young University. It eventually became the center of the Great Seal of the State of Utah.

A spiritual component of Zion was expressed by including the words “Holiness to the Lord”⁸⁰ above the beehives on the door-knobs (fig. 26). Brigham Young used the phrase “Holiness to the Lord” in “a dedicatory prayer, presenting the Temple, thus far completed, as a monument of the saints’ liberality, fidelity, and faith, concluding: ‘Lord, we dedicate this house and ourselves, to thee.’”⁸¹ He then elaborated what “Holiness to the Lord” meant to him:

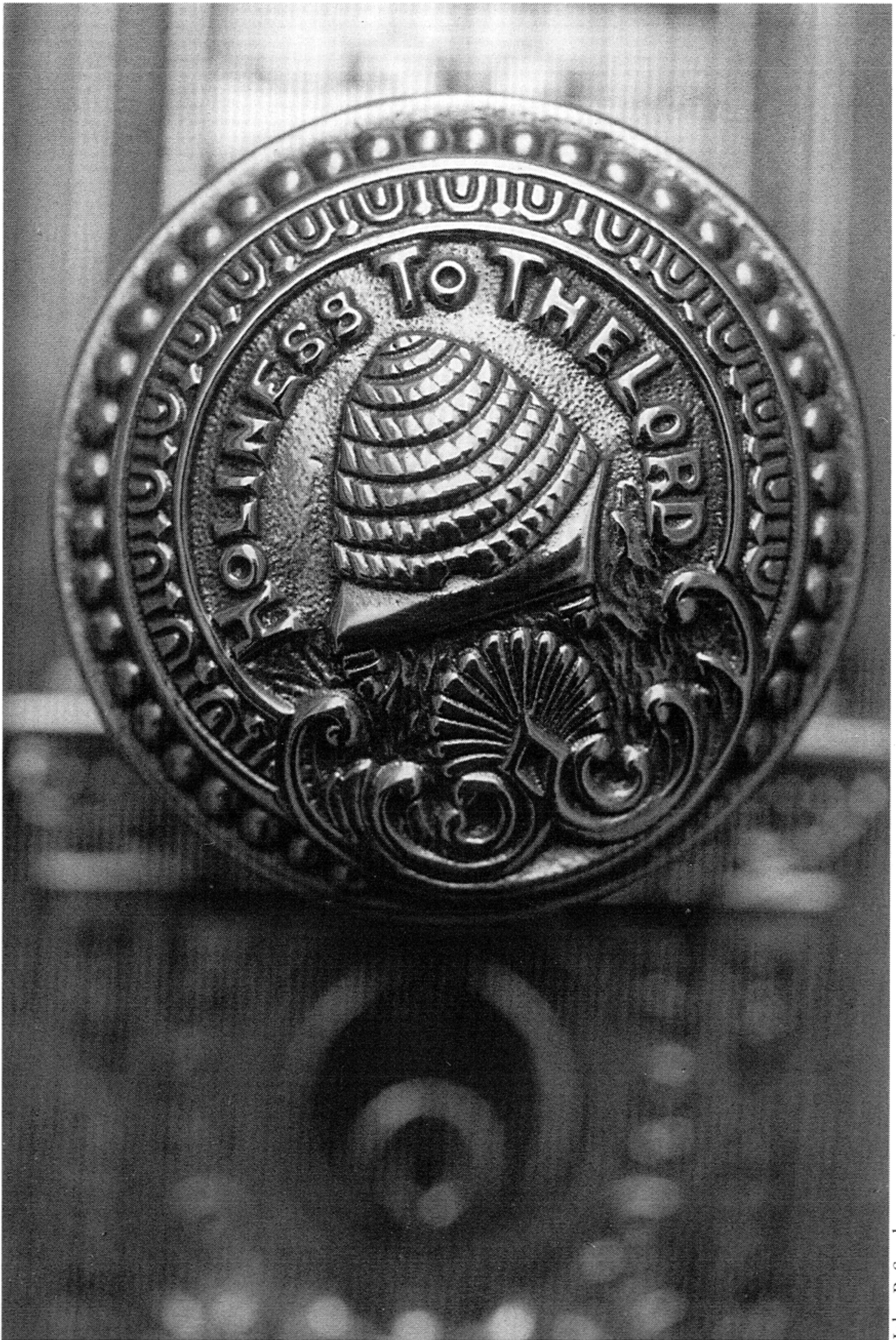
Thirty years’ experience has taught me that every moment of my life must be holiness to the Lord, resulting from equity, justice, mercy, and uprightness in all my actions, which is the only course by which I can preserve the Spirit of the Almighty to myself.⁸²

Christological Symbolism

The most significant focus of the temple is Christ. One can see allusions to Christ and his gospel in many symbols, in their location and relationships, and indeed in the very orientation of the temple.

The Temple Doors. The escutcheon plates for the door handles reinforce the centrality of Christ in Latter-day Saint theology. The plates have a small bas relief of a door (fig. 27). The scriptures contain numerous references to Christ and his gospel as the door or the gate.⁸³ Christ himself says, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9). In the nineteenth century, Church leaders occasionally referred to the gospel of Jesus Christ as the door: “When a man entered the church by the door, that is by faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands, he was required to live in strict obedience to the principles laid down in the teachings of our Savior.”⁸⁴

Above the door on the escutcheon plate is an arch with a very prominent keystone (fig. 28). Elder Erastus Snow spoke of the



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Fig. 26. Doorknob on the Salt Lake Temple.

Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art



Fig. 27. Escutcheon plates for door handles with bas relief of a door on the upper half.



John P. Snyder

Fig. 28. Detail of escutcheon plate showing the arch and keystone.

sealing ordinances and the covenants the Saints make with the Lord as a keystone:

This new and everlasting covenant reveals unto us the keys of the Holy Priesthood and ordinances thereof. It is the grand keystone of the arch which the Lord is building in the earth. In other words, it is that which completes the exaltation and glory of the righteous who receive the everlasting Gospel, and without it they could not attain unto the eternal power and Godhead and the fullness of celestial glory.⁸⁵

Celestial Bodies and Light. The glory of celestial bodies and of the earth are depicted in symbols covering the temple. Some scriptural passages represent these bodies as praising the Lord:

Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.
(Ps. 148:3)

Let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever! And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers! (D&C 128:23)

An ancient Hebrew song speaks of the Lord's light bringing worshipers to sacred places: "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles" (Ps. 43:3). Light, particularly light from heavenly bodies, is an expression of Christ, intelligence, revelation, life, truth, and the power of the Lord, which power animates all things, including the heavens. Christ is described as "the life and the light of the world" (Alma 38:9). In the Doctrine and Covenants, we learn, "For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (D&C 84:45).

Perhaps the most inclusive scriptural statement about light is in Doctrine and Covenants 88, which says that the light of truth or the light of Christ is the medium through which the Lord animates the universe. Brigham Young's focus on light at the laying of the first cornerstone and the depiction of heavenly bodies on the temple are undoubtedly related to these theological ideas. Consider the

extensive use of celestial symbols on the temple's exterior while reading these verses:

He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;

Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:6–13)

The heavenly bodies depicted on the temple bathe it in the perpetual light of the sun, moon, and stars. This light ultimately emanates from Christ himself. Thus the entire temple symbolically radiates the light, intelligence, and order of the Lord into Zion.

The Moonstones and the Towers. The specific placement of the moonstones celebrates the Savior in several ways. Each cycle of the moon is depicted for the year of 1878 (fig. 10).⁸⁶ As previously discussed, the lunar year was started in a relatively obscure place on the temple exterior because neither January 1 nor December 31 are important dates for temple symbolism. The most significant date is the possible birthdate of the Savior, April 6.⁸⁷ This was the approximate date that he commenced his earthly ministry.⁸⁸ He was crucified and rose from the dead in early April.⁸⁹ Thus the calendrical function of the east central tower moonstones celebrates key dates in the life of the Savior.⁹⁰ These moonstones also commemorate the organization of the Church and the official beginning of Christ's last dispensation. Each year, on or near April 6, Latter-day Saints celebrate these events by holding annual general conference.⁹¹ In October, the probable birth month of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Lord, the Saints hold their

semiannual general conference, marked by the moonstones on the west central tower. At these general conferences, Christ's living prophets speak to his people and testify of him.

The twelve small pinnacles on each of the east towers (fig. 29) represent the twelve Apostles,⁹² who are called to be special witnesses of Jesus Christ. The three great pyramidal spires that cap the towers of the east represent the First Presidency of the Church. It is the President of the Church who holds all the priesthood keys of Christ's church on earth (D&C 81:2).

The Clasped Hands. Carved into the stone panel above the bottom window in the center east and west towers is a pair of clasped hands (fig. 30), which represent the hand of fellowship and the unity of the Saints.⁹³ But the clasped hands seem to have additional meanings, for surrounding the hands is an oval with rays emanating outward. The usual meaning of an aureole of light is divine sanctification or divine presence. Thus two interpretations seem to be associated with the addition of the aureole of light. The first is that the fellowship of the Saints is part of building a sacred community, Zion. The second is that the Lord is bound with us in a covenant, which is central to temple worship:

For those who enter these walls, this house becomes a house of covenants. Here we promise, solemnly and sacredly, to live the gospel of Jesus Christ in its finest expression. We covenant with God our Eternal Father to live those principles which are the bedrock of all true religion.⁹⁴

Engraved into the scroll on the keystone above the clasped hands and gilded are the words "Alpha and Omega." These, the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet, are one of the names of the Lord: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). "Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I AM, Alpha and Omega" (D&C 38:1).

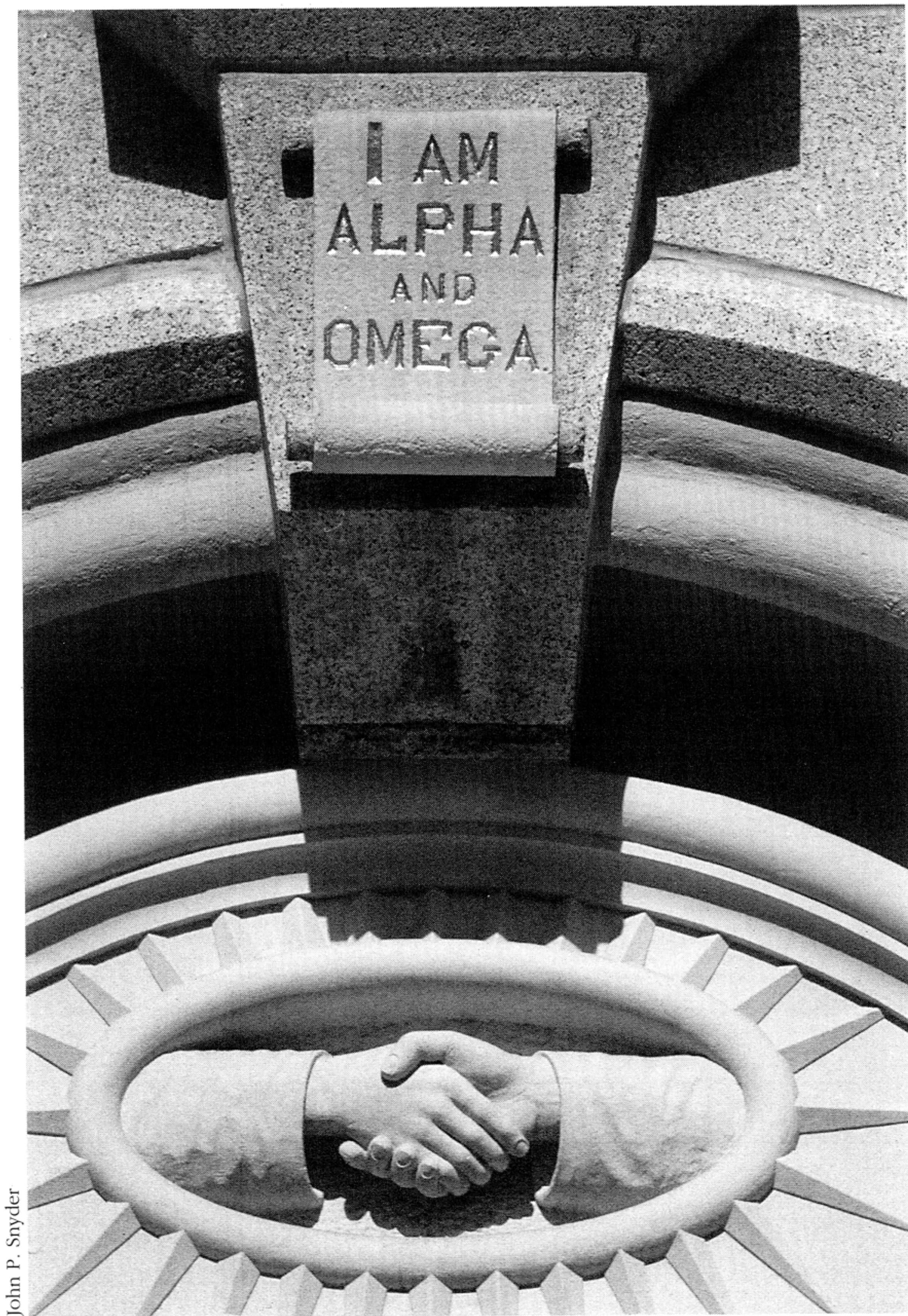
The All-Seeing Eye. Above the second window in the east and west central towers is an eye looking out at us from below a veil of pleated fabric (fig. 31). Surrounding the eye is another aureole of light depicted by a raised oval with outward shooting rays. The keystone in the arch above is blank.⁹⁵ This is the all-seeing eye, a symbol frequently used in pioneer Utah. This symbol reminded the Saints that the eye of the Lord was upon them and that all that



Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art

Fig. 29. Of the twelve spires per tower, nine can be seen on some of the towers in this 1893 photograph by H. H. Thomas.

they did should be in accordance with the will of the Lord. John Taylor noted it “penetrates and is enabled to weigh the actions and motives of the children of men.”⁹⁶ In Proverbs we are told, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3). The all-seeing eye of the Lord was often used on Church cooperative buildings with the phrase “Holiness to the



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Fig. 30. Clasped hands and keystone.



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Fig. 31. The all-seeing eye.

Lord” arched over it. Sometimes the all-seeing eye was used in pioneer tabernacles; one is located over the choir seats in the St. George Tabernacle.

However, the all-seeing eyes on the temple differ from all the rest. Most all-seeing eyes have eyebrows above them, but those on the Salt Lake Temple are depicted looking out from beneath a pleated veil.⁹⁷ Veils are used to separate the sacred from the profane, the spiritual from the carnal, truth from confusion, the Lord from mankind. The veil separating man and the Lord is removed only on rare occasions of great faith and obedience:

And because of the knowledge of this man [the brother of Jared] he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting. Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him. (Ether 3:19-20)

And prepare for the revelation which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together. (D&C 101:23)

Holiness to the Lord. Above the second window in the east central tower is the large dedicatory plaque, which reads, “Holiness To The Lord. The House of the Lord, built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Commenced April 6, 1853. Completed April 6, 1893” (fig. 32; see also fig. 33). President Hinckley made this comment about the dedicatory plaque:

The first phrase of this statement is a declared recognition of the Almighty and a pledge of holiness and reverence before Him. The second is a statement of ownership. This is His house, built through the consecrations of the people and presented to Him as their offering of love and sacrifice.⁹⁸

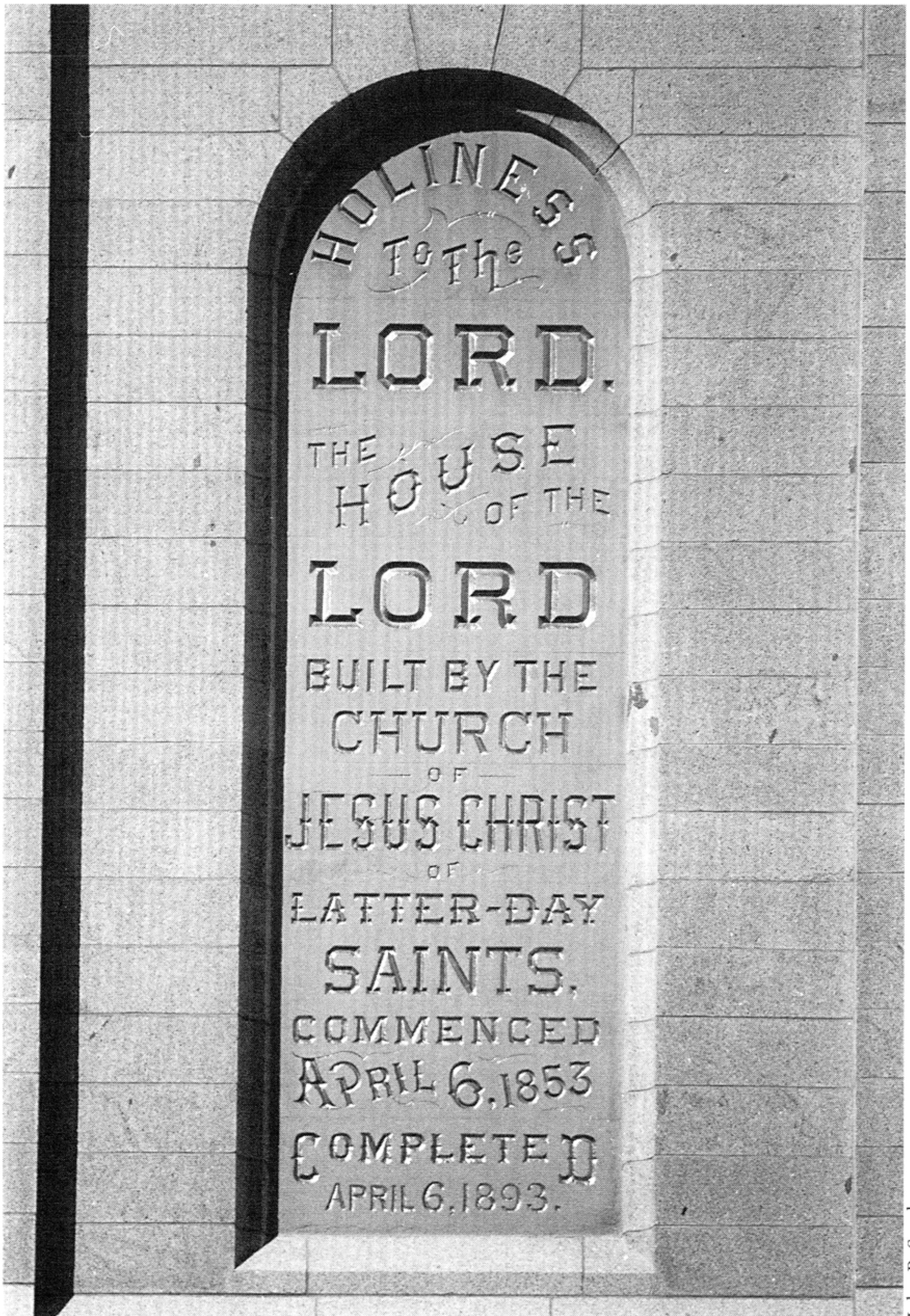
The first phrase, “Holiness to the Lord,” is also a millennial declaration about building a Zion to which the Lord can return at his second coming:

In speaking of the gathering, we mean to be understood as speaking of it according to scripture, the gathering of the elect of the Lord out of every nation on earth, and bringing them to the place of the Lord of Hosts, when the city of righteousness shall be built, and where the people shall be of one heart and one mind, when the Savior comes; yea, where the people shall walk with God like Enoch, and be free from sin. The word of the Lord is precious; and when we read that the vail spread over all nations will be destroyed, and the pure in heart see God, and reign with Him a thousand years on earth, we want all honest men to have a chance to gather and build up a city of righteousness, where even upon the bells of the horses shall be written *Holiness to the Lord*.⁹⁹

Elder Bruce R. McConkie also comments on the relationship between “Holiness to the Lord” and the city of Enoch:

“Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.” What was more natural than to name the city after the people? The pure in heart called their abode by the name City of Holiness. Their every thought was “Holiness to the Lord, and blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!”¹⁰⁰

The Cloudstones. The Latter-day Saint belief that the temple is the house of the Lord here on earth as well as his point of contact with his people is reinforced symbolically by the cloudstones. The final placement of cloudstones was altered from the original plan. This change was probably part of the simplification that



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Fig. 32. Dedicatory plaque.

occurred because of the difficulty of carving granite instead of the softer freestones. Originally a cloudstone was to be placed at the top of each buttress on each tower. This would have made a total of eight cloudstones per tower for a total of forty-eight cloudstones in all. But the temple was completed with just two cloudstones. These were placed on the east face of the east central tower (figs. 9, 21). This simplification actually strengthens the Christological symbolism of the temple exterior by keeping the cloudstones on the tower that symbolically is the most focused on the Savior. Since one of the symbolic functions of this tower is to focus on Christ, the cloudstones, when interpreted as symbols of the presence of the Lord, reinforce both this focus and the literal meaning of the great dedicatory plaque, "Holiness to the Lord. The House of the Lord."

The key to understanding the relationship of the cloudstones and the Lord is found in the rather consistent linking of the presence of the Lord and clouds in holy writ. Truman Angell stated that Brigham Young diligently studied the scriptures, "particularly the Old Testament,"¹⁰¹ before developing the plan for the exterior symbolism of the temple. Over and over in the scriptures, the Lord appears in a cloud to his prophets and his people.

The Lord often dealt with the children of Israel in the wilderness from within a cloud. He "went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way" (Ex. 13:21). He spoke to Moses on Sinai and to the elders of Israel from within a cloud (Ex. 24:16; 19:9; 24:15; 34:5; Num. 11:25). The Lord appeared in a cloud:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy [place] within the vail before the mercy seat, which [is] upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. (Lev. 16:2)

And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. (Num. 16:42)

The Lord came to the dedication of the Temple of Solomon in a cloud:

Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, [and stood] over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. (Ezek. 10:4; see also 2 Chr. 5:13)

The Lord informed Joseph Smith that when the temple is built in Jackson County a cloud of glory will rest upon it: "For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house" (D&C 84:5).

God the Father spoke to the Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration from within a cloud: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). The Lord spoke to the brother of Jared from a cloud: "And it came to pass that when they had come down into the valley of Nimrod the Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared; and he was in a cloud, and the brother of Jared saw him not" (Ether 2:4, 14).

After his final visit with his Apostles, the Savior ascended to heaven in a cloud (Acts 1:9). He also ascended in a cloud after visiting the Nephites (3 Ne. 18:38). Finally, the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith that he would come again in a cloud: "For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, the time is soon at hand that I shall come in a cloud with power and great glory" (D&C 34:7; see also D&C 45:45; Luke 21:25-28).

Since the temple is set apart as the House of the Lord, it seems logical to assume that the cloudstones could symbolize the second coming of the Lord as well as his word and presence in his earthly home, the temple.

The House of the Lord. Because the temple is the earthly sanctuary of the Lord, it is physically set off from the world: "The traffic outside the wall [of Temple Square] is now frequently heavy and noisy. Within the wall, there is an environment of peace and beauty."¹⁰² Aside from the peace attained within the walls of Temple Square, the positioning of the temple within those walls adds some symbolic elements. The main access to Temple Square is from the north and south gates, which are located in the center of the south and north walls of the square. A secondary gate is located in the center of the west wall of the square. There was no public access from the east until very recently, when an eastern gate was made. None of these four gates center on the temple.

The front of the temple faces directly into the east wall, less than seventy five feet away. In fairly recent times, the thick masonry wall directly in front of the temple has been replaced with a high ornamental iron fence, making the temple more visible from the street (fig. 33; compare to fig. 4). However, there is still no access to the front of the temple from the street. The temple could have been placed where the Tabernacle now stands, making the front of the temple easily accessible from Temple Square's main north-south pedestrian mall (remember that the temple was begun over ten years before the Tabernacle was begun). The temple actually turns its back on people entering Temple Square. Clearly, easy casual access for visitors was not the intention in positioning the temple on the square.

The temple is further set off from visitors within the walls surrounding Temple Square by inner fences and walls. Even those that come to Temple Square to attend the temple do not directly enter the temple. They enter the temple annex through a small gate in the north wall of the square. The entrance into the temple itself is via an underground passage coming from the north. One is reminded of the various courts that set off the Temple of Solomon from the world. That temple was not only in a holy city, it was also approached through a series of courts to which access was increasingly restricted. The walls around Temple Square and the somewhat serpentine entrance into the temple seem to be a reflection of the tradition that temples should be a sanctuary set off from secular world.¹⁰³

So why does the temple face east if the east doors are not for regular worshiper access? The dedicatory plaque on the east face of the east central tower holds the answer. Ultimately, the temple is not a house for man; it is the Lord's house. The eastward-facing position of the temple on the square reinforces the millennialism of the gospel. Just as the east central tower welcomes the untrammelled light of the rising sun coming from the east, so it will welcome the Lord at the commencement of the Millennium: "But the Son of Man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning cometh out of the east."¹⁰⁴ This prophetic doctrine was reaffirmed in 1956:

[The Los Angeles Temple] was the first in the twentieth century to include . . . an angel Moroni statue on its 257-foot tower.



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Fig. 33. East side of the Salt Lake Temple.

Architectural plans called for the angel to face southeast, as did the temple itself. President David O. McKay, however, insisted that the statue be turned to face due east. Most (but not all) LDS temples face east, symbolic of the anticipated second coming of Christ, which Jesus compared to the dawning in the east of a new day (Matt. 24:27).¹⁰⁵

Thus the dedicatory plaque is not a casual sign. In one sense, it is an announcement to greet the Lord when he comes to his house at his second coming. The temple's position facing the east wall of Temple Square reminds us that this is not our house; it is the Lord's. We go to the temple to be taught of him, to adjust our lives to the Lord in order to understand his ways.

Conclusion

A few years ago Joseph McConkie wrote a short article on the symbolism of the exterior of the Salt Lake Temple. He made this observation about interpreting the symbols:

One explanation of a symbol that has been given does not preclude someone else seeing beyond that. Symbols were intended to expand our freedom of expression and feelings, not limit them. In suggesting some meanings associated with the symbols on the Salt Lake Temple, it need not be supposed that this constitutes the final word on the matter. Finality robs symbols of their meaning.¹⁰⁶

My interpretation of the exterior symbolism on the temple will not be the "last words" on this subject. Scholarship will add more to our understanding. But as a sacred structure, the Salt Lake Temple derives its meaning primarily from the spiritual context that caused it to be built and from its use for over a century as a place of spiritual teaching, inspiration, worship, and religious ordinances.

I have tried to avoid the interpretation of exterior temple symbols in isolation. The medieval cathedrals of Europe are viewed by scholars as a symbolic microcosm of the medieval world,¹⁰⁷ a microcosm in which the symbols are bound together. In many ways, the Salt Lake Temple is a microcosm of Latter-day Saint belief and even of some of its central sacred history. As such, through the symbolic relationships expressed on its exterior, it gives physical form to Latter-day Saint faith.

The Salt Lake Temple has yet to be matched in the tradition of the Latter-day Saint temple architecture. Some may see in this article

an imperative on how Latter-day Saint temples should be ornamented. That is neither my intention nor the intention of those who built the Salt Lake Temple. The three other pioneer temples—the St. George, Manti, and Logan Temples, which were all begun and completed during the period that the Salt Lake Temple was under construction—were all made with much less elaborate exterior symbolism. Orson Pratt had this to say about temple architecture and design:

You see that, notwithstanding all these Temples that are now building in this Territory, and those that have been built before we came here in Kirtland and Nauvoo, the Lord is not confined to an exact pattern in relation to these Temples building in the different Stakes. . . . He will construct His Temples in a great variety of ways, and by and by, when the more perfect order shall exist we shall construct them through the aid of revelation, in accordance with the Temples that exist in yonder heaven.¹⁰⁸

Spiritual and aesthetic power and majesty and amazing comprehensive theological and intellectual thought are expressed through the exterior symbolism of the Salt Lake Temple. It shows the theological unity of the heavens. The symbolism expresses the sacralization of a new “Zion” and visually links mankind with the heavenly realms of the Lord. The sacred history of this dispensation is made manifest and with it the imperative to carry that message to the world though an orderly process presided over by the Lord’s priesthood leaders. The organizational structure of the presiding councils of his church is made visible. And the centrality of Christ and the imminence of his return to the earth are expressed. Surely the architecture of the Salt Lake Temple shines with craftsmanship and aesthetics. But it is the nobility of the temple’s sacred messages expressed through the relationships of its symbols that shines with transcendent brilliance. According to nineteenth-century Church leaders,¹⁰⁹ the Salt Lake Temple fulfills this prophecy from Isaiah:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, [that] the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he

will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Isa. 2:2-5)

Richard G. Oman is Senior Curator of the Museum of Church History and Art. The author would like to acknowledge Doris R. Dant, Nancy R. Lund, Steven L. Olsen, Robert O. Davis, and Glen M. Leonard for their insights and help. He thanks his wife, Pamela Fillmore Oman, for her encouragement, support, and patience.

NOTES

¹Viktor Emil Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square, 1985).

²I purposely avoid discussing some symbols, such as the inverted stars on door keystones and the so-called Saturn stones, because I did not find a reliable LDS source on which to base an interpretation. Several authors have preceded me in interpreting the Salt Lake Temple, and others will do so after this article is published. Similarly, there are dozens of books on the iconography of Byzantine and medieval architecture; in some cases the authors agree; in others they do not. Such is the nature of scholarship about significant and complex works of art and architecture. The Salt Lake Temple is such a work. I approached the exterior iconography of the Salt Lake Temple from a particular point of view. That point of view affected which sources I most valued.

³Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City, A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 4. As Georges Duby said in his monumental work on Gothic cathedrals, "We have. . . to give more attention to the theology than to the sociology of the period if we wish to understand its art." Georges Duby, *The Europe of the Cathedrals, 1140-1280*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Geneva: Editions d'Art Albert Skira, 1966), 9.

⁴As a believing Latter-day Saint, I am not impartial, but according to the German philosopher Hegel, such impartiality is a myth anyway:

Even the ordinary, the "impartial" historiographer, who believes and professes that he maintains a simply receptive attitude; surrendering himself only to the data supplied him—is by no means passive as regards the exercise of his thinking powers. He brings his categories with him, and sees the phenomena presented to his mental vision, exclusively through these media. (G. W. F. Hegel, "Philosophical History," in *The World's Great Thinkers: Man and the State: The Political Philosophers*, ed. Saxe Commins and Robert N. Linscott, 4 vols. [New York: Random House, 1947], 3:408)

In other words, who we are conditions what we see, in spite of all of our attempts at impartiality.

⁵As an art historian, I have used the visual images on the temple itself as its own best document, although I have referred to the significant body of spiritual and scholarly material written about the temple and its meaning. James E. Talmage, Boyd K. Packer, Hugh W. Nibley, and others have written extensively on this subject. The author is grateful for the role these authors have played in building the foundation for this study. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (1912; reprint, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962); Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980); Hugh W. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992).

Among the other scholars who have written about the temple are (in alphabetical order by surname) Laurel Brana Blank Andrew, *The Early Temples of the Mormons: The Architecture of the Millennial Kingdom in the American West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978); Matthew B. Brown and Paul Thomas Smith, *Symbols in Stone: Symbolism in the Temples of the Early Restoration* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, forthcoming, 1997); Loren C. Dunn, "Symbols in Architecture of the Temple Are 'a Means of Teaching,'" *Church News*, February 13, 1993, 7; Charles Mark Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences on the Salt Lake Temple" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1972); Charles Mark Hamilton, *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Charles Mark Hamilton, "The Salt Lake Temple: An Architectural Monograph" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1978); Charles Mark Hamilton, *The Salt Lake Temple: A Monument to a People*, based on the research and study of C. Mark Hamilton and written in collaboration with the concept and design of C. Nina Cutrubus (Salt Lake City: University Services, 1983); Matthew Kevin Heiss, "The Salt Lake Temple and the Metaphors of Transformation" (master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1986); Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, *Every Stone a Sermon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992); Nels Benjamin Lundwall, *Temples of the Most High* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1947); Truman Madsen, ed., *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, Religious Studies Monograph Series, vol. 9 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University), two articles of particular interest being Hugh W. Nibley, "Looking Backward," 39-51 and Hugh W. Nibley, "What Is a Temple," 19-37; Duncan McNeil McAllister, *A Description of the Great Temple, Salt Lake City, and a Statement concerning the Purposes for Which It Has Been Built* (Salt Lake City: Bureau of Information and Church Literature, 1904); Joseph Fielding McConkie, "Symbols of Our Faith," *This People* (spring 1993): 31-34; Wallace Alan Raynor, "History of the Construction of the Salt Lake Temple" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1961); Wallace Alan Raynor, *The Everlasting Spires: A Story of the Salt Lake Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965); George H. Schoemaker, "Acculturation and Transformation of Salt Lake Temple Symbols in Mormon Tombstone Art," *Markers IX: Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* (1992): 196-215.

⁶For example, Talmage, among others, mentions "saturn stones," referring to the small stones each decorated with a circle in a square and located just below

the battlements of the towers. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 122. Examining the symbolism of these stones presents several problems. The stones were depicted in the original drawings at the same time that huge stones that are clearly the ringed Saturn were also depicted (these stones were dropped from the final design; fig. 34—compare to figs. 9 and 19). So we are faced with the question Why depict Saturn with two different visual images? A second problem is that if the small circle in a square is not Saturn, what is it? Some speculate that these stones represent the dome of heaven (the circle) and the earth (the square). Paul Thomas Smith and Matthew B. Brown, personal communication with author.

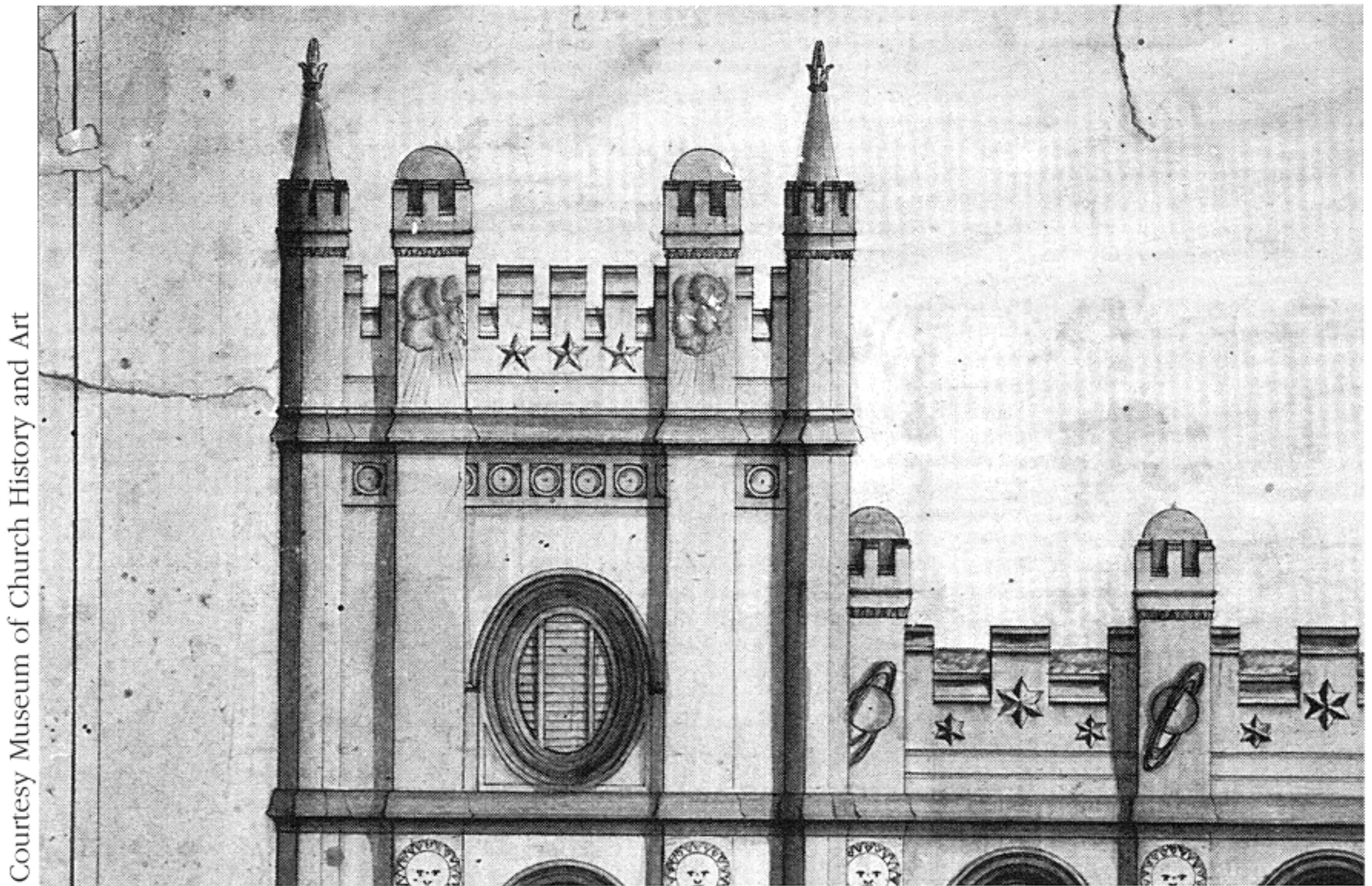


Fig. 34. Detail from the 1854 side elevation.

A third problem is, Why represent Saturn on the temple? Some speculate that perhaps this stone is a symbol for Kolob, a possibility that makes some sense because Kolob is a “governing planet.” Its time frame is much slower than the earth’s (one revolution being one thousand years). This interpretation would be consistent with the expression of time slowing down as one’s eye moves upward from the earthstones to the moonstones to the sunstones. Again, the problem is that I have no historical, scriptural, or authoritative Church reference that says the “Saturn Stones” are really “Kolob Stones.” To make such a conclusion is too speculative for me at this time, although I acknowledge that this omission represents a major visual gap in my interpretation.

⁷*Iconography* can refer to a set of symbolic forms or to the images an artist selects to communicate the meaning of his or her work. The word comes from *eikonographia* ‘sketch, description’.

⁸Because of perceived parallels, this symbolism actually linked Mary back to the Greek goddess Artemis.

⁹See n. 38 for a discussion of why I do not equate the moonstones on the temple with the terrestrial degree of glory.

¹⁰Steven Epperson, "Symbolic Stones and the Salt Lake Temple," unpublished paper in possession of the author.

¹¹Temple recommends are certificates that can be signed only by ward and stake ecclesiastical leaders after interviews that ascertain the spiritual worthiness of the supplicant. Hugh W. Nibley, "Meanings and Functions of Temples," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1462 (hereafter cited as *EM*).

¹²Steven L. Olsen, "The Mormon Ideology of Place: Cosmic Symbolism of the City of Zion, 1830-1846" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1985), 302.

¹³Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855-86), 8:202, October 8, 1860 (hereafter cited as *JD*).

¹⁴Brigham Young, in *JD*, 8:203, October 8, 1860.

¹⁵Truman O. Angell, quoted in Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 145.

¹⁶William Ward's architectural drawing of the temple is featured on the back cover of this issue.

¹⁷William Ward, "Who Designed the Temple?" *Deseret News*, April 16, 1892, 578-79.

¹⁸Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:133, April 6, 1853. Hugh Nibley says, "Latter-day Saints see in the completeness and perfection of Joseph Smith's teachings regarding the temple a sure indication of divine revelation. This is also seen in the design of the Salt Lake Temple." Nibley, "Meanings and Functions of Temples," 4:1462.

¹⁹This tradition was continued in many of the large solemn assembly rooms in other post-Nauvoo temples such as St. George, Logan, Manti, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

²⁰"The Melchizedek Priesthood, with the altar, fixtures, and furniture belonging thereunto, is situated on the East, and the Aaronic Priesthood belongs in the West." Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:135, April 6, 1853.

²¹Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:133, April 6, 1853.

²²Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:134, April 6, 1853.

²³Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:134, April 6, 1853.

²⁴Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:135-36, April 6, 1853.

²⁵Truman O. Angell, cited in Raynor, *Everlasting Spires*, 175.

²⁶T. O. Angell to President John Taylor, April 29, 1886, John Taylor Presidential Papers, LDS Church Archives; underlining in original.

²⁷Note, for example, the statues on top of the Salt Lake City and County Building and the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

²⁸Moses was on Mount Sinai forty days (Ex. 24:18), the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness forty years (Num. 14:33), Jonah predicted Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days (Jonah 3:4), and Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:2).

²⁹Isaiah 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5; Abraham 3:18; James E. Talmage, *Vitality of Mormonism* (Boston: Gorham, 1919), 322; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 765-66.

³⁰Wilford Woodruff, in *JD*, 18:114-15, September 12, 1875.

³¹Doctrine and Covenants 20:1. See also John Franklin Hall, "April 6," in *EM*, 1:61-62.

³²“Buttress Blocks Commencing with Course M2 Representing the Moon in All Its Phases during the Year 1878,” stonemason’s diagram, Salt Lake Temple Architectural Drawings Collection, LDS Church Archives.

³³Truman O. Angell, “The Temple,” *Deseret News*, August 17, 1854, 2.

³⁴Hugh W. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen R. Ricks, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1987), 357.

³⁵Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return; or, Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series XLVI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³⁶Orson F. Whitney, “Latter-day Saint Ideals and Institutions,” *Improvement Era* 30 (August 1927): 861.

³⁷Hugh Nibley states that God and the temple represent an ordering agent, counteracting the second law of thermodynamics. Hugh W. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 1–11.

³⁸Visitors to Temple Square sometimes see the sun, moon, and stars as representing the three degrees of glory. I have not offered this interpretation for three reasons. First, the three degrees of glory as described in Doctrine and Covenants 76 are represented by stars (testial), moon (terrestrial), and sun (celestial) in ascending order, but the pilasters on the temple have earthstones, moonstones, and sunstones in ascending order. This difference in sequence seems to indicate that the order of heavenly rewards is not the iconographical intention of these symbolic stones. Second, starstones are not included in the pilasters. The starstones that do appear on the temple are over the windows, below the battlements of the east towers, and on the Big Dipper on the west central tower. It is not logical to assume that the testial kingdom would be represented by stars that are higher than the sunstones if the sunstones were to represent the celestial kingdom. Third, on the Nauvoo Temple, the sunstones are rising suns indicating the Restoration not the celestial kingdom. If the sunstones in Nauvoo do not symbolize the celestial kingdom, they probably do not symbolize the celestial kingdom on the Salt Lake Temple. Therefore, one may logically assume that there is not a “degrees of heaven” iconographical program on the temple.

³⁹Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 12. The role of a temple as an axis mundi is well known throughout the earth and across time. For example, among the Moslems,

the Kacba at Mecca is still thought to mark the exact middle of the earth and hub of the universe; it is surrounded by special shrines marking the cardinal points, and the roads that lead to it are holy, the main one being called the Royal Road. There at a set time the whole human race must assemble in one tremendous concourse, as it shall assemble on the Day of Judgment before the throne of God. It was common in the Middle Ages to represent Jerusalem on maps as the exact center of the earth and to depict the city itself as a quartered circle. (Hugh W. Nibley, *The Ancient State* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987], 102–4)

Among the ancient Mesopotamians, the ziggurat was a stairway that led between the lower and upper worlds. It represented a mountain because mountains were viewed as places where contact between man and the heavens could take place. Nibley, “What Is a Temple?” 360.

Among the Hopi Indians of northern Arizona, the kachinas (who serve as the messengers of the gods) live on the tops of the San Francisco Peaks just north of Flagstaff, Arizona. Several times per year, kachinas come down from the San Francisco Peaks into the Hopi villages. They emerge from the kiva, a Hopi version of a temple. See Harold Courlander, *The Fourth World of the Hopis* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971); Fark Waters and Oswald White Bear Fredericks, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1963); Harold S. Colton, *Hopi Kachina Dolls with a Key to Their Identification* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1959).

Among the Navajos, hogans function not only as homes, but also as sacred space. Hogans are always oriented to the four cardinal directions with the door facing east. The sacred land of the Navajos is surrounded by the four sacred mountains where the yeis, or holy people, live. Contact with the yeis happens during Navajo religious rituals called sings. In the sings, the creation stories are told and a large, symmetrical, diagram-like sand painting is created in the hogan that depicts through symbolic forms the story that is being sung. Sacred space, symmetry, cardinal orientation, and creation stories are elements for patterning the Navajo life. Physical and spiritual health is renewed through a sing when one brings one's life back into parallel with the spiritual pattern of spiritual leaders who brought order out of chaos in the beginning of life on this level of existence. Some excellent books on Navajo religion and culture include, Paul G. Zolbrod, *Dine Bahane: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); Gladys A. Reichard, *Navaho Religion: A Study of Symbolism*, Bollingen Series 18 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Gary Witherpoon, *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977); and James C. Faris, *The Nightway: A History and a History of Documentation of a Navajo Ceremonial* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).

Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, temples represented this idea of centering and connecting with the realms of the sacred. The root *tem-* in Greek and Latin denotes a "cutting," or intersection of two lines at right angles and hence the place where the four regions of the world come together, ancient temples "being carefully oriented to express 'the idea of pre-established harmony between a celestial and a terrestrial image.'" Alfred Jeremias, quoted in Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 358.

For additional bibliography, see Hugh W. Nibley, "Christian Envy of the Temple," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 391-434; Nibley, "What Is a Temple?" in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 355-90; Hugh W. Nibley, "The Hierocentric State" *Western Political Quarterly* 4 (June 1951): 226-53; Packer, *Holy Temple*; and Talmage, *House of the Lord*. A full-length bibliography on early temples is Donald W. Parry, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch, *A Bibliography on Temples of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1991).

⁴⁰Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:218-19, October 9, 1852.

⁴¹Angell to Taylor.

⁴²Parley P. Pratt, "Oration," *Deseret News*, April 16, 1853, 3.

⁴³"The Temple," in *Contributor* 14 (April 1893): 254, originally published in *Deseret News*, April 16, 1853, lyrics written by Eliza R. Snow for the cornerstone-laying ceremony of the Salt Lake Temple.

⁴⁴Nibley, "Meanings and Functions," 4:1458–59.

⁴⁵Brigham Young, in *JD*, 1:376, December 16, 1851.

⁴⁶Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 15.

⁴⁷Nibley, "Meanings and Functions," 4:1458.

⁴⁸Nibley, "What Is a Temple," 358.

⁴⁹Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 17. Eliade indicates that other sacred central sites also serve this function.

⁵⁰Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 10.

⁵¹Nibley, "What Is a Temple," 358.

⁵²Wilford Woodruff, *Collected Discourses*, comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy, 5 vols. (Burbank, Calif.: B. H. S. Publishing, 1987), 2:208, April 6, 1891.

⁵³Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy, and the Ancient World* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), 24, 25.

⁵⁴Olsen, *Mormon Ideology of Place*, 282.

⁵⁵Packer, *Holy Temple*, 45.

⁵⁶Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 181.

⁵⁷John Taylor, in *JD*, 1:366, April 19, 1854; italics added.

⁵⁸Whitney, "Latter-day Saint Ideals," 851.

⁵⁹The fifty earthstones can also represent one jubilee cycle. See Leviticus 25:8–16, 23–55; 27:16–25.

⁶⁰Nibley, "Meanings and Functions," 4:1462–63. In ancient times, a temple connected the deceased with the present and the future: "The living could not do without the dead, nor the dead without the living." Fustel de Coulanges, *Ancient City*, 28.

⁶¹For an excellent review of the evolution of the symbolic imagery of the Angel Moroni, see Fred Roe, "Angels: Moroni and His Associates," unpublished manuscript, LDS Church Archives.

⁶²Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 176.

⁶³Angell, "Temple," 2; James H. Anderson, "Salt Lake Temple," *Contributor* 14 (April 1893): 276.

⁶⁴John Taylor, in *JD*, 5:158–59, August 23, 1857; Wilford Woodruff, in *JD*, 6:138, December 27, 1857; Orson Hyde, in *JD*, 7:158, February 12, 1860; Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 7:314, September 18, 1859; Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 16:83, June 15, 1873.

⁶⁵Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 29.

⁶⁶*Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), hymn no. 1.

⁶⁷Charles W. Penrose, "Rays of Living Light," Library Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

⁶⁸Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis, *Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 20–21. The second painting replicates the first, which was painted in 1893.

⁶⁹See also Brigham Young, in *JD*, 9:364–65, August 31, 1862—"The testimony of God's servants has sounded like the voice of a trumpet from nation to nation, and from people to people"—and Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 17:318–19, February 28, 1875.

⁷⁰See also Orson Hyde, in *JD*, 2:65, October 8, 1854.

⁷¹Exact juxtapositions are not necessary to establish every iconographical interpretation. Part of the beauty of the temple iconography is that the symbolism has layers of meaning. Sometimes this layering requires connections between symbols that are not next to each other. Let me use two examples. The base meridian stone is part of Nibley's axis mundi interpretation. Yet there are numerous landscape elements, including a high wall, separating the base meridian stone from the temple. The east towers represent the First Presidency, the Apostles, and the Melchizedek Priesthood. By all standards, these are the governing priesthood towers. Yet the Big Dipper that points us symbolically to the home of God is on the "lesser priesthood" tower. Intervening architectural and symbolic elements between the Big Dipper and the Melchizedek Priesthood towers do not mean that our priesthood line of command goes through the Aaronic Priesthood to link with God. The east central tower needed to be used for the dedication plaque; thus it was not available for the Big Dipper. The Big Dipper was placed where there was available space even though there were other architectural and iconographical elements between it and the east towers. Ample precedent exists for connecting elements symbolically that are not juxtaposed physically.

⁷²Truman O. Angell, "The Salt Lake City Temple," *Millennial Star* 36 (May 5, 1874): 275, cited in Raynor, *Everlasting Spires*, 176.

⁷³See also Hamilton, *Temple: Monument to a People*, 145.

⁷⁴Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 180.

⁷⁵"Buttress Blocks Commencing with Course M2."

⁷⁶An excellent article on the significance of the date is John P. Pratt, "Passover: Was It Symbolic of His Coming?" *Ensign* 24 (January 1994): 38–45. See also Hall, "April 6," 1:61–62. This date has been celebrated by holding a semiannual general conference of the Church on or near this date for well over a century and a half.

⁷⁷Richard G. Oman, "Beehive Symbol," in *EM*, 1:99.

⁷⁸"Deseret," *Deseret News*, October 11, 1881, 2.

⁷⁹John L. Cross and Violet G. Cross, *Old Glory and Her Predecessors over Utah* (Orem, Utah: n.p., 1975), unpaginated.

⁸⁰"Holiness to the Lord" was engraved on the plate of the holy crown of pure gold that was part of Aaron's temple garments (Ex. 28:36–38; see also Zech. 14:20).

⁸¹Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 7:456–57 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

⁸²Brigham Young, in *JD*, 9:220, February 16, 1862.

⁸³For example, see Matthew 7:13; John 10:1; Revelation 3:8; 2 Nephi 9:41; 31:17–18; and Doctrine and Covenants 22; 43:7.

⁸⁴George A. Smith, in *JD*, 12:265, June 21, 1868.

⁸⁵Erastus Snow, in *JD*, 24:161, June 24, 1883.

⁸⁶1878 is the year the buttresses were raised to the level at which the moonstones were to be placed.

⁸⁷Pratt, "Passover," 38–45.

⁸⁸Pratt, "Passover," 42–43, 44.

⁸⁹Pratt, "Passover," 43, 44.

⁹⁰This date frequently coincides with the Feast of the Passover, which celebrates the escape from slavery of the children of Israel in Egypt. So the central position of this date stretches back over almost thirty-five hundred years of religious history.

⁹¹Doctrine and Covenants 20:1; Harold B. Lee, "Strengthen the Stakes of Zion," *Ensign* 3 (July 1973): 2; Spencer W. Kimball, "Remarks and Dedication of the Fayette, New York, Buildings," *Ensign* 10 (May 1980): 54; see also B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 17.

⁹²Raynor, *Everlasting Spires*, 175.

⁹³Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 179.

⁹⁴Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Salt Lake Temple," *Ensign* 23 (March 1993): 6.

⁹⁵These are the only blank keystones in the temple. During the recent renovation of the exterior of the temple, faded paint residue was found on the eyes, indicating they were originally painted naturalistically.

⁹⁶John Taylor, in *JD*, 16:301, November 16, 1873.

⁹⁷This distinctive use of a veil seems to be an augmentation from the original design. The earliest architectural renderings of the temple show the All-Seeing Eye with the usual eyebrow.

⁹⁸Hinckley, "Salt Lake Temple," 6.

⁹⁹*History of the Church*, 2:357-58; italics in original. "Holiness to the Lord" also appears on the block of stone designed by the Deseret Legislature for the Washington Monument, which was exhibited at general conference and then forwarded to Washington, D.C. The central emblem was a "Bee-hive, in full operation, in the centre, encircled by the convolvulus, &c., with the inscription, 'Holiness to the Lord. Deseret.'" James R. Clark, comp., "Ninth General Epistle," *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 2:114 (April 13, 1853).

¹⁰⁰Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 568-69.

¹⁰¹Angell wrote this in a letter to President John Taylor in response to a question from Franklin D. Richards about the presence of what Richards perceived to be Masonic symbols on the temple. Angell to Taylor.

¹⁰²Hinckley, "Salt Lake Temple," 5.

¹⁰³The walls and courts before the temple of Solomon served the same function.

¹⁰⁴Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 287.

¹⁰⁵Richard O. Cowan, "History of LDS Temples from 1831 to 1990," in *EM*, 4:1453.

¹⁰⁶McConkie, "Symbols of Our Faith," 32.

¹⁰⁷Emile Male, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: Harper and Row, 1958); see also Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: New American Library, 1976).

¹⁰⁸Orson Pratt, in *JD*, 24:27, October 26, 1879.

¹⁰⁹George A. Smith, in *JD*, 2:219, March 18, 1855; Charles W. Penrose, in *JD*, 22:168, July 17, 1881; Wilford Woodruff's dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple, April 6, 1893, in G. Homer Durham, ed., *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 337.