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Parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple: cooperation and contestation among Mormon denominations, 1965-2009

David James Howlett
University of Iowa

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PARALLEL PILGRIMAGE AT KIRTLAND TEMPLE: COOPERATION AND
CONTESTATION AMONG MORMON DENOMINATIONS, 1965-2009

by

David James Howlett

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Religious Studies
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Professor T. Dwight Bozeman

ABSTRACT

For tens of thousands of contemporary Latter-day Saint pilgrims, the Kirtland Temple near Cleveland, Ohio, provides an opportunity to visit a place where they believe Jesus appeared and restored long-lost priesthood powers. The Kirtland Temple, however, is not owned by the LDS church. Instead, the shrine is owned by a related denomination that has doctrinally aligned itself with mainline Protestant Christianity—the Community of Christ (formerly known as the RLDS church). Members of both churches include Kirtland on pilgrimage itineraries yet have understood the site's significance in radically different ways between themselves and within their denominations over time. The Kirtland Temple provides an opportune case study for changing contestation and cooperation by multiple groups at an American pilgrimage shrine—a phenomena that I term "parallel pilgrimage."

Two orienting metaphors help focus my moving picture of parallel pilgrimage: proximity (how the site “moves” in relation to changing pilgrimage routes, new shrines, and new interest groups) and performance (plays re-enacting the history of the temple and tour scripts, along with the reception of these performances). My study works out these two themes across the last forty years of change at the Kirtland Temple.

Ultimately, I draw three main conclusions in my study. First, parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple reveals sacred places, not simply pilgrimage routes, as itineraries in motion, constantly contested and constantly changing. Second, acts of cooperation and contestation at Kirtland Temple have formed a dialectical relationship that allows the site to function. Acts of contestation helped the site retain its heightened importance while acts of cooperation allowed members from various denominations to minimize potentially disruptive conflict. Finally, in a wider context, parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple, with its moving alliances and contested narratives, may be seen as suggestive of

how many late twentieth-century Christians negotiated a pluralistic and fragmented religious America.

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

David James Howlett

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Religious Studies at the May 2010 graduation.

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Raymond A. Mentzer

Michelene E. Pesantubbee

Richard B. Turner

Scott Schnell

To my parents, Jim and Suzanne, and my siblings, Julie and Nathan,
Mark and Charity, and Michael.

Around the quiet little village of Kirtland . . . cluster some of the most remarkable events of Ohio history, and in its presence the visitor still feels the spell of years long past, and senses the spirit of a people who . . . possessed the fullest measure of faith and whose temple stands yet today as a monument to their devotion.

- *Kirtland Temple: The House of the Lord*,
the Community of Christ Visitor Center film, ca. 2007,
quoting a 1925 RLDS promotional tract.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One night when I was nine, I was watching my father work in the family basement when he asked, “Do you want to see some square nails?” He rummaged in an old card catalog drawer and pulled out a yellowed envelope. In pencil on the envelope’s cover was written, “Original nails from Kirtland Temple.” He showed me two rusty square nails. My father’s former business partner, a man who had served as a grandfather figure to me, had retrieved the nails while doing restoration work at the first Mormon Temple, the Kirtland Temple, in the 1960s. As a nine-year-old, I was deeply impressed by the artifacts—not just because they were once my “Papa’s” who had passed away just a few years earlier, but because even then I knew that the Kirtland Temple was no ordinary building. My parents, devout conservative RLDS members, had raised me with stories of miracles surrounding the dedication of the temple. To say that this dissertation originated in seeing two rusty nails when I was nine is an exaggeration; but this incident illustrates that, even then, I knew something of the power of a holy site on a believer.

Writers work in communities—even if the communities are interior imagined audiences—and those communities shape what is written. I am greatly indebted to a host of institutions, mentors, colleagues, family members, and friends, who have made this dissertation possible and shaped me as a scholar. First, I wish to thank those associated with The University of Iowa who have made my six years in Iowa City an intellectually challenging experience. My fellow graduate students in the Department of Religious Studies have critiqued various essays born out of this dissertation over the past three years. Our classes together and weekly meetings of the Religion Graduate Student Organization provided the intellectual stimulation necessary for me to frame this study within a wider academic conversation. My thanks to Professor Janine Sawada, now of Brown University, for her seminar on pilgrimage in which I was first introduced to the anthropology of pilgrimage. It was in her class that I also first conceived of studying

Kirtland Temple as a viable dissertation project. My committee members have each added to my intellectual growth. Professor Mentzer introduced me to the politics of ritual and sacred space in early modern Europe. Professor Pesantubbee made me more keenly aware of how gender relations may be worked out in ritual performances. Professor Turner opened up the world of African American religious history in twentieth century America. And Professor Schnell alerted me to insider/outsider debates in anthropology. All of the aforementioned influences from these professors have found their way into my dissertation. I am grateful, too, for the assistance that professors Pesantubbee, Turner, and Mentzer have provided me in my job application process. Their sage advice helped me navigate new waters through which I had never sailed. Finally, I wish to thank the Graduate College at The University of Iowa; it supported my final year of writing with a Ballard and Seashore Dissertation Fellowship. Without this financial support, my defense date would have surely been further into the present decade.

Second, I wish to thank my colleagues, friends, and interview partners associated with the Kirtland Temple, Community of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Historic Kirtland. The past and present directors at Kirtland Temple, Lachlan Mackay, Barbara Walden, and Ron Romig, are among my best friends in the Latter Day Saint historical community. Lach and Barb first invited me in the spring of 2004 to work at Kirtland Temple as a summer guide. Little did I know then that I would return for the next five summers and write a dissertation about the site. Throughout my research, Lach, Barb, and Ron were open, honest and candid with me about their experiences as site directors at Kirtland Temple. They provided me with free access to files in the Kirtland Temple Historic Site Special Collection and the Community of Christ Archives (where Ron worked as the archivist until 2009). Additionally, whenever I visited them in Kirtland, Ohio, or Nauvoo, Illinois, they housed me free of charge. Karl Anderson, Sunny Morton, and my many interview partners from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also deserve special thanks for their candor and helpfulness. Karl in

particular supplied me with dates and stories that I would never have found on my own. I am also grateful for the gracious help provided by the staff at the Family and Church History Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, where I conducted preliminary research for this project. The staff at the Community of Christ Library and Archives in Independence, Missouri, saw me on practically every school vacation during the past three years. Ron Romig, Barbara Bernauer, Sue MacDonald (former and present staff at the library and archives), allowed me to photograph or photo copy documents, thus saving me countless hours of taking notes with paper and pencil.

Three scholars outside of my committee read at least one hundred pages of this manuscript in its draft form. Sam Van Horne, Pat Dolan, and Rene Romig thoughtfully critiqued my prose. I only wish that all of my writing matched the clarity they wrung from my text after an editing session. I owe all three of them far more than the rather paltry cup of coffee I bought Pat during a session this last winter.

Throughout my graduate career, my most significant and exacting editor and mentor has been my adviser, T. Dwight Bozeman. As I began the dissertation process, he was in phased retirement and was under no obligation to keep me as a student. He did keep me, though. When most advisers would have just given a cursory reading of a student's dissertation, he painstakingly critiqued my arguments and sentence construction. At times, his comments on one page equaled the amount of text that I had written on it. I am a far better writer and scholar for having written this dissertation under him. I am greatly indebted to him for keeping me as his student and believing in the importance of this study.

Finally, I am grateful beyond words for the support of my parents, Jim and Suzanne, and my wonderful siblings and their spouses, Julie and Nathan, Mark and Charity, and Michael. Their encouragement, support, and prayers helped buoy me through writing this dissertation. My trips home to Independence, Missouri, to visit them

provided welcome relief from the exhausting, exhilarating rigors of graduate school in far off Iowa City. We may have some differences, but we are, in the end, a family. It is to them that I lovingly dedicate this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

For tens of thousands of contemporary Latter-day Saint pilgrims, the Kirtland Temple near Cleveland, Ohio, provides an opportunity to visit a place where they believe Jesus appeared and restored long-lost priesthood powers. The Kirtland Temple, however, is not owned by the LDS church. Instead, the shrine is owned by a related denomination that has doctrinally aligned itself with mainline Protestant Christianity—the Community of Christ (formerly known as the RLDS church). Members of both churches include Kirtland on pilgrimage itineraries yet have understood the site's significance in radically different ways between themselves and within their denominations over time. The Kirtland Temple provides an opportune case study for changing contestation and cooperation by multiple groups at an American pilgrimage shrine—a phenomena that I term "parallel pilgrimage."

Two orienting metaphors help focus my moving picture of parallel pilgrimage: proximity (how the site “moves” in relation to changing pilgrimage routes, new shrines, and new interest groups) and performance (plays re-enacting the history of the temple and tour scripts, along with the reception of these performances). My study works out these two themes across the last forty years of change at the Kirtland Temple.

Ultimately, I draw three main conclusions in my study. First, parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple reveals sacred places, not simply pilgrimage routes, as itineraries in motion, constantly contested and constantly changing. Second, acts of cooperation and contestation at Kirtland Temple have formed a dialectical relationship that allows the site to function. Acts of contestation helped the site retain its heightened importance while acts of cooperation allowed members from various denominations to minimize potentially disruptive conflict. Finally, in a wider context, parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple, with its moving alliances and contested narratives, is suggestive of how many

late twentieth-century Christians negotiated a pluralistic and fragmented religious America.

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CHAPTER 1: KIRTLAND TEMPLE AS A PARALLEL PILGRIMAGE

In 2008, 33,000 people total from six continents visited a small, historic Mormon temple, the Kirtland Temple, near Cleveland, Ohio. “I couldn’t value any place more than the Kirtland Temple,” related a frequent Latter-day Saint visitor. “The feeling there is similar to what I had in Jerusalem when I visited the garden tomb and the garden of Gethsemane. . . I sense that angels are not far when I enter it.”¹ This pilgrim does not belong to the denomination that owns the Kirtland Temple. Instead, the 170-year old stone and plaster structure is owned by another Mormon denomination that over time has aligned itself with ecumenical, mainline Protestant Christianity—the Community of Christ (formerly known as the RLDS church).² This is no small difference for the thousands of LDS who annually tour the temple and the Community of Christ historical interpreters who host them. “This is our temple—give it back!” wrote an LDS pilgrim on a 2006 temple tour comment card. Another LDS member wrote, “Thank you for taking

¹ Karl R. Anderson, interview by author, July 13, 2008, Kirtland, Ohio, typescript.

² The names for various Mormon groups can be quite similar; a word of explanation is needed for how I will describe them. Throughout this study, I will use RLDS (the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) and Community of Christ synonymously. In 2001, the RLDS church renamed itself Community of Christ. To avoid the notion that members of Community of Christ are the only real members of Christ’s community on earth, leaders and members often omit the article “the” in front of Community of Christ. I will occasionally follow this convention, too. Historically, Community of Christ/RLDS have fastidiously avoided describing themselves as “Mormons,” though they have identified themselves as Latter Day Saints (no hyphen). They have also identified themselves as members of “the Restoration movement.” All of these distinctions could potentially confuse readers of this manuscript. Following an emerging scholarly convention, I will use the terms “Latter Day Saint churches,” “Restoration churches,” or “Mormon denominations” to refer to all of the groups descended from Joseph Smith’s church in the 1830s. I will reserve the term “Latter-day Saint” and “LDS” for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Salt Lake City-based church most commonly associated by scholars with the term “Mormon.” Finally, I will refer to former RLDS members who broke away from the RLDS church in the 1980s as “Restorationists,” following the designation with which most members of this emerging religious enclave would use (though some use the term “RLDS” to describe themselves).

care of this very special House of God.”³ Both statements are typical of the comments received by temple hosts every week during the height of the summer pilgrimage season. For scholars, the Kirtland Temple provides a surprising glimpse of contestation and cooperation at an American pilgrimage shrine.

“Could there be a more contested Mormon site than Kirtland Temple?” rhetorically exclaimed an LDS official after I gave a paper related to this study.⁴ Indeed, there probably is no more contested site in Mormondom. In its first fifty years alone (1833-1883), the Kirtland Temple witnessed lawsuits over ownership, fights in the sanctuary, meetings held at the shrine by dozens of Mormon factions, thwarted attempts of arson, and stories of apparitional appearances (including Jesus and Elijah).⁵ Since that time, the temple has developed into a pilgrimage site visited annually by tens of thousands of pilgrims.

Instead of cooling into a routinized sacred space devoid of major conflicts, the last forty years of Kirtland Temple’s history have been almost as dramatic as the first fifty. Tens of millions of dollars have been spent by competing factions to control and shape the interpretation of Kirtland. LDS members in Cleveland discovered a nineteenth-century curse on “the land of Kirtland,” asserted it to still be in effect, and then witnessed

³ Comment Cards, Kirtland Temple Historic Site Special Collection, Kirtland, Ohio. Hereafter, the Kirtland Temple Historic Site Special Collection will be designated as KTHSSC. Much of the material that I cite from this collection is not catalogued, including the comment cards that I have just cited.

⁴ Steve Olsen, Concurrent Paper Session, Mormon History Association, Springfield, Illinois, May 22, 2009.

⁵ Kim L. Loving, “Ownership of the Kirtland Temple: Legends, Lies, and Misunderstandings,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 2 (2004): 1-80; Barbara Walden, “Prophet, Seer, and Tour Guide: The Changing Message of Kirtland Temple Interpreters from 1830-1930,” *John Whimter Historical Association Journal* 29 (2009): 15; Dean C. Jesse, Mark Ashcraft-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, 1832-1839*, volume 1 of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 222.

an LDS apostle officially lift the curse through ritual activity in the 1970s. Shockingly, in 1989, a former RLDS guide at the Kirtland Temple along with his small band of followers stock-piled weapons and plotted to take over the Mormon shrine through armed force. He planned executions for the temple sanctuary; his plot was thwarted, but not before he had murdered five followers. Much less radical factions and individuals have tried to purchase the shrine outright from its Community of Christ owners. Meanwhile, bloggers from all groups regularly post about their uplifting or deeply disappointing experiences at the temple. Groups from all major factions visit and hold services in the building. And even within denominations, people differ as to the shrine's value. "I'd like to bear my testimony that I have not felt the Spirit [of God] here at this temple," declared a junior high-aged LDS youth at a 2007 service in Kirtland Temple. "It seems just like a tourist trap," he continued. "And I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."⁶ In contrast, a late 1970s LDS elder assigned to Kirtland, Ohio wrote in his journal, "Kirtland is holy land—Holy because my Savior and My Father in Heaven have personally been here. Holy because of what has happened, holy because of what will yet happen."⁷ Wherever one looks, contestation and cooperation abound at and near the shrine. Kirtland Temple could well be described as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of Mormonism.

Through "loud" and "soft" forms of contestation and cooperation, Kirtland Temple exemplifies what I term "parallel pilgrimage" in the United States. Drawing on Thomas Tweed's definition of "parallel ritual,"⁸ I define parallel pilgrimage as ritual journeys by disparate groups to a site of some shared superhuman significance. In this

⁶ David Howlett, Field Notes, July 6, 2007.

⁷ As quoted in Donald S. Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village: Lifting the Curse* (N.p., 2004), 141.

⁸ Thomas A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 43.

peripatetic ritual, groups from various religious enclaves draw on a shared set of symbols. Yet, pilgrimage patrons and site hosts radically reconceptualize these shared symbols. As disparate pilgrims bump up against one another along shared travel routes and shrines, and as site hosts encounter pilgrims from a faith not their own, all must cooperate at some level if they want to avoid conflict. Even in cooperation, there is an element of contestation being worked out as groups engage in covert forms of coercion.⁹ For instance, the mere presence of a competing group at a shrine reminds the other group that their claims to rightly experience a site are not unopposed. Contestation, whether covert or overt, often charges the shared sacred site with a heightened importance since the shrine is seen as a scarce resource, in danger of appropriation by a religious other. In this way, a contested sacred site may become a supra-sacred site. Kirtland Temple, a site owned by a minority, moderately liberal faith community and patronized mainly by a much larger, conservative religious community, serves as an opportune case study for parallel pilgrimage and its attendant rituals of cooperation and contestation.

Two orienting metaphors help focus my moving picture of parallel pilgrimage: proximity (how the site “moves” in relation to changing pilgrimage routes, new shrines, and new interest groups) and performance (plays re-enacting the history of the temple and tour scripts, along with the reception of these performances). My study works out these two themes across the last forty years of change at the Kirtland Temple.

Pilgrimage has remained a perennial topic of scholarly investigation since anthropologist Victor Turner's influential work in the early 1970s.¹⁰ Mormon pilgrimage

⁹ Simon Coleman and John Elsner, eds., *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 51.

¹⁰ Victor Turner, “The Center out There: Pilgrim’s Goal,” *History of Religions* 12, no. 3 (1973): 191-230; and Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

recently has begun to receive some scholarly attention, but, with few exceptions, studies have focused only on LDS pilgrims (members of the church based in Salt Lake City). In fact, dozens of separate Mormon denominations, with wildly diverse beliefs and practices, make pilgrimage treks across the United States. By analyzing interactions between Mormon denominations, my study highlights a neglected aspect of American Mormon identity—how Latter-day Saints form themselves in relation to their closest “cousins,” not just in relation to Evangelical America, American Catholics, or a generalized American culture.¹¹ My study also pays attention to a neglected voice in the study of Mormonism, the relatively liberal Community of Christ.¹² Thus, my study of a Mormon pilgrimage site that metaphorically “moves” over time also de-centers scholarly narratives of Mormon identity construction in the late twentieth century.

¹¹ Authors who have focused on specific interactions among LDS, other Christian groups, and American culture include Armand Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994); O. Kendall White, *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987); Matthew J. Grow, “The Whore of Babylon and the Abomination of Abominations: Nineteenth-Century Catholic and Mormon Mutual Perceptions and Religious Identity,” *Church History* 73, no. 1 (2004): 139-167; and John-Charles Duffy, “Christians, Cultists, and Cobelligerents: Mormon-Evangelical Relations and the American Culture Wars,” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, forthcoming). Each of the preceding studies addresses a particular lacunae in the scholarship on Mormonism and are needed. My point is simply to state that an additional aspect of LDS identity is the ongoing relationship between themselves and the RLDS/Community of Christ, something that few authors have addressed in their synthetic works. An exception to my observation is Richard P. Howard, “The Mormon-RLDS Boundary: Walls to Windows,” *Journal of Mormon History* 18, no. 1 (1992): 1-18.

¹² While the Community of Christ/RLDS typically have merited mention in most overviews of Mormonism, authors almost solely note the church in connection with its publication of the Joseph Smith’s “translation” of the Bible, its Protestant tendencies, or its variation on presidential succession from the LDS practice. Sustained analysis of the church is lacking in all major book-length surveys since the 1950s. For brief references to the Community of Christ/RLDS, see Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 71-72, 80, 188, 241, 248; Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 84-85, 89, 181; Douglas J. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31, 43, 120, 227, 231-33; Claudia Lauper Bushman and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35.

In the following chapters, I argue that parallel pilgrimage to Kirtland Temple, with its constant ideological negotiations, moving alliances, and contested narratives, provides a suggestive example of how late twentieth-century Christians negotiated a pluralistic and fragmented religious America. Thus, I connect an extraordinary ritual event to a much broader picture of religious change in late modernity. If, as anthropologist James Clifford suggests, “pilgrimage” might be a candidate for *the* metaphor of our contemporary culture, “parallel pilgrimage” aptly describes the messiness of late-modern American religious experience.¹³ Yet, my arguments here get ahead of my foundational theorizing and narrative for this study. Before proceeding further, I will provide a review of pilgrimage studies literature, along with my own working conceptualizations of pilgrimage. Finally, I will summarize my chapters and reflect on my sources and background as a researcher.

The Academic Study of Pilgrimage:

In the United States, pilgrimage as a topic of analysis came to prominence through the influential work of Victor Turner, Edith Turner, Joseph Kitagawa, and others.¹⁴ While earlier scholars presupposed a structuralist method that sought an underlying unity to human cultural activity termed “pilgrimage,” scholars since the 1980s have attempted much more provisional, particular understandings of pilgrimage.¹⁵ Like any analytic term, “pilgrimage” is a concept that itself has a history, laden with particular

¹³ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 39.

¹⁴ Victor Turner, “The Center out There”; Turner Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*; and Joseph Kitagawa, *On Understanding Japanese Religion* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 127-136.

¹⁵ John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (New York, New York: Routledge, 1991), 5.

political and ethical commitments. A comparison to another constitutive term, religion, is helpful for thinking about the utility of pilgrimage as a category. In an influential essay, historian of religions Jonathan Z. Smith summarizes the complicated history of “religion” as an analytic category, complete with colonial violence, hybrid sharing, and cultural translations. In the end, he concludes that “ ‘religion’ is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define.”¹⁶ Similarly, from a purely pragmatic perspective, I argue that “pilgrimage” is for scholars to define and use. Despite its Latinate Christian origins, pilgrimage remains a useful heuristic term that brings various modern practices into a scholarly conversation that would otherwise remain separated.

Stated another way, pilgrimage is what James Clifford would call a translation term. That is, pilgrimage is a comparative concept, “privileging certain ‘originals’ and made for specific audiences.”¹⁷ As Jonathan Z. Smith pithily notes, “A comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge.”¹⁸ Any comparisons in this dissertation that suggest that Kirtland Temple participates in a ritual activity found at sites around the world—namely pilgrimage—necessarily engages in exaggerations; the trick simply lies in trying to ensure they are disciplined.

I argue for two ways of defining pilgrimage for this study. The first is specific and attempts to clarify why I opt for this term over religious travel or simply tourism. The second broader approach sees pilgrimage as a kind of family resemblance system that may take into it a whole host of practices beyond my formal, operationalized definition.

¹⁶ Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 281.

¹⁷ Clifford, *Routes*, 11.

¹⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52.

First, I define pilgrimage as a ritual journey to a shrine or place of superhuman significance involving a transaction between humans and supernatural powers. Following anthropologists John Eade and the late Michael Sallnow's suggestive typology, I argue that pilgrimages are religiously motivated journeys centered on people (retracing the steps of a holy person), places (spaces where significant spiritual events happened or happen), and/or texts (travel that validates a sacred text or allows people to "journey" through a text).¹⁹

My second definition of "pilgrimage" builds upon Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblances". In his posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein tries to show how things can be related, more or less, without sharing any single, essential trait. Wittgenstein argues that a word like "game" can help describe many different practices, from tennis to chess. There is no one set of traits that these practices have in common, but they are more or less related.²⁰ Some scholars use this concept of "family resemblances" to describe how we can talk about "Hinduism" as a religion,²¹ and I suggest that it might be employed to talk about pilgrimage as a ritual activity done by many groups across many cultures. The downside for my second definition lies in its lack of boundaries at its edges. We might ask when practices cease being related and find that the family resemblance concept connects practically everything. Still, not all things are similarly connected. Some things are more directly related than others. Episcopal pilgrimage to Walsingham, England, and Catholic

¹⁹ Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 6-9.

²⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 27-28.

²¹ For instance, Gavin Flood classifies Hinduism as a religion by using George Lakoff's "prototype theory," a further development of Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblances." See Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7.

pilgrimage to Lourdes bear far more similarities to each other than they do tourism to the former site of New York City's World Trade Center. Words used in comparisons, Clifford reminds us, "get us some distance and fall apart."²² Theories do, too. My conceptualization of pilgrimage as a kind of family resemblance system helps us forge beyond structuralist limitations, but it is not immune from a critique of its own.

Once established with broad operationalized definitions of pilgrimage, I can now offer my rationale for focusing on Kirtland Temple itself in the parallel pilgrimage process. In academic literature in the last thirty years, two types of pilgrimage studies have predominated: shrine centered studies and, more recently, studies of the journey itself. Beyond simply scholarly focus, anthropologist Peter Jan Margry suggests that pilgrimages can be classified primarily as "shrine pilgrimages" (like Lourdes) or "transit pilgrimages" (like Santiago de Compostella).²³ Some pilgrimages may be a combination of these two.²⁴ Since by all accounts from participants, the Kirtland Temple pilgrimage is a shrine-centered journey, the focus here will fall primarily upon the shrine. Additionally, I argue that the dynamics of parallel pilgrimage are worked out most intensely at Kirtland Temple itself.

The central shrines for parallel pilgrimage experience can be described through various metaphoric lenses. Sacred sites in general are palimpsests, argues religious studies scholar Martyn Smith, with "one layer of meaning and association making eternal

²² Clifford, *Routes*, 39.

²³ Peter Jan Margry, "Conclusion," in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred*, ed. Peter Jan Margry (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 325.

²⁴ For an example of study of transit and shrine pilgrimages coinciding, see Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

claims, but always hiding previous layers of meaning.”²⁵ Marion Bowman also takes a metaphor for “layered meaning” at sacred sites, but uses a geological analogy where, at sacred places, “different strata form in sedimentary rock, one on top of the other, leaving horizontal ‘stripes’ marking different eras.” Bowman then modifies this analogy to catch the different layers of meaning experienced co-temporally at what he calls a “simultaneous pilgrimage” site like Glastonbury—what I refer to as a parallel pilgrimage site. Bowman uses the analogy of a fold mountain where “once horizontal strata are realigned so that they are vertically positioned.” At a simultaneous pilgrimage site, Bowman imagines that “it is as if various phases of its [the site’s] religious history stand together at the present time, and assorted paradigms are operating simultaneously.”²⁶ Bowman’s insight applies for more than simply the sites of pilgrimage, too. The “field” around a pilgrimage center is also vertically layered with places that bear significance and meaning to disparate pilgrim groups. For example, a 1980s breakaway faction from the Community of Christ has a building down the street from the temple. This congregational building means virtually nothing to an LDS pilgrim (most of whom are unaware of the small group despite its close proximity to the temple). It means something far more complicated and painful to a Community of Christ member from the Kirtland congregation. Places of parallel pilgrimage are layered sites.

In many ways, my study of shrine-centered parallel pilgrimage is the continuation of the revisionist project first articulated in the late 1980s by Eade and Sallnow. An earlier generation of scholars, based largely on Victor Turner’s work, saw pilgrimage as a kind of universal anti-structural ritual process that subverted hierarchies and formed new

²⁵ Martyn Smith, *Religion, Culture, and Sacred Space* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.

²⁶ Marion Bowman, “Going with the Flow: Contemporary Pilgrimage in Glastonbury,” in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, 247.

communal bonds between participants as they journeyed to a “center out there.” Turner’s magic term that encapsulated the anti-structural feeling of pilgrims was *communitas*.²⁷ In contrast, Eade and Sallnow argued in their now classic 1991 work, *Contesting the Sacred*, that pilgrimage is best conceived as “above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both the official co-optation and the non-official recovery of religious meanings, for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and *communitas*, and for counter-movements towards separateness and division.”²⁸ While Eade and Sallnow argued for the presence of both contestation and *communitas* in pilgrimages, the general effect of their work was to highlight the former while de-emphasizing the latter. Later anthropologists, such as Peter Jan Margry, would argue that Turner’s theory of *communitas* in pilgrimage “has been falsified over and over again on the basis of ethnographic case studies.”²⁹ While such assertions overstated the case for the demise of Turner’s pilgrimage model (indeed,

²⁷ Victor Turner, “The Center out There: Pilgrim’s Goal,” 193-196.

²⁸ John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds. *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (New York, New York: Routledge, 1991), 2.

²⁹ Peter Jan Margry, “Secular Pilgrimage: A Contradiction in Terms?” in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, 21.

contributors to Margry's own edited volume contradicted his assertion),³⁰ contestation has become a major focus in contemporary studies of pilgrimage.³¹

Two salutary effects of Eade and Sallnow's revisionist agenda has been both renewed theorization on pilgrimage as well as several in-depth, book-length ethnographic studies that test theory on the ground. So much theorization has occurred that, in 2006, an exasperated William H. Swatos wrote that "theory seems to have worked well ahead of data."³² Furthermore, Swatos observed that "a relatively limited number of pilgrimage sites on the one hand, along with perhaps a greater interest in the modern/postmodern phenomenon of tourism have, in my view, skewed the field away from the *religious* element in travel to pilgrimage sites."³³ However, a growing number of focused studies explore how theory plays out on the ground as well as how religion is constructed through these journeys. In particular, scholars have used studies of specific pilgrimages to analyze the social construction of gender at a Greek shrine, the social constructions of religion in early-modern Japan, and the manipulation of pilgrimage by the British

³⁰ Marion Bowman, "Going with the Flow: Contemporary Pilgrimage in Glastonbury," in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, 269-274; another example of an ethnographic study that verified rather than subverting Turner's notion of "communitas" is Paula Elizabeth Holmes-Rodman, "'They Told What Happened on the Road': Narrative and the Construction of Experiential Knowledge on the Pilgrimage to Chimayo, New Mexico," in *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, eds. Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 24-51. Holmes-Rodman notes that the group she observed "shared preexisting Catholic beliefs, such as the power of repeated rosaries and Mass and ho healing through sacrifice. These beliefs were not contested but rather confirmed, authenticated, and idealized through participating in the pilgrimage." *Ibid.*, 44.

³¹ Simon Coleman, himself one of the revisionist architects the academic study of pilgrimage, asserts that Turner still forms the basis from which most scholarship is derived. See his entry "Pilgrimage," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. by Robert A. Segal (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 385-396.

³² William H. Swatos, Jr., ed. *On the Road to Being There: Studies in Pilgrimage and Tourism in Late Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), viii.

³³ *Ibid.*

colonial state in India (and how Indians used pilgrimage for their own purposes).³⁴ In these studies, the local story was given priority over theory, but Eade and Sallnow's theoretical project on contested pilgrimage helped guide the telling. My study takes cues from their work, attending both to theories of pilgrimage and sacred space and to the unfolding narrative unique to Kirtland Temple.

In the concluding section of their original 1991 introduction, Eade and Sallnow called on scholars to take up the project of extending pilgrimage studies to the analysis of "conflict and articulation between multiple discourses, the manifold differences in perceptions of a shrine and its powers both within and between denominations, and between pilgrims and staff."³⁵ My study can be seen as directly taking up this call within the setting of the United States. While contested pilgrimage has long been noted at European and Asian pilgrimage sites,³⁶ as recent as 2005, at least one cultural geographer of religion, Craig Campbell, argued that post-colonial North America seems to be relatively devoid of such overt religious contestation by multiple groups at one

³⁴ Kama Maclean, *Pilgrimage and Power: The Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, 1765-1954* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008).

³⁵ Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 26.

³⁶ These sites include Walsingham, United Kingdom; Jerusalem; the tomb of St. Francis Xavier in Goa, Sri Lanka; and the tomb of Soekarno in Blitar, Indonesia. See Simon Coleman, "Pilgrimage to 'England's Nazareth': Landscapes of Myth and Memory at Walsingham," in *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, eds. Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 52-67; Glenn Bowman, "Christian Ideology and the Image of a Holy Land: The Place of Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the Various Christianities," in *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, eds. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (New York, New York: Routledge, 1991), 98-121; Luigi Tomasi, "Homo Viator: From Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism via the Journey," in *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety*, eds. William H. Swatos, Jr., and Luigi Tomasi (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), 3; and Huub de Jonge, "Patriotism and Religion: Pilgrimages to Soekarno's Grave," in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, 95-120.

site.³⁷ Campbell's one exception to this trend was among Mormon denominations. Along with Campbell, I argue that particularly intense sacred site contestation has occurred among various Mormon factions. Yet, I would argue that Mormons simply serve as one example among many. Contestation is occurring widely across America's many "sacrosapes."³⁸ Whether it is at Sedona, Arizona; the Alamo; various Mennonite heritage sites; or the shrine to Our Lady of Charity in Miami, many Americans construct and contest the meanings given to sacred sites.³⁹ Still, the theme of *American* sacred site contestation has remained relatively undeveloped in the burgeoning field of pilgrimage studies, overshadowed by recent scholarly concerns about diasporic identity or the relationship between religion and tourism. Even the best theorized study of American sacred space fails to provide concrete examples of sacred space contestation from self-consciously religious groups who overtly challenge one another.⁴⁰ In contrast, my study

³⁷ Craig S. Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem: Latter Day Saint Faction Interpretations of Independence, Missouri* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 293. Campbell, though, argues that it is occurring with Mormon groups. I, of course, agree with this last statement but simply challenge his assertion that it is not occurring elsewhere in America.

³⁸ I borrow this term from Thomas Tweed who defines "sacrosapes" as "religious confluences" or a type of global cultural flow added to Arjun Appadurai's typology for five distinct "imagined worlds": ethnosapes, mediasapes, technosapes, financesapes, and ideosapes. Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 61.

³⁹ Thomas S. Bremmer, *Blessed with Tourists: The Borderlands of Religion and Tourism in San Antonio* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), and Thomas A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*.

⁴⁰ David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds. *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995). Chidester and Linenthal's examples draw on sites connected to "American civil religion" rather than organized religious communities who see themselves as transacting with suprahuman forces.

analyzes how separate ecclesiastical groups “build” a shared American pilgrimage site through divergent interpretations and practices.⁴¹

Beyond the aforementioned works on non-Mormon pilgrimage and sacred shrines, several authors have analyzed Mormon pilgrimage practices in particular. While all of the following authors add something to my analysis, each tend to ignore or minimize the cooperation and contestation experienced among Mormon denominations at sacred sites. A brief review of this literature is also necessary to track how previous studies have analyzed “pilgrimage” as a ritual practice experienced by various Mormon ecclesiastical communities.

Geographer Jill Knapp investigated Mormon pilgrimage practices at Salt Lake City in a 1989 master’s thesis published as a chapter in a volume on pilgrimage in America. Knapp’s research had two major shortcomings. First, Knapp problematically argued that Mormons in fact, should not be seen as practicing traditional pilgrimage, but

⁴¹ Simon Coleman, “Pilgrimage to ‘England’s Nazareth’: Landscapes of Myth and Memory at Walsingham,” in *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, eds. Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

a modern form of pilgrimage best defined as “religiously motivated travel.”⁴² This seems to repeat an LDS tendency to desire that all things about their religion should be exceptional; Catholics practice pilgrimage, but LDS do not in such a formulation. My own pragmatic definition of pilgrimage as a family resemblance system includes “religious travel” as a type of pilgrimage and thus avoids problematic assumptions about “traditional pilgrimage.” Second, Knapp did not investigate sites that confront LDS pilgrims with different interpretations and different communities. Kirtland Temple offers an interesting study into the uncomfortable alliances LDS have had to make with competing “Mormon” groups. Thus, while her study broke new ground on Mormon pilgrimage, Knapp left much room for further investigation.

While Knapp was hesitant to classify Mormons as pilgrims, scholars reading her study have not been so. Based on Knapp’s research, cultural geographers Surinder M. Bhardwaj and Gisbert Rinschede made a surprising observation. They noted that “the proportion of Mormon adults visiting their major sacred sites is probably higher than in

⁴² Jill W. Knapp, “The Pilgrimage Phenomenon: An Analysis of the Motivations of Visitors to Temple Square” (MS thesis, Brigham Young University, 1989), 22. While she quotes official LDS statements against shrines and holy objects of veneration, Knapp underestimates the appeal of pilgrimage, shrines, and “relics” to Mormons. Matthew Bowman, a Mormon and PhD history student at Georgetown, related the following story on his blog site. “I moved to the DC area about two years ago. Early on, I attended services with an uncle and aunt in their Northern Virginia ward. When I walked down the hallway, I did a double take. There’s a piece of wood from the Joseph Smith Palmyra cabin hanging from the wall. It’s framed. I noticed a group of Primary kids filing down the wall. As they passed, each reached up and touched it. . . . It’s become commonplace to stress the Puritanism residue in Mormonism’s liturgy – our stripped down chapels, our Protestant emphasis on preaching over ritual. But I wonder if this underestimates the tangible nature of Mormonism’s sacred imagination, something certainly present in our theology, but also in our culture and history. These territories are replete with seerstones, the Urim and Thummim, sunstones, temple garments, and a host of sacred sites (some of which we steal presumably significant rocks from). Scripture for us is not only the Word of God, but also a set of tangible golden plates taken up to heaven. I’m not sure Mormonism has completely shaken the talismanic sense that it had its youth – and nor should it. The golden plates, the sacred space of temples, that piece of wood from Palmyra, anchor us in the esoteric Mormon version of Christianity, and this is a large reason why we’re not Protestant.” Matthew Bowman, “Relics,” 25 July 2006, <<http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2006/07/on-relics/>>, (28 November 2006).

any other religion, partly because of the proximate distribution of Mormon population in relation to the temples, but more due to the pivotal role of the Church in Mormon culture.”⁴³ Mormon pilgrimages, then, deserve scholarly investigation simply by virtue of their frequency and centrality to the community.

Sarah Bill Schott’s 2006 essay on “Pilgrims, Seekers, and History Buffs: Identity Creation Through Religious Tourism” provides some recent reflections on Mormon pilgrimage. Schott investigates the Mormon site at Hill Cumorah near Palmyra, New York, and a Seventh-Day Adventist heritage site also in New York. She argues that while previous scholars assume that simply one group, devout church members, visit such sites, actually three groups do so—pilgrims, religious seekers, and history buffs. Schott’s typology describes the dynamic motivations and formations which occur at religious tourist sites. In addition, she attempts to argue that previous dichotomies between tourism and pilgrimage need to be deconstructed so that a more complicated interaction between the two be acknowledged.⁴⁴ Schott’s 2006 study, while complicating our images of visitors to sites, does not investigate Mormon pilgrimage sites, like Kirtland, where another community, the Community of Christ, owns and interprets the primary shrine. Such ownership creates constant tension between interpreters and pilgrims of all types. Later work by Schott, namely her 2008 dissertation, begins to investigate this tension at Nauvoo, Illinois between LDS sites and Community of Christ sites. However, this analysis only takes the form of one chapter in her work on American pilgrimage shrines. Ample room is left for a more detailed, thorough investigation of what I term parallel pilgrimage.

⁴³ Surinder M. Bhardwaj and Gisbert Rinschede, eds., *Pilgrimage in the United States* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1989), 10.

⁴⁴ Sarah Bill Schott, “Pilgrims, Seekers, and History Buffs: Identity Creation through Religious Tourism,” in *On the Road to Being There*, 297-326.

In a study that closely parallels an application of Bourdieu's practice theory that I will utilize in this dissertation, anthropologist Hildi Mitchell addresses how "embodied memories" affect LDS British pilgrim interactions with material objects at pilgrimage sites. In her concluding section, Mitchell brilliantly analyzes "how embodied memories are important in giving rise to religious feelings."⁴⁵ Mitchell offers an important understanding of the "habitus" of many LDS pilgrims and clarifies the identity formation practices that occur at LDS sites. However, Mitchell conceives of LDS pilgrims as a relatively monolithic group—a shortcoming she admits to elsewhere.⁴⁶ In addition, she does not address how British LDS pilgrims respond to the dissonance of encountering Community of Christ sites along the Mormon "history trail." Perhaps to delimit the scope of her study, she simply includes the LDS and Community of Christ as one single group without making any significant differentiations. Pilgrims on the ground know better.

Most recently, professor of heritage tourism Dallen J. Timothy and cultural geographer Daniel H. Olsen investigate what Olsen terms "informal pilgrimage" by Mormons.⁴⁷ In a 2002 article, Olsen and Timothy analyze contested notions of heritage

⁴⁵ Hildi Mitchell, " 'Being there': British Mormons and the history trail," in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, eds. Simon Coleman and John Eade (New York, New York: Routledge, 2004), 43.

⁴⁶ Hildi Mitchell, "The Author Replies," *Anthropology Today* 17, no. 4 (2001): 23.

⁴⁷ Daniel H. Olsen, "Tourism and informal pilgrimage among the Latter-day Saints," in *Tourism, Religion, and Spiritual Journeys*, eds. Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen (New York, New York: Routledge, 2006), 255-256. Olsen notes that "unlike many religions, pilgrimage does not hold a place within LDS theology, at least in the sense that leaders of the church have not declared formal doctrines pertaining to any forms of pilgrimage. This is spite of the fact that the church and its leaders and members recognize the existence of sacred spaces and have long held that certain places are more holy or sacred than others In other words, travel to sacred sites associated with the forgiveness of sins or miraculous healings does not take place within the travel practices and beliefs of the LDS Church" (ibid., 255). With this differentiation in mind between a formal statement on pilgrimage and informal practices, LDS church officials obviously do encourage faithful saints to travel to their historic sites; LDS leaders themselves undertake these journeys (I have seen them at Kirtland Temple). In my opinion, LDS leaders have not made a statement on pilgrimage due to the term's association with Catholic practices. For a church that has taught that the Catholic church is the "harlot who sits on the seven hills" in the Book of

present at Community of Christ and LDS historic sites. Their analysis is brief and, again, does not address the pilgrims themselves who participated in religious contestation at the sites. The authors simply analyze how official Community of Christ and LDS site interpreters explain each sacred site.⁴⁸ A more complete reading of each tradition and a fuller explanation of on-site interaction is needed.

The study of Mormon pilgrimage is still in its infancy. Scholars who have addressed this topic tend to do so by homogenizing LDS members, or even worse, homogenizing Mormon denominations. In addition, even the few studies that do address contestation among Mormon denominations neglect an equally important phenomenon happening at these sites—religious cooperation. My study seeks to redress these shortcomings by an in depth analysis of both cooperation and contestation among diverse Mormon groups who journey to the first Mormon temple.

Methods, Material Sources, and “Siting” My Study

My study is an historical ethnography, following in the tradition of Robert Orsi who popularized historical ethnography as a viable and important tool of inquiry for religious studies scholars.⁴⁹ That said, I am hesitant to call myself an ethnographer.

Revelation, the association between their own practices and Catholic practices would be deeply offensive. While anti-Catholic sentiments are not as pronounced as in the nineteenth century, such prejudices still run deep within the LDS faithful. For a discussion of Catholic and Mormon identity in the nineteenth century, see Grow, “Nineteenth-century Catholic and Mormon Mutual Perceptions and Religious Identity,” 139-167.

⁴⁸ Daniel H. Olsen and Dallen J. Timothy, “Contested Religious Heritage: Differing Views of Mormon Heritage,” *Tourism Recreation Research* 27, no. 2 (2002): 7-15.

⁴⁹ Orsi’s reflections on the novelty of his method in the mid-1980s may be found in “Introduction to the Second Edition: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem,” in *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), x-xiii. Writing in the mid-1980s, historian Thomas Bender noted that the then recent turn to ethnography formed in reaction against “the quantitative emphasis in the field in the 1960s, with its characteristic if not universal contempt for subjective meanings.” Thomas Bender, “Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History,” *The Journal of American History* 73, no. 1 (1986): 129.

While I have some formal training in ethnographic field methods, my primary training is as an historian and religious studies scholar. However, in an age of interdisciplinary research, it should not be surprising that I and a host of other younger scholars would seek to enrich their work through ethnographic methods. Indeed, my study, set in the present and the recent past, makes extensive use of participant observation, surveys, and interviews. Archival sources are nearly non-existent for the recent past and what has been preserved reflects a limited slice of pilgrimage experience at Kirtland Temple. As historian Grant Wacker argues, “which bits of data were preserved [from the past], and how they were preserved reveal the moral hierarchies of countless intermediaries between past actors and the present-day historians who write about them.”⁵⁰ Such a limitation is inevitable, notes Wacker. This is true of the recent past as well as the distant past. For instance, the archives I used overwhelmingly contained documents from church leaders and official site coordinators rather than individual pilgrims or part-time interpreters. Yet, even with these limitations, it does not mean that scholars cannot look for supplementary sources to fill in the silences of archives themselves. Ethnography provides one avenue to give voice to these silences and reconfigure the “moral hierarchies” that archives inevitably birth.

To understand the changes at Kirtland Temple in the last forty years, I combined ethnographic observations and oral history interviews with traditional archival sources. In the course of my research, I conducted extensive research at the Kirtland Temple Historic Site Special Collections in Kirtland, Ohio, the Community of Christ Library-Archives in Independence, Missouri, and the History Department Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. My archival sources are richly varied.

⁵⁰ Grant Wacker, “Understanding the Past, Using the Past: Reflections on Two Approaches to History,” in *Religious Advocacy and American History*, eds. Bruce Kuklick and D.G. Hart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 161.

They include journal entries from visitors, attendance statistics (charted monthly, revealing the faith background of pilgrims), visitor comment cards from the late 1960s and 2000s, published accounts of spiritual experiences during visits, official correspondence on the presentation and design of the site, and the scripts for plays performed at the pilgrimage site. With the approval of the University of Iowa's Internal Review Board (IRB), I supplemented my study of the temple through oral history interviews, participant observation at the site, and an approved questionnaire. I conducted interviews of site interpreters, pilgrims, bus drivers, non-Mormon tourists, tour leaders, and long-term Kirtland residents. I also copied dozens of publicly accessed blogs that record visitor reflections about the site (many written the day after the visit).

There is no view from “no-where,” and, as scholars like Thomas Tweed and James Clifford remind us, scholars themselves are always sited in particular places with particular backgrounds that will inevitably effect what and how they study.⁵¹ Even with this limitation (part of what historian Grant Wacker once called the “original historical history”),⁵² scholars are divided over the question of whether revealing personal commitments by the researcher is advantageous or simply a distraction from the actual arguments of a study. Added to this is the further question of whether so-called “insiders” can fairly evaluate a subject, or conversely, if insiders have unique access to knowledge that outsiders cannot possibly possess. Anthropologists in the early 1990s argued over the merits of so-called native anthropology or work done by insiders as opposed to work done by supposedly disinterested outsiders. As this debate progressed, anthropologists like Kirin Narayan argued that the insider/outsider distinction was a false dichotomy. Narayan argued that we should “view each anthropologist in terms of shifting

⁵¹ Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 17-18; Clifford, *Routes*, 11.

⁵² Wacker, “Understanding the Past, Using the Past,” 161.

identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations. The loci along which we are aligned are multiple and in flux.”⁵³ Following Narayan’s argument, James Clifford later asserted, “I do not accept that anyone is permanently fixed by his or her ‘identity’; but neither can one shed specific structures of race and culture, class and caste, gender and sexuality, environment and history. I understand these, and other cross-cutting determinations, not as homelands, chosen or forced, but as sites of worldly travel: difficult encounters and occasions for dialogue. It follows that there is not a cure for the troubles of cultural politics in some old or new vision of consensus or universal values. There is only more translation.”⁵⁴

My own study is necessarily a work of translation. While I presume that my own work could be duplicated by a researcher with no prior knowledge or relationship to Kirtland Temple, I recognize that my particular background and past interests have coalesced to allow me to ask significant questions about the Mormon shrine. Before I even contemplated a dissertation on Kirtland Temple, I was deeply involved with the site. As a youth, I grew up in the fractured fundamentalist Restorationist community (a schismatic church that arose out of the RLDS/Community of Christ in the 1980s) where I was ordained as an elder. Early in my religious studies graduate career, I joined the Community of Christ and worked for this church at Kirtland Temple. For two summers, I gave several hundred tours to LDS, Community Christ, and Restorationist pilgrims, as well as to the general public and other Mormon factions. Since 2006, I have taught a college credit summer course to the Community of Christ student guides at Kirtland on early Kirtland history in the nineteenth-century American religious context. The tension

⁵³ Kiryin Narayan, “How Native is a ‘Native’ Anthropologist?,” *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 3 (1993): 671.

⁵⁴ Clifford, *Routes*, 12-13.

between my roles as a scholarly observer and a participant came to the fore during my research phase for this study (which began in July 2008). A few days after I was authorized by the University of Iowa's Institutional Review to keep a field journal, I wrote the following observation:

I am beginning to feel a bit odd about my position as a scholar who is both observing a phenomenon and one who is shaping it. As "John" [an employee at Kirtland Temple] and I interact, for instance, I realize that I am helping him think through issues relating to pilgrimage and this site. Students [summer guides] will come up to me when I am waiting to get guests to fill out questionnaires and ask me questions about things that arose on their tours. It is an odd thing to wear both hats. Also, the problem of belief in something is beginning to get in the way. I feel uncomfortable objectifying people I love. A common problem, I know.⁵⁵

Like anthropologists Jackie Feldman and John Eade who studied pilgrimage processes that they had once helped shape,⁵⁶ I have had (and continue to have) an effect on the Kirtland Temple since I first began working there in 2004. Still, while it would be naïve for me to assume that I (like any researcher) do not affect the site that I study, it would be a manifestation of serious hubris for me to presume I have had a major impact upon Kirtland Temple.

My unique position as both a scholar and a participant in several communities carries with it both amazing possibilities and ethical constraints. Because of my particular confessional and professional background, I have access to primary source materials not available to most researchers, since most are unaware of the existence of these materials. Also, I have contacts with the Community of Christ Kirtland Temple staff who have

⁵⁵ Field Notes, 6 July 2008.

⁵⁶ Jackie Feldman, "Constructing a Shared Bible Land: Jewish Israeli Guiding Performances for Protestant Pilgrims," *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 2 (2007): 353; and John Eade, "Order and Power at Lourdes: Lay Helpers and the Organization of a Pilgrimage Shrine," in *Contesting the Sacred*, 51.

supplied me with copious amounts of primary source material--from anecdotes and visitor statistics to comment cards. Restorationist contacts (including my family) have also supplied primary source material. The living people I name within this study are not abstract texts that I have read, digested, and deconstructed. Instead, many are people who have befriended me and with whom I would like to continue such a relationship in the future. Furthermore, following the lead of anthropologist Jackie Feldman, by subjecting my sources “to critical analysis, my project is also a reflexive self-questioning of my own performances and assumptions.”⁵⁷ My study, then, will provide a historical narrative that attempts to respect my subjects and question my own actions, while also providing a thoroughly contextualized analysis of praxis at Kirtland Temple. The reader must judge whether I succeed at this end.

The Journey Ahead: Parallel Pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple
in Theory and Narrative

Parallel pilgrimage is above all a ritual practice. To describe it, I draw upon a theoretical framework developed by Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, practices are constituted by an interaction between the habitus (structuring dispositions which one carries with her), forms of capital (social, economic, cultural) and the field (what Bourdieu scholar Michael Grenfell calls the network of “relations . . . to be found in any social space or particular context”).⁵⁸ Consider, for example, a person playing a game of soccer. The players are situated on a social space—the “field” of play—which also includes “rules” that are assumed in the game. Not all are equal in the field of play. A player has a position on the field, say of midfielder. There are captains, too. (Think of this

⁵⁷ Feldman, “Constructing a Shared Bible Land,” 353.

⁵⁸ Michael Grenfell, ed., *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (London: Acumen Publishing, 2008), 47.

as people possessing varying levels of capital.) A player carries with her a set of skills and dispositions (a habitus) that allow her to react to play on the field and even improvise in a game situation. A practice is the aggregate of all of these forces (field, capital, habitus).

Considered as a practice, parallel pilgrimage illustrates a kind of dynamism and conflict, though, that is lost in my analogy of a person engaged in a soccer match. To extend the game metaphor further, imagine that a baseball team shows up on our soccer field and confronts the group playing on it. The baseball team claims the field for their own and begins putting down bases. The ensuing confusion, conflict, and possible strategic cooperation analogously describe what I call parallel pilgrimage. Players suited to different games must interact with each other on a changing field of play.

Much of what follows in chapters four and five (Part II) describe the changing field around Kirtland Temple—the morphing geographies, social relations, and proximities of players to one another. In Part III of this dissertation (chapters five and six), I will describe both the habitus (what people “bring” with them) and the movement of players on the field (ritualized actions). Here, I address the theme of performance. In short, Part II is about conditions of proximity that allow for certain possibilities of action while Part III is about performance within these proximities. Of course, such a separation is somewhat artificial. As will be seen, it is impossible to talk about Kirtland’s changing field without also noting the changing habitus of the players positioned on this field (field and habitus mutually constitute each other). Similarly, a focus on the changing geography of the shrine requires a description of some ritual performances, such as dedication rituals, that accompany and instantiate such acts. Nevertheless, my topoi of proximity and performance highlight narratives about Kirtland Temple that would be lost in a simple chronological biography of sacred space.

Before we can adequately address Kirtland Temple’s changing proximities and performances in the last forty years, we must foreground Kirtland Temple in its past

history—a history that continually seeps into the present. While providing a basic narrative of Kirtland Temple as sacred space between 1833 to 1965, Part I contextualizes competing Mormon notions of sacred space and religious travel. By exploring Kirtland Temple’s past, we also glimpse the stories of the divergent peoples who metaphorically (and in some cases, literally) have built the shrine over time. Mormon factions, like any family of religions, had numerous quarrels with their cousins. Over the course of its first century of existence, Kirtland Temple proved to be a platform for the airing of many of these differences.

PART A:
THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE AND ITS DIVERGENT INTERPRETERS,
1833-1965

CHAPTER 2: A “HOUSE OF THE LORD”: KIRTLAND TEMPLE IN
ITS ANTEBELLUM CONTEXT, 1831-1844

Prologue to Part A

LDS Apostle Anton Lund and a traveling party of LDS leaders and their spouses toured Kirtland Temple on a cold December day in 1905. The travelers quickly found areas of disagreement with their RLDS guides who represented the church that owned the temple. “To hear their [RLDS] explanations,” wrote Lund in his journal, “it was easily understood that they had no conception of the real uses of a Temple.”⁵⁹ Lunds’s complaint would be echoed by thousands of Latter-day Saints after him, and reveals clashing understandings of Kirtland Temple and temple space between Mormon denominations by the early twentieth century—a trend that would continue far into the future.

Part I briefly reviews the genealogy of this contestation, from the time of Kirtland Temple’s construction in the 1830s up to the 1960s. In chapter 2, I argue that early Mormons created temple spaces to gain special blessings of God’s spirit beyond the conversion experience. The Kirtland Temple fulfilled this function but remained in infrequent use after the large Latter Day Saint community left in 1838. New temples were built by subsequent Mormon communities in places like Nauvoo, Illinois, and later in the Intermountain West. New theologies of human redemption were enacted in these spaces that went well beyond the neo-evangelical Mormon theology of the Kirtland era. Chapter 3 begins in the mid nineteenth century, just as competing Mormon denominations coalesced. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City) and the smaller Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints emerged as the most

⁵⁹ Anthon H. Lund, *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890-1921*, ed. by John P. Hatch (Salt Lake: Signature, 2006), 328.

important denominations for Kirtland's future. These two churches were rivals with different visions for the purpose of temple spaces. However, LDS visitors to Kirtland Temple were few and far between in this era. Kirtland Temple was overwhelmingly used by the RLDS in period from 1860 to 1900. Chapter 3 includes an investigation of how RLDS used the temple as a way of legitimating their emerging movement and forming their image of themselves as the true heirs of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s legacy.

As the twentieth century dawned, pilgrimage and tourism increased at Kirtland Temple. Chapter 4 narrates RLDS and LDS interactions at the sacred shrine from 1900 to 1964. The sometimes awkward early twentieth-century meetings between these two groups set the patterns for later interactions at the temple. A rich folklore about the temple was generated by the two competing denominations, and they shared in disseminating tales to one another. In the process, they reconstructed Kirtland Temple's history to meet their present denomination's needs. In many ways, the Kirtland Temple proved to be a mirror for these groups, reflecting the image of the beholder. That the other group could not see the same image proved an obvious point of contention. At the same time, the temple began to be more physically accessible to members of both churches as an American tourist industry arose that would transform pilgrimage to the temple. By the 1950s, a growing number of middle-class LDS and RLDS members would take their families on vacations that included pilgrimage stops at Kirtland Temple. These stops would bring members of one group face-to-face with members from the other church and spur new ways of understanding the temple.

The Nineteenth-century Context of Early Mormonism

In the early nineteenth century, western New York's so-called "burned-over district" produced some of America's most innovative religious movements and social reform campaigns. Women's rights conventions, prohibitionist campaigns, and fiery religious revivals all emerged out of what one scholar has called "the crucible of the

millennium.”⁶⁰ As one of America’s most successful (and controversial) religious movements that emerged out of that fecund milieu, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded by Joseph Smith, Jr., and several associates near Fayette, New York, in April 1830. Like many leaders of Christian movements of the age, Smith preached a gospel of restorationism. He and his associates believed that they had restored primitive Christianity again in its purity, long lost, they claimed, since a general Christian apostasy after the time of the apostles.⁶¹ Methodists, Presbyterians, Christians (Disciples of Christ), and other groups likewise claimed that they had recaptured “the ancient order of things.”⁶²

As participants in what Nathan O. Hatch has called “the democratization of American Christianity,” Mormons, as Smith’s group began to be called, challenged the old “New England standing order” of seminary educated Congregationalist ministers. The revolutionary impulse toward democratized politics started in the previous generation reincarnated itself in early nineteenth-century democratized religious institutions where “common men” preached “plain speaking sermons” to all that would hear. Visionaries like Smith abounded in this era. Ordinary people claimed to have been ordained by angels to preach to their neighbors. Methodist camp meetings teamed with individuals caught up in ecstatic “spiritual gifts” such as “the gifts of tongues,” prophecy, and visions described in the apostolic literature.⁶³ In sum, many Americans North and

⁶⁰ Michael Barkun, *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-over District of New York in the 1840s* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985).

⁶¹ For a discussion of early Mormon doctrines about the “Great Apostasy,” see Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 58-75.

⁶² Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 167-170.

⁶³ Hatch, *Democratization*, 3-16; Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton

South believed that they had reconnected to ancient Christianity. Old ways were waning, and the kingdom of God seemed to be dawning in America.

While claims of primitive Christian restoration were hardly new in Protestant Christianity, Smith and his followers embraced at least three unique practices that would chart for themselves a different course than other nineteenth-century restorationist Christians. First, Smith's followers claimed to have restored Christianity through the authoritative voice of a prophet.⁶⁴ For Mormons, Smith spoke God's divine will. Early Mormon priesthood structures, based loosely on American Methodist offices, quickly evolved into a many-tiered hierarchy that resembled Catholic more than egalitarian Protestant polities.⁶⁵ Ordinary men with little academic training served in the highest offices, preserving the era's idealization of the "common man" while elevating Smith to the highest of earthly roles. Second, Smith's followers printed his revelations in a bound volume and took them as an additional book of Scripture. Prophetic leaders in other movements generally did not write down their revelations since, many believed, this took away from the immediacy of the experience of the Spirit moving on an individual.⁶⁶ Mormons took Smith's revelations as the Word of God. Finally, Mormons shared

University Press, 1999), 76-117; John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 53-54.

⁶⁴ Hatch, *Democratization*, 67.

⁶⁵ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York, New York: Alfred Knopf, 2005), 202-205; Hatch notes that, paradoxically, early nineteenth-century "democratizing" religious leaders like Smith, Alexander Campbell, and others "walked a fine line between authentic servanthood and exploitive demagoguery" (Hatch, *Democratization*, 208).

⁶⁶ Later nineteenth-century religious leaders, like Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy and Theosophic mystic Madame Helen Blavatsky, however, printed their revelations, which also held canonical status for their followers. In the context of the entire nineteenth century, Smith becomes less of an anomaly. See Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health* (Boston: Christian Scientist Publishing, 1875); Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-key to the Mysteries Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1884).

millennialist beliefs with their Protestant Christian contemporaries, but they ventured much bolder claims. While some millennialists named dates for the second coming of Christ, Mormons named a time and a place; Independence, Missouri was the place, and the end would come within a generation of the completion of a proposed temple there.⁶⁷ In sum, the complex Mormon hierarchy, new written Scripture, and a millennial geopiety marked Mormons as radical restorationists for their era. These three distinctive traits would come together in the creation of a new kind of religious space for Mormons—the temple.

Gathering to Kirtland and the Emergence of Mormon

Temple Space

In the latter part of 1830, Smith’s band of followers in western New York sent out missionaries who made several hundred converts in northern Ohio near modern-day Cleveland. With the nucleus of the converts centered on Kirtland, Ohio, Smith moved with his family there in early 1831. With a revelation in hand, Smith commanded his followers to “go to the Ohio and there you will receive my [God’s] law for you and you will be endowed with power from on high, and from thence, whosoever I will, shall go forth among all nations, and it shall be told them what they shall do.”⁶⁸ Early Latter-day

⁶⁷ This argument runs contrary to Grant Underwood’s argument that Mormons were “moderate millenarians.” Underwood, *Millenarian World*, 97-111. Support for my observation can be found in Mario DePillis, “Christ Comes to Jackson County: The Mormon City of Zion and Its Consequences,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 23 (2003): 21-44.

⁶⁸ Unless noted, this essay uses the RLDS/Community of Christ edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, a book of collected revelations from church prophets and considered canonical by RLDS members. Following stylistic conventions for the Bible and the Book of Mormon, I will not italicize “Doctrine and Covenants” like a normal book title. Following common scholarly conventions, I will abbreviate the Doctrine and Covenants as “D&C.” The LDS Doctrine and Covenants is numbered differently from the RLDS edition, omits some sections that RLDS include, and includes many more Smith revelations that RLDS omit. Consequently, all LDS references common with the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants will be put in brackets and so noted. RLDS D&C 38: 7b-c [LDS 38: 32-33].

Saints, then, believed that they would be spiritually empowered like the early apostolic Christian church; with sufficient spiritual power, their missionaries could evangelize the world and usher in the promised millennial reign. Kirtland, Ohio, would be the beginning point for this “endowment.”

By early 1833, Smith’s followers around Kirtland numbered several hundred while several hundred more attempted to establish a colony in Jackson County Missouri. The latter colony was to build a “temple” in Independence, Missouri, the city where Smith believed the New Jerusalem would be established. This temple, though, would never be completed since angry Missouri residents forced the Mormons out of Jackson County in the summer of 1833.⁶⁹ Smith, however, had already turned his attention toward building a “House of the Lord,” or temple, in Kirtland, Ohio. An enormous task for his group, the temple was constructed between 1833 and 1836 at a cost of \$40,000 to \$70,000.⁷⁰ The mostly impoverished Mormons struggled to build the two-story stone and plaster building. While small by modern standards, when completed, it rivaled the largest buildings in Northern Ohio.

Reformed Christians, including American Congregationalists, had occasionally called their worship buildings “temples,” due in part to the high degree of continuity

⁶⁹ Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 148-230.

⁷⁰ John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons) Including an Account of Their Doctrine and Discipline; With the Reasons of the Author for Leaving the Church* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1839), 21. John Corrill was a temple workman who later left Smith’s church but remained sympathetic to the persecuted plight of the people. His 1839 history of the Latter Day Saints is widely regarded as a neutral, accurate document. Villainized in early LDS histories for his “apostasy,” Corrill advocated for political redress for the Latter Day Saints and was elected as a member of the Missouri Legislature. Corrill died destitute in 1843 after he had given away almost all of his possessions to help his former friends. See Ken Winn, “‘Such Republicanism as This’: John Corrill’s Rejection of Prophetic Rule,” in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, eds. Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 45-75.

Calvinists saw between the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible.⁷¹ Mormons also called their worship space a temple, but quickly they envisioned a new meaning for the term. As restorationists, they believed that they would receive a Pentecostal “endowment” or blessing within the building and sought to prepare for this outpouring.

The Mormon quest for a temple endowment came as one response to the needs that evangelical revival culture both generated and left unmet. Evangelicals had been told that their conversion experience would be the culminating experience of their religious life. Once it was over, though, many evangelicals were met with disappointment, wondering if there was not more of God’s powerful grace yet to be experienced. As Ruth Doan argues, the “widespread disjunction between [the] promise [of conversion] and the reality” after conversion resulted in “an increase in the number of individuals and movements that focused on a second religious experience.”⁷² As contemporaries of Smith, millennialists, like William Miller and spiritual perfectionists, like Phoebe Palmer, promised that there was something beyond conversion. For the one, individuals could be caught up in preparing for the Second Coming and warning their neighbors. For the other, individuals could experience a second work of grace that would lead to living without the desire to commit (serious) sin. Of course, these two solutions often overlapped, as Miller counted many Methodist perfectionists as his adherents and most evangelical perfectionists were millennialists of some sort, even if they were not followers of Miller. Joseph Smith, however, combined these two popular answers to life after conversion in a novel way. At the temples he created, male Mormon priesthood had a geographic place

⁷¹ Helene Guicharnaud, “An Introduction to the Architecture of Protestant Temples Constructed in France before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes,” in P. C. Finney, ed., *Seeing Beyond the Word: Visual Arts and the Calvinist Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 133-154; Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 216.

⁷² Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 114.

where they would be sanctified (“endowed with power from on high”) and sent forth to usher in the millennial reign through their evangelism (the Mormon notion of this was phrased as the “redemption of Zion,” or establishing the Kingdom of God on earth). For Mormons, the place for the millennial redemption and spiritual sanctification had a definite geographical location.

If the temple was a novel creation of American sacred space based on revival culture, it was birthed most directly from the Methodist camp meeting itself. Steven D. Cooley argues that the camp meeting may be understood “not only an instrument for obtaining conversions, but sacramentally, as a place that physically represented sacrality and a place enchanted with the presence of God.”⁷³ Following this line of argumentation, Christopher Jones recently has pointed out the similarities between camp meetings and activities in the Kirtland Temple. He argues that Methodists often attended camp meetings not for the sake of conversion, but for a further experience of spiritual power after conversion, much like the Mormon quest for spiritual power in a temple.⁷⁴ Furthermore, he points to early Methodists who referred to camp meeting groves as “God’s first temples” and “the House of God.” Almost half of early Mormons had at one time been Methodists.⁷⁵ Mormons were well acquainted with revivals, too. American revival Methodism helped foster the Mormon propensity to invest spaces with sacred meaning.

⁷³ Steven D. Cooley, “Manna and Manual: Sacramental and Instrumental Constructions of the Victorian Methodist Camp Meeting during the Mid-nineteenth Century,” *Religion and American Culture* 6, no. 2 (1996): 134.

⁷⁴ Christopher C. Jones, “‘We Latter-Day Saints Are Methodists’: The Influence of Methodism on Early Mormon Religiosity” (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2009), 100.

⁷⁵ Jones, “We Latter-Day Saints Are Methodists,” 3, 102.

I argue that the key differences between the camp meeting and the early Mormon temple lay in the mobility of the camp meeting versus the fixed location of the temple and in the corporate versus individual dimensions of the spiritual sanctification expected. Methodists sought individual experiences of God's grace; Mormons sought experiences as a gathered people who were the New Israel. Methodists gathered in congregations. Early Mormons gathered in cities. While the geo-pieties of both groups were related, Mormons invested definite geographical places with a permanency not matched by the itinerant Methodists whose camp meetings and congregations could be anywhere on the American landscape.

The completed Kirtland Temple brought together three distinct Mormon solutions to restoring the ancient order of things: new scripture, a complex authoritative hierarchy, and millennial geo-piety. First, the temple's basic design was sketched by Joseph Smith in new revelations printed as Mormon scripture. Joseph Smith's 1833 temple revelations provided the inner dimensions for the temple. There were to be two "courts" or spaces in the temple: an inner upper court "for the school of mine apostles" and a lower inner court "dedicated unto me for your sacrament offering, and for your preaching; and your fasting, and your praying, and the offering up your most holy desires unto me, saith your Lord."⁷⁶ Two essentially identical rooms with high ceilings were stacked on top of each other. While most contemporary churches of the same size had balconies, the Kirtland Temple had separate floors with distinct functions (worship and ministerial education). One late-nineteenth-century Mormon account claimed that Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams were shown the exact details of the temple in a vision.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ RLDS D&C 92:3e-f [LDS 95:15-17].

⁷⁷ In 1885, Truman Angell wrote that "I did not go to Kirtland until the fall of 1835. At this time I went to work upon the Kirtland Temple . . . F.G. Williams came into the Temple about the time the main hall first floor was ready for dedication. He was asked, how does the house look to you. He answered that it looked to him like the model he had seen. He said

While this story was probably apocryphal, saints used new Mormon scripture to delineate the rough boundaries for the temple and its use.

Second, Mormon priesthood and hierarchy became physically instantiated in the temple. In the two main floors, four tiers of pulpits in both ends of the room faced the congregation. The west pulpits featured offices and groups from the Melchisidek Priesthood, or “higher priesthood” in the early Latter Day Saint church. Each pulpit was marked off by gilded letters abbreviating the office for that particular tier. “P.E.M,” for instance, likely stood for “presiding [or presidents] elders Melchisidek.” Other tiers included pulpits for the high priests quorum (a group of twelve high priests, an office in Smith’s restored priesthood), another set for the stake high council (another group of twelve high priests who governed the affairs of the Kirtland stake—a division like a diocese), and the highest tier for the First Presidency (Joseph Smith and two counselors). The east pulpits featured places for the Aaronic priesthood, or “lesser priesthood.” These were mainly local ministers (Melchisidek priesthood were classified as ministers who traveled, even if they had local authority) and included deacons, teachers, priests, and bishops who presided over the Aaronic priesthood. As Richard Bushman argues, the temple pulpits reflected Smith’s fascination with compartmentalized space. “He [Smith] believed that the body of the Church functioned best in ‘quorums,’ the subdivisions of the two priesthoods,” writes Bushman, “suggesting a segmented conception of ecclesiastical authority, more Catholic than Protestant.”⁷⁸ The Kirtland Temple visually represented Mormon conceptions of hierarchy and ecclesiastical power with its prominent pulpits.

President Joseph, Sidney Rigdon and himself were called to come before the Lord and the model was shown to them. He said the vision of the Temple was thus shown them and he could not see the difference between it and the House as built.” Truman O. Angell to John Taylor and Counsel, 11 March 1885, as quoted in Laurel B. 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), 36.

⁷⁸ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 218.

Finally, the temple itself was the product of Mormon millennialist geo-piety. From the late 1820s and early 1830s, Smith's revelations revealed America as the promised land and the place for the New Jerusalem. Before Christ could return, the city of Zion in Independence, Missouri, must be built. It would be a place of refuge that people would flee to as the world slipped into apocalyptic chaos before the Second Coming. Tied with this was the Mormon belief that two lost tribes of Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh, would build this city together. Early Mormons identified Manasseh as Native Americans and Ephraim as Northern Europeans. Missionary efforts to both groups would be needed, then, to accomplish God's purposes in the "latter days." The millennium in part depended upon Mormon actions and their faithfulness to accomplishing God's purposes. What Mormons termed "the redemption of Zion" was then two-fold: calling in the lost and preparing a habitation for them. Temples would aid in these ends.

As Bushman explains, early Mormon cities did not have court houses, jails, or ordinary school buildings at their center. They had temples. These sacred buildings became cosmic vortexes, funneling converts to their precincts, filling them up with spiritual power, and then sending them out into the world to seek Israel's lost sheep.⁷⁹ At least, this was their intended purpose. Jesus' earliest disciples received an apostolic outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem after communing in a temple daily and spread the church to the world after the Ascension (a scattering). In anti-typical imitation, Mormons believed they needed a Pentecostal outpouring in a temple to gather the faithful into "Zion" before Jesus' second advent. It was the recapitulation of the apostolic narrative in reverse, projected upon the continent of North America.

⁷⁹ Richard Lyman Bushman, "Making Space for Mormons," in *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. by Reid L. Neilsen and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 184, 188; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 220.

Calling the Solemn Assembly: Kirtland Temple Ritual as
Vernacular Theology

During the months surrounding the Kirtland Temple's March 27, 1836 dedication, the saints reported Pentecostal-like experiences in the temple. In diary accounts and later reminiscences, they reported seeing angels in services, feeling the Holy Spirit sweep into their meetings "like a mighty rushing wind," receiving the "gift of tongues," and speaking in prophecy.⁸⁰ As the culminating point of the blessing, priesthood members participated in a day-long ceremony, called the "Solemn Assembly," in which they felt they received the promised "power from on high."

No early Latter Day Saint systematized the emerging temple theology practiced in Kirtland. However, as a vernacular theology, their reading can in part be approached as an "iconic" reading of Scripture. They read Scripture as a living picture that they could recapture again in their lives. Philip Barlow argues that early Latter Day Saints "were actually recapitulating, *living through*, the stories of Israel and early Christianity—reestablishing the covenant, gathering the Lord's elect, separating Israel from the Gentiles, organizing the Church, preaching the gospel, building up the kingdom, living in sacred space and time."⁸¹ With this in mind, we can understand the Kirtland Temple rituals as performances of Biblical stories that would transform the world. In other words, performing the rituals was not about remembering a day of Pentecost. It was about living Pentecost in the latter days. Such a recapitulation would result in millennial redemption, too.

⁸⁰ *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio), 1 April 1836; Leonard J Arrington, ed., "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, Sketchbook." *BYU Studies* 12, no. 4 (1972): 426.

⁸¹ Phillip Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 69.

Within the Kirtland endowment ritual, the Solemn Assembly, early Latter Day Saints recapitulated the events of the Passion Week and the Day of Pentecost.⁸² Before entering the temple, priesthood members gathered together for body washings with cinnamon oil and whiskey, reminiscent of Jesus' anointing with spikenard by the woman in Mark 14:3. Within the temple, they practiced foot washings (just as Jesus had done to his disciples before the Last Supper). They next engaged in a formalized manifestation of a Shouting Methodist practice, the Hosanna shout. In unison, they shouted "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb, amen, amen, amen!"⁸³ This latter practice imitated the shouts by the crowd in Jerusalem as Jesus entered, and possibly the disciples' response at the Day of Pentecost.⁸⁴ Additionally, priesthood laid their hands on one another and sealed blessings of eternal life on their heads (just as Jesus had breathed the Holy Spirit on his disciples after His resurrection). And finally, priesthood resisted sleep and conducted an all night prayer meeting on the temple's third floor (in

⁸² For an excellent primary source that details these events, see Dean C. Jesse, "The Kirtland Diary of Wilford Woodruff," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 386-394. For secondary accounts, see Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 115-149 and David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 11-34. Richard Bushman argues that the Kirtland Endowment ceremonies "derived from the Exodus instructions for consecrating priests, involving washings with water, anointing with oils, and sealings (Exodus 30:22-30; 40: 12-15)." See Bushman, "Joseph Smith and Creation of the Sacred," in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, edited by Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 104.

⁸³ Reference here to Wilford Woodruff's journal from 1837; Edward Partridge's journal entry for a January 22, 1836 meeting (a preparatory meeting for the Solemn Assembly) records the words as, "Hosannah, Blessed be the name of the Most High God," as quoted in Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 17.

⁸⁴ Shouting Methodists presumed that the disciples at Pentecost must have been shouting praises, since when the Spirit moved an individual, they, too, would shout. Interestingly, Taves notes that Shout Methodists associated the images of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem with the Day of Pentecost. See Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*, 112. Forty percent of all Latter Day Saints had once been raised in Methodist homes and at least twenty-five percent were Methodists at the time of their conversion. Jones, "We Latter-day Saints are Methodists," 3.

imitation of the Garden of Gethsemane). At the conclusion of this prayer meeting in the early morning hours, priesthood partook of bread and wine in this “upper room” of the temple (imitating the Last Supper) and began to speak in tongues (Pentecost).

Early Mormon priesthood believed that these temple rituals were necessary prerequisites for evangelizing the world. In imitation of Jesus’ disciples, they believed that apostolic miracles would follow them. Two weeks before the Solemn Assembly, the *Ohio Atlas* reported, “They [the saints] assure you, with utmost confidence, that they shall soon be able to raise the dead, to heal the sick, the deaf, the dumb, and the blind. &c.”⁸⁵ During the ceremony on March 30, Smith told 316 gathered priesthood that “the time that we were required to tarry in Kirtland to be endued [endowed] would be fulfilled in a few days, and then the Elders would go forth and each must stand for himself And let the redemption [sic] of Zion be our object, and strive to affect it by sending up all the strength of the Lords house wherever we find them.”⁸⁶ Smith also added an ill-conceived oath, swearing that “if any more of our brethren are slain or driven from their lands in Missouri by the mob that we will give ourselves no rest until we are avenged of our enemies to the uttermost.”⁸⁷ This foreshadowed conflict to come in Missouri. For the time, though, Smith basked in the glow of revivalistic sentiment, recording in his journal , “it was a pentecost [sic.] and enduement [endowment] indeed, long to be remembered for the sound shall go forth from this place into all the world, and the occurrences of this shall be handed down upon the pages of sacred history to all generations, as the day of Pentecost, so shall this day be numbered and celebrated as a year of Jubilee and time of

⁸⁵ *Ohio Atlas*, 16 March 1836, as quoted in Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 20.

⁸⁶ Jesse, et. al., eds., *Journals 1832-1839*, 214-215.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

rejoicing to the saints of the most high God.”⁸⁸ A now well-beloved hymn sung at the 1836 Kirtland Temple dedication sums up the endowment ceremonies in language, though cryptic now, that was clear to its first singers.

The Spirit of God like a fire is burning
 The latter day glory begins to come forth
 The visions and blessings of old are returning
 And angels are coming to visit the earth

We'll sing and we'll shout with the armies of heaven,
 Hosanna, hosanna, to God and the Lamb!
 Let glory to them, in the highest be given!
 Henceforth and forever, Amen and amen.

We call in our solemn assemblies, in spirit,
 To Spread forth the kingdom of heaven abroad,
 That we through our faith may begin to inherit
 The visions, and blessings, and glories of God

We'll wash and washed, and with oil be anointed
 Withal not omitting the washing of feet
 For he that receiveth his penny appointed
 Shall surely be clean at the harvest of wheat.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Ibid., 216.

⁸⁹ *Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams and Co., 1835; reprint, Independence, Missouri: Herald Heritage, 1973), hymn 90.

The ceremonies sung described in this hymn (washing, anointing, and shouting) would later evolve into the more elaborate, complex temple rituals practiced by modern LDS. At the time, however, Smith did not foresee the need for additional ceremonies. At the conclusion of the Solemn Assembly, he told the gathered priesthood, “I had now completed the organization of the church and we had passed through all the necessary ceremonies, that I had given them all the instruction they needed and that they were at liberty after obtaining their licences [sic.] to go forth and build up the kingdom of God.”⁹⁰

While Smith at first intended the Solemn Assembly to be a one-time event, he repeated the ceremony three more times in 1836 and twice in 1837. Wilford Woodruff, who had not attended the previous meetings, wrote in his journal on April 6, 1837, that “Henceforth the Solemn [sic.] assembly of the Elders of Israel & all official members that can, will meet in the LORDS house annually to attend to the most Solemn [sic.] ordinances of the house of GOD & receiving the visions & great things of heavens.”⁹¹ By 1837, the Solemn Assembly had the potential to become an annual revival event for the Latter Day Saint priesthood. However, due to internal dissensions in the community, the Solemn Assembly was not repeated in 1838. The last Kirtland Temple Solemn Assembly performed by early Latter Day Saints happened on November 17, 1839 in a small ceremony where two priesthood members received the “endowment” while en route to a mission in England.⁹²

⁹⁰ Jesse, Dean C., Mark Ashcraft-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, 1832-1839*, volume 1 of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 215.

⁹¹ Susan Staker, ed., *Waiting for World’s End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1993), 13.

⁹² Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 34.

“The Vision”: Joseph Smith’s April 3, 1836 Experience in
Kirtland Temple

While 1836 Latter Day Saints would talk of the “Pentecostal season” in general as the pre-eminent moment of blessing in their lives, another event would take on supreme significance for later LDS believers who followed Brigham Young to the Intermountain West. This was Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery’s April 3, 1836 vision in the temple. In Smith’s private journal, his scribe recorded the following vision, presumably as the details were dictated by the Mormon prophet:

In the P.M., he [Smith] assisted the other Presidents⁹³ in distributing the elements of the Lords Supper to the Church receiving them from the Hands [of the] “Twelve” [Apostles] whose privilege it was to officiate in the sacred desk this day. After having performed this service to his brethren, he retired to the pulpit, the vails being dropped [veils could be dropped around the pulpits in the temple], and bowed himself, with O[liver] Cowdery, in solemn, but silent prayer to the Most High. After rising from prayer the following vision was opened to both of them. The vail was taken from their minds and the eyes of their understandings were opened. They saw the Lord standing upon the breast work of the pulpit before them. and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber: his eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was like the pure snow, his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun, and his voice was as the sound of

⁹³ This use of the term “presidents” is now archaic for Latter Day Saint traditions. At the Kirtland Temple’s dedication, nine different men were called “presidents of the church” and presented by Joseph Smith, Jr. to the congregation as his co-equals. The *Messenger and Advocate* (the Latter Day Saint newspaper in Kirtland) reported that “President J. Smith jr. then rose, and after a few preliminary remarks, presented the several Presidents of the church, then present, to the several quorums respectively, and then to the church as being equal with himself, acknowledging them to be Prophets and Seers.” As quoted in *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 6 (March 1836). In practice, though, Smith was firmly in charge of the church and had no equal or no superior in church governance or ecclesiastical authority. The nine presidents of the church in 1836 included Joseph Smith, Jr., his brother Hyrum Smith, his father Joseph Smith, Sr., the two counselors to Joseph Smith, Jr. in the church’s “First Presidency” that governed the entire church (Frederick Granger Williams and Sidney Rigdon), and the three member presidency of the stake of Zion in Missouri (David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and William W. Phelps). The traditional of designating presidents as co-equals with Joseph Smith did not survive in the LDS church structure or in the RLDS church structure.

the rushing of great waters, even the Voice of Jehovah, saying, I am the first and the last. I am he who liveth. I am he who was slain. I am your Advocate with the Father. Behold your sins are forgiven you. You are clean before me, therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice, let the hearts of your brethren rejoice and let the hearts of all my ~~brethren~~ <people> rejoice, who have with their might, built this house to my name. For behold I have accepted this house and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people, in mercy, in this House, Yea I will appear unto my servants and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments and do not pollute this Holy House. Yea, the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out and the endowment with which my servants have already been endowed and shall hereafter be endowed in this House. and the fame of this House shall spread to foreign lands, and this is the beginning of the blessing, which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people. even so amen.⁹⁴

Smith then related that Moses and Elias appeared and conferred on him the “Keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the Earth [sic] and the leading of the ten tribes from the Land of the North” and “committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham.” Then, Smith related that “Elijah, the Prophet, who was taken to Heaven without tasting death, also stood before them.”⁹⁵ With millennial urgency, Elijah declared:

behold the time has fully come which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi, testifying, that he [Elijah] should be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come, to turn the hearts of the Fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse. Therefore, the Keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands, and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Jesse, et. al., eds., *Journals 1832-1839*, 219, 222.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Smith's mystical experience closed with a warning that the end was near. What he made of the experience at the time, the "keys" and "dispensations," is unknown. His teachings and theology constantly evolved throughout his life, as did his angelology (Smith considered Moses, Elijah, and Elias to be angels). A full congregation worshipped in the Kirtland Temple as he experienced this vision; no known account recorded anything unusual during the service. While Smith records that Oliver Cowdery experienced the vision with him, Cowdery left no record of the vision. Smith did share his personal vision with a few close colleagues, but the vast majority of the 1836 Mormons at Kirtland had no knowledge of his experience.

A generation later, most Mormons learned of Smith's vision when it was printed in the 1876 edition of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, a Mormon book of Scripture.⁹⁷ For many twentieth-century LDS members, this vision would be the culminating point of the apostolic blessing in Kirtland--and the reason for visiting the temple. By at least the late nineteenth century, LDS members had come to believe that Elijah had conferred on Joseph Smith (and by extension his apostolic successors) the authority to conduct rituals for the living and the dead in modern LDS temples, thus connecting their present temple spaces to Kirtland's "preparatory temple" space. RLDS, however, embraced a far different model for temple ritual and temple space. They would contest LDS understandings of the Smith's 1836 vision and construct alternative reasons for visiting the temple.

⁹⁷ Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1995), 183-190. RLDS members were producing a separate Doctrine and Covenants by the 1870s and, consequently, did not add Joseph Smith's 1836 vision. The vision was published, however, in an 1853 edition of the British Latter-day Saints Newspaper. See "History of Joseph Smith," *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 14, no. 45 (November 5, 1853), 729 and "History of Joseph Smith," *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 14, no. 46 (November 12, 1853), 739.

Beyond Endowment Space: Kirtland Temple's Many Uses

Beyond the use of the temple as a place for spiritual “endowment,” early 1830s saints used it as a school for children and adults, a center for priesthood education, office space for Joseph Smith, Jr., and a public worship space for Sunday morning services, Sunday afternoon services, and Thursday morning prayer meetings. Saints and guests alike worshipped in the space.⁹⁸ In a rare gesture of solidarity with groups who shared some common beliefs, a Christian Universalist minister from Pittsburgh, S. A. Davis, preached in Kirtland Temple in 1837 to a packed house of saints and “gentiles” (the less-than-flattering term used by Mormons for their non-Mormon neighbors).⁹⁹ In addition, saints gave tours through the building for twenty-five cents; guests viewed the worship space and investigated oddities on the third floor, like an Egyptian mummy that Smith bought from a traveling showman.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, the early saints used the temple space for purposes far beyond spiritual empowerment.

Two Communities, Two Temples: Kirtland and Nauvoo as Competing Centers

By 1838, after a series of internal schisms and lawsuits which nearly destroyed the Mormon community, the majority of the saints in Kirtland left for Far West, Missouri. Fewer than 100 saints remained in the area, down from a high of nearly 2,000 in late 1837. Following a series of violent conflicts with non-Mormon Missourians known as the “1838 Mormon War,” the saints were driven from the state. In the spring of

⁹⁸ “Our Village,” *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio), March 1837.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ An excellent primary source that documents these uses is from an early Kirtland Temple tourist, William S. West. See his *A Few Interesting Facts Respecting the Rise and Progress and Pretensions of the Mormons* (N.p., 1837), 3-5.

1839, the Missouri saints gathered on the Illinois banks of the Mississippi River at a town Smith renamed Nauvoo, a Hebrew word that he had perhaps learned while in a Hebrew class on the third floor of the Kirtland Temple.¹⁰¹ Thousands of English converts joined the saints in Nauvoo as it grew over the next seven years.

By 1840, the church purchased thousands of acres of land for the new community. Initially, Smith hoped to make the purchase with money gained from the Church's properties in Missouri. In October 1840, church leaders recognized Kirtland as a legitimate gathering place for Latter Day Saints, but by May 1841, Smith revoked this status when it became clear that the saints would not receive any material redress from their Missouri lands. Saints remaining in Kirtland were urged to gather to Nauvoo. However, the Kirtland saints convinced a group of one hundred English converts to settle in their community rather than Nauvoo. Church leaders in Nauvoo promptly disfellowshipped the leader of the Kirtland group, Almon Babbitt, and Hyrum Smith, Joseph's older brother and a general church leader, issued a revelation that attempted to silence all opposition:

All the Saints that dwell in that land [Kirtland] are commanded to come away, for this is "Thus saith the Lord;" therefore pay out no moneys nor properties for houses, nor lands in that country, for if you do you will lose them, for the time shall come that you shall not possess them in peace, but shall be scourged with a sore scourge; yet your children may possess them; but not until many years shall pass away.¹⁰²

The Word of the Lord, however, was flexible. The Kirtland saints appealed the command, explaining that they had recently established a church press and had organized to support the poor. On December 15, 1841, the leaders at Nauvoo responded favorably,

¹⁰¹ Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1990) and Shalom L. Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue: Hebrew and the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 176-198.

¹⁰² *Times and Seasons* 3 (November 1, 1841): 589.

stating, “you have made great exertions, according to your letter, to establish a printing press, & take care of the poor, &c since that period, you may as well continue operations according to your designs.” The Nauvoo leaders added a warning, however. “Do not suffer yourselves to harbor the Idea that Kirtland will rise on the ruins of Nauvoo. It is the privilege of brethren emigrating from any quarter to come to this place [Nauvoo], and it is not right to attempt to persuade those who desire it, to stop short.”¹⁰³ Nauvoo leaders were pragmatic. Despite Hyrum’s strongly worded prophetic warning in November, the Kirtland saints could remain where they were, as long they did not impede the growth of Nauvoo.

During the previous summer (1840), Joseph Smith, Jr. made a speech in Nauvoo in which he announced plans for an enormous new temple there. “We will build upon the top of this Temple a great observatory, a great and high watch tower and in the top thereof we will suspend a tremendous bell.” The temple would contain ancient records, too, prophesied Smith. “Dig them,” he proclaimed, “yes bring them forth speedily.” In addition, the temple would attract a profitable tourist trade. “Pleasure parties shall come from England to see the mammoth and like the Queen of Sheba shall say the half never was told them.” Thus would the poor of Nauvoo “be fed by the curious.”¹⁰⁴ It is clear that Smith, at least in part, envisioned the temple as an attraction that would help the Nauvoo economy. Tourists would put money into the Nauvoo economy through their purchases in the city, their tours through the temple, and their need for lodging. Smith later revealed that the Lord desired the saints to build a five-story brick hotel, the Nauvoo House. With the temple as a magnet for visitors and saints, and accommodations to house

¹⁰³ Dean C. Jesse, ed., *Journal, 1832-1842*, volume 2 of *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1992), 340.

¹⁰⁴ Dean C. Jesse, “Joseph Smith’s 19 July 1840 Discourse,” *BYU Studies* 19 (Spring 1979): 390-394.

and feed the visitors, Nauvoo was intended to develop an industry beyond the construction industry that drove its economy in the early 1840s.

By 1842, Smith's temple theology entered a new stage that focused on the temple as a place to ensure afterlife exaltation (progression in eternity toward higher and higher levels of resurrected glory). While saints for a time thought that they had gained the final spiritual outpouring in Kirtland, events in Missouri had shown that they were not empowered enough to usher in the kingdom of God on earth. Consequently, Smith's temple theology incorporated more and more elaborate ceremonies into a new temple endowment. These new temple rituals unmistakably resembled Masonic rituals.

In 1842, Smith joined a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo. Only weeks after his initiation, he told Apostle Heber C. Kimball "Masonary [sic.] was taken from preasthood [sic.] but has become degen[e]rated. but menny [sic.] things are perfect."¹⁰⁵ Consequently, Smith's new temple ceremonies drew upon and modified elements of Masonic ritual.¹⁰⁶ As a radical restorationist, Smith aspired to purify Masonic rituals and restore the true temple ritual. Tied closely to the evolving 1842 temple endowment were Smith's controversial practice of baptism for the dead and secret plural marriage (begun in 1840 and 1841 respectively). Such rituals radically extended the family across time and space, connecting individuals to unending familial hierarchies. Just as radical were the promises that Mormons now were given in the Nauvoo endowment ceremonies. Mormons were taught the necessary oaths, tokens, and passwords to eventually enter into godhood in eternity. In sum, the temple had become a place not simply to endow missionaries with Pentecostal power, but to connect the living and the dead together across time and eternity.

¹⁰⁵ As quoted in Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 40.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 51-56.

Where Smith would have gone with this ever-evolving theological system remains the subject of historical speculation, for some evidence suggests that he ended teaching about plural marriage in June 1844 and burned his temple garments (special clothes worn during and after one had been initiated into the new endowment ceremony).¹⁰⁷ If so, he may have acted out of desperation (the Nauvoo kingdom was collapsing under the weight of internal and external dissension). Smith may have also been a new phase in his theology. He could abruptly reverse his theology or freely contradict his past statements, as revealed by his 1836 Kirtland pronouncements that he “had now completed the organization of the church and we had passed through all the necessary ceremonies.” Historians will never know what Mormonism might have evolved in his hands, for on June 27, 1844, Smith was assassinated by a mob in Carthage, Illinois.¹⁰⁸

Smith’s death plunged his movement into chaos. Over the next few months, church leaders battled for supremacy within the ecclesiastical ranks. Led by Brigham Young, nine of the church apostles in Nauvoo, Illinois, gained the support of a special church conference in August 1844 that had been called to resolve leadership issues. All nine apostles secretly supported Smith’s system of plural wives. In contrast, Smith’s ecclesiastical counselor in the church presidency, Sidney Rigdon, did not support the practice. At the August conference, he advanced his claims to be the “guardian of the church.” Young outmaneuvered Rigdon and had the apostles collectively declared as the church presidency. Young immediately began acting as the singular church leader (not

¹⁰⁷ D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1994), 146-147.

¹⁰⁸ Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, 35-68.

one of a collective) and, consequently, excommunicated his rival, Rigdon.¹⁰⁹ Emma Smith, also an opponent of her husband's polygamy, had tense relations with Young over the next few years.¹¹⁰ Relationships with "gentiles" rapidly deteriorated in this era, too, resulting in several violent skirmishes. Finally, in 1846, Young and the majority of the Latter-day Saints living in Nauvoo left the United States to establish a new theocratic kingdom in the West.¹¹¹ As Young's group did so, they dedicated the roughly finished Nauvoo Temple on May 1, 1846. This dedication was as much an expression of piety as it was a polemic against other successor claimants: both Sidney Rigdon and a new claimant, James J. Strang, were prophecying that the saints had not completed the temple in the Lord's allotted time and that the church had been duly rejected.

In the years that followed, the Nauvoo Temple became a tourist attraction, but not on the scale the Joseph Smith had envisioned. Joseph Smith III, whose family did not go West with Young's group, recalled leading tours of the temple for passing guests. Tourism was in its infancy in the United States; few had the money and leisure time to travel. In 1848, an unknown arsonist set fire to the Nauvoo Temple. The stone shell of the building was further destroyed by a wind storm in 1849. Guests to Nauvoo dropped with the temple gone.

Even as the Nauvoo Temple crumbled, the Latter Day Saint movement was further beset by competing factions with competing headquarters across the United States. Saints who stayed in the American Midwest followed various leaders, such as

¹⁰⁹ In a revision of Yale doctoral dissertation, historian D. Michael Quinn analyzes eleven different succession options available to Mormons after Smith's assassination. See, Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 143-244.

¹¹⁰ Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 199-209.

¹¹¹ Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 130-152.

Alpheus Cutler, James J. Strang, William Smith (Joseph Smith, Jr.'s brother), and Lyman Wight. Many members of these smaller groups would eventually coalesce into a dissenting Latter Day Saint faction, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—the group that would eventually gain ownership of the Kirtland Temple, setting up later confrontations with the descendants of Brigham Young's faction.

Conclusion: Kirtland Temple and Smith's Legacy of
Sacred Space

Smith's theology entailed a radical departure from familiar Protestant styles, including the typical emphasis of grace over place. In limited ways, his final conceptualizations more closely resemble Catholic or Greek Orthodox notions of sacred spaces and places. Smith ambitiously created sacred spaces within which he created ritual solutions to his followers' anxieties. Kirtland Temple served as an answer to the quest for divine grace after the conversion. The later Nauvoo Temple helped allay the fears of followers separated from their families by immigration and death. In a sense, Smith's followers received "grace" *through* place.¹¹²

The Kirtland Temple's many uses—as public worship space, as a special "endowment" space, as a place for church offices, and as a symbolic gathering point for drawing in the Lost Tribes of Israel—highlighted the fungibility of Smith's sacred space. Yet, this very strength of Smith's evolving temple spaces (their adaptability) proved also

¹¹² By grace, I simply mean divine power. Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons had varied theological understandings of the term "grace" in Christian scripture. Many early Mormons came from Armenian churches that emphasized one's active involvement in salvation. Since early Latter Day Saints wanted distance between themselves and other groups, many members typically de-emphasized the term "grace" while they still described something like it in their vernacular theology and practices. For a discussion of "grace" in Smith's early work (namely the Book of Mormon), see G. St. John Stott, "The Natural Man and Enmity to God" (paper presented to the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology, Orem, Utah, 25 March 2010), paper in possession of author.

a weakness for the unity of his grieving followers after his death. The splintered groups that arose in Smith's wake would have varied understandings of temple space and temple rituals. Under many different leaders, each faction would reinterpret Smith's legacy, claiming that their construction of temple space was most faithful to the doctrines of the slain prophet. As will be shown in chapters three and four, Kirtland Temple, in particular, would become a focal point for RLDS identity formation.

CHAPTER 3: SPLINTERED SAINTS AND KIRTLAND TEMPLE:
 RLDS IDENTITY FORMATION AND EVOLVING FACTIONAL
 TEMPLE THEOLOGIES, 1844-1900

During the winter of 1879-1880, a writer for *Lippincott's Magazine*, Frederic G. Mather, visited Kirtland Temple and wrote a detailed account of the then half-century old building. On a tour of the temple led by an RLDS member, Mather was struck by a sign prominently posted on a wall in the temple's upper court and copied it into his notes:

THE SALT LAKE MORMONS.—When Joseph Smith was killed on June 27, 1844, Brigham Young *assumed* the *leadership* of the Church, telling the people in the winter of 1846 that all the *God* they wanted *was him*, and all the *Bible* they wanted was in *his* heart. He led or drove about two thousand people to Utah in 1847, starting for Upper California and landing at *Salt Lake*, where, in 1852, Brigham Young presented the *Polygamic Revelation* to the people. The *True Church* remained disorganized till 1860, when Joseph Smith took the leadership or Presidency of *the Church* at Amboy, Illinois. *We* (thirty thousand) have no affiliation with the *Mormons* whatever. They are to us an *apostate* people, *working all manner of abomination* before *God* and man. We are no part or parcel of them in *any sense whatever*. Let this *be distinctly* understood: *we are not Mormons*. Truth is truth, wherever it is found.¹¹³

Even at this early date, the Kirtland Temple served as a stage to air the differences between the new RLDS movement and their Utah cousins. RLDS members literally inscribed such differences on the temple itself.

The RLDS church, though, was a relative late-comer to Kirtland Temple. In the first two decades after 1844, the temple passed through the hands of many different Latter-day Saint groups. James Colin Brewster had a congregation in the temple, as did William McLellan's short-lived Church of Christ in the late 1840s and early 1850s. For a time in the 1850s, a group loyal to Sidney Rigdon met in the temple, as did a latter group

¹¹³ Frederic G. Mather, "The Early Days of Mormonism," *Lippincott's Magazine* 26 (August 1880): 210. My thanks to Barbara Walden for sharing this source with me.

loyal to Brigham Young. Kirtland resident and Book of Mormon plates witness Martin Harris joined several successive groups, with each holding conferences or meeting for services in the temple during the 1850s and 1860s. In 1857, William Smith, Joseph Smith's last surviving brother, also attempted to organize a movement from Kirtland.¹¹⁴ Yet, by 1858, William Smith's group was imploding, due in part to the revelations that William Smith had polygamously cohabited with a sixteen-year old woman. All the other major Latter Day Saint factions based in the Midwest tottered on the verge of collapse, too, as leaders died or engaged in internecine fights that split their factions further. This left a vacuum for a new group to fill.

In the 1860s, the first members of the RLDS began meeting in Kirtland Temple. Called originally the "New Organization," the church was composed mostly of Midwestern saints who opposed plural marriage and supported lineal succession—the notion that Joseph Smith should be succeeded by members from his family. In 1860, Joseph Smith III, the oldest son of the slain Mormon prophet, accepted leadership of the new denomination. At the time, it numbered only a few hundred, with membership mainly in Illinois and Wisconsin. Under Joseph Smith III's leadership, the church incorporated other dissenting factions and grew to over 70,000 members by Joseph Smith III's death in 1914.¹¹⁵ While greatly outnumbered by the larger LDS church in Utah, the RLDS church proved a durable competitor to its western cousin.

¹¹⁴ Christin C. Mackay and Lachlan E. Mackay, "A Time of Transition: The Kirtland Temple, 1838-1880," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 18 (1998): 137-143.

¹¹⁵ The best study of Joseph Smith III is Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

Images of Ownership: Factional Interactions and Kirtland

Temple Interpreters, 1850-1880

Even as the RLDS church in the Midwest cobbled together a new organization in the 1850s and 1860s, it did not possess a strong membership in Kirtland. Though the temple itself was used by many different groups in this era, it mainly stood empty on any given Sunday. The infrequent use of the temple led to a belief that the building had fallen into disrepair. Joseph Smith III passed through Kirtland on his way to Washington, D.C. in 1866 and later remembered that the temple was “in a very deplorable and dilapidated condition. The curtains were all torn down, the seats and other furniture broken or gone, and the basement open for the free ingress and egress of sheep and hogs that found shelter therein.”¹¹⁶ A longtime resident remembered that in the 1850s “the doors to the Temple stood open and sheep and hogs and cattle were allowed to run in the highway at that time, wandered around at their own sweet will inside the building.”¹¹⁷ This memory of free-range livestock wandering into the temple is probably the source of later folklore that the temple was used as a barn and intentionally desecrated by the local inhabitants.

Ownership of the Kirtland Temple in the mid- to late-nineteenth century was not at all clear. The general public’s understanding of Kirtland Temple ownership seemed to be muddled by inaccurate stories circulated by various parties from afar. An RLDS elder turned Spiritualist in Independence, Missouri, R.G. Eccles, wrote in 1873 that he planned to pass through Kirtland and deliver a series of lectures, adding that the temple “belongs now to the Spiritualists and Quakers of that place.”¹¹⁸ Eccles was incorrect, but the

¹¹⁶ Richard P. Howard, ed., *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III (1832-1914)* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1979), 127.

¹¹⁷ George H. Morse, “A Special Item of Interest Written for the Special Edition of the Republican by George H. Morse,” *Willoughby Republican*, 29 June 1921.

¹¹⁸ R. G. Eccles to “Friend William,” Kansas City, Missouri, 9 November 1873, in “William H. Kelley Papers,” P1: f4, CCA.

general public perception was that the temple had largely been abandoned. As late as 1882, a Philadelphia newspaper reported, “Strange to say, there is no one who claims to be the owner of the old temple.”¹¹⁹ The Philadelphia reporter was mistaken. By that date, the RLDS had sued for ownership of the temple, and its members had been meeting off and on in the temple since the 1860s. Even though Eccles’s account and the later newspaper report were inaccurate, they suggest how outsiders from afar perceived what was happening on the ground in Kirtland. One may reasonably conclude that the groups who possessed the temple had not sufficiently publicized their possession or mounted a sustained effort to meet regularly in the building—hence the plausibility of accounts like Eccles’s narrative.

Practical ownership of the building in the 1860s appears to have been resolved by who possessed the temple keys. Small factions seemed to mix, too. RLDS member Electra Stratton sometimes gave tours through the building while at other times Martin Harris (who never affiliated with the RLDS) did so. Harris, one of the Joseph Smith’s original “three witnesses” to the Book of Mormon plates, lived in Kirtland. He was a follower of Zadoc Brooks at the time and, in 1860, had the sign on the building repainted to say “Built by the Church of Christ” (bearing the original name of Joseph Smith’s church in 1830) rather than the original temple inscription, “Built by the Church of the Latter Day Saints.” For Harris who held to a more “primitive” form of Mormonism, this gesture restored some of the purity to the structure even if it was not what saints in the 1830s had painted on the plaque. Harris gave regular tours through the building in which he denounced the “Brighamite Mormons.” He was particularly bitter since his wife and children had gone to Utah without him. Notwithstanding his animosity toward the Salt

¹¹⁹ “Mormons in Ohio: The Old Temple at Kirtland to be Rededicated,” 9 January 1882, *Philadelphia Weekly Press*, KTHSSC.

Lake group, he passionately attested to the truth of the Book of Mormon as he led the curious through the temple. A passing elder from Brigham Young's faction asked Harris on a tour "how he could bear so wonderful a testimony after having left the Church. He said, 'Young man, I never did leave the Church, the Church left me'."¹²⁰ Harris would later change his mind and, in 1870, joined his family in the West.

The small RLDS congregation in Kirtland proved to be the most durable of any of the local factions, and by the late 1860s, RLDS member Ira Bond was acting as a caretaker for the temple. He invited a passing LDS elder, Edward Stevenson, to preach from the Kirtland Temple pulpits on August 17, 1870. Stevenson's sermon topic could not have been more offensive to the mostly RLDS congregation that gathered to hear him: "Brigham Young, the True Successor to the Prophet Joseph Smith." The registry book for the temple has a note appended to Stevenson's signature, stating that the sermon was "emphatically denied by the Elders of the Reorganized Church of J C of LDS." The rare moment of ecclesiastical cooperation degenerated into sharp contest of words between the two groups.¹²¹

Sacred Spaces, Different Places: Evolving LDS and RLDS

Understandings of Temples

Even as the Kirtland Temple changed hands and tour guides in the East, LDS members in Utah began building temples with steadily evolving shapes and functions. On April 6, 1853, Brigham Young and his followers broke ground for a temple in Salt Lake

¹²⁰ William Harrison Homer, "The Passing of Martin Harris," *Improvement Era* 29, no. 5 (March 1926): 468–72 as quoted in Ronald E. Romig, *Martin Harris's Kirtland* (Independence, Missouri: John Whitmer Books, 2007), 88–92.

¹²¹ "Kirtland Temple Visitor Register, 1866–1883," 51, CCA, as quoted in Barbara Walden, "Prophet, Seer, and Tour Guide: The Changing Message of Kirtland Temple Interpreters from 1830-1930," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 29 (2009): 15.

City that would come to epitomize the iconic image of a Mormon temple for his church. This building was not finished until 1893; in the meantime, Mormons constructed an “endowment house” and smaller temples in Utah territory: St. George, Logan, and Manti. In the Salt Lake Endowment House, Young’s followers conducted all the Nauvoo temple rituals with their modifications to fit evolving Mormon theology (for instance, the dead by proxy could now be endowed, in addition to being baptized by proxy as they had in Nauvoo). Dedicated in 1855, the Salt Lake Endowment House became the first Mormon temple space accessed only by “worthy members” (at the time, individuals who paid tithing in full).¹²² LDS temples, consequently, became more exclusive spaces.

Instead of the interchangeability of sacred space exhibited in Kirtland, LDS sacred space also became more and more differentiated and segmented. The Salt Lake Tabernacle, completed in 1867, hosted public worship meetings while the new Utah temples hosted the secret, sacred rituals. The interiors of the new temples, too, evolved to accommodate the rituals. The St. George Temple had two large meeting halls, just as the Nauvoo and Kirtland Temples had. Since this spatial arrangement was impractical for the LDS endowment ritual, rooms that represented the different stages of the ceremony were added when the temple was remodeled in 1938.¹²³ In contrast to the St. George Temple’s imitation of Kirtland and Nauvoo interior spaces, the Logan and Manti Temples followed a new spatial arrangement that reflected the LDS understanding of Eternal Progression—the journey of a pre-existent spirit to the earth and then exaltation in the afterlife to godhood. This spatial plan had a room representing the pre-existence, a Garden of Eden room, a telestial kingdom room, a terrestrial kingdom room, and a celestial kingdom room where the endowment ritual climaxed. In these new temples, the

¹²² Andrew, *The Early Temples of the Mormons*, 102.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

Kirtland Temple's focus on a seminary space for priesthood, office space for members of the hierarchy, and public worship space was pushed out of the temple and into other Mormon buildings.

RLDS beliefs about temples rapidly were evolving, too, as the new movement gained converts and sought to sharply differentiate itself from its LDS cousin. Many early RLDS members retained belief in such Mormon doctrines as the pre-existence of souls, multiple gods, and baptism for the dead—doctrines from the Nauvoo-era. However, as the movement grew, many of these distinctive beliefs began to die out with the deaths of leaders like William Marks, an early leader and close confidant of Joseph Smith, Jr. (Marks was Nauvoo Stake President.) By the 1870s, key parts of Nauvoo temple theology, such as polygamous sealings, were attributed to Brigham Young, not Joseph Smith, Jr. This development helped RLDS members embrace their founder even while they anathematized their LDS competitors as false heirs of the true church.

While RLDS members could blame Brigham Young for secret temple practices, they could not blame him for public practices, like baptism for the dead, which Joseph Smith, Jr. had advocated in revelations printed in his lifetime. RLDS needed different tactics to confront such issues. Officially, they embraced baptism for the dead, but never practiced it. As Joseph Smith III explained, baptism for the dead could only be practiced under the most restricted circumstances—in a properly dedicated temple, built by divine command, with a font for that purpose. Even more restrictive was Smith's reading of his father's baptism for the dead revelation which to him stated that a deceased candidate had to have her name revealed through direct revelation from the church prophet. As Joseph Smith III and his followers recognized no standing structure having a font for the baptism for the dead (LDS temples were not built by true revelation, they contended, and Kirtland never had such a font), and as Joseph Smith III never claimed to have a revelation

authorizing a deceased person to be baptized, RLDS in effect nullified this Nauvoo-era doctrine.¹²⁴

In many ways, then, RLDS leaders reacted against Nauvoo innovations and re-emphasized beliefs and rites of the Kirtland period. What emerged some historians have called “moderate Mormonism.”¹²⁵ This new amalgamation was neither secretive nor militant. It sought recognition as a fully Christian denomination, yet it claimed to be the true continuation of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s church. It drifted back to traditional Trinitarian theology, yet it embraced new Scripture. It was strictly monogamous, yet it embraced a toned-down Mormon understanding of the afterlife with multiple kingdoms of glory. Embrace of this “moderate Mormonism” resulted in a church that was, in historian Roger Launius’s phrase, “neither fully Protestant nor fully Mormon.”¹²⁶ In the 1870s and 1880s, the Kirtland Temple would play a large role in consolidating a unique identity, though this at first was not readily apparent.

Suing for the Temple: The 1881 RLDS Lawsuit and the Quest for Legitimacy

Initially, Joseph Smith III became interested in the Kirtland Temple as a means to pay long-standing debts he had incurred by taking responsibility for a deceased brother’s failing farm. In 1873, he joined Mark H. Forscutt, a former Morrisite apostle and convert

¹²⁴ Roger D. Launius, “An Ambivalent Rejection: Baptism for the Dead and the Reorganized Church Experience,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23, no. 2 (1990): 63-69.

¹²⁵ This view was first articulated in Alma R. Blair, “The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: Moderate Mormons,” in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, eds. Mark F. McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (Independence, Missouri: Coronado Press, 1973), 207-230.

¹²⁶ Roger D. Launius, “‘Neither Mormons nor Protestant’: The Reorganized Church and the Challenge of Identity,” in *Mormon Identities in Transition*, ed. by Douglas J. Davies (New York : Cassell, 1996), 52-60.

to the new movement,¹²⁷ to purchase what they thought was the title to the Kirtland Temple from Russell Huntley, an RLDS member who believed that he had purchased the temple at auction in 1862. In fact, the chain of ownership to the temple had been broken in many places and no one clearly owned the building. Still, Smith thought that he had purchased the building and attempted to sell it to the city of Kirtland as a public building in 1875. The transaction fell through when the buyer found that the 1862 auction had not given clear title to Huntley. Further investigation revealed that Joseph Smith, Jr., had held the temple as trustee-in-trust for the church, not as a private individual. The auction in 1862 had been to settle Joseph Smith, Jr.'s personal debts, not the debts of the church; therefore, the temple sale had a shaky legal basis. The legal title had four different possible chains emanating out from Joseph Smith, Jr.'s claim as "trustee-in-trust." A court would have to decide who owned the temple.

RLDS members seized on the temple ownership issue as a way of legitimizing their movement. In a report to the 1878 RLDS General Conference, Presiding Bishop Israel Rogers reported that a lawyer had "examined it [an abstract of the temple's title] and considered that the title plainly belonged to the Church, and hence the question will now be, Who is the Church, or what body is it?" Herein lay their opportunity. "If we are the Church, recognized by the law of the land, then it belongs to us."¹²⁸ In fact, matters were to prove far more complicated than this. Lake County, Ohio abstractor George E. Paine informed the church that the most secure way to obtain possession of the temple was through "adverse possession." That is, possession of the temple for twenty-one years

¹²⁷ The Morrisites were a breakaway group from Brigham Young's Utah faction. For more information on Mark Forscutt's winding religious career, see Eric Paul Rogers, "Mark Hill Forscutt: Mormon Missionary, Morrisite Apostle, RLDS Minister," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 21 (2001): 69-100.

¹²⁸ "General Conference Minutes, April 6-14, 1878," *Saints' Herald* 24, no. 9 (1878): 129, 135.

would result in perfecting Huntley's 1862 claim even with its cloudy chain of title. Ohio law allowed for Joseph Smith III and Mark Forscutt to add their six years of possession onto Huntley's eleven years. In four years, then, the temple would legally belong to the RLDS members, free and clear. This would avoid legal action; however, RLDS leaders wanted such action to gain some kind of legal recognition of their church as the successor to Joseph Smith's movement.¹²⁹

In 1880, Smith risked ownership of the temple in a lawsuit which aimed to have his own denomination confirmed as the legal successor to his father's church. As legal successor, then, Smith's church would also be legal owner of the temple without adverse possession. To initiate the proceedings, an RLDS lawyer filed suit against Joseph Smith III and Mark Forscutt on behalf of the church who claimed title to the building. The other non-resident defendants included "the Church in Utah, of which John Taylor is President, and John Taylor." Following legal practice in Ohio, the defendants were notified of the suit in a local Lake County newspaper, the *Painesville Telegraph*. LDS President John Taylor, half a continent away, knew nothing of the suit.¹³⁰

When the court case began on February 17, 1880, none of the defendants attended. RLDS lawyer E.L. Kelley supplied Judge Laban Sherman with a proposed ruling and a completed finding of fact. A week later, Sherman issued his judgment. He included all of Kelley's finding of fact in his ruling, agreeing that the RLDS church was the successor to Joseph Smith's movement, but dismissed the case on the grounds that "the legal title to said property is vested in the heirs of said Joseph Smith, in trust for the legal successor of said original church, and that the plaintiffs are not in possession

¹²⁹ Kim L. Loving, "Ownership of the Kirtland Temple: Legends, Lies, and Misunderstandings," *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 2 (2004): 36.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

thereof.”¹³¹ The church, therefore, could not sue for possession of the building. As lawyer and historian Kim Loving summarizes, “Kelley, who had been focused exclusively on questions of legitimacy, rather than upon the legal technicalities of a suit to quiet title in Ohio, must have been severely shocked by Sherman’s decision.”¹³² Still, the judge’s finding of fact proved useful for the RLDS church. RLDS leaders widely publicized the ruling, but omitted the last two sentences that dismissed the case.¹³³ Generations of RLDS members, who did not know of this omission, trumpeted the judge’s finding of fact as proof that the RLDS were Joseph Smith, Jr.’s true successors.

Restoring the Temple, Restoring the Church: RLDS Uses
of the Temple, 1880-1899

By the 1880s, general RLDS attitudes toward the Kirtland Temple were decisively transformed. Members began to see its potential as a platform for evangelizing others as well as legitimizing their small movement. In 1880, the RLDS General Conference authorized funds to restore the temple the somewhat dilapidated temple. By 1882, the restoration was well under way, and a committee authorized by the church conference issued a report justifying further investment in the temple. The report described the temple as a magnet, drawing in guests and converts alike. “There are visitors coming constantly from various parts of the United States, the Territories, and Europe, to see the Temple,” the committee noted. “It is best that they be not too greatly disappointed.” A restored temple would serve as tangible evidence to “those interested in

¹³¹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 62.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 74-76.

our success . . . that the [RLDS] Church is in earnest, and means to go forward.” Additionally, “a grand and imposing building [like the temple] exerts a magical effect upon the masses of mankind.” Yet, when visitors see the interior of the temple, partially restored, “something of a disappointment is felt.” The committee believed that, above all, “the Temple is really doing the loudest preaching and giving the greatest prestige to the cause just now.” The temple could even be “a key to the solution of the western problem.” By this, the committee meant that the temple could show the polygamous RLDS the errors of their ways as well as clearly differentiate the RLDS church from the LDS church. Even though LDS were at the time building temples in Intermountain West, the committee claimed that “their children have been heard to exclaim in the walls of this one, ‘I think more of this one than any of them’.” More directly, the committee asserted that LDS in Utah “know that the Lord met with his people here and put his Spirit into their hearts; and that he has never done either in temples elsewhere on this land; and these children are fast finding it out.” RLDS members believed that LDS guests could feel the sacredness emitted by the Kirtland Temple—a feeling the RLDS committee believed could not be duplicated elsewhere. Kirtland acted as a beacon for the RLDS message as well as a site of personal transformation.¹³⁴

Repairs on the temple continued throughout the 1880s, requiring the church leadership to justify the expenditure of church funds to some members who were apparently skeptical of the effort and money being spent on the structure. “We are decidedly favorable to the idea of fully repairing the Temple at Kirtland,” Joseph Smith III wrote in an 1886 editorial. “[T]here is a moral prestige to be gained by it which properly utilized by the elders . . . will materially increase the chances of the

¹³⁴ W.H. Kelley and G.A. Blakeslee, “Report of Committee on Kirtland Temple,” *Saints’ Herald* 30, no. 35 (1883): 560-561.

missionaries to get a hearing before the people.” Once again, he emphasized the evangelistic potential posed by possession of the structure. “Of course, measured from merely a money getting stand point it ‘will not pay,’ as there is nothing connected with it that can possibly turn cent per centum, upon the expenditure,” Smith candidly admitted. “[B]ut measured from a spiritual and moral standpoint, it will return a hundred fold.” The temple had proved useful already in the 1880 lawsuit, he noted. And while “there are no millions in it, as a speculation in the money market, in the moral and intellectual world it is a vantage ground that we can not afford to abandon, or forgo to occupy, it will be seen ere long.”¹³⁵ To draw upon Bourdieu’s concepts, while the temple did not offer ready economic capital for the small group, it gave them immense symbolic capital (prestige, honor, and attention) in their relations with competitor groups and the general public.¹³⁶

RLDS members held mass worship meetings in the temple on several occasions in the 1880s, in addition to the smaller weekly gatherings by the congregation. In 1883 and 1887, the church held its annual church conference in Kirtland Temple. Fifty years after the 1887 conference, the elderly former RLDS apostle, Gomer Griffiths, recalled a prayer meeting at the conference held by Joseph Smith III “in the upper auditorium” of the temple. “Angels were present in our midst; visions were had, and under the power of the Spirit present strong men broke down and wept like children,” remembered Griffiths. “It was a pentacostal [sic.] outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord.”¹³⁷ Late nineteenth-century RLDS members frequently reported having the apostolic gifts of prophecy, visions, and

¹³⁵ Joseph Smith III, “Editorial Items,” *Saints’ Herald* 33, no. 20 (1886): 725.

¹³⁶ For a discussion of Bourdieu’s distinction between economic capital and symbolic capital, see Robert Moore, “Capital,” in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 103-109.

¹³⁷ Gomer T. Griffiths, “Reminiscences of Kirtland Temple During a Period of Acquaintance and Experience Covering Fifty-two Years,” *Saints’ Herald* 82 (1935): 724.

tongues;¹³⁸ however, the location of these particular spiritual experiences in the temple heightened their sacrality. Griffiths's language, describing the events as a "pentacostal outpouring," linked his experience in the temple with the apostolic era and the 1836 Kirtland season of Pentecostal blessings. As RLDS members tried to restore the temple to its original physical condition, they believed that they had restored themselves to their ancestors' spiritual condition.

Alterations continued on the temple through the 1890s. In 1899, RLDS members in Kirtland repainted the prominent plaque mounted on the temple's front entrance. The new inscription made good use of the (misunderstood) 1880 court case. It read, "HOUSE OF THE LORD/ BUILT BY THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST/ OF LATTER DAY SAINTS 1834/ REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST/ OF LATTER DAY SAINTS IN SUCCESSION BY/ DECISION OF COURT FEB. 1880." Barbara Walden and Margaret Rastle document that this inscription was repainted, with only slight alterations in wording, until the mid-1980s.¹³⁹ With the 1899 inscription, RLDS members moved their religious contestation from the interior of the temple (the plaque seen by Frederic G Mather in 1880) to the exterior of the temple that faced the Old Chillicothe Road. The new wording was dutifully reported in the 1900 RLDS general church conference, reflecting how the RLDS members desired both public recognition and internal reassurance of their movement's place in the wider religious world. Kirtland Temple served as a sacred polemic against their LDS cousins.

¹³⁸ For a study of early RLDS spiritual experiences, see Clare D. Vlahos, "A History of Early RLDS Spirituality, 1860-1885," (PhD dissertation: University of Kansas, 1992).

¹³⁹ Barbara B. Walden and Margaret Rastle, "Restoring, Preserving, and Maintaining Kirtland Temple, 1880-1920," *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (2008): 18, 21-23.

Summary: Kirtland Temple and Temples, 1844-1899

Between 1844 to 1899, the Kirtland Temple went from being a disputed, dillapidated building, controlled by various small factions (sometimes at the same time), to a sacred space decisively controlled by the RLDS church. The temple, too, came to symbolize the aspirations of the new RLDS church. It linked RLDS members directly to Joseph Smith and their ancestors and provided a public platform for them to proclaim “We are not [Utah] Mormons.” By restoring Kirtland Temple, the small, but growing movement felt that they were demonstrating the strength and legitimacy of their movement. At the same time, LDS members in Utah were creating new temple spaces closed to the public that would problematize their church’s relationship to the Kirtland Temple. By emphasizing the Nauvoo part of Joseph Smith’s theology, LDS read back into their Kirtland history practices and intentionality that RLDS would find unconvincing. RLDS, in turn, denied that Joseph Smith taught much of his Nauvoo theology and blamed the innovations solely on Brigham Young. Consequently, two very different understandings of temple space emerged from the nineteenth century that would clash over the next hundred years. Kirtland Temple would be a site for this contestation in the generations ahead.

CHAPTER 4: REFORMING IDENTITIES, REFRAMING MORMON
PILGRIMAGE: KIRTLAND TEMPLE IN TRANSITION, 1900-1965

In December 1905, a small group of LDS General Authorities and their spouses embarked on a whirlwind tour of the Eastern United States, including a stop to dedicate a monument at Joseph Smith's birthplace in Vermont. On the return, the LDS party surprised the RLDS Kirtland Temple caretakers by appearing on the temple's steps during a time of the year that had few guests touring the structure. According to Edith Ann Smith, the LDS party experienced two types of coldness in the Kirtland Temple: "One the result of the temperature and the other a lack of [God's] Spirit."¹⁴⁰ As the group listened to an RLDS elder interpret the structure, they held their tongues and did not directly challenge their guide who LDS Prophet Joseph F. Smith described as an "affable and apparently sincere gentlemen."¹⁴¹ In a somewhat backhanded compliment, Joseph F. Smith wrote in the official LDS record of the trip that the RLDS church "should receive due credit for the restoration of the Temple as nearly as possible to them," especially since the RLDS were "not fully acquainted with its purpose and ceremonies."¹⁴² In addition, Joseph F. Smith echoed the same sentiment that Edith Anne Smith had noted in her diary. While he was inspired to stand inside the temple, he wrote

¹⁴⁰ Edith Ann Smith, "Journal," 27 December 1905, the Church History Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake, City, MS 1317 FD.1.

¹⁴¹ [Joseph F. Smith], *Proceedings at the Dedication of the Joseph Smith Memorial Monument, Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, With a Detailed Account of the Journey and Visits of the Centennial Memorial Party to Vermont and Other Places in the Eastern States; also a Description of the Solomon Mack Farm and Account of the Purchase of Same* ([Salt Lake City], 1906), 68. Hereafter, *Proceedings at the Dedication of the Joseph Smith Memorial Monument*.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

that “there was a marked absence of the spirit and sacred influence which pervade the Temples of our God in the valleys of the mountains.”¹⁴³

While this group of LDS leaders were clearly a class in themselves, they formed the advanced party of the hundreds of thousands of ordinary LDS pilgrims who would come to Kirtland in the twentieth century. The 1905 party also typifies the reactions and attitudes that LDS members would hold of the temple. Between 1900 to 1965, Kirtland Temple became a stop on an emerging LDS History Trail; however, the historic structure elicited an ambiguous response from LDS pilgrims. The temple had been holy in the past, but it was now in the hands of a misguided, even if amiable, people. In turn, RLDS members continued to use the temple as a sacred polemic against the LDS church. In the first half of the twentieth century, the RLDS church would more emphatically singularize the structure as “the only temple standing today, built by command of the Lord,” and thus strengthen the symbolic boundaries between themselves and their LDS cousins.¹⁴⁴

While acting as hosts to increasing numbers of LDS and RLDS pilgrims, temple guides would also aid in the development of a rich folklore surrounding the temple. LDS pilgrims also would begin to form folkloric traditions that better explained why RLDS members held the temple. Separate from these interactions with religious competitors, RLDS members would begin to use the Temple as a site for week-long camp meetings, keeping memories alive of the revivalistic origins of the Kirtland Temple, as well as forming a new tradition mixing organized recreation and tent meetings. By the early 1960s, both churches would stand on new pathways in modernity that would profoundly shape how they understood Kirtland Temple in the late twentieth century. The emergence of mass middle-class tourism, too, would bring more pilgrims to the temple than at any

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ C. Ed Miller, “The House of the Lord,” *Saints Herald* 83 (1936): 242

time before in its history. As will be shown, developments in the period of 1900 to 1965 set the stage for parallel pilgrimage in the late twentieth century. These years, too, served as bookends for an era in both the RLDS and LDS churches. A brief discussion of the wider transformations involved in the early twentieth century RLDS and LDS churches helps foreground the narrative of parallel pilgrimage that follows.

Pilgrimage and Polygamy: LDS and RLDS Identities in Transition

As the twentieth century dawned, the RLDS church and the LDS church entered a period of modern transformation. With the gradual end of LDS polygamy starting in 1890, the RLDS church could not simply direct its energies to denouncing the contemporary LDS practice of polygamy, as it had for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. While denial of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s complicity in polygamy would be a major source for RLDS group identity until the late twentieth century, RLDS members needed another focus if they were to survive in the free-market of religious America. In the early twentieth century, they found this focus by embracing a syncretic combination of Social Gospel thought and Joseph Smith's revelations. RLDS would become a people who sought to build "Zion" in the world. Just as it had been a site for disputing the origins of polygamy, the Kirtland Temple would be used to symbolize the RLDS goal for "social betterment and salvation" in the wider world.

If the end of LDS polygamy softened one crucial RLDS symbolic boundary, it completely reformulated LDS society and church life in the Intermountain West. Responding to this challenge, LDS leaders sought to re-anchor LDS collective memory in physical and metaphorical sites that did not carry with them the stigmas of polygamy and other controversial doctrines in the LDS church. As a recent study by Kathleen Flake concludes, the LDS hierarchy successfully "re-placed" the memory of their followers by emphasizing other parts of LDS sacred history—such as Joseph Smith's First Vision and

the translation of the Book of Mormon.¹⁴⁵ Flake narrates the LDS hierarchy's 1905 trip to dedicate the Joseph Smith memorial monument in Vermont, but ignores their visit to the Kirtland Temple. This is telling. Scholars like Flake and R. Laurence Moore have been concerned to show how LDS members formed their religious identity with and against the "American mainstream." What they omit from this story is how LDS members formed their identity with and against their nearest religious competitor, the RLDS church. Parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple, then, adds a third border to the story of LDS crossing or maintaining boundaries with "outsiders."

"Reframing" the Temple: Photography, Material Objects,
and RLDS/LDS Contestation, 1905

When LDS pilgrims encountered Kirtland Temple in the early twentieth century, they needed to "reframe" its presentation and present ownership. By engaging in polite decorum, snapping photographs, or buying souvenirs, LDS pilgrims were able to claim Kirtland Temple symbolically. At the same time, they used the RLDS presentation of the site as a means to undercut that group's intended message. Paradoxically, while on tour, LDS members could voice complaints about the RLDS use and interpretation of the temple through silence.

The large, prominently positioned plaque on the front of the temple particularly elicited a negative response in 1905 from Joseph F. Smith's party of LDS hierarchy. Noting the RLDS succession claim "by decision of court," Edith Ann Smith found this "a flimsy title to such a building and the wonder was that such an inscription should be placed there for the whole world to read and ponder over."¹⁴⁶ Joseph F. Smith

¹⁴⁵ Kathleen Flake, "Re-placing Memory: Latter-day Saint Use of Historical Monuments and Narrative in the Early Twentieth-Century," *Religion and American Culture* 13, no. 1 (2003): 69-109.

¹⁴⁶ Edith Ann Smith, "Journal," 27 December 1905, the Church History Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake, City, MS 1317 FD.1.

indignantly added in his official account that “no ‘order of the court’ can transmit the succession of the Holy Priesthood or of the spirit, power and religious rights of the Church established by revelation from God. These are not under the jurisdiction of any civil tribunal.” Still, he added, our “party was not there for argument or protest and while saying nought, kept up considerable thinking.”¹⁴⁷

Despite Joseph F. Smith’s claim that the group was not there for “argument or protest,” the visitors found ways to resist the RLDS interpreter’s authority and narrative while on tour. Although the RLDS guide forbade the LDS tour group to take photographs inside the Temple, one member “attempted to obtain a picture of the pulpits but was asked to desist.” “George A. asked for the privilege and was refused. Before Brother B had been discovered the Kodak had already got its work.”¹⁴⁸ As this example illustrates, pilgrims could contest a sacred site’s interpretation by reframing it through photography. Like pilgrims across the world, LDS pilgrim photographers brought back with them a piece of the site—in this case, photographs of the temple’s bare pulpits that excluded the living RLDS priesthood who preached from these pulpits every week. By this selective framing, LDS pilgrims could erase the possession of the Kirtland Temple by the RLDS church and symbolically give possession of the structure to the individual LDS pilgrim.

For LDS pilgrim photographers, the Kirtland Temple’s value mainly lay in events that had occurred there in the past. The LDS brothers who attempted to photograph the interior of the temple wanted photographs of the very spot where they believed that Elijah had appeared to Joseph Smith in 1836 and given him (and by extension his apostolic successors) the authority to conduct vicarious work for the dead in modern-day temples. The temple served as a sacred trace of past salvific events, and the surreptitious Kodak

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *Proceedings at the Dedication of the Joseph Smith Memorial Monument*, 69.

¹⁴⁸ Edith Smith, “Journal,” 27 December 1905.

photographs were intended to recapture that sacred trace, as well as exclude the dissonant RLDS presence. For instance, one of Edith Ann Smith's 1905 traveling companions, Susa Young Gates, wrote "how we longed to be alone in that historic structure, just our party and the crowding memories which filled heart and brain."¹⁴⁹ Photographs of an empty temple did just that.

The act of photography in the temple, like an act of memory, necessarily excluded some people, places, and events while it framed others. But it was more than this. Photography inside the temple was a transgressive act aimed at defying a competing religious body and reinforcing the authority of another. In short, pilgrim photography was an act of religious legitimation. Such acts would be repeated over and over again in the mid- and late-twentieth century as well.

The LDS guests in 1905 also engaged in a behavior that would become familiar to later generations of pilgrims. Standing in the very place where they believed that Joseph Smith's vision of Jesus, Elijah, Elias, and Moses occurred, they read Section 110 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. Interestingly, they read this section in the upper court when they encountered the pulpits there rather than the lower where the vision was purported to have occurred. Edith Ann Smith remembers that a sister on the tour "had her little pocket edition [of the Doctrine and Covenants] along with her to read from."¹⁵⁰ For these pilgrims, going to Kirtland was not just about seeing a place where their ancestors once stood. It was also about a journey through a text—in this case, their Doctrine and Covenants. The earliest Mormon pilgrims visited people who had witnessed significant events of their church's founding era. With the deaths of the founding generation in the

¹⁴⁹ Susa Young Gates, "Memorial Monument Dedication," *Improvement Era* 9, no. 5 (1906): 383.

¹⁵⁰ Edith Anne Smith, "Journal," December 27, 1905.

late nineteenth century, early twentieth-century Mormon pilgrims began making place-centered journeys.¹⁵¹ More than this, I argue that these journeys became both place-centered and text-centered, as pilgrims sought confirmation of the truths of Mormon doctrines in the places where they were given. In many ways, reading a Mormon text in the place where it occurred almost became a votive offering of thanksgiving to the God who had blessed their ancestors there.

Edith Anne Smith's group also participated in an act that hundreds of thousands would do in the decades to come. "The little store [across from the temple] was visited and some postcards and paper weights secured," wrote Smith.¹⁵² The LDS group bought souvenirs of their trip to the temple. By the early twentieth century, small transfer-ware china sets were also being sold near the temple, in addition to the postcards and paper weights that Smith mentioned. We do not know how LDS pilgrims used the items they bought at the site. Still, it is possible to reflect more generally on material objects used by religious Americans from the same era. As Colleen McDannell argues in her influential study, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, "When we look at how Christians use objects, rather than merely what they say about them, we find that the similarities outweigh the differences." She asserts that across centuries, "Christians use religious goods to tell themselves and the world around them that they are Christians." Further, "religious objects also signal who is in the group and who is not. . . . Religious goods not only bind people to the sacred, they bind people to each other."¹⁵³ With these arguments in mind, I speculate that images of the Kirtland Temple, whether

¹⁵¹ Paul L. Anderson, "Heroic Nostalgia: Enshrining the Mormon Past," *Sunstone* 5, no. 4 (July-August 1980): 48-49.

¹⁵² Edith Anne Smith, "Journal," December 27, 1905.

¹⁵³ Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 45.

on paper weights, miniature china pieces, or postcards, served to reinforce the religious identities of LDS and RLDS saints in the period of this study. A souvenir like a paperweight or a postcard allowed members of both communions to possess the temple in some sense. The material object, displayed in one's home or in an album, could activate both personal and institutional memories of a sacred site, too, reminding a pilgrim of a personal visit to the shrine and reinforcing the institutional narratives associated with the Temple. Material objects also demonstrated to others who would come in contact with them that their owner or sender had traveled to a far-off place of ongoing spiritual power for RLDS members or of past spiritual blessing for LDS visitors.

Crossing Boundaries, Reinforcing Identities: LDS and
RLDS Interactions at Kirtland, 1920-1937

By the turn of the twentieth century, visitor numbers at Kirtland Temple rose as the mobility of the American population increased and the LDS began "out-migration" from the Salt Lake Valley. These new waves of visitors interacted with temple guides in experiences that both crossed normal lines of religious demarcation (such as an occasional sharing in sacraments) and reinforced existing religious identities (such as confirming one's membership in the right church based upon the actions and message of a religious other). RLDS members continued to see the temple as a site for evangelism, but they also adapted it as a symbol for their social projects, and a platform to reinforce the differences between themselves and the LDS church.

The number of visitors to Kirtland Temple greatly increased from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. In 1880, RLDS guides reported that 318 guests visited the temple from the period of May 16 to August 8, the height of the tour season. In contrast, by the early 1920s, over 9,000 guests were visiting the temple

annually.¹⁵⁴ This number appears to have been steady over the next few decades; temple caretaker James Pycock reported 9,000 guests in 1937. According to him, “Almost every conceivable religion was represented [in 1937], but Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Utah Mormons comprise over 75 percent of the total.” Most visitors were from Ohio, but Pycock also noted that many visitors came from Utah, indicating a heavy LDS presence.¹⁵⁵ The Kirtland Temple once had been inaccessible to many LDS members simply because of its distance from their homes. Now, it was being visited by an increasingly mobile number of LDS guests. However, the large number of Ohio tourists that Pycock reported indicates that the temple was still much more of a regional tourist attraction, patronized by many curious groups that had no affiliation with the various churches of the Latter Day Saints. In contrast, by the end of the twentieth century, the temple would be a national religious attraction dominated by LDS visitors.

Set in a wider context, the new wave of visitors to Kirtland Temple ran parallel the rise “national tourism” across America in the early twentieth century. Marguerite S. Shaffer defines national tourism in contrast to the “resort vacations, the picturesque tours, and the literary pilgrimages of the early nineteenth century” by the genteel elite. Instead, national tourism “extended from and depended on the infrastructure of the modern nation-state” and presupposed an expanding middle class as its consumers, not simply the American elite.¹⁵⁶ It was a form of tourism that “centered on the sights and scenes of the

¹⁵⁴ John F. Martin, “Many Visitors to Kirtland Temple,” *Saints’ Herald* 70 (1923): 117.

¹⁵⁵ James Pycock, “Temple Visitors,” *Kirtland Visitor* 1, no. 5 (November 1938): 2. The *Kirtland Visitor* was an irregular periodical put out by the Kirtland RLDS district starting in 1935. The volume number is inconsistent with conventional numbering. Volume 1 includes issues in 1935 through 1938. The only known copies of this periodical are in the Community of Christ’s Kirtland Temple Historic Site Special Collections.

¹⁵⁶ Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 3.

American nation,” closely tied to early twentieth-century American nationalism.¹⁵⁷ Visitors to Kirtland did not frame their experience in nationalistic terms. Instead, they invested their trips with explicitly religious terms that reinforced their identification with their particular denominations. However, “national tourism” and increased tourism were not unrelated. Just as increasingly large numbers of people traveled in search of an authentic America, so, too, a large number of religious Americans traveled in search of an authentic faith. Kirtland Temple tourism in the twentieth century, then, adds a parallel narrative to the well-known story of Americans visiting National Parks and civic monuments.

RLDS guides and members saw great evangelistic potential in the growing number of Temple visitors. Appropriately for an era in which the power of Madison Avenue grew by leaps and bounds, one guide framed this potential for proselytizing with an analogy to advertising. “I know of no better place to advertise our work than in the Kirtland Temple,” an RLDS guide wrote in 1920. “The architectural beauty of the building immediately challenges the admiration of the visitors and, invariably questions are asked regarding its history, which, if carefully answered, lead to the gospel story.”¹⁵⁸ Echoing Martin’s sentiments eighteen years later, James Pycock wrote, “It is one place in all the Church where the world comes to view evidences of the Restored Gospel instead of our taking it to them.” He admitted that he did not know how many people actually joined the RLDS church after visiting Kirtland Temple.¹⁵⁹ Available statistical evidence does not suffice to show that visitation to the temple yielded a substantial number of converts, but some RLDS saints believed that it did. For the guides at least, the Kirtland

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Martin, “Many Visitors to Kirtland Temple,” 117.

¹⁵⁹ Pycock, “Temple Visitors,” 2.

Temple was doing meaningful work, vital for the growth of church membership and the dissemination of the church's message. During this period, they promoted this belief in the RLDS church's official magazine, and thus encouraged ordinary members to embrace Kirtland Temple as more than a site of church heritage.

Interactions between LDS and RLDS during this time helped both groups to clarify their group's boundaries and confirm the apostasy of their rivals. When Frederic James Peck, an LDS member on an extended tour of Mormon sites in the eastern U.S., visited Kirtland with his family on May 31, 1925, he was shocked to find that "an elder of the Reorganized church, in charge of the building at the time of our visit, said some very uncomplimentary things to a group of tourists concerning the 'Utah Mormon' people." "Indeed, several of the statements that he made were totally unfounded."¹⁶⁰ His experience was typical. Guide John F. Martin, for example, estimated in 1923 that "nine tenths of the visitors came to the Temple with the belief that we were affiliated with the Utah Church, but we endeavored to see that none went away with that opinion."¹⁶¹ If Martin saw the temple as a place to declare the spiritual legitimacy of his group, Peck in contrast, believed that RLDS members were using it for "mere pecuniary purposes." "I discovered, through inquiries," he wrote, "that the temple is now largely used as a means of attracting tourists, with the hope of receiving donations from them. It is indeed regrettable that a temple of the Lord should be used for such an unbecoming purpose."¹⁶² Peck's visit to Kirtland Temple allowed him to recast its owners as mere profiteers rather than sincere guardians of a sacred shrine. For him, it only confirmed

¹⁶⁰ Frederic James Peck, "Autobiography, 1925-1938," May 31, 1925, the Church History Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake, City, MS 8901.

¹⁶¹ Martin, "Many Visitors to Kirtland Temple," 117.

¹⁶² Peck, "Autobiography," May 31, 1925.

further the truth of his branch of Mormonism. In contrast, Martin had his own belief in the veracity of the RLDS church strengthened by his experience as a Kirtland guide.¹⁶³ Both men convinced themselves of their church's legitimacy by visiting (Peck) or guiding (Martin) at the temple.

Yet, RLDS and LDS relationships at Kirtland Temple were not exclusively antagonistic, bent on reinforcing images of the apostasy of the other. Sacramental sharing could occur—sometimes through obvious misunderstandings. For instance, in 1937 an RLDS guide Earnest Webbe related meeting two LDS members, a mother and a married daughter, wandering around inside the temple. They asked Webbe about “the vision” (LDS Section 110), a clear sign that they were not RLDS. “They said that they were Latter Day Saints,” Webbe reported, “but when I asked which kind they looked ‘blank’.” What happened next took Webbe aback. The daughter ran out to waiting car and brought back “an infant which she placed in my arms asking that it be blessed.” Webbe tried to explain that he was a member of a different church. “They seem never to have known there was other than the church in Utah,” he wrote. Still, “since she persisted I had another elder come over, we counseled together, and blessed the child.”¹⁶⁴ Rather than insist on sacramental purity, Webbe allowed the lines of RLDS and LDS authority to be blurred.

Other instances of positive interaction are also on record. At times, RLDS members provided direct hospitality to LDS travelers beyond tour services. Webbe relates that in the spring of 1937, “a large delegation of Utah ‘run-of-the-mine’ folk . . . stopped here en route to Cumorah.” The RLDS women's department provided lunch for

¹⁶³ Martin, “Many Visitors to Kirtland Temple,” 117.

¹⁶⁴ Earnest A. Webbe, “Experiences at Kirtland Temple,” *Saints' Herald* 84, no. 30 (1937): 937-938.

the group at a local high school. Webbe added that “many of our good sisters were surprised at the way those people excused themselves from coffee and tea beverages.”¹⁶⁵ RLDS observance of Joseph Smith’s dietary counsel, “The Word of Wisdom,” was increasing in the 1920s; their observance included refraining from tea and coffee.¹⁶⁶ Their interaction with LDS visitors, then, provided Kirtland RLDS members with models for RLDS dietary orthopraxy. The visitors directly benefited from this interaction by receiving a free meal. On another occasion, RLDS guides used their LDS guests as models of piety to instruct RLDS members about how to treat sacred space. John Martin wrote in the official RLDS magazine, the *Saints Herald*, that “during the year [1922] there were many of the Utah Church representatives at the Temple, and I found most of these men to be gentlemen who showed a reverence and respect for the temple that could well be emulated by our own people.”¹⁶⁷ Again, RLDS guides created a positive model for RLDS piety out of the generalized demeanor of their LDS guests. The image of the “Other” could be used for defining both who RLDS should be as well as who they should not be.

Folklore and Kirtland Temple

The complexity of RLDS and LDS interactions is well illustrated by the uses of folklore which developed about Kirtland Temple in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. As noted in the previous chapter, local livestock at times wandered

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 938.

¹⁶⁶ See my discussion of this in “‘The Making of a Steward’: Zion, Ecclesiastical Power, and RLDS Bodies, 1923-1931,” *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 2 (2006): 29-30. For the shifting LDS practice and interpretation of keeping the Word of Wisdom, see Thomas G. Alexander, “The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 3 (1981): 78-88 and Paul H. Peterson and Ronald W. Walker, “Brigham Young’s Word of Wisdom Legacy,” *BYU Studies* 42, no. 3 and 4 (2003): 29-64.

¹⁶⁷ Martin, “Many Visitors to Kirtland Temple,” 117.

into the Kirtland Temple in the 1850s when its doors stood open. A retired RLDS apostle reminisced in 1935 that “when one views the condition of the Temple as it is today it is hard to believe that between the time of the driving out of the early Saints and its restoration to the hands of the Reorganized church it was so terribly abused and polluted; the cellar was used as a stable for cattle and sheep.”¹⁶⁸ RLDS members related this story to reassure themselves that they had redeemed the Kirtland Temple from certain ruin. Just like the Primitive Church had fallen into apostasy, only to be restored by an act of God through Joseph Smith, so, too, the Kirtland Temple had fallen into “pollution” and been restored by them.

This same story, however, was used for very different ends by LDS members. Perhaps after hearing the tale on RLDS tours, LDS visitors perpetuated the sheep and cattle story throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century to show that the Kirtland Temple was a defiled structure. This narrative reached its apogee in E. Cecil McGavin’s writings. In a 1962 Deseret Press book on the Nauvoo Temple, he included a full appendix titled “Kirtland Temple Defiled.” He wrote that “profanity and cursing were likely heard every day within those once hallowed walls as the wicked husbandmen fed their flocks and cleaned out their pens.”¹⁶⁹ Animals in the temple were not just relegated to the basement in McGavin’s account; they were also in the upper court of the temple. He claimed that “small circus units often performed in the second story amusement room, as the congregation sat in chairs around the walls. Trained horses and other animals were taken up the steep stairway to perform before the boisterous crowd that had assembled to witness the spectacle in the house that had been built for God.”¹⁷⁰ While the Kirtland

¹⁶⁸ Griffiths, “Reminiscences of Kirtland Temple,” 723.

¹⁶⁹ E. Cecil McGavin, *The Nauvoo Temple* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1962), 161.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 161-162.

Temple was used for a variety of community activities, including meetings of temperance societies and the Grand Old Army of the Republic, there is no evidence to substantiate McGavin's claim of trained circus horses walking up the temple's steep stairways.¹⁷¹ But McGavin's account provides a window into what some LDS members desired to affirm about Kirtland Temple: it was once a blessed structure but it had been rejected by God. The temple was once theirs, but now polluted under RLDS management. As will be seen in chapter 4, local Cleveland LDS members in the 1970s would reactivate these themes and instrumentalize it for new ends.

One of the most persistent pieces of folklore emerged in the early twentieth century—the story of early Latter Day Saint women breaking their china to mix into Kirtland Temple's exterior stucco. Gomer Griffiths relates that “when I first went to Kirtland in April, 1883, I met a great number of the ‘old timers’ and their descendants who were children at the time of the building of the Temple. They informed me that the women took their glassware and other dishes and broke them into small pieces and gave them to the men to put into the cement for the outside walls of the Temple.”¹⁷² Griffiths's story about “glassware and dishes” quickly became transformed into a story of women breaking their “fine china” by later people who passed on the tale. According to historian Mark Staker, Griffiths's story, published in 1935, provides the earliest account of anyone noting that women in the 1830s crushed their dishes for the temple's stucco.¹⁷³ In the late nineteenth century, Joseph Millett, the son of the temple foreman, noted that men and boys were sent into the surrounding community to gather “old

¹⁷¹ Barbara Walden, “The Kirtland Letters of Catherine ‘Cassie’ Kelly,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 24 (2004): 130;

¹⁷² Griffiths, “Reminiscences of Kirtland Temple,” 715.

¹⁷³ Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake: Greg Kofford Book, 2010).

crockery and glass” for the temple.¹⁷⁴ However, Millett did not mention women crushing their fine china, as later accounts would have it.

Like the story of livestock being kept in the temple, the story of women crushing their china probably had a grain of truth in it. Original stucco from the temple does contain bits of broken china, as well as glassware. Staker notes that archeological digs in Kirtland have found many bits of broken china in nineteenth-century trash heaps. Likely, plasterers in the 1830s used this waste material in the stucco, rather than women donate their china directly (a pointless act, since so much broken china would have already existed). Again, though, the purpose of the folklore is important here. RLDS and LDS both perpetuated the image of women breaking their fine china to assert that the early saints greatly sacrificed to build the temple. The story of the china allowed them to include women within this sacrificial story in a safe, domesticated manner. Even today, pilgrims at Kirtland Temple ask about the story of women breaking their china; through stories passed down in families, some RLDS and LDS members still claim that their ancestors donated their china for the plaster on the walls.¹⁷⁵

RLDS “Reunions” and the Temple

As the folklore surrounding Kirtland Temple grew, RLDS members continued to use the structure as a center for spiritual renewal and revival. By the early twentieth

¹⁷⁴ As quoted in Elwin C. Robison, *The First Mormon Temple: The Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 79.

¹⁷⁵ As guide at Kirtland Temple, I frequently encountered the china story, as did other guides, such as “Sara,” interview by author, January 6, 2009, Independence, Missouri, tape recording. While conducting research for this dissertation, a distant cousin informed me that my family, too, has such a story. According to my cousin, my ancestors through my grandfather’s maternal line lived in Kirtland in the 1830s. They cut their hair and broke their china plates to enrich the Kirtland Temple’s plaster. My encounter with this folklore in my own family is a testament to the ubiquity of the broken china story.

century, week-long RLDS “reunions” were being held on the temple grounds during the summer. Evolving into outdoor camps that combined preaching, prayer meetings, classes, and organized recreation, these meetings reflected changing American attitudes towards Godliness, leisure, and recreation in the Progressive Era. Reunions paralleled the transformations that Methodists and other Protestants were enacting at former camp meeting grounds in Chautauqua communities like Ocean Grove, New Jersey.¹⁷⁶ The old evangelical camp meeting was becoming a religious summer camp for the whole family.

The history of RLDS reunions is intimately tied to the history of Kirtland Temple. After the successful spring 1883 RLDS conference in Kirtland Temple, many members wanted an opportunity to meet together more than once a year. (At that time, RLDS general conferences were held annually.) Members organized a week-long “grove meeting” or “reunion” the following fall near Council Bluffs, Iowa. The meeting far exceeded expectations for attendance. Soon, reunions spread from coast to coast among American RLDS members. Organized at a local level, reunions featured guest ministry provided by missionaries or traveling elders and apostles. By the 1890s, permanent reunion grounds were being bought and developed in places like Maine, California, and Iowa. By that time, too, reunions had become transnational events and were held in England, Canada, and Australia.¹⁷⁷ Later, they spread to French Polynesia where they were particularly popular. What the Kirtland Temple had once consolidated (the charisma of the Evangelical revival experience) was now being exported, reassembled, and

¹⁷⁶ For a history of the Methodist community at Ocean Grove, see T. Roy Messenger, *Holy Leisure: Recreation and Religion in God's Square Mile* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

¹⁷⁷ For an overview of the history of RLDS reunions, see Maurice L. Draper, "Reunions," in *Restoration Studies II: A Collection of Essays about the History, Beliefs, and Practices of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, ed. by Maurice L. Draper and A. Bruce Lindgren (Independence, Missouri: Temple School of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1983), 142-151.

refracted across the world on reunion grounds. The Kirtland Temple itself appropriately became a sacred locus for reunion experience for RLDS members in the eastern Great Lakes region. By the early twentieth century, RLDS members began holding regional reunions on the Kirtland Temple grounds.

A traveling RLDS elder and grandson of Joseph Smith, Jr., Elbert A. Smith, provides a window into what these early Kirtland Temple reunions were like for RLDS members. In a 1911 letter to his uncle, Joseph Smith III, Elbert noted that when he arrived in Kirtland “some 25 or 30 tents [for families] were on the ground just back of the temple, and a great many people had taken rooms in the hotel and private houses.” Services were held inside the temple during the week-long reunion, and Smith noted that “the solemn and sacred atmosphere of the temple seemed to influence the minds of those who were present.” The fruit of this influence was ten new baptisms, Smith proudly noted. Not all were Americans, for “forty or fifty of the Canadian Saints were there and enjoyed themselves immensely.”¹⁷⁸ The transnational Kirtland reunion had the effect of sustaining the atmosphere of the nineteenth-century camp meeting through the conversion of new believers and reinforcing the faith of the experienced saints.

Reunion worship services occasionally generated Pentecostal manifestations. Gomer Griffiths recalled that at the 1920 reunion “there was also a never-to-be-forgotten day; a prayer meeting lasting from eight o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock noon, during which angels were seen, visions were had, seventeen prophecies, four or five gifts of tongues, and many testimonies of God's goodness given under the power of the Spirit.”¹⁷⁹ Like the 1883 conference that Griffiths had experienced as a young man, this

¹⁷⁸ Elbert A. Smith, Letter to Joseph Smith, 7 September 1911, “Lynn Smiths’ Papers, Elbert and Clara Smith Collection,” P78-2, f158, CCA.

¹⁷⁹ Griffiths, “Reminisces of Kirtland Temple,” 724.

1920 Pentecostal outpouring linked the RLDS experience with the early Kirtland Saints. For Griffiths, this provided a continuing example of faithfulness and blessing from one generation to the next.

RLDS members in Ohio and western Pennsylvania continued to hold reunions on the Kirtland Temple grounds until the late 1950s when they moved to a converted farm in western Pennsylvania that had been donated by an RLDS member. RLDS members moved for practical reasons. The Kirtland Temple reunion had become so popular that it had long outgrown the sanitation facilities that could be provided across the street from the temple in a 1920s wooden auditorium. Families who used these restrooms also had to cross the busy state highway that ran parallel to the temple; as traffic on the highway increased over the decades, the street became dangerous for reunion attendees. Yet, they did not want to forget the grounds where they first held their regional reunion. Even though the new reunion grounds were hours by car from the Kirtland Temple, RLDS members named the new camp “Temple Grove,” thus metaphorically taking the temple’s presence with them to the new place.

Celebrating the Centennial, Strengthening Identity: RLDS

Uses of the Temple in the 1930s

RLDS members continued to hold congregational meetings in the Kirtland Temple throughout the early twentieth century. Yet, for them, the structure itself was more than just a church building for them. It was the holiest of all sacred spaces. Temple caretaker C. Ed Miller wrote that Kirtland was “the only temple standing today, built by command of the Lord, so it is well to speak of it as ‘THE HOUSE OF THE LORD’.”¹⁸⁰ A member of the RLDS First Presidency, Elbert A. Smith, wrote an extensive 1935

¹⁸⁰ Miller, “The House of the Lord,” 242.

exposition of why LDS temples were not accepted of God. He concluded by stating, “Kirtland Temple remains the one edifice of its kind on earth erected by the Lord's commandment, completed, and used by the church for purposes that He intended.”¹⁸¹ In a 1940 sermon in Kirtland Temple, O.J. Tary proclaimed that the “Kirtland Temple stands without parallel anywhere. Other temples have been built, but the element of divine command or guidance was not manifest.”¹⁸² RLDS leaders and laity alike proclaimed Kirtland as the only genuine extant temple on earth.

In 1936, the RLDS church marked the centennial of Kirtland Temple’s dedication. As in past decades, they used the structure for sacred polemics, evangelism, and the promotion of church programs. In a newsletter aimed at the general public, Kirtland saints argued that “possession of the Temple is proof of non-existence of Polygamy in the Early Church or its legal successor whose headquarters are located at Independence, Mo., and has for its president, Frederick M. Smith, grandson of Joseph Smith, the founder.”¹⁸³ That possession of the temple did not logically rule out polygamy in Joseph Smith’s lifetime was completely lost on RLDS members eager to perpetuate a long-standing church narrative that clearly differentiated themselves from their Utah cousins. The temple’s dedicatory anniversary seemed the perfect time to get a wide audience for this claim.

When RLDS Prophet F.M. Smith came to Kirtland for centennial celebrations in 1936, he saw the temple as a place to promote his idealistic vision for utopian community. Smith had been greatly influenced by Social Gospel reformers while earning

¹⁸¹ Elbert A. Smith, “The Why of Kirtland Temple,” *Saints’ Herald* 82 (1935): 1235.

¹⁸² O. J. Tary, “Little Latter Day Sermons: A Sacred Heritage,” *Kirtland Visitor* 3 (November 1940): 2.

¹⁸³ “Temple Possession Marks Legal Status,” *Kirtland Visitor* 1, no. 1 (1935): 3.

his master's degree in sociology at the University of Kansas and his PhD in social psychology at Clark University.¹⁸⁴ Even as the Social Gospel vision waned in the work of mainline Protestant theologians in the 1930s, Smith continued to advocate it in a syncretic amalgamation with RLDS Scripture. Inside the temple in 1936, Smith proclaimed "in celebrating the anniversary we will at once rejoice in the achievements of the Saints while struggling at Kirtland and rededicate ourselves, talents, zeal, possessions, and powers to the great and glorious task of making Zion real, and thus demonstrate to the world that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a power in social betterment and salvation."¹⁸⁵ Smith's appropriation of liberal Protestant thought portended the direction RLDS leaders would go in generations following him. As we will see in chapter five, late twentieth-century RLDS members would transform Kirtland into a symbol for social justice.

Conclusion: Kirtland Temple, Tourism, and the Cold War

By the mid-twentieth century, Kirtland Temple's pilgrims, guides, and regular congregation members stood at a clear moment of transformation. As a large middle class with the ability to consume new products emerged across the United States, Americans en masse bought family cars and took week-long summer vacations in numbers like never before. The American culture of Cold War containment made such consumption a patriotic act, too. As Susan Rugh argues, "in an era of anti-communism, the ability of American families to afford new kitchen appliances or a summer vacation demonstrated the superiority of the free enterprise system."¹⁸⁶ Additionally, families took vacations to

¹⁸⁴ Cite F.M. Smith: Saint as Reformer here.

¹⁸⁵ F.M. Smith, "Editorial: The Meaning of the Kirtland Centennial," *Saints Herald* 83, no. 8 (1936): 227.

¹⁸⁶ Susan Sessions Rugh, *Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 5.

instill values into their children. Rugh chronicles how returning World War II veterans took their children to see monuments like Washington, D.C. on a kind of civic “pilgrimage.”¹⁸⁷ A significant number of LDS and RLDS families shared the broader pattern, but added sites like Kirtland Temple to their trip itineraries. In this era of the “consumer republic,” travel to Kirtland Temple was no longer limited to the rich, to regional RLDS members, to passing LDS missionaries, or to the rare occasional group of working class LDS on their way to Hill Cumorah. Now, the majority of American RLDS and LDS families, ready to engage in mass consumption with their newly acquired post-World War II middle-class status, could visit the Kirtland Temple, driving their own car along the developing interstate system. The interstate I-90 (former in 1957 mainly from existing highways) passed only within a few miles of Kirtland and included an exit at the town. The net effect was to increase Mormon pilgrimage to Kirtland—as well as LDS awareness of the temple’s importance.

As tourism and pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple increased after World War II, the shrine was transformed from an active church structure to a specially preserved historic site only occasionally used for worship. By the late 1940s, the RLDS church approved construction of a new congregational meeting place across the street from the Kirtland Temple. No longer would the temple be used every Sunday. Civil marriages,¹⁸⁸ once a regular event in the temple, ended by the early 1960s, too. Now, the temple was used for special worship services and promoted even more as a historical shrine, part of the growing heritage movement in America. Consequently, the RLDS bureaucracy, rather than local Kirtland RLDS members, asserted a growing control over the structure.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 41-67.

¹⁸⁸ RLDS did not conduct marriages for eternity, unlike LDS who did so in their temples.

Additionally, the structure became better preserved for future guests.¹⁸⁹ Paradoxically, the separation of the Kirtland Temple from regular congregational space at once reinforced and undermined the temple's sacrality. Even though Kirtland RLDS members had long proclaimed that the temple was more than just a mere building, the shrine's more restricted access heightened the specialness of time that local members spent within the building. The congregation's separation from the building also made it feel more alienated from the structure which now was being transformed into a separated shrine and museum of sorts. By the mid-1960s, Kirtland Temple was a new place for all involved.

By this time, the Kirtland Temple hosted visitors from the LDS church, the RLDS church, various smaller, but related groups, and the general public.¹⁹⁰ Each of these groups approached the temple with different understandings of its value, history, and purpose. In short, it became a hub for parallel pilgrimage as visitors continued to increase in the Cold War era. In the coming chapters, I will explore how in the second half of the twentieth century the spiritual geography of Kirtland changed for the RLDS church and the LDS church. These changes paralleled, reflected, and shaped their respective institutions in late modernity. What emerges in Part II, then, is a story just as much about a site in transition as it is of two peoples seeking their place in a pluralistic religious America.

¹⁸⁹ Based upon several interviews that I conducted, some Kirtland RLDS members still resent that they had to move out of the temple.

¹⁹⁰ Israel A. Smith, "The Re-opening of the Kirtland Temple to Guided Tours," *Saints' Herald* 105, no. 7 (1958): 244.

PART B:

PROXIMITY: PEOPLES AND PLACES IN MOTION

CHAPTER 5: CREATING A CURSED AND SANCTIFIED TEMPLE
(1965-1984)

Prologue to Part B

By the 1960s, the two denominations entered a period of dramatic transformation. For the RLDS church, this transformation would be one of uneven acculturation with the old mainline Protestant denominations. By the mid-1960s, RLDS leaders who had attended mainline Protestant seminaries began openly to question traditional doctrines. No longer could they accept uncritically their church's exclusive spiritual authority or the Book of Mormon as a record of ancient American civilizations; and they began to recognize Joseph Smith's role in introducing and practicing plural marriage. To this day, there are RLDS/Community of Christ members who affirm the traditional positions on these three points; however, as early as the 1960s, leaders began to believe differently. This led to a course change in the denomination's future that would impact Kirtland Temple's place in the RLDS/Community of Christ's spiritual geography. As will be seen in chapter five, a fundamentalist schism would develop within the RLDS church by the 1980s over women's ordination. On result of this conflict would be a substantial reduction in church membership. RLDS growth, once vibrant and booming, would flat-line by the 1980s. As guides at Kirtland Temple gradually came to embrace and accept the RLDS church's new positions on Joseph Smith and polygamy, spiritual authority, and scripture, the kinds of polemical interactions between LDS and RLDS would be transformed; what would emerge was not necessarily a lessening of hostilities as much as it was a negotiation of new boundaries.

In contrast to the smaller church's more liberal trend, the "Mountain saints" (the LDS) reversed many assimilative tendencies; the middle twentieth century proved to be the beginning point of massive LDS retrenchment. According to sociologist Armand Mauss, the LDS church entered a period of retrenchment in the 1960s marked by five

initiatives: “renewed assertion of the claim of continuous revelation through modern prophets; renewed emphasis on temples, temple work, and genealogical research; expansion and standardization of the missionary enterprise; family renewal and retrenchment; and expansion of formal religious education in the service of parochial indoctrination.”¹⁹¹ To understand what will follow in chapters two and three, we will briefly review how these changes would impact parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple.

First, an LDS re-emphasis on modern prophets required renewed interest in church history. As LDS prophets claimed Joseph Smith’s revelatory mantle all the more, the sites associated with him became increasingly important in the church’s collective memory. Kirtland, while largely ignored until the late 1970s, would become a locus of renewed interest. Second, LDS prophets would undertake an expansive temple building program in the 1980s until the present. With increased emphasis on temples and genealogical research connected to temple rituals for the dead, the first Mormon temple became more important. Was it not in this place that Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and restored to him the power to conduct ordinances for the dead? Third, with increased missionary work and a massive expansion of the numbers of missionaries, the denomination’s visitor centers became portals for contact with the general public. New centers, including one in Kirtland, were opened at major sacred sites in the decades after the 1950s. Missionaries staffed these centers and served as models for LDS faithful as to how they should understand the sites and how they should share their own testimonies with non-members. As it had once been for the RLDS, Kirtland would become a center for LDS evangelism and member formation.

Fourth, LDS family renewal and their re-emphasis on the patriarchal nuclear family went hand-in-hand with the family vacation. As Susan Rugh argues, after World

¹⁹¹ Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive*, 85.

War II, the American family vacation became a way of asserting an ideal family order, with the husband in the driver's seat, the wife taking care of the children. It promoted feelings of family togetherness. As noted previously, Utah Mormons, as the quintessential conservative 1950s nuclear families, added trips to key sites in LDS history sites to their vacation itineraries. While Rugh shows that family vacations waning after the 1970s, vacationing Mormon families actually increased their visits to church history sites in the period. Even as popular culture was satirizing family vacations by the 1980s through films like "National Lampoon's Family Vacation," Mormons more than ever embraced the image of a happy family taking road trips with the children strapped in the back seat. As will be seen, Kirtland Temple would slowly develop as an important destination for LDS pilgrims.

Finally, the larger church greatly expanded its educational system and began a process known as "correlation." This meant that High school students attended short early-morning classes before regular school at a "seminary" while college students attended classes at an "institute." This costly educational system aimed at standardizing (and simplifying) LDS beliefs and practices through a "correlated" curriculum across the church. Worship services were also "correlated" so that Sunday school lessons across the world, as well as sermon topics, were identical for the entire LDS church. Correlation extended beyond church lessons to everything from church architecture to the new standards for attire that missionaries could wear. For the future of Kirtland Temple, it meant that LDS members understood the shrine in fairly standardized ways, with surprisingly little variation. As Hildi Mitchell has argued, Mormon culture has produced a common habitus of "shared embodied memory" that means that LDS pilgrims "are highly likely to experience these places [on the Mormon History Trail], events [in Mormon history] and objects [of the Mormon past] in a hegemonic, culturally

standardized way.”¹⁹² Consequently, they would experience pilgrimage to Kirtland Temple with a much less individualized and much more homogenized fashion. Mormon pilgrims are not individualistic spiritual explorers adrift searching for an allusive authenticity; the vast majority are orthodox pilgrims searching for confirmation of pre-existing commitments and standardized beliefs.

Yet, in 1966, these dramatic changes in the two churches were by no means apparent. These transformations would emerge over time, sometimes quickly, such as the schism and membership loss over the RLDS women’s ordination controversy, or more slowly, such as the LDS re-emphasis on temples and temple work. In turn, such changes would shape the expectations, practices, and conflicts engaged by pilgrims and site interpreters at Kirtland Temple. Just as the RLDS and LDS religious communities changed, Kirtland Temple metaphorically would be a site again in motion, connected to new pilgrimage routes and varied spiritual meanings. Kirtland Temple would be a place of ever-morphing proximal relationships for pilgrim groups and site interpreters.

Dedicating a Marker, Needing Proximity

On June 26, 1966, 325 people jammed Kirtland Temple’s “lower court” (first floor) to dedicate a nearby “Ohio Historical Marker” for the building. The Kirtland Temple, noted a Cleveland newspaper, was designated “among the finest examples of architecture in Ohio,” the fifth building in the state to earn such an honor. . . On hand for the ceremony was Joseph Smith’s grandson, W. Wallace Smith, the sixty-five-year-old president of the Community of Christ who lived in Independence, Missouri, the denomination’s corporate headquarters. After brief remarks by various state and local historical associations, Smith rose to give the main address. “Whether you believe their

¹⁹² Hildi Mitchell, “‘Being There’: British Mormons and the History Trail,” *Anthropology Today* 17, no. 2 (2001):12

story or not,” stated Smith, “I am sure you agree that these builders were inspired by a great sense of purpose and urgency.”¹⁹³ Standing in the place where his grandfather had occasionally labored with other workmen, W. Wallace Smith symbolically linked Kirtland’s “inspired” builders to the present. As the grandson of the Mormon prophet, Smith projected the public image of an authoritative voice for those long dead saints. The temple scene formed a translocative site as identities, power relations, and narratives traveled back and forth across the past era and the present, across homelands to peripheral regions, and across boundaries of church and state.

After Smith’s prepared remarks, the gathered crowd in the temple passed through the two mammoth wooden doors of the building to unveil the new state marker. As they proceeded, they passed under the central plaque embedded in the temple’s exterior. Even though Smith avoided polemical proclamations against the LDS church in his dedicatory speech, the plaque made the same less-than subtle claim about RLDS legitimacy that troubled visiting LDS General Authorities in 1905 : “The House of the Lord, Built by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 1834. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, In Succession by Decision of Court Feb. 1880.”¹⁹⁴ Even at a civic event celebrating a common Ohio historical heritage, the plaque stood silent witness to the temple as a religiously contested conjuncture in a broader ecclesiastical landscape.

The state marker, in contrast, legitimized the site as part of the civic, capitalistic landscape. It read, “Ohio Historical Marker. Kirtland Temple. Built 1833-1836 ‘House of the Lord’ Joseph Smith, Jr., called this building in his dedicatory prayer March 27, 1836.

¹⁹³ “Two Units Honor Kirtland Temple,” *Painesville Telegraph*, Jun 29, 1966; Wilbur Sartwell, “Ohio Historians and Architects Acclaim Kirtland Temple,” *Saints’ Herald* 113 (August 15, 1966): 20-21.

¹⁹⁴ Walden and Rastle, “Restoring, Preserving, and Maintaining Kirtland Temple, 1880-1920,” 18, 21-23.

The solemn, massive weather-stained structure stands today as a memorial to Smiths' followers who sacrificed their worldly goods to build of local materials this impressive Gothic Revival and classic style temple."¹⁹⁵ With this awkwardly worded, seemingly neutral statement, the state symbolically incorporated Kirtland into the tourist economy and concretely helped create the temple as a point of interest along the state's growing highway system. Like places connected to Shakers and Native Americans, Mormon places could now be incorporated into Ohio's landscape as "heritage."

Beyond the plaques present and the speeches given, the 1966 dedication scene remains interesting for who was and was not present. Professional historical associations were well represented--the Ohio Historical Society, the Lake County Historical Society, the Western Reserve Historical Society, and the Architects Society of Ohio. However, in all of the newspaper reports about the ceremony, no mention whatsoever was made of LDS officials or members on hand for the dedication.¹⁹⁶ For generations in the Cleveland area, Community of Christ members were *the* Latter Day Saints (no hyphen); the LDS church headquartered in Utah was simply a strange aberration of the true faith, or so every Community of Christ member wanted their neighbors to know. In the 1960s, LDS were steadily building a presence in wards (congregations) across the country but still did not have any members in Kirtland and very few in adjacent towns. LDS members were marginal voices in this 1966 place making act, and would remain so for some time in official ceremonies in Kirtland.

This dedication scene, then, served as a visual representation of 1960s proximal relationships of various groups to Kirtland Temple. Smith's presence in Kirtland as the

¹⁹⁵ Sartwell, "Ohio Historians and Architects Acclaim Kirtland Temple," 20-21.

¹⁹⁶ "Historians Plant Marker Honoring Kirtland Temple," *News Herald* (Willoughby, Ohio), June 27, 1966; "Two Units Honor Kirtland Temple," the *Telegraph* (Painesville, Ohio), Jun 29, 1966; "Temple Architecture is Praised," *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), Jun 27, 1966.

key-note speaker projected his denomination's central relationship to the temple and their corporate confidence in their future. The plaque embedded in the temple's facade declared RLDS legitimacy through a misunderstood statement by a nineteenth-century Ohio court. And the brass highway marker incorporated the temple into the series of Ohio historical markers that dotted the state, aimed at attracting tourists who searched maps for out of the ordinary stops on day trips and vacations. Economy, state, and church all stood together in a fairly undisturbed layering of the landscape with albeit disparate narratives. Yet, in the next few years, LDS claims to Kirtland's vital importance, long neglected, would soon appear. Strangely enough, LDS appreciation of Kirtland's importance was first demonstrated by the dramatic assertion in the 1950s that the land had been cursed since the 1840s. Years later, a senior LDS apostle would lift this curse at the dedication of an LDS church building in Kirtland and begin a new phase of LDS involvement in Kirtland that included the building of historic sites that would contest the Community of Christ's appropriation of the local landscape. Before turning to these narratives, though, this chapter will briefly review theories of proximity, mobility, and place that will aid in the following analysis of Kirtland Temple as shared and contested sacred space.

Social theorist John Urry argues that contemporary people have a basic need for physical proximity to one another and to significant sites. According to Urry, contemporary "social life requires moments of physical proximity."¹⁹⁷ Even if face-to-face encounters are intermittent, people need such encounters to establish social relations, display "attentiveness and commitment, and simultaneously to detect where there is little commitment in others." In Urry's theory of mobility and proximity, people need not only face-to-face interactions, but they also need to be "facing-the-place" of socially significant sites. Just as virtual communications (telephone and e-mail) form meaningful

¹⁹⁷ John Urry, "Mobility and Proximity," *Sociology* 36, no. 2 (2002): 258.

but ultimately inadequate forms of social life that must be supplemented by direct interactions, contemporary people do not simply read about places or watch programs about such locales; individuals accustomed to travel and a high degree of mobility “desire to know a place by encountering it directly.”¹⁹⁸ Mormon pilgrimage meets this need, as people go beyond learning about a place in church history manuals and Sunday school classes to encountering a site directly.

Yet, the need for proximity by people to a site is never a simple relationship between a pilgrim in motion and his or her travel to a fixed sacred location. No cultural or spiritual geography ever remains static. Sites themselves are created, sustained, and altered by morphing interest groups, new sites, and new pilgrimage routes. In this sense, a shrine may be said to “move” on a pilgrimage of its own. As anthropologists Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman note, pilgrimage “centers, like journeys, are continuously emergent and perpetually in motion.”¹⁹⁹ This chapter charts Kirtland Temple’s complex pilgrimage with its itinerant patron communities.

Bourdieu’s notion of the “field” is a particularly useful lens for describing Kirtland’s peripatetic journey. Bourdieu’s field plots how social agents are positioned relative to each other and the roles they play within a network. If Bourdieu’s other key term, the *habitus*, describes one’s “feel for the game” (structuring structures or habits that shape our interactions), the field is the arena of the game itself.

For Bourdieu, a field is not a passive place or an idyllic landscape, such as a meadow; it is a place of power, as in a battlefield. (The word Bourdieu deploys in French *le pres* can be used to describe “an area of land, a battlefield, and a field of knowledge,”

¹⁹⁸ Urry, “Mobility and Proximity,” 261.

¹⁹⁹ Badone and Roseman, *Intersecting Journeys*, 11.

but not a meadow, *le pre.*)²⁰⁰ In his applied work, Bourdieu notes that fields can intersect and contain each other. For example, the “field” of religious studies is contained within the field of American higher education which may be ultimately contained by the economic field (as departments of religious studies know all too well). We can describe an individual’s relation to each of these contexts and each can condition social action in the other. Collectively, all of these “fields” constitute a social world or a “field of power.” A true Bourdiean analysis employing “field theory” will analyze the multiple fields that interact to form a social world.

While not being bound by Bourdieu’s theoretical apparatus, this chapter addresses the intersections of three fields centered around Kirtland Temple—the physical geographical field, the social field of relationships of people within a denomination, and the field of Mormon denominations in public space interacting with a perceived public and public institutions. In each of these fields, power is negotiated as people dominate, coerce, and cooperate with one another. As an historical ethnography, my study will describe the moving picture of how people with durable, yet changing dispositions engage ever-changing fields of social interaction. In other words, I describe how parallel pilgrimage has changed over the course of twenty years (1965 to 1984) due to morphing relationships of proximity.

Developing a Pilgrimage Site: RLDS Mapping, Promotion,
and Visitation at Kirtland, 1966-1975

While the opening vignette for this chapter revealed the power of hierarchies and state institutions to create Kirtland Temple’s place as a destination, local Community of Christ volunteer temple staff and congregation members were just as crucial, if not more

²⁰⁰ Patricia Thompson, “Field,” in *Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 68.

so, in creating the conditions that allowed for these place-making performances and the logic that undergirded them. Indeed, the influence of local agents on peripheral, perhaps seemingly more powerful agents, comprises a theme that runs through the story of Kirtland's changing proximities.

From the 1960s until the late 1980s, retired RLDS volunteer guides staffed Kirtland Temple for unpaid stints ranging from two to seven years. These guides worked closely with paid supervisors who managed summer programs and buildings and grounds. However, for all practical purposes, such guides were the public face of Kirtland Temple for pilgrims and guests. In the 1960s and 1970s, the volunteer guides worked tirelessly toward having Kirtland Temple noted on Ohio maps, in magazine, and in countless newspaper articles that they wrote themselves and sent to local papers. Temple guide Nephi Phillips, for instance, sent a letter to the editor of the Texaco Travel Atlas requesting that the temple be noted on its Ohio map. In August 1973, Phillips happily reported to his supervisor that the editor had assured him that the temple would be correctly noted on the new map.²⁰¹ Phillips also informed Rand McNally and the Department of Highways of the State of Ohio that the temple was omitted from their maps—a correction made later by both.²⁰² A few months later, Phillips noted, “We supplied information for an item about Kirtland Temple and the tours which was published in the column ‘Traveling Ohio’ of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.” In the meantime, Phillips placed Kirtland Temple visitor brochures in local motels in exchange for motel brochures kept at the Temple visitor center. In April of 1974, Phillips noted that the Ohio Motorist Magazine featured a brief article on the Kirtland Temple. “They used a

²⁰¹ Nephi C. Phillips, “Report from Kirtland Temple for August 1973,” in First Presidency Papers, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” RG 29-3, f7, CCA.

²⁰² “Kirtland Temple to be on Future Maps,” *Saints' Herald* 120, no. 5 (1973): 60.

clipping from our envelope as an illustration,” chortled the enthusiastic Phillips. Additionally, “A number of visitors, especially from the west side of Cleveland have mentioned reading this writing.”²⁰³

In this era, RLDS temple staff almost invariably used media exposure to claim that their church was the true successor to Joseph Smith’s original movement. The temple staff had great success in proclaiming this message, at least in Ohio. In a December 1970 *The Wonderful World of Ohio Magazine* article, a travel writer explained that “confusion followed their [Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s] martyrdom, and it was not until 1852 that the original church reorganized, adding that word to the church name.” With such a claim, the author of this article very well might have been an RLDS member. Additionally, the travel writer left out any mention of the LDS church in Utah.²⁰⁴ Even if the writer had no connection to any Mormon denomination, the author’s wording reveals the success of RLDS members to shape the image of the temple for a local Ohio audience.

While church officials, state organizations, and blossoming tourist industries promoted the need to travel to Kirtland, local Community of Christ members also began promoting the temple as a place of pilgrimage. The brain child of Bishop Roy P. Jones, youth leader Scott Liston, former temple caretaker Earl Curry, and a small group of Kirtland congregation members, the “Kirtland Visitor Program” brought thousands of RLDS members to spend a weekend retreat at the Temple from 1965 to 1977.²⁰⁵ At first targeted at RLDS youth, the program expanded to include retreats aimed at mixed age

²⁰³ Nephi C. Phillips, “April 1974 Newsletter from Kirtland Temple Historic Center,” in First Presidency Papers, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” CCA, RG 29-3, f7.

²⁰⁴ Norma Anne Kirkendall, “Welcome to the House of the Lord,” *The Wonderful World of Ohio Magazine* 34, no 12 (December 1970): 57.

²⁰⁵ “Temple Host Program Grows,” *Telegraph* (Painesville), March 16, 1973; “Kirtland Temple Schedule for 1977,” in Kirtland Temple Request for Use, 1972-1977 (Sampling), RG 29-3, f9.

groups and, in 1972, retreats for couples seeking to improve their marriages.²⁰⁶ The weekend retreat included a tour of the temple, classes held inside the temple on “restoration deeps” and church history, a guided tour of selected church history sites in the surrounding area, evening devotions in the temple, and a Sunday morning “dedication service” held in the temple. For \$6.50 per person, program attendees would receive four meals cooked and served by the women of the Kirtland congregation and cots, bedding, pillows, and housing in the local church building. Occasionally, visiting pilgrims were housed in the homes of Kirtland congregation members. In a 2008 interview, Betty Liston recalled that “I was a loyal supporter [of the Kirtland Visitor Program and] sometimes we housed some of the visitors in our home . . . They also shared some of the [spiritually] moving experiences they had had during their visit to that sacred space.” Thirty to one hundred pilgrims typically took part in an individual retreat on nine (later thirteen) selected weekends out of the year.²⁰⁷

Local congregation members literally emplotted visiting pilgrims, supplying them with special maps of Kirtland and its surrounding areas that featured landmarks pilgrims anticipated seeing, along with somewhat idiosyncratic landmarks familiar to the local RLDS population. The standard visitor map featured the temple and thirty-four additional sites, including lesser-known sites like the “site of Sister Molly Brewster’s Boarding House,” another site “where the photograph of the reflection of the Temple in the river was taken,” and a spot “where a ‘Grandma Smith’ lived, who at the age of 90 plus, remembered her family working on the Temple.” Each of these locations formed

²⁰⁶ Katherine Booher, “Kirtland Host Program, 1972,” in *Kirtland Scrapbook, 1960-1979*, in KTHSSC.

²⁰⁷ “Temple Project Explores Basic Church Concepts,” *Telegraph* (Painesville), May 27, 1972; “Temple Visit Slated,” *Telegraph* (Painesville), July 21, 1972; Elizabeth Ann Liston to author, 27 October 2008.

potential stops or drive-by places of interest on the three-and-a-half-hour long tour of the temple and its surrounding environs. The familiar, localized geography of Kirtland residents became part of the geography encountered by the pilgrims.²⁰⁸

The strong Midwestern concentration of Community of Christ members showed in the locales of pilgrim groups. Pilgrims typically hailed from Michigan, Ontario, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio, reflecting a day and a half's journey (or less) by car to the temple. Though fewer in numbers, groups from as far away as Washington state visited the temple as part of the program.²⁰⁹ For the Kirtland congregation, a group then of about 350 enrolled members, the Kirtland Visitor Program was an enormous volunteer undertaking, done without any monetary support from the corporate Community of Christ headquarters. The program finally ended in 1977 when health inspectors ruled that the congregation could no longer house visitors in their facility due to the lack of any sewer systems in Kirtland Village (to this day, Kirtland still relies on septic waste removal).²¹⁰

The Kirtland Visitor program highlights how people at the grassroots level can significantly shape the drawing power of sacred sites. Local residents and Kirtland Temple guide staff provided the tours, taught the classes, fed and housed the pilgrims, and fashioned significance out of the surrounding land. In the early 1970s, a few officials in the RLDS hierarchy raised concerns that the world church in Independence should have more oversight on the program. Local leaders actually requested such help as they

²⁰⁸ *A Souvenir of Your Visit to Historic Kirtland, Come and See Us Again* (N.p., ca. 1970), in possession of author.

²⁰⁹ "Kirtland Temple Host Program," draft of article sent to *Telegraph* (Painesville), 19 February 1973, uncatalogued, KTHSSC.

²¹⁰ *A Visit to Kirtland Temple, Planned for You by Your Friends in the Kirtland Area* (N.p., ca. 1968); "Mark," interview by author, July 9, 2008, Kirtland, Ohio, typescript.

felt over-stretched. By 1973, the full-time RLDS Kirtland Stake Youth leader led the program and needed the help of 10 to 12 people every weekend. His supervisor, the RLDS Stake President, thought this was an unfair burden and requested funding from headquarters. Despite the issue being raised, no significant control was ever acquired over the program by the hierarchy. Whether or not the people running the program wanted it to be a local initiative, the Kirtland Visitor Program remained such for its duration.²¹¹

The combination of “tourist mapping” and “member mapping” appears to have increased Kirtland Temple visitors. In 1966, the year of the plaque dedication, 5795 Ohioans visited the temple, a significant increase from 3766 who visited it in 1965 and 3711 in 1964. The Ohioans could have been a combination of Community of Christ, LDS, and interested tourists. More than likely, however, the increase in numbers was not due to increased LDS attendance. In 1964, 5,524 LDS visitors registered, followed by a sharp decrease over the next two years (only 3,664 registered in 1966), and rising again to 5,110 in 1967. In contrast, after the start of the Kirtland Visitor program in 1966, RLDS pilgrims increased from 1360 in 1964 (before the program) to 2272 in the program’s first year. All of these numbers may be skewed, since they account only for individuals who self-identified their religious faith when they registered at the end of a temple tour. Kirtland Temple guides recorded large numbers of individuals each year who “did not register” or “did not indicate” a particular faith when they registered. However, in raw figures over a decade, total visitors rose from a low of 9,899 in 1965 to double that number by 1975 (19,872). Probably caused by the aggregate of many forces

²¹¹ William R. Clinefelter to Cecil Ettinger, 17 July 1973, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” in First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7.

(increased mobility, opening of new sites, and the promotion of Kirtland), visitor numbers climbed, adding to the site's renown among proud RLDS members.²¹²

In the 1960s and 1970s, RLDS members largely regarded the Kirtland Temple as a place of singular spiritual significance, unsurpassed by any extant structure. “I definitely feel that it was built by the command of God,” wrote RLDS Kirtland District President William Clinefelter in an unpublished letter to a Cleveland newspaper, “and that it still holds a very relative [sic.; relevant] place in the ministry of the lives of people in our day.”²¹³ “Clearly I recall the feeling I had as I left the building, that this is the dwelling place of Christ,” wrote pilgrim Zelia C. Jennings in a “testimony” section of the official RLDS magazine.²¹⁴ An elderly, well-respected member of the RLDS community in Kirtland and former temple caretaker, Earl Curry topped all of these statements. Curry referred to the temple as “a Mount of transfiguration.”²¹⁵ These statements by Jennings, Clinefelter, and Curry were borne out of a traditional RLDS piety that saw the temple as the “the only temple standing today, built by command of the Lord”—a common sentiment held by RLDS members until the 1980s.²¹⁶

By 1975, staff at Kirtland Temple and RLDS members in Cleveland had successfully organized and promoted tours to Kirtland that took coincided with the rise of

²¹² “Kirtland Temple Guide Service: Annual Report, Year ____” in “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7; “Record Visit Temple,” *Monitor* (Mentor), 25 January 1968; “8919 Visited Mormon Temple in Last 3 Months,” *News Herald* (Cleveland), 7 August 1971; “Kirtland Temple Information Center, Period December 1973,” in “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7.

²¹³ Clinefelter to the *Press Citizen* (Cleveland), 11 July 1973, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” in First Presidency Papers, CCA RG 29-3, f7.

²¹⁴ Zelia C. Jennings, “I Visited Kirtland Temple,” *Saints’ Herald* 111 (1964): 84.

²¹⁵ As quoted in Emma M. Phillips, “The Message of Kirtland Temple,” *Saints’ Herald* 120, no. 8 (1973): 29.

²¹⁶ C. Ed Miller, “The House of the Lord,” *Saints Herald* 83 (1936): 242.

the family vacation and the greater mobility of middle-class RLDS members. Now, more than ever, RLDS congregations from across the country were holding weekend retreats at the Kirtland Temple. Though they did not know it at the time, RLDS in the mid 1970s saw the apogee of travel by their members to Kirtland, as well as the apogee of the church as a growing institution. The decades ahead would see major transformations within the movement's theology, membership base, and fundamental relationship to the temple as a pilgrimage shrine. Yet, the RLDS church provide only one half of the story of pilgrimage at Kirtland. The LDS church would undergo major changes of its own in relation to the site during the same period.

Remaking the Land: An RLDS Visitor Center and LDS

Views of Kirtland, 1966-1974

In contrast to the beatific adjectives that Community of Christ members attached to the temple, LDS members largely regarded the temple as a mere point of historical interest. The year of the Ohio highway marker dedication, LDS pilgrims could have been reading a different “sign” about Kirtland in the form of a portable travel guide published in 1965. R. Don Oscarson and an avid historical researcher, Stanley B. Kimball, printed the short, succinct work, *The Travelers' Guide to Historic Mormon America*. Designed to fit in a car glove compartment, Kimball and Oscarson's guide mapped “historic sites” from the Latter-day past that followed the peregrinations of Joseph Smith and his LDS successor Brigham Young. Starting in Vermont, the place of Joseph Smith's birth, the guide noted historic sites spanning the width of the United States from New York to Utah, also including locations in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, and the western trail. In their book replete with pictures of the Kirtland Temple, the authors explained the events that happened in the structure, adding that “after the body of the church left for Missouri in 1837-38 the temple fell into the hands of apostates. It was defiled and the first floor was used eventually as a barn. . . . In 1880, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints obtained title to the building, restored it, and now uses it as a regular meeting place.”²¹⁷ Kimball and Oscarson explained that “the Kirtland Temple was not a temple in the sense that subsequent temples were and are. It was essentially a holy meeting house, a preliminary step which led to the great temple-building era which followed.”²¹⁸ While urging the visitor not to miss visiting the building, faithful Latter-day Saints like Kimball and Oscarson clearly saw the temple in a different context than their RLDS cousins. If for many RLDS members the temple was the holiest structure on earth, for mid-1960s LDS members, the temple was simply a point of historical interest. It lacked something essential that later LDS temples contained.

Kirtland’s inclusion in Oscarson and Kimball’s book, though, highlights a then emerging LDS practice of circuit pilgrimage. Since the 1930s, the LDS church had produced a religious pageant at Hill Cumorah, the western New York site where Joseph Smith claimed to have obtained the gold-like plates from which he translated the Book of Mormon. By the 1960s, tens of thousands of LDS flocked to the pageant from the intermountain West. For many LDS pilgrims, a visit to Hill Cumorah and the nearby “Sacred Grove” where Joseph Smith had his first vision provided the culminating point of a circuitous journey that started in the Salt Lake Valley (the place where many pilgrims lived) and retraced the steps of the Prophet Joseph and his LDS successor Brigham Young in reverse. Along the way, they were confronted by an overwhelming RLDS presence at three crucial places—Independence, Missouri (the site of Joseph Smith’s proposed New Jerusalem and the headquarters of the RLDS church), Nauvoo, Illinois (Joseph Smith’s 1840s city where RLDS maintained his still-standing properties

²¹⁷ R. Don Oscarson and Stanley B. Kimball, *Travelers’ Guide to Historic Mormon America* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 30.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

and grave) and Kirtland, Ohio. Along this route, then, they would encounter the dissonance of parallel pilgrimage. The final spot on the circuit pilgrimage, however, lacked any RLDS presence. Hill Cumorah and the Sacred Grove were owned and interpreted by the LDS church. By the mid 1960s, LDS pilgrims visited Kirtland Temple as a way station en route to the more sacred—and less ambiguous—LDS shrines on their travel itineraries. Oscarson and Kimball’s materials, then, were partly constitutive of and constituted by a pre-existing, evolving practice of LDS circuit pilgrimage.

Part of Kimball and Oscarson’s cool, relatively neutral description of Kirtland as a temple perhaps grew out of the alterations that had been made to the site since the 1830s. While the structure was remarkably intact, years of wear had resulted in multiple roofs, new plaster, and a limited amount of restored interior woodwork. All of this seems natural for a building of its age, but faithful Latter-day Saints believed, then and now, that any renovations to a dedicated temple required an entire rededication of the building.²¹⁹ In late-nineteenth-century LDS temples, LDS Prophets had included minute details in their dedicatory prayers, asking God to sanctify window sills, plaster, glass, bolts, screws, and locks. While most dedicatory prayers in the twentieth century did not contain such lists, LDS prophets in the 1950s and 1970s revived the practice of sanctifying individual parts of a building.²²⁰ Changing worn out hardware on a previously dedicated temple could have significant repercussions in the minds of some LDS members.

Alterations to the temple and its surrounding landscape did come in the late 1960s. Since tours first began in the 1830s, guides had worked out of the “outer court” or vestibule area inside the temple. With small offices underneath the twin staircases that led

²¹⁹ Samuel Brown, “A Sacred Code: Mormon Temple Prayers, 1836-2000,” *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 3 (2006): 174.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

to the upper levels, guides wedged themselves (and a growing collection of books) in a space that was cramped, to say the least. In 1967, volunteer temple guide Alvin Wadsworth wrote a letter to the RLDS First Presidency informing them of “the need for a guide center to care for the increasing number of visitors to the Temple.”²²¹

Wadsworth’s recommendation was seconded by Public Relations Counselor Wilbur K. Sartwell who pointed out that “the need for public rest rooms at Kirtland grows more urgent as our tourist traffic continues to grow.” The 1830s temple had been wired for electricity and fitted with pipes for heating and cooling, but it had never had a public restroom installed in it. Visitors who felt the call of nature were forced to cross the busy state highway 306 in front of the temple and use the Kirtland RLDS congregation’s building. Now, a consensus was forming that both restrooms and a visitor center were needed immediately. RLDS leaders decided to expend funds on converting an antique shop near the temple into a visitor center. While guides through the summer of 1969 still were stationed in the temple vestibule, by December employees were removing souvenir items from there to set up shop in the “new Kirtland Visitors’ Center.”²²²

The converted antique shop eventually allowed for a more professional image of the site as it imitated other historic centers. The team charged with converting the antique shop selected colors and interior design work that echoed decorative woodwork in the Temple and nineteenth-century Victorian styles. For this end, they obtained assistance from an RLDS architect, John J. Roos, who designed the interior of the Visitor Center; he volunteered his services. A Chicago company that produced paint for Colonial Williamsburg, Martin Senour Paints, sent the team paint samples of historically accurate

²²¹ Alvin C. Wadsworth to First Presidency, 13 October 1967, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” in First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7.

²²² Russell W. Pearson to First Presidency and The Presiding Bishopric, 8 December 1969, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” in First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7.

nineteenth-century colors. A historic sites consultant made recommendations for the physical layout of the site. And an educational equipment company produced theater seats for the Visitor Center's small theater that had decorative ends vaguely reminiscent of the Temple pews.²²³ Working on a small budget with few staff members, the RLDS team made the most of their limited resources for the Visitor Center.

The separation of the museum space from the temple to the Visitor Center proved to be a crucial step in making the site both into a place of heritage and also heightening its sense of being a sacred site. The small museum space with its exhibits and the historic plaques on the grounds marked the site as heritage space. It added to the site's sense of what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls "hereness" or that quality which makes a "location into a destination."²²⁴ With the addition of a theater that showed hand-drawn slides and a recorded narration, temple guides began mimicking travel at the site—travel back in time and across spaces. Temple guides and supervisors met a need for creating a virtual experience of the temple beyond the first-person guiding. Again, following Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "virtualities, even in the presence of actualities, show what can otherwise not be seen."²²⁵ Tourist sites, according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, are mute without such reconstructions. Beyond creating an experience similar to other historic sites, the creation of a guide center infused the experience inside the temple with greater

²²³ Russell W. Pearson to John J. Ross, 18 December 1969, "Kirtland: Visitor's Center, 1967-1972," in "Kirtland: Visitor's Center, 1967-1972," Historic Properties Papers, CCA, RG 26, f140; and Russell W. Pearson to Hoover Educational Equipment, 30 March 1970, in "Kirtland: Visitor's Center, 1967-1972," Historic Properties Papers, CCA, RG 26, f140.

²²⁴ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 7.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

anticipation. In a way, the guide center became a preparatory shrine where pilgrims could rest before making the journey to the central shrine—the temple itself.²²⁶

The RLDS also sought to increase their land holdings around the temple, ever aware of a growing LDS presence in Cleveland. “We need to secure certain properties in relation to the Kirtland Temple,” wrote RLDS Presiding Bishop Counselor Reed M. Holmes in a 1968 letter to the RLDS First Presidency. He proposed acquiring two new buildings—one across the street from the temple and another across town. Holmes believed that the 1820s Sidney Rigdon home in Mentor, Ohio, could be purchased, disassembled, and reassembled in Kirtland, even though Rigdon’s 1830s Kirtland house still stood across from the temple. (Rigdon had sold his Mentor house after converting to Joseph Smith’s newly formed church and built a house across from the stucco and stone temple.) In a way, Holmes advocated the transportation of a set of relics to a new place and new shrine of sorts; and these relics would be even closer to the holy place of the temple. Holmes perceptively recognized a growing LDS interest in historic properties. “Since the Mormons [the LDS] are pussyfooting around the area,” Holmes stated flatly, “endeavoring to secure various properties, and since we will be pointing toward increasing our visitors to the Temple and our service to them I think it would be highly desirable for us to secure this property if it is at all possible.” Holmes also cited community support for his proposal from non-RLDS members. “The people with the Lake County Historical Society are anxious that we secure this house rather than have it go to the Mormons,” claimed Holmes. Like many RLDS members of his era, Holmes was quick to differentiate his church from the “Mormon” church and had apparently convinced the local historical society of the differences. Although inquiries into

²²⁶ Victor and Edith Turner argue that the proto-typical pilgrim on a pilgrimage stops “at every major way station, there to do penance, pay his devotion, and prepare for the holy climax at the central shrine.” See Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 22.

purchasing the Rigdon house in Mentor never moved past the initial stages, the RLDS church followed Holmes' suggestion and acquired the house across from the temple.²²⁷

Just as the RLDS built their new visitor center and bought more houses around the temple, the LDS church began developing historic sites in close proximity to Kirtland. After a visit by LDS Prophet David O. McKay to northern Ohio in 1956, the LDS church deployed a wealthy Utah real estate agent, Wilford Wood, to negotiate the purchase of an historic early Latter Day Saint farm house in northern Ohio. Wood had an avid, life-long interest in Mormon historic sites and began purchasing sites on his own in the 1930s, long before the LDS church began making a concerted effort to buy many sites. Following McKay's orders, Wood successfully purchased the former John Johnson farm in Hiram, Ohio, in which Joseph Smith had lived for several months in 1832. Significantly, the Johnson farm was thirty-five miles from Kirtland—far enough away that it did not directly contest the temple but close enough so that LDS could physically “reclaim” part of the Ohio portion of their early church history narrative. Despite the purchase, LDS officials took no action to restore the site until 1968 when displays were set up in several rooms of the farm house. In 1969, LDS Apostle Mark E. Peterson formally dedicated the Johnson farm as a church-run historic site. Slowly, the LDS church was establishing itself in Northern Ohio.²²⁸

²²⁷ Reed M. Holmes to First Presidency, 19 November 1968, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” in First Presidency Papers, RG 29-3, f7.

²²⁸ Michael Madsen, “Mormon Meccas: The Spiritual Transformation of Mormon Historical Sites from Points of Interest to Sacred Space,” (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 2003), 109; Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 16-18.

Creating a Curse, Redeeming a Land: LDS Resanctification
of and RLDS Expansion in Kirtland

The ecclesiastical battles of previous generations still haunted Kirtland in the 1960s. In the aftermath of the hotly contested 1905 fight over seating a non-polygamous Mormon Apostle in the U.S. Senate, LDS Apostle James Talmadge wrote a book explaining the LDS temple system to an American public given over to Orientalist fantasies of what went on inside temple precincts. Significantly, Talmadge's work was printed by the LDS church over and over again, with the fourth edition appearing in 1968. When he wrote in 1911, Talmadge was painfully aware of the growing RLDS presence in the Midwest and their ownership of Kirtland Temple. Perhaps predictably, Talmadge attempted to completely dismiss the smaller faith as he explained Kirtland Temple in his text: "Within two years following the dedication [of the Kirtland Temple], a general exodus of the Saints had taken place, and the Temple soon fell into the hands of the persecutors." He continued, "The building is yet standing, and serves the purpose of an ordinary meeting-house for an obscure sect that manifests no visible activity in temple building, nor apparent belief in the sacred ordinances for which temples are erected What was once the Temple of God, in which the Lord Jesus appeared in person, has become but a house—a building whose sole claim to distinction among the innumerable structures built by man, lies in its wondrous past."²²⁹ With these few lines, Talmadge could effectively paper over the evident hurt that historically conscious LDS felt in the early twentieth century over Kirtland Temple's possession by the Community of Christ. But by the 1960s and 1970s, as a growing number of LDS members visited Kirtland

²²⁹ James Edward Talmadge, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968 [original 1911]), 121. Talmadge's explanation was quoted as late as 1988 in official LDS publications. See Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr., ed. *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 304.

Temple on treks to church history sites in the East, a stronger explanation was needed for the Community of Christ's possession. This came through the iteration of an 1841 "scourge" or "curse" on Kirtland, advocated most prominently by 1970s LDS members in the Cleveland area.

Known affectionately today by LDS members as "Mr. Kirtland," Karl Anderson arrived in Cleveland in 1967. A corporate software company executive during the work week, he served in a variety of LDS ecclesiastical offices and "callings," including Cleveland Stake President and Regional Representative. Within the immense and complicated LDS bureaucracy, Anderson was simply a middling-level leader over the equivalent of a diocese.) While preparing for a talk to his LDS stake in 1974, Anderson strongly came to believe that God had placed a "scourge" or curse on Kirtland in the 1840s that had not been lifted.²³⁰ The fact that Anderson did not come to this belief until 1974 is a good indication that the story of the Kirtland scourge was not widespread among Cleveland LDS members.

In Karl Anderson's understanding, the Lord spoke through Joseph Smith in an 1841 revelation and designated Kirtland as a cursed place. In that revelation, Joseph Smith prophetically informed his counselor in the LDS First Presidency, William Law, that "If he will do my will let him not take his family unto the eastern lands, even unto Kirtland; nevertheless, I, the Lord will build up Kirtland, but I, the Lord have a scourge prepared for the inhabitants thereof."²³¹ For Anderson, this verse explained why the LDS church lacked a presence in Kirtland. God had cursed the land; like a fallow field, it lay dormant waiting to be sowed and harvested again.

²³⁰ Maurine Jenson Proctor, "A Passion for Kirtland: God is in the Details," *Meridian Magazine* (2003), <http://www.ldsmag.com/articles/030604details.html>, accessed March 26, 2009.

²³¹ Proctor, "A Passion for Kirtland"; LDS D&C 124: 83 (RLDS D&C 107: 27b).

Beyond Anderson, the belief in a scourge on Kirtland appears to not have been well-known by many Latter-day Saints in the mid-1970s. From anecdotal evidence, several 1970s LDS pilgrims from the intermountain West that I later interviewed had never heard of the scourge.²³² The LDS mission president sent to preside over the Columbus, Ohio Mission in 1976, Donald Brewer, apparently was unaware of the curse until he encountered the teaching from Anderson. “I must admit my mind was somewhat troubled about the scourge that Karl mentioned,” wrote Brewer in his memoirs. “I looked up the references that he gave me. I studied and prayed about them to find answers.”²³³ Brewer became convinced of the curse and informed his missionaries of the momentous task each had before them—they were to assist in lifting the curse, concluded Brewer, through evangelizing in Kirtland itself.

Even if most LDS members did not know of the Kirtland scourge, the teaching did have a limited amount of institutional support by the 1970s. In a 1956 *Improvement Era* article (the then official LDS church magazine), Artel Ricks narrated what soon would become the standard scourge story. Drawing on an 1841 letter, Ricks quoted Hyrum Smith as saying, "All the Saints that dwell in that land are commanded to come away, for this is 'Thus saith the Lord;' therefore pay out no moneys, nor properties for houses, nor lands in that country, for if you do you will lose them, for the time shall come, that you shall not possess them in peace, but shall be scourged with a sore scourge; yet your children may possess them, but not until many years shall pass away;. . .and then I will send forth and build up Kirtland, and it shall be polished and refined according to my word; therefore your doings and your organizations and designs in printing, or any of

²³² For instance, Craig Foster, interview by author, 25 September 2008, Burlington, Wisconsin.

²³³ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 28.

your councils, are not of me, saith the Lord, even so. Amen."²³⁴ Ricks then listed an 1842 tornado, population decline, and lack of industry in Kirtland and the surrounding townships as clear evidence that for more than a century the area had indeed been scourged. "Probably the real scourge which afflicted the area," wrote Ricks, "was the spirit of bitterness and apostasy which took hold of the inhabitants." Ricks crowed that the scourge was beginning to lift; the LDS population in northern Ohio numbered over 1,000 by the 1950s.²³⁵

Several 1960s LDS authors followed Ricks's article when they addressed the contemporary situation in Kirtland. In a 1963 biography of Hyrum Smith published by the official LDS publishing house, author Pearson H. Corbett wrote, "The Lord made it plain that a scourge was to fall upon Kirtland and its inhabitants, but said also that after many years should pass away, their children would possess the blessings promised. Today, the latter part of the prophecy is beginning to be fulfilled, for the membership of the Church is increasing in the vicinity of Kirtland and Northern Ohio."²³⁶ Karl Anderson read Pearson's biography and the scourge information with local Cleveland LDS leaders. Another LDS author, Roy E. Doxley quoted Ricks extensively in his 1969 Deseret Book published work, *Prophecies and Prophetic Promises in the Doctrine and Covenants*.²³⁷ It is unclear whether Ricks's narrative was widely read by LDS members across the United States, but it clearly influenced later LDS authors writing for a church audience.

²³⁴ Artel Ricks, "Hyrum's Prophecy," *Improvement Era* 59 (May 1956): 305.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 307, 341-344.

²³⁶ Pearson Corbett, *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1963), 263. Brewer cited this text as shown to him by Karl Anderson. See Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 33.

²³⁷ Roy E. Doxley, *Prophecies and Prophetic Promises in the Doctrine and Covenants* (Deseret Book, 1969), 147-148.

Beyond these published statements in official LDS books, some LDS members deployed an account of Joseph Smith's 1844 "last dream" to further explain Kirtland Temple's possession by the RLDS. Recorded by W.W. Phelps in recollections after Smith's death,²³⁸ the Mormon prophet apparently dreamed that he was back at his farm in Kirtland, Ohio amidst a desolate landscape. As he stood in his barn, Smith began "contemplating how it might be recovered from the curse upon it." Then, "there came rushing into the barn a company of furious men, who commenced to pick a quarrel with me." A man angrily argued with Smith over ownership of the barn and the farm. "I then told him that I did not think it worth contending about," related Smith, "that I had no desire to live upon it in its present state, and if he thought he had a better right I would not quarrel with him about it but leave." While this argument continued, "a rabble rushed in and nearly filled the barn, drew out their knives, and began to quarrel among themselves for the premises, and for a moment forgot me, at which time I took the opportunity to walk out of the barn about up to my ankles in mud." As Smith continued to walk through the mud, he heard the "rabble" in the barn "screeching and screaming in a very distressed manner, as it appeared they had engaged in a general fight with their knives. While they were thus engaged, the dream or vision ended."²³⁹

There is evidence that some LDS members read Smith's dream and saw it as shedding prophetic insight on the RLDS ownership of Kirtland Temple. Key 1970s Northern Ohio LDS leaders used the dream as a supplementary text to help LDS members understand the predicament "the land of Kirtland" faced and the momentous times in which faithful members lived. In 1976, Mission President Donald Brewer wrote

²³⁸ Bruce A. Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith's Political Clerk," *BYU Studies* 32, no. 1 (1991): 9.

²³⁹ Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1924), 393-394.

in his diary that, after a meeting with Anderson in which Brewer learned of Smith's dream, "I looked up the reference to Joseph Smith's 'dream or vision' and pursued an intense prayerful study. The more I read and reread what had been recorded concerning the matter, the more convinced I became that it held the key or secret to Kirtland, the Temple and the ultimate disposition of the Lord's plan for that special area of Church history. . . . For now I will be content to let the Lord play out His timetable."²⁴⁰

Anderson and Brewer felt that Joseph Smith had foreseen their predicament and, slowly but surely, efforts were being made to reclaim the land of Kirtland—and the temple.

Anderson and Brewer quickly became allies. Possessed with an urgency about Kirtland's situation, they told the curse story to local LDS members, missionaries, and LDS hierarchy in Salt Lake City. Anderson and Brewer posed three solutions to lifting the curse: constructing an LDS visitor center near the Kirtland Temple that, in Brewer's words, could share the "true story of Temples,"²⁴¹ conducting evangelism in Kirtland itself, and establishing an LDS ward, or congregation, near the temple. Crucially, these were local initiatives that had to gain the reluctant acceptance of LDS officials in Salt Lake City. Anderson and Brewer's cosmic framing of their initiatives greatly aided in their acceptance by the hierarchy.

By the mid 1970s, local Cleveland LDS members sought approval to build an LDS Visitor Center down the road from the temple. Spearheaded by Karl Anderson, local LDS members in 1975 put together a proposal for the LDS First Presidency that included an architect's drawing of the new visitor's center, a brochure stating the purpose for the building, and even a "sheet listing prophecies related to the future of Kirtland."

According to the brochure, the purpose of the Visitor's Center "would be to initiate a new

²⁴⁰ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 41-42.

²⁴¹ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 7.

Missionary era in Kirtland” and “introduce non-members to basic teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” “reinforce the faith and testimony of active Church members,” and “assist in fulfilling the promise the Lord made regarding the growth of the Church in Kirtland after having indicated the Scourge would come upon the area.”²⁴² With the exception of the latter point, these goals approximated the stated objectives of similar LDS-run Visitor’s Centers in Independence, Missouri, in Nauvoo, Illinois, and near Palmyra, New York.²⁴³ Despite the many hours local Cleveland members spent drafting this professionally designed proposal, there was no word from the hierarchy even a year after submission. Their proposal had stalled somewhere in the burgeoning maze of the LDS church’s bureaucracy. As Anderson later recalled, the bureaucrats “opposed anything that did not originate in Salt Lake.”²⁴⁴

Still, this did not dissipate the fervor of local LDS Kirtland boosters like Anderson and Brewer. They felt that their church desperately needed proximity to the temple to decenter the RLDS narrative being shared there. This need haunted Mission President Brewer even before he began his mission in 1976. In an extraordinary dream recorded in his journal, Brewer found himself standing in front of the Kirtland Temple, engaged in a conversation with a stranger about a “visitors’ center that our church was contemplating building in Kirtland.” Brewer continued:

As I stood facing the Temple, my gaze moved to the left through the trees and I beheld a vacant area of green grass and stated, “There upon that vacant lot our church will build a Visitor’s Center where the public may come and hear the real story of the temple and its purpose.’ The stranger to whom I was speaking said, ‘You can’t build a Visitor’s Center on that lot, it belongs to us—the

²⁴² Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 39.

²⁴³ Madsen, “Mormon Meccas,” 130-131.

²⁴⁴ As quoted in Madsen, “Mormon Meccas,” 106; see also Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 39.

Reorganized Church!’ I replied, ‘What difference does that make? You should be just as interested as we are in building a center on that lot that would tell the true story of Temples.’ He then emphatically stated, ‘Well, you’ll not build on that lot.’ As he said this I immediately turned around and looked south along the street running in front of the Temple and saw a two-story building of a certain block construction, on the other side of the road. Pointing to the building I said, ‘All right then, we will build it where that building now stands and it will be a beautiful building and we will tell the world the true story of this magnificent Temple.’²⁴⁵

The dream faded, and Brewer awoke. “It had been so real that I actually felt I could describe every detail of the Temple and surrounding area,” wrote Brewer.²⁴⁶

Brewer’s dream provides a window into the desire of some LDS to be close to the temple. Clearly, Brewer felt that RLDS did not grasp the real reason for Kirtland Temple’s existence. New interpreters were needed to share “the true story of Temples.” Additionally, Brewer felt that the LDS understanding of temples was universal enough that RLDS would not stand in the way of proclaiming the message of the temple to the world. (Of course, it was precisely in this different understanding of temple space that conflict was centered in Kirtland.) As Brewer’s mission continued, he felt increased urgency for the LDS church to build a visitor center near the temple to share this authentic LDS message. Brewer and Anderson’s solution to this dilemma was to look for land close to the temple for a temporary LDS visitor’s center in anticipation of a more permanent visitor’s center. They would need to act fast. As the late 1970s trailed onward, the RLDS church increased its hold on Kirtland as a pilgrimage center.

On July 17, 1977, W. Wallace Smith returned again to Kirtland for another plaque dedication. The National Park Service was honoring the temple as a newly proclaimed National Historic Landmark. “The citizens of Ohio and the nation, of all denominations, can take pride in this church’s contribution to the history of the United States,”

²⁴⁵ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 7-8.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

proclaimed National Park Service Representative William Birdsell. The non-RLDS mayor of Kirtland was even more effulgent with his praise: “We thank those of you who, when the reins of church leadership were passed on, maintained high ideals, honest convictions and further pursued standards for the community to follow.” Such praise rang true to the ears of the mostly RLDS crowd who perhaps felt that the mayor referred to the historic RLDS opposition to plural marriage. Those saints who had practiced plural marriage in the intermountain West were again absent from the ceremony. An RLDS historian, stake bishop, and world church presiding bishop all gave brief remarks, but no LDS members participated. Following the ceremony, the RLDS hosted a reception followed by tours of the temple for the assembled guests.²⁴⁷

By the late 1970s, the RLDS church officials moved to buy properties of their members living close to the temple. As the church members aged, some contemplated selling their residences or donating them to the church. Several contacted their church, but also alerted local LDS members that their homes would be for sale. RLDS member Frank Ray owned a home built by a Latter Day Saint member in the 1830s, William Marks. Ray mentioned that he might offer his home for sale to local LDS elders that he had befriended; Ray passed away a few months later. His widow then wrote to the RLDS headquarters and offered the building for sale. “If my church doesn’t let me know soon, is your church ready to buy?” queried Mrs. Ray to the roving LDS elders in the neighborhood. “Yes,” was their quick reply, even though they had no official authorization to do so. Anderson and Brewer immediately wrote to Salt Lake, but the home was sold before they received a reply.²⁴⁸ While this setback was disappointing, it was mitigated by the identity of the original owner of the home. William Marks had

²⁴⁷ Elroy Hanton, “Celebration at Kirtland,” *Saints’ Herald* 124 (1977): 32-33, 38.

²⁴⁸ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 119.

become an RLDS member in the 1850s and, therefore, an apostate to most LDS members. Another home in the area was far more desirable—the former home of Joseph Smith, Sr.

Like the Marks house, the Smith house was owned by an RLDS family. Beyond the Smith provenance, the home stood directly to the north of the temple, bordering the temple cemetery and possessing a clear view of the stucco and stone House of the Lord. “Our feeling was that being in full view of the Temple, we might be able to remodel the back addition to the house into a temporary Visitors’ Center for the orientation of tour bus groups and others that were coming to Kirtland, primarily to visit the historic Temple,” wrote Brewer in his diary.²⁴⁹ Again, Brewer and Anderson went through the complicated process of applying for funds to purchase the home from its owners. They also sought to buy a structure further away from the Kirtland Temple in the nearby Chagrin riverbottom—the 1830s Newell K. Whitney dry goods store. Unlike the Smith home, this structure was already owned by an LDS member.

In 1964, the eccentric Utah real estate broker Wilford Wood had purchased the former Newell K. Whitney store in the Kirtland flats area. The store had been the home of an early Latter Day Saint bishop and the site of several significant events—such as the incipient 1830s “School of the Prophets” conducted by Joseph Smith, Jr. and the birthplace of his son, Joseph Smith III, the late nineteenth-century prophet of the RLDS church. Wood passed away in 1972, but his widow continued to hold onto the Whitney store property in case the LDS church would ever want to purchase it from her. With a new plan to begin housing LDS missionaries in Kirtland on site, Mission President Brewer called the widow Wood in December 1977 for permission to house elders in the historic structure. “Why certainly you have my permission to move the Elders into the

²⁴⁹ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 120.

store,” replied Wood. “You know why I have held the store all these years since Wilford died? Because he told me back in 1964 that the Lord had made it known to him that the day would come when two missionaries would move into the upstairs of the Whitney Store and he, Wilford Wood, had better get out to Kirtland and purchase the store so it would be available.”²⁵⁰ Both Brewer and Sister Wood saw prophetic fulfillment in the presence of missionaries in the Whitney store—not just of Wilford’s revelation, but of the larger prophecy of Kirtland’s scourge. “How could man, without inspiration and the whisperings of the Lord, possibly have known the future need of this old store in the restoration of Kirtland?” rhetorically asked Brewer in his diary. “He couldn’t! But the Lord has a plan for Kirtland.”²⁵¹ For Brewer and Anderson, the availability of the Whitney store and the properties surrounding it were an answer to earnest prayer.

In August 1978, the two LDS members then helped draft a letter to the Church Real Estate and Historic Sites Committee providing rationale for the purchase of the Whitney Store, the Smith home, and the surrounding houses. They also included their renewed plea for a visitor’s center to be opened by the LDS church in Kirtland. In the letter, Brewer complained that “the truth of what happened in Kirtland is not being told by the RLDS. A guided tour of the Kirtland Temple does not generally mention the spiritual happenings that took place.”²⁵² Brewer repeated the Kirtland scourge story to the committee, underscoring the prophetic importance of their actions. Furthermore, historic sites with a visitor’s center would allow for clear differentiation between their church and the RLDS church. “Every road map, Ohio tour guide, etc., indicate Kirtland as the town of the ‘historic Mormon temple’. Yet when the tourist visits the area, no

²⁵⁰ As quoted in *ibid.*, 80.

²⁵¹ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 80.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 128.

mention is made of the word Mormon. People come and go by the thousands, thinking they have met the Mormons.”²⁵³ Brewer was particularly concerned with what guests were learning about the LDS church at the Community of Christ’s site. “Thousands upon thousands of Heavenly Father’s children . . . come to this place expecting to hear the truth,” argued Brewer, “and go away with half-truths and a complete misconception of our church.”²⁵⁴ While Brewer complained about the message RLDS members were bringing, he wanted the committee members in Salt Lake to not worry about upsetting relations the RLDS church. “They have actually encouraged and helped us here,” argued Brewer.²⁵⁵ Brewer worried that inaction on the part of the LDS church would prove disastrous for future property acquisitions. “Available properties are being bought by the Reorganized Church thus being permanently removed from availability.” Finally, Brewer argued that they needed to move forward with these acquisitions even without ownership of the Kirtland Temple. “In the Lord’s own due time that [ownership of the temple] will be taken care of,” Brewer confidently predicted.²⁵⁶ Clearly, Brewer believed his church eventually would own the structure.

While they awaited approval from the Real Estate Committee, Anderson and others in his stake sought to buy land for a new stake building in the Kirtland area. After much thought, they decided to target land a half mile from the temple. Anderson and Brewer arranged for a third party real estate agent to purchase the stake center land; such an agent was to represent a group of anonymous investors. This process would be repeated with their attempts to purchase historic homes in the Kirtland area, too. As

²⁵³ Ibid. 128-129.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 129.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 129-130.

Brewer explained, the third party real estate agent was “to avoid any form of a ‘bidding war’ with the RLDS Church of property owners.”²⁵⁷ Such competition was not simply waged with the RLDS church. Brewer saw it as a battle with the Devil himself. “One thing I do know, Satan does not want us to succeed,” wrote Brewer. “This area for Church growth has been under the ‘scourge’ for so many years that Satan would be satisfied with the ‘status quo’.”²⁵⁸ The battle with the Adversary took on increasing importance as Brewer’s LDS missionaries in Kirtland began to testify to others that the land was holy ground. “Rare are the spots of earth that could be as holy,” wrote LDS missionary Michael J. Fitzgerald in a journal kept to record the opening of the LDS mission in the area. “Only towns like Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Nauvoo could compare [in sacredness],” opined Fitzgerald.²⁵⁹ Another missionary elder, Drew Galbraith, wrote, “Kirtland is holy land—Holy because my Savior and My Father in Heaven have personally been here. Holy because of what has happened, holy because of what will yet happen.”²⁶⁰ At an LDS sacrament meeting, President Brewer “bore witness of God’s sacred plan for the redeeming of Kirtland.” “Upon establishing the fact that we all were privileged to be here,” remembered Brewer, “I then explained how I felt about the area being Holy Ground.” Like Fitzgerald, Brewer saw parallels between Kirtland and Palestine. “Our people often travel many thousands of miles to go to the ‘Holy land’ in Palestine when we are living and walking on Holy Ground all around us. . . . A Holy Land! Yes, and soon to be redeemed by the Lord, according to the prophecies of Hyrum

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 146.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 112.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 141.

Smith, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.”²⁶¹ The super-sacralization of Kirtland, then, made Brewer and Fitzgerald actors in a cosmic drama between the forces of good and demonic evil. Kirtland and its temple became homologous to Palestine, creating spatial links between the two sites in the minds of the LDS missionaries. This resanctification of Kirtland provided the missionaries with validation of their efforts in a very difficult mission field, too. As Elder Fitzgerald left his mission in late January 1979, he wondered if he had failed—not one person had been baptized in Kirtland. President Brewer reassured him that “you will yet see fruits of your labors in Kirtland.”²⁶² Brewer’s God was working out a plan to redeem the land.

As Cleveland LDS leaders sacralized the land and strategized purchases in Kirtland, the local high school newspaper scooped their plan, causing great concern to the elders. The October 27, 1978 issue of the *Kirtland High School Observer* proclaimed, “Utah Mormons Buy Store.” Brewer nervously noted that the story included “falsehood ... [such as] as the Whitney Store being turned into a museum, the Church planning 3 or 4 other Chapels within the Kirtland Ward area, and the building of a Temple in Kirtland that will include the administrative offices for the eastern United States.” Brewer worried, “This kind of information could really upset our relations with the RLDS Church. . . .”²⁶³ With the propagation of sophomoric journalism in Kirtland, local LDS hierarchy were placed on notice that, even if the RLDS were now a tolerated minority, local Kirtlanders feared that a larger Mormon group would alter their community in significant ways.

In the meantime, Anderson and Brewer’s purchase proposal wound its way through the immense LDS bureaucracy. On February 8, 1979, six months after their

²⁶¹ Ibid., 55.

²⁶² Ibid., 159.

²⁶³ Ibid., 145.

initial proposal, they received approval from the LDS Real Estate and Historic Sites Committee to negotiate purchase of the Smith home, but were met with bitter disappointment. “Oh no! The Joseph Smith Sr. home has been sold—but not to us!” exclaimed Brewer in his diary. The owners “had used our offer (which was identified as a group of businessmen) to convince the RLDS that they ought to buy it.”²⁶⁴ Shrewdly, the owners had played the two churches off one another and sold the property to their own church. “Satan continues his attempts to frustrate our work,” stoically wrote Brewer. “However, we continue to press forward. We will win. Kirtland Village will be restored!”²⁶⁵

Despite this setback, Anderson and Brewer successfully gained approval for purchase of land for a stake center in Kirtland along Ohio State Route 306—only a mile from the temple. They moved quickly to submit a new proposal for a Kirtland Visitor’s Center. In a meeting of Akron and Cleveland Stake Presidents, Karl Anderson proposed that the LDS church contact the descendants of early Kirtland Latter-day Saints and ask them to purchase the historic properties of their progenitors and turn them over to the church. Brewer, who was present at the meeting, exulted, “In this manner he [Anderson] could see a literal fulfillment of Hyrum’s prophecy ‘. . . yet your children may possess them, but not until many years shall pass away.’ How exciting! What a perfectly logical explanation of how this could come to pass.”²⁶⁶ By late March, the ad hoc committee had placed their finishing touches on their plan and lined up an April 1, 1979 presentation with a committee of the LDS Church Historical Department headed by G. Homer Durham. From there, Durham would make a presentation to the LDS First Presidency.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 166-167.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 168.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 169.

For years, Anderson had been stymied by committees that had turned down his local initiatives on Kirtland. His first proposal was sent in April 1975, but no action was taken on it.²⁶⁷ A second proposal sent by Brewer in early 1977 was referred to the LDS Missionary Executive Committee who turned it down “for the time being.”²⁶⁸ Anderson became frustrated the maze of church committees which sidelined his proposal. Still, he confidently believed that a personal, face-to-face appeal to members in the LDS First Presidency or Quorum of Twelve Apostles eventually would work; and he was right. His proximity to Kirtland had enabled him to cultivate a far closer relationship with LDS apostles and General Authorities (GA’s) than most stake presidents across the United States. When members of the LDS hierarchy traveled through the Cleveland area, Anderson picked them up at the airport, drove them around historic sites, and had a captive audience to pitch his plan for the Kirtland Visitor’s Center. He also talked to them about the promises God had made toward the lifting the scourge on Kirtland. If LDS hierarchy had not known about the scourge on Kirtland before meeting Anderson, they went home well-aware of his belief in it.

Anderson’s outreach to LDS hierarchy proved successful in the end. After Anderson gave his Kirtland tour to Senior Apostle Spencer W. Kimball in 1976, Kimball left with a strong impression that he must do something soon about Kirtland.²⁶⁹ Similarly, after a tour of Kirtland, Apostle James Faust encouraged Anderson’s pursuit of the Kirtland project. As Anderson and Brewer began their sales pitch to a visiting seventy (an administrator in charge of their area), he affably responded that he did not need any

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 38.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 59.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 35.

convincing; he was pleased by their efforts.²⁷⁰ “As more and more of the Brethren from Salt Lake come to Ohio for a visit,” Mission President Brewer believed, “word is getting out that attitudes in Kirtland are changing for the better.”²⁷¹ Brewer believed that the more favorably his church was perceived in Kirtland, and the better informed “the Brethren” were of these changes, the better the chance that their Kirtland LDS Visitor Center plan would become a reality.

Beyond sending their proposal to the Church Historical Department, Anderson and Brewer sent their proposal directly to Apostle David Haight before the April General Conference of the LDS Church. Brewer grew nervous as the presentation to the First Presidency neared. He called a friend in the hierarchy and asked him to “‘touch bases’ with Brother Durham to have time to be sure to explain to the Brethren how desperately the voice of truth was needed to be heard in Kirtland.”²⁷² Anderson and Brewer’s proposal emphasized Kirtland’s historic and prophetic role. The brochure they prepared was titled “Kirtland—Village of Prophecy.”²⁷³ Apostle Haight did not have time to review their material due to a pending visit to South America. However, he fortuitously left the proposal packet on the desk of the powerful President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Ezra Taft Benson. Benson pushed through the proposal in a later meeting with the Quorum of Twelve and subsequently championed the restoration of the Whitney store as a historic site. As Benson later related, “In a meeting with the brethren, they told me we would not have another Nauvoo”—a historic site that the LDS church had spent millions to recreate and restore in the 1970s and 1980s. The assembled LDS

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 171.

leadership worried that too much had been spent on Nauvoo, diverting funds needed for missionary projects and church buildings. They did not want this scenario repeated in Kirtland. To this, Benson replied, “We would not have another Nauvoo, but we would have a Kirtland, and it would be what it should be.”²⁷⁴ Benson effectively ended the debate with his comment.

Brewer and Anderson were ecstatic at this turn of events. On April 27, 1979, Brewer received a letter from the LDS Missionary Department about a proposed visitor’s center for Kirtland.²⁷⁵ “As I look back on the pattern that has been set,” he wrote in his diary, “I can see how the Lord has guided us towards the ‘flats area [the land a quarter mile to the north of the Kirtland Temple]” The desire for physical proximity to the temple was still very strong, but Brewer’s faith assured him that the setbacks, such as the failed purchases of the Smith and Marks homes, were all part of larger narrative of redemption being worked out in the course of time. “Each time we attempted to purchase a piece of property up near the Temple, we have met with failure,” noted Brewer. “I am not entirely sure of the reasons but apparently we have a greater future surrounding the Whitney Store—at least for the present time. One day it will all be available.”²⁷⁶ “Who said, ‘dreams never come true?’” asked Brewer, with letter in hand from the Missionary Department. “Mine will!”²⁷⁷ Still, the full scope of Anderson and Brewer’s proposal would not be realized until 2003—a long wait for both men who desperately wanted an alternative narrative on Kirtland Temple to be shared with arriving pilgrims.

²⁷⁴ As quoted in Madsen, “Mormon Meccas,” 111.

²⁷⁵ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 177.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

On October 14, 1979, Anderson's advocate for LDS Kirtland restorations arrived in town again. Apostle Ezra Taft Benson was on a whirlwind tour of the globe that included a short stay in Kirtland, Ohio. While there, Benson participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new LDS Kirtland Stake Center building. A month later, Benson would travel to a hillside outside of Jerusalem where he would attend the dedication of a garden monument to an early Mormon apostle, Orson Hyde, whose 1841 prayer LDS faithful believed had "dedicated the land of Palestine for the building up of Jerusalem and the gathering of Abraham's posterity."²⁷⁸ Conscious of the role of LDS authorities in blessing or cursing a place, Benson engaged in place-making of his own in Kirtland. In a dedicatory talk, he read from Hyrum Smith's 1841 letter that placed a scourge on Kirtland and then declared, "The scourge that was placed upon Kirtland in that prophecy is being lifted today." Additionally, Benson stated that "we have a new day here [in Kirtland], and a great opportunity and a great day ahead of us. I'm sure of it, because I have been pondering this. I'm sure that there is a new day, that the Lord is looking in on the people of this community." Later, in his dedicatory prayer for the groundbreaking ceremony, Benson pleaded with God to lift the scourge from the land.²⁷⁹

Anderson was overjoyed at Benson's pronouncement. He called his friend Brewer that evening, who by October had ended his mission presidency in Ohio and gone by to Utah. "This is the moment I have been waiting for, ever since reading about the curse in D&C 124:83," scribbled Brewer in his journal. "I have felt that when President Kimball visited Kirtland in January 1976, he opened the door to events that have transpired since,

²⁷⁸ "President Kimball Dedicates Orson Hyde Memorial Garden in Jerusalem," *Ensign* 9, no. 12 (December 1979): 67-68.

²⁷⁹ "The Church Comes Alive in Kirtland, Ohio," *Ensign* 9, no. 12 (December 1979), 69-70.

but now we have the door thrown wide open and the work will move very quickly.”

“After such a long wait,” he exulted, “Kirtland will soon be a center of truth, broadcasting the message of the restoration to the world.”²⁸⁰

The increased presence of LDS in an area historically dominated by RLDS caused concern for some RLDS members and non-Latter Day Saint residents. As the LDS church began construction on its new Kirtland chapel in the fall of 1979, local media outlets reported (and perhaps even stoked) the controversy between the two rival churches just as church leaders tried to assure their memberships that there was no story. A November 18, 1979 article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* provocatively claimed “Mormons’ return to Kirtland may trigger war for converts.”²⁸¹ Front and center in the article was the story of the scourge on Kirtland. “We believe when the Mormons left there (Kirtland), God put a curse on the place,” a reporter quoted LDS Cleveland Stake Bishop Bruce C. Walborn as saying. The construction of the chapel would lift the curse, claimed Walborn. Countering the LDS mapping of Kirtland was the RLDS claim that “a temple can be built only at the specific command of God. Members say the Kirtland Temple, which they call the House of God [the House of the Lord], is the only existing structure that meets this criterion.” The reporter went on to cite the traditional RLDS claims to temple ownership—the claim inscribed on the temple placard. “We have no aspiration of ownership (of the temple),” assured Walborn in a statement that can only be taken as disingenuous. “We are thankful that they (members of the reorganized church) care about it.”²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 194.

²⁸¹ Leigh Hermance, “Mormons’ Return to Kirtland May Trigger War for Converts,” *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), 18 November 1979.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

As LDS resacralized the land around Kirtland Temple, RLDS leaders contemplated changing the plaque on the front of the temple. In 1972, RLDS church historian Dick Howard wrote in a memo to the First Presidency that the plaque on the temple's front "remains as a visible post-1880 denial of the Temple as an authentic restoration of the original 1836 temple." The original plaque did not bear any words about the RLDS as "in succession by decision of court." Gently, Howard asked, "How do we use sites such as Kirtland—as historical, or as polemical?"²⁸³ In essence, Howard believed that representing Kirtland's history did not entail crafting a polemical claim to authority over and against other Latter Day Saints. Howard's description of the temple as historical versus polemical space would become the watchword of temple guides by the 1990s. Yet, as will be shown, such a concern did not in fact soften the polemical claims made by Kirtland's interpreters. It only changed the terms.

In 1976, the then RLDS Assistant Church Historian Grant McMurray made a report to a supervisor on the original wording of the temple inscription. McMurray admitted that, with his materials, "the evidence is sketchy" about the temple's original inscription. He suggested that "it would be desirable to place on the Temple a sign which has the most historical claim (not necessarily the oldest) This suggests to me that the phrase related to the succession by the Reorganized Church should be removed as extraneous to the purpose and value of the sign." McMurray suggested that the sign should read "HOUSE OF THE LORD, Built by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1834."²⁸⁴ McMurray's suggestion was adopted by the mid-1980s, with the added

²⁸³ Richard P. Howard to First Presidency, "Re: Proposed Kirtland Drama," 15 September 1972, "Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975," First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7.

²⁸⁴ W. Grant McMurray to Elroy Hanton, "Re: Inscription on Kirtland Temple," 10 December 1976, "Kirtland: Correspondence, 1975-1979," in Historic Properties Papers, CCA, RG 26, f160.

appellation of “Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” but without the polemical tag, “in succession by decision of court, Feb. 1880.”²⁸⁵

While RLDS leaders envisioned a new relationship between themselves and the public through the temple, the LDS church moved forward with plans to restore a dry-goods store down the hill from the temple. LDS officials acquired the former 1830s Newel K. Whitney Store from the widow of LDS member Wilford Wood. By late April 1978, the church allocated \$500,000 for purchasing properties surrounding the store. One couple, owners of the former 1830s John Johnson tavern, held out against any approaches made by the authorized real estate agent for the LDS church. The couple assured the agent that they wanted to run their business (a bar) for another three years before retiring. LDS Mission President Brewer related, “Two weeks later, the wife suddenly and unexpectedly died.” “After a period of time, the agent will return and make another offer to the widower,” he wrote. “On every hand I see the influence of God directing our course in Kirtland,” he reflected, as always, searching for providential meaning in events.²⁸⁶ Subsequently, the LDS church acquired the bar from the widower.

On August 24-25, 1984, LDS Church officials sponsored “Kirtland Heritage Days” that drew LDS members from far and wide, along with thousands of local Kirtland residents. Culminating the celebrations was the formal dedication of the Newell K. Whitney Store. After a year of research and restoration work, the newly renovated structure was formally re-opened for tours. “If New York was the cradle of the Church, then Kirtland represents the school days of the Church,” pronounced LDS First Presidency member Gordon B. Hinckley to a crowd of 2,000 spectators outside the

²⁸⁵ Walden and Rastle, “Restoring, Preserving, and Maintaining Kirtland Temple, 1880-1920,” 22-23.

²⁸⁶ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 193.

structure. “The store was a hallowed place of glorious revelation,” preached President of the Council of Twelve Apostles Ezra Taft Benson. He went on to elaborate that Joseph Smith received twenty revelations in Kirtland that became part of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, a canonical book of LDS Scripture. Benson also mentioned an account by an early Latter-day Saint, John Murdock, who saw a vision of Jesus in the Whitney Store. Clearly, Benson and Hinckley wanted to impress on their audience the sacred nature of the newly restored structure. Such an emphasis paradoxically drew on the power of the nearby temple where LDS believed Jesus had appeared as well as contested the temple’s importance. Now another structure where “the Savior” had appeared would vie for the attention of LDS pilgrims.²⁸⁷

While many of the attendees of the dedication service were LDS members, some RLDS church members and the local community were also present. The local community joined together for a pie-making contest, a family film festival, a pancake breakfast, and five-mile long race. “The finest feeling of unity was apparent in the Church and community efforts,” exuded a highranking LDS official, Elder Rex C. Reeve.²⁸⁸ In a somewhat hostile environment, LDS officials attempted to present their church as a valued member of the community. With this presentation, LDS members could value their distinctiveness (after all, the Whitney Store was an LDS sacred site) while asserting that “gentiles” now accepted them. Such acceptance reassured LDS members that God had decisively lifted the curse from Kirtland and the land would now prosper.

What is sacred or profane space is always situational—connected to specific stories, actions, habits, and contexts for specific groups. Jonathan Z. Smith suggests that

²⁸⁷ Sister Andrews, “Restored Whitney Store Dedicated in Kirtland,” *Ensign* 14, no. 11 (November 1984), 110-111.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 111. Reeves was a member of the LDS First Quorum of the Seventy, and, in this role, served as administrator for the North America Northeast Area of the LDS church.

“sacrality is, above all, a category of emplacement.”²⁸⁹ The formal dedication of the Whitney Store explicitly placed Kirtland and its temple more firmly within the LDS sacred space. Since 1978, LDS missionaries had given tours of the Whitney Store and shown a crudely produced slide show made by the young missionary elders.²⁹⁰ With added support from the LDS hierarchy in 1979, the Whitney Store presentation became more professional. LDS members could hear “the true story of the Kirtland” in the words of LDS Mission President Donald Brewer.²⁹¹ Senior missionary couples would now staff the Whitney Store full-time, much like the senior RLDS couples who had staffed Kirtland Temple in the past. With the blessing of church leaders and new sites, Kirtland was well on its way to becoming recognized as sacred space throughout the membership of the LDS church.

Conclusion: From Cursing a Land to Blessing a Temple

By the mid-1980s, then, two sets of pilgrimage routes had emerged for LDS and RLDS pilgrims that included Kirtland Temple as sacred space. For RLDS, Kirtland Temple remained the primary sacred shrine in a travel itinerary that could include other places, such as Nauvoo, Illinois; Independence, Missouri; Lamoni, Iowa (a city built by RLDS in the 1880s); and the LDS controlled sites in western New York. LDS pilgrims might visit these same sites (with the exception of Lamoni) en route to the summer Hill Cumorah pageant, just as they had in the 1960s. However, by the mid 1980s, LDS members now had shrines close to Kirtland Temple that clearly contested the RLDS control and interpretation of Kirtland’s sacred space.

²⁸⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 104.

²⁹⁰ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 128.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

For at least the LDS members in Cleveland and the hierarchy in Salt Lake, Kirtland Temple itself had been transformed from a site of interest into a site of contagion, only then to be blessed along with the surrounding land as a place of promise. Like bodily fluids that could be either holy or polluting, the Kirtland Temple had gone from socially constructed dirt on a cursed landscape to a sacred shrine in a holy land. While Kirtland Temple still remained an ambiguous site for many LDS pilgrims, LDS agents on the ground in Cleveland worked out a story that could explain RLDS possession of the temple while still embracing it as a holy site. With the addition of a few converts in the area, a new LDS ward building, and a restored Whitney Store, the LDS God was slowly calling Kirtland home again, they posited. “Now whenever I am asked, ‘So when will we get the temple back?’” wrote Mission President Brewer in 1978 after an epiphany about Kirtland Temple ownership, “I simply reply, ‘It is not our Temple, but His Temple. He [God] is able to appoint any one or any group to be the caretakers. In due time, all things shall be established in their proper place and order.’”²⁹² As anthropologist Mary Douglas argued, “In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying, we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea.”²⁹³ With the curse on Kirtland lifted, an LDS order was remaking the land and its sites.

This LDS resanctification of sacred space offers several insights into the study of sacred space that may be “useful to think with.” First, this case study illustrates the power of middling agents, or the subalterns of religious groups, in creating and sustaining sacred spaces. Karl Anderson’s success shows how the understandings and visions of a local

²⁹² Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 151.

²⁹³ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 2.

LDS leader could have enormous influence on a rigidly hierarchical denomination. Anderson not only convinced his local congregants that Kirtland had a curse that needed to be lifted; he convinced the LDS President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. And he mobilized all of them to act. Future studies of Mormonism need to pay closer attention to how subaltern agents like Anderson have shaped institutional policies and caused historical change. And future studies of sacred space could further investigate how intermediaries between hierarchies and pilgrims mediate and create sacred spaces.²⁹⁴

Second, this case study illustrates that the creation and maintenance of sacred space may be one strategy that religious groups use to answer theodical questions, or questions about the presence of evil. Indeed, through the pronouncement of the curse and the place-making actions that lifted the curse, LDS members made Kirtland a spatialized theodicy that explained the presence of religious competitors. The LDS resanctification of Kirtland was a complicated ritual performance, too, involving missionaries traversing the land, LDS members drawing up literal blueprints for the area, and Mormons testifying in print and in person of the divine activity that was happening and had happened in Kirtland. This gives further evidence to the claim by religious studies scholars David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal that sacred space is necessarily a performed (or ritualized) space and necessarily a contested space.²⁹⁵ Additionally,

²⁹⁴ With the exception of a few monographs on service providers for the hajj and a handful of articles on tour guiding in Israel, very few pilgrimage studies have focused on the mediation of sacred space by middling agents. For examples of the exceptions, see Jackie Feldman, "Constructing a Shared Bible Land: Jewish Israeli Guiding Performances for Protestant Pilgrims," *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 2 (2007): 351-374 and Robert R. Bianchi, *Guests of God: Pilgrimage and Politics in the Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). On the other hand, according to heritage studies scholar Dallen J. Timothy, the literature on travel and tourism has long recognized the role of intermediaries in place making. Dallen J. Timothy. "Re: Literature on Tourism and Translators," email message to author, September 8, 2009.

²⁹⁵ Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 18-19.

through this case study we see more clearly how the creation of sacred space involves a process extended over time; Kirtland's resanctification demonstrates that cursing a place may be simply one step taken in a larger process of spatial sanctification.

Despite Kirtland's dramatic transformation by its confident boosters, in the coming decades after 1984, Kirtland Temple's redemption as LDS sacred space would be a gradual, uneven process for most LDS members. RLDS members, Brewer's caretakers of the temple, would face even larger problems related to the site in the years following the Whitney Store dedication. The sacred place of Kirtland Temple, and the standing of the community in relation to the site, would be at stake in their struggles.

CHAPTER 6: PROXIMITY: THE DESTROYER AND THE
PEACEMAKERS: EVOLVING CONSTRUCTIONS OF KIRTLAND
TEMPLE (1984-2008)

“God is giving me a new name and a new job,” declared former Kirtland Temple guide Jeffrey Lundgren to a group of gathered Kirtland followers in 1987. “I am now to be called ‘the destroyer.’ People will die at my hands.”²⁹⁶ Lundgren did not speak in hyperbole. Just as the Kirtland Temple began to be positively reincorporated into LDS sacred space by 1984, the RLDS community was rocked with a church schism. The division complicated the church’s relationship to the temple as a singular sacred space. Tragically, the ensuing contestation was not simply verbal in its dimensions, but physical, too. Lundgren’s tiny schismatic sect marked Kirtland Temple as a place for apocalyptic redemption; Lundgren himself would become a mass murderer. In a contrapuntal distinction from Lundgren’s violence, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the RLDS church would attempt to reinvent itself as a peace and justice church even as a discursive civil war raged between liberals and conservatives in the movement. By turn of the new

²⁹⁶ Pete Earley, *Prophet of Death: The Mormon Blood Atonement Killings* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 223. The Lundgren cult killings have been chronicled in two other works, Cynthia Stalter Sasse and Peggy Murphy Widder, *The Kirtland Massacre: The True and Terrible Story of the Mormon Cult Murders* (New York: D.I. Fine, 1991) and William Dean Russell, “His Name was Death and Hell Followed with Him: The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland, Ohio” (unpublished manuscript in possession of author, 1996). Russell’s manuscript is paginated by chapter and not as a whole. Subsequent references will appear as Russell, “The 1989 Cult Murders,” followed by chapter number and page number. Russell, a professor emeritus at the RLDS Graceland College, conducted thousands of hours of interviews for his work; his manuscript is the best documented of all texts on the Kirtland cult. However, his work remains in draft form. In a conversation with this author, Russell opined that Earley’s work is “reasonably accurate,” but Sasse and Widder’s work is poorly researched and overly sensational. Sasse was the prosecutor for the Lundgren trial. Russell believes that Sasse “made no attempt to understand the religious issues, and she treated Lundgren’s wife and son as devils, along with the other co-defendants. . . . So the book is useful for anyone wanting to get the prosecution’s take on the case. But it is pretty useless otherwise.” William D. Russell, “Sasse and Widder’s Quick Best Seller,” email message to author, 16 March 2010.

millennium, both the LDS church and the renamed Community of Christ (the former RLDS church) had created a number of shrines connected to the temple that offered new ways for people to understand the sacred site. In short, between 1984 and 2008, Kirtland Temple's field would change in dramatic fashion, even while religious narratives of permanency would mask this change.

Dramatic forms of contestation may decrease the sacrality of a site. Physical violence at a site may bring guilt and shame upon a people. Cultural geographer Kenneth Foote provides a useful analysis of guilt and shame, violence, and "sacred sites." He argues that, "American society has no ritual of purification to cleanse people and places of the guilt and shame that arise from events such as mass murder." Consequently, a sacred site could potentially become a site of shame and guilt for people connected to a tragedy; and, according to Foote, Americans historically deal with such feelings through obliterating a site.²⁹⁷ As will be shown in this chapter, the violence that the destroyer, Jeffrey Lundgren, brought to Kirtland cast a pall of shame upon the entire town—shame that included his connection as a former guide at the Kirtland Temple where he recruited his followers. Contestation, then, may transform sacred sites into much more ambiguous places.

Yet, some forms of contestation may actually heighten the sacrality of a site. Writing about contested pilgrimage in China, anthropologists Susan Naquin and Chun-fang Yu argue that "as pilgrims competed to build a sacred site, they contributed collectively (if inadvertently) to its general fame."²⁹⁸ By this, Naquin and Yu meant that sacred space is always socially and culturally constructed. Yet, these cultural and social

²⁹⁷ Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Tragedy and Violence* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1997), 179.

²⁹⁸ Susan Naquin and Chun-fang Yu, eds., *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (University of California Press, 1992), 24.

constructions of space can be quite different from group to group and individual to individual. Nevertheless, the discord and contestation that results from such disparate constructions draws attention to a site, and thus promotes it. As narrated in the last chapter, the competitive promotion of Kirtland Temple through mapping, travel guides, and official church guiding programs increased both RLDS and LDS awareness of its presence. Additionally, in the 1960s and 1970s, the LDS and RLDS churches engaged in competitive efforts to buy houses around the temple before the other church could purchase them. Again, the net effect of these actions was to elevate the sacrality of Kirtland, not to lessen it. To quote Jonathan Z. Smith, a sacred object is made sacred “by having attention focused on it in a highly marked way.”²⁹⁹ Place, I argue, is also sanctified by such attention. Few things bring attention to a place more markedly than contestation and conflict.

Sacred sites are not “built” simply through contestation, however. They also are built through cooperation. At sites of parallel pilgrimage, people may negotiate with others and form alliances (however temporary) that allow them access to otherwise denied resources. In addition, people who form alliances benefit from a multiplier effect—meaning the resources of a group are greater than the sum of its parts. Bourdieu’s notion of social capital is helpful here. He defines it as “the aggregate of potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various

²⁹⁹ Smith, *To Take Place*, 104

sense of the word.”³⁰⁰ Group membership carries with it a form of power, or social capital, that can only be established and maintained by “reacknowledgement of proximity,” that is, “relations of proximity in physical (geographical) space or even in economic and social space.”³⁰¹ The amount of social capital an individual accrues “depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.” Furthermore, social capital, due to its connection to other forms of capital held by group members, “exerts a multiplier effect on the capital he [the individual agent] possesses in his own right.”³⁰² Social and economic capital are not mutually exclusive (social capital may be sustained and be accrued in part through economic capital), they are not necessarily interchangeable, and one is not straightforwardly converted into the other. Building social capital—and confusing one form of capital for another—will be one theme explored in this chapter as I continue my narration of changing proximal relationships in the LDS church and the RLDS church around Kirtland Temple.

The story of Kirtland Temple narrated by its promoters and interpreters eventually became a story of rivals turned friends as cooperation trumped contestation. However, when the physical and cultural geography of Kirtland is examined in this chapter, a far more complicated tale emerges of new forms of contestation and cooperation succeeding older forms. Finally, this chapter will reflect on what changing proximal relationships in

³⁰⁰ Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. by John G. Richardson (Wesport, Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1986), 248-249.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 249.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 249.

the field around Kirtland Temple can contribute to more general understandings of parallel pilgrimage.

The RLDS Schism in 1984 and the Revelation for a New
Temple

At the biannual RLDS World Conference in April 1984, RLDS Prophet Wallace B. Smith, the great-grandson of Joseph Smith, announced that he had received a revelation that the conference needed to consider for approval. Unlike their LDS cousins who rarely added sections of Scripture to their canonical works, RLDS Prophets frequently presented new revelations that were debated and approved at church conferences. While conference delegates approved many of these sections with little controversy, the 1984 document would create schism within the movement. Smith's document, too, would have long-reaching effects on Kirtland Temple and its relationship to the Community of Christ. To the dismay of stalwart conservatives, Smith revealed that women would now be called to serve in the priesthood. Conservatives as early as 1980 had predicted he would do so. Now, their worst fears had been realized. Furthermore, Smith's revelation called for construction to begin on the long-awaited temple in Independence, Missouri, first proposed by his great-grandfather in 1831. This temple, Smith revealed, would be dedicated to "the pursuit of peace" and the healing and reconciliation of nations and peoples. Thus, for the first time, RLDS members would have two temples. Kirtland's status as the singular structure "built by the command of God" was transformed. How the two temples would relate to one another was unclear. As the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Kirtland Temple's dedication neared, the RLDS community began openly dividing into liberal and conservative factions.

Conservatives, self-styled as "RLDS fundamentalists" or "Restorationists," quickly condemned the proposal for the temple. They pointed to the new temple's proposed location, a parking lot owned by the RLDS church adjacent to the traditional

site for the temple in Zion. A small Mormon faction, the Church of Christ, owned the traditional site, and they were not about to sell their land. In the subsequent debate about the temple, RLDS historians argued that the parking lot site was in fact part of the temple parcel of land dedicated by Smith in 1831 as the site for the temple in the City of Zion. They also pointed out that Smith's plans for the temple in Zion evolved over time—calling for twenty-four small temples by 1833, several of which would have been on the land proposed for the new temple. Since the understanding of the temple complex had evolved over time, therefore, the church needed to be responsive to prophetic guidance in its own time. Conservatives rejected these arguments, saying that the new modern temple was to be built in the wrong place and for the wrong purposes. Additionally, they reasoned that any revelation could not be true in part and false in another part. For fundamentalists, women's ordination smacked of gender confusion and a dangerous boundary crossing that called into question the authority of their patriarchal ministerial structure. They reasoned that surely the new temple was false, too. The pursuit of peace reminded them of 1960s radical themes; the popular RLDS fundamentalist publisher Richard Price even openly accused RLDS hierarchy of collusion with Communists.³⁰³ From the outset, then, fundamentalists flatly rejected Smith's 1984 revelation and its call for a new temple.³⁰⁴

Liberal leaders could not take the criticism leveled against them without contesting the ecclesiastical terrain. Across the RLDS church, church administrators placed priesthood members who criticized the hierarchy under ministerial silence. In one instance in a mainly fundamentalist congregation in Buckner, Missouri, fundamentalist

³⁰³ For a summary of Price's charges of RLDS leaders' collusion with Communists, see his extended article in Richard Price, et. al., "RLDS Leaders Promote Marxist Liberation Theology," *Vision* issue 9 (April 1992): 4-22.

³⁰⁴ Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem*, 219-230.

church members were locked out of their building. RLDS hierarchy ensured that women could be ordained even in congregations largely hostile to the notion. Battles over buildings, assets, and ecclesiastical legitimacy ensued. Over the course of the next decade, as many as one quarter of the RLDS membership and fully half of the active, contributing members left the church in a bitter split.³⁰⁵ Fundamentalist schismatic groups rose and fell and scattered over and over again. Convinced that Wallace B. Smith was a false prophet, many individual conservative members looked for a new leader. A small group tragically found one who they eventually believed was God's appointed destroyer. While this group's story was exceptional for the violence in which they engaged, they epitomize the extreme social constructions of Kirtland Temple's relationship to other sites. The group's actions also illustrate the sometimes tragic consequences of site sacralization at a contested space.

A Place of Peace, a Place of War: Liberals, Lundgren, and
Violence in Kirtland, 1983-1990

As storm clouds loomed on the horizon for the RLDS church in 1983, an Independence man began having a series of visions. Jeffrey Don Lundgren was a somewhat controversial Sunday school teacher at his local RLDS congregation in Independence, Missouri.³⁰⁶ A sometimes bio-medical equipment salesman with an unremarkable educational and professional background, Lundgren had an insatiable thirst for studying and memorizing passages from the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants. Newly ordained in 1983 to the priesthood, Lundgren began having a series of visions: in one, he saw Jesus dying on the cross and in a later

³⁰⁵ George N. Walton, "Sect to Denomination: Counting the Progress of the RLDS Reformation," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 18 (1998): 50, 58.

³⁰⁶ Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders," 6: 8-11.

vision, he was shown golden plates that no one—not even the RLDS Prophet Wallace B. Smith—could translate. For Lundgren, the meaning of these visions was clear. Wallace B. Smith had become a fallen prophet, and Lundgren would be called on in the future to bring forth a new revelation.³⁰⁷ For a fundamentalist of his era, this conclusion was passé. Fundamentalist RLDS priesthood members across the church began suspecting Smith's theology long before Lundgren's vision. Lundgren's notion that he would bring forth new revelation was unusual, but not unfathomable for many members. The RLDS church historically had embraced prophecy and regularly added new sections to their scripture brought forth by their recognized prophet. Lundgren's claim mirrored those of past prophets (like Joseph Smith) and utilized a logic that legitimated present RLDS leaders. Lundgren shared his visions with a few close friends but did not broadcast his messages to all.

As Lundgren mowed his lawn on a July 1983 afternoon, he prayed for further guidance. Through visions, God had told him that he would become a great prophet, but his next steps to realize this calling remained unclear. Then, as he later explained, a thought entered his mind. "The answer is already written," spoke a divine still, small voice to Lundgren's mind.³⁰⁸ He rushed into house, grabbed his RLDS Doctrine and Covenants. He stopped at Section 38: 7b. It was the revelation to Joseph Smith, Jr. to "go to the Ohio and there, I will give you my law and there you shall be endowed with power from on high." Through this 1831 text, Lundgren was convinced that God had spoken to him directly. Lundgren was to move to Kirtland to await further instruction and spiritual power. A few days later, he and his wife answered an advertisement in the RLDS *Saints'*

³⁰⁷ Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders," 6:20-21, 61; 7:10-12; Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 110-111.

³⁰⁸ As quoted in Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 112.

Herald requesting volunteer guides for the Kirtland Temple. Lundgren later claimed that he was also offered a job by an Independence company for \$65,000, but he decided to take the unpaid church job instead. With money raised privately from local friends, he moved his family to Kirtland to begin working full-time as a tour guide at the temple.³⁰⁹

Before arriving in Kirtland, Lundgren had applied and been accepted as a guide for service at the temple. He lied to the historic sites director about how he would support his family while working in Kirtland, claiming that he had monthly income from an inheritance. Yet, from the start, much of his real income came from tourists who gave him cash directly—a practice that broke all rules for guide conduct. As an enthusiastic guide in his mid 30s, Lundgren quickly won the confidence of the senior site coordinators at the temple, Bill and Eleanor Lord, who placed him in charge of the financial records for the temple. Later, officials discovered that Lundgren also supported himself by stealing donations and money from book sales in the gift shop.³¹⁰

In October 1984, on a tour of the temple, Lundgren met Kevin Currie, a friend he had known in the U.S. Navy in the 1970s and had introduced to the Book of Mormon. Currie had converted to the RLDS church and in 1984 worked at a VA hospital in Buffalo. In private, Lundgren told Currie that he and his family had come to Ohio seeking God’s endowment of spiritual power. He had also made what he considered an amazing discovery in the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants. Through an idiosyncratic reading of a passage, Lundgren had come to believe that God had declared Kirtland Temple the site for Christ’s Second Coming. Currie was struck by this reading of Scripture as powerfully true. Lundgren’s discovery very likely came from another source.

³⁰⁹ Russell, ““The 1989 Cult Murders,” 7:13-15, 18, 24-28.

³¹⁰ Russell, “The 1989 Cult Murders,” 7:18-19; 8:2-3, 6, 30, 37; 11:19; Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 140, 155.

Several older Kirtland RLDS members believed that Christ would return to Kirtland Temple, though the teaching had no official sanction (if anything, it went contrary to official RLDS teachings). However Lundgren came to embrace this teaching, it had a powerfully destructive implementation in his hands.³¹¹

By January 1985, Currie had moved from Buffalo to Kirtland to study Scripture with Lundgren. Currie transferred to a VA job in Cleveland, moved in with Lundgren, and began turning over his paychecks to him directly. Slowly, Lundgren began building a small community around him of people who felt drawn to him and his teachings. Like Currie, several summer college-age guides moved in with Lundgren. Others lived nearby. Almost all held outside jobs and turned over their paychecks to Lundgren.³¹²

Lundgren quickly became known in the local RLDS congregation in Kirtland as a fundamentalist stalwart. Conservative members liked his critiques of the liberal RLDS hierarchy and were impressed with his facility at memorizing Scripture verses. Soon Lundgren began teaching an adult Book of Mormon class during the Sunday School hour. It was well attended by congregation members. (9: 8-17)

At the 1986 RLDS World Conference, RLDS fundamentalists failed to repeal women's ordination by conference vote. Ordinations, which had begun in November of the previous year, continued with renewed vigor across the church. RLDS records from the era do not indicate the sex of the ordinand, but one may reasonably conclude that thousands of women were ordained in the years following the first ordinations. In 1987 alone, over 1500 ordinations occurred in the denomination—this compared to just over 600 total ordinations in 1985. The spike in ordinations was accompanied by a severe drop

³¹¹ Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders," 10:2-5; Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 141-144.

³¹² Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders," 10: 6-9, 17.

in baptismal rates and in contributions.³¹³ As women were being ordained in RLDS congregations, then, conservative or fundamentalist members were voting by their feet and meeting outside of the denomination.

In Kirtland, a new, progressive stake president, Dale Luffman, took over the RLDS Kirtland Stake, replacing a more conservative stake president. Luffman and Lundgren clashed from the beginning. Luffman was everything Lundgren was not—highly educated, ecumenical, liberal, and part of the RLDS hierarchy. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Luffman preached neo-orthodox theological tenets that Lundgren contradicted in each of his Sunday School classes.³¹⁴ After Luffman’s very first sermon in the congregation (a sermon about grace), Lundgren openly refuted him point by point in his Book of Mormon class. Luffman stood outside the door of the classroom, dumbfounded at what he heard. “Our God is a God of vengeance,” Lundgren proclaimed. Luffman’s gospel of love and grace were part of Satan’s crafty lies, Lundgren asserted. God “expects only one thing from us—repentance. Repent, repent, repent. Those who do not repent will perish.”³¹⁵ At this remark, Luffman entered the classroom and sat down on the front row, staring at Lundgren. Luffman and Lundgren would continue to clash over the next two years.³¹⁶

³¹³ Walton, “Counting the Progress of the RLDS Reformation,” 44-52.

³¹⁴ Russell, “The 1989 Cult Murders,” 11:7.

³¹⁵ As quoted in Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 166. Repentance was a common theme in Lundgren’s sermons, too. A member of the Kirtland congregation recalls that Lundgren’s first sermon “was all repentance, repentance. It was just like he was beating everyone up. I felt so bad. In the congregation was a man who had been institutionalized for depression, just lost his job, just gone through therapy, and he hears a sermon like that. [There was also a] lady who just came to church after years. It [Lundgren’s sermon] was not a message of love.” “Mark,” interview by author, July 9, 2008, Kirtland, Ohio, typescript.

³¹⁶ Russell, “The 1989 Cult Murders,” 11:12.

As liberals and conservatives wrangled in congregations across the RLDS church, the sesquicentennial of Kirtland Temple's dedication neared. Due to the timing of the biannual legislative RLDS World Conference in early April 1986, the commemorative events were moved from the week around March 27 (the date of the 1836 dedication) to June 22. Up to 1800 worshipers were expected for three different services (600 per service, with people seated in the upper and lower courts).³¹⁷ Beyond the commemorative service on June 22, planners commissioned a drama to be performed during the week and organized a symposium titled "Becoming Makers of Peace" to be held on June 20 to 21. This latter symposium was an attempt to link the Kirtland Temple to the anticipated Independence Temple, designated in Wallace B. Smith's 1984 revelation as "dedicated to the pursuit of peace."³¹⁸ RLDS leaders gave speeches at this event, along with a key-note address by Richard J. Barnet, a former State Department employee during the Kennedy administration and founder of a left-leaning think tank, the Institute for Policy Studies.

At the June 22 commemorative services, attendance exceeded earlier estimates. The *Saints Herald* reported 1,386 people jammed into the Kirtland Temple for the first two commemorative services. Members of all of the church's leadership quorums attended, delivering prayers and short addresses to the gathered RLDS members. LDS members, like Karl Anderson, also attended the service. RLDS President Wallace B. Smith focused his commemorative sermon both on the Kirtland Temple's past and on the potential for the new Independence Temple to be a place of peace, reconciliation, and "wholeness of mind, body, and spirit."³¹⁹ For conservative members, the Kirtland

³¹⁷ "Kirtland Commemoration Registration Begun," *Saints' Herald* 133 (1986): 76.

³¹⁸ RLDS D&C 156: 5; "Kirtland Events Available on Videotape," *Saints' Herald* 133 (1986): 399.

³¹⁹ Wallace B. Smith, "Therefore Glorify God," *Saints' Herald* 133 (1986): 9.

Temple peace symposium and Smith's sermon simply furthered their fears that the church leadership had become captive to a leftist Protestant agenda. In an article published six years later, fundamentalist publisher Richard Price was still railing against Smith's decision to invite Richard Barnet to speak at Kirtland Temple. "It is startling, but true, that an advisor to Marxist Dictator Daniel Ortega was allowed by President Wallace B. Smith to be a main speaker at the one hundred fifty year anniversary of the sacred Kirtland Temple!" screamed Price in print.³²⁰

Amid the sesquicentennial celebrations, Lundgren began teaching Scripture study classes to his emerging group at his Kirtland house twice a week. Lundgren's teachings now became more extreme. After watching the movie *The Highlander* over and over again on a Saturday in 1986, he became convinced that God was speaking to him. Lundgren concluded that he was an immortal who would never taste death—the last great seer who would redeem Zion, the kingdom of God in the latter days. *The Highlander's* frequent scenes of beheading also played a role in Lundgren's emerging theology. By 1987, Lundgren revealed to his small inner group of followers his true identity as the last prophet. Based on his own reading of "the parable of the vineyard" found in the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants (98: 6a-8c; LDS 101: 43-62), Lundgren revealed that Kirtland Temple was the tower spoken of in the parable. As the last messenger, Lundgren told his group that he was to prepare the way of the Lord's Second Coming by taking over the temple. God would then create an earthquake that would lift the temple skyward and create a mountain—Mt. Zion of the latter days. Satan's forces would come against the messenger and his followers in the temple, but they would not prevail. Lundgren and his followers began to secretly stock-pile and buy ammunition and firearms. Lundgren and

³²⁰ Price, et. al., "RLDS Leaders Promote Marxist Liberation Theology," 7.

his wife even went on antique buying sprees for furnishings that they intended to use in the Kirtland Temple after their planned seizure of the site.³²¹

As Lundgren's group began plotting to take over the temple, the Kirtland RLDS congregation became more and more deeply divided over women's ordination. Lundgren's Sunday School class became a bastion for fundamentalist resistance. Stake President Luffman finally ended his class in July over the protests of many older members. Such members did not know his more extreme teachings. For them, Lundgren personified populist resistance against a coercive RLDS hierarchy. His enthusiasm for the temple spoke to his goodness, many felt. Lundgren's days as a temple guide, though, were numbered.

An RLDS church official in Independence discovered that the income for the temple had severely dipped once Lundgren had taken over the books. The site directors had been completely unaware of this. Though they could not prove that Lundgren had been stealing from the temple funds, Lundgren was quietly let go from his position as a guide. In total, Lundgren probably had taken more than \$17,000 in cash from the site. Lundgren moved out of his RLDS church housing on the site to a nearby farmhouse where his small community of followers and former guides lived together.³²²

Even as Lundgren's group became more isolated, the Kirtland RLDS congregation went through a congregational split that would be mirrored in hundreds of congregations across the denomination. Lundgren was not the only member who clashed with Dale Luffman. A cadre of priesthood members and their families from Kirtland and the surrounding congregations decided to withdraw their membership from their local

³²¹ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 174-176, 203-209; Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders," 12:34-36.

³²² Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 155; Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders," 12:12-14, 18.

congregations. At the Kirtland Stake Conference in the fall of 1988, eighty to one hundred fundamentalist RLDS members attended, sat in back, and rose in unison as Luffman attempted to begin his sermon. They defiantly walked out the door in protest and began meeting at a nearby public school gymnasium. (11:6-7; Mark, interview July 9, 2008, Kirtland, Ohio)

Among the conservative dissenters was the soft-spoken, long-time Kirtland architect Al Clough who had designed the Kirtland RLDS congregation's building and other churches in the region. Clough drew up plans for a new church building for the group of "RLDS Restorationists," members of a then inchoate movement later called the Restoration Branches movement. Clough reproduced the general design of the interior of the church they had left, allowing members to feel comfortable in their new environment and visually asserting the common Restorationist adage, "We did not leave the church; the church left us." Crucially, the new Restorationist church building was platted down the street from the Kirtland Temple, creating proximity between the two structures. A lay member made an interior window for the new building that featured original glass salvaged from the windows of the Kirtland Temple when the originals were restored in the early 1970s. Members of the congregation passed under this window each time they entered the sanctuary. Thus, Kirtland Restorationists kept in close proximity to the sacred building—even reproducing part of the building in their own space—while they symbolically contested the legitimacy of the institution that still controlled the temple space.³²³

As Restorationists separated from the Kirtland RLDS congregation, Lundgren and his radical group on the Kirtland farm entered a new violent stage. Lundgren now secretly revealed to his followers that not only was he the last messenger; he was also the

³²³ Al Clough, interview by author, July 12, 2008, Kirtland, Ohio, typescript.

Lord's destroyer. The prophet referred again to Joseph Smith, Jr.'s "parable of the vineyard" in the Doctrine and Covenants. In this parable, a vineyard was taken over by "the enemy" and the Lord of the vineyard sent his servants to retake the site and "and, inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies."³²⁴ "Dale Luffman and the RLDS Church are the enemy," proclaimed Lundgren. "I am the destroyer. We must destroy the wicked who are now in control of the temple if we want Christ to return."³²⁵ Furthermore, the temple and everything within a one mile radius needed to be cleansed. In total, twenty-five people who lived around the temple needed to be executed. Dale Luffman and his family were to be reserved for a special fate. In a scene reminiscent of *The Highlander*, Lundgren told his followers that they would behead Luffman and his family in front of the temple pulpits. Luffman's blood would atone for the sins committed by the liberal RLDS church.³²⁶

Lundgren began readying his troops through paramilitary drills. Women learned to identify ammunition by touch alone to help their husbands if they needed to reload during the coming siege. A talented art student and follower, Danny Kraft, built a model of the temple and the surrounding buildings so that the group could run through their plans. All that remained was a date for the attack. Lundgren discerned this through prayer. The answer, he revealed, was inscribed in the temple itself on the outer doors. The 1830s doors featured two decorative oval cutouts over three larger oval disks. Lundgren taught that this told the date for the attack—May 3. The two circles stood for

³²⁴ RLDS D&C 98:7d-g [LDS 101: 55-58].

³²⁵ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 223; Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 13:8.

³²⁶ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 225; Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 12: 36.

the second Jewish month, which Lundgren figured as May and the three larger circles stood for the day. By happenstance, May 3 was also Lundgren's birthday.³²⁷

Kevin Currie began to doubt Jeff Lundgren's teachings. Then, he began to fear for his life. Suspecting that Lundgren could read his mind and had marked him for death, Currie fled the group and traveled back to Buffalo where he went into hiding. He went to the FBI and nervously told them of Lundgren's plot. The agents questioned Currie's wild story about a temple takeover and thought that Currie himself needed to be investigated. Currie was astounded. Not taken seriously by the federal agency, Currie contacted the local Kirtland police chief, an inactive RLDS member with a fundamentalist RLDS wife. Currie's story made more sense to Chief Gail Yarborough. He struck on a plan to stake out the temple with his small police force and borrowed a Mac-10 machine gun. But he did not tell local residents of Lundgren's plot.³²⁸

As May 3 neared, Lundgren began to worry that he did not know the exact year for the attack. The day and the month were divinely revealed, but the year was unclear. A phone call by Chief Yarborough scared the group, too. Lundgren informed the group that God had revealed to him that the group was not yet ready to meet Jesus at his soon-to-be Second Coming (an advent that the group would trigger). The group had too much sin within it. Only Jeffrey Lundgren was pure enough to meet Jesus face to face. May 3 came and went without any attack. Yarborough was relieved, but still wanted to investigate the group. In September, Luffman began the excommunication process for Lundgren. Luffman talked to a former group member who told him of the May 3 plot. He was horrified that he had not been told of the threat on his life and those around the temple. In

³²⁷ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 227-228; Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 10:49-50, 13:10.

³²⁸ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 236-237, 241-242; Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 13:12-13, 13:18-21.

October 1988, Lundgren, under pressure, withdrew from the RLDS church rather than go through excommunication proceedings.³²⁹

Over the next six months, the Kirtland police along with federal authorities attempted to build a case against Lundgren but none could be made. Meanwhile, Lundgren determined that his group needed to be cleansed before the coming of the Lord. For some weeks Lundgren and his followers secretly formulated a plan for the murder of a family of five, unsuspecting, marginal followers, the Averys, who lived off the farmhouse compound. On the night of April 17, 1989, Lundgren invited the Averys to his farm for a class and then invited each one into the farm's barn. As each entered the barn, Lundgren's accomplices bound and gagged them. Lundgren personally shot the Avery family, one by one. Three were children. Blood had been shed; Lundgren's angry God of vengeance had been satisfied and the group had been "cleansed". The bodies were buried on the Kirtland farm.³³⁰

Following the urgings of Lundgren's God, the small group fled into the Canaan Wilderness in West Virginia where Lundgren became a bigamist, commanded by God to take more than one wife. By the fall of 1989, the group began to break apart as funds dried up and the cold made living in tents unbearable. The group decided to move to western Missouri where many of them had once lived. Lundgren left first, taking the last of their money and leaving behind his disciples to follow after him. By October 1989, Lundgren's community was living together in a barn on the land of a fundamentalist RLDS member. Members began to gradually scatter, and by December, the group had

³²⁹ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 244; Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 13: 29, 32-33.

³³⁰ Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 15:2, 8-9, 18-20; 16:13-21.

disintegrated. Only Lundgren's family, his second wife, and Danny Craft remained loyal. Finally, Lundgren packed his family in a van and left Missouri for California.³³¹

On New Year's Eve 1989, the jealous husband of Lundgren's second "wife" called an ATF agent and reported the murders. On January 4, a horrified RLDS community watched scenes from CNN as police investigators brought five bodies out of the Kirtland barn. Three days later, Lundgren was caught by FBI agents in National City, California.³³² As the trigger man in all five murders, Lundgren was sentenced to death in 1990 and executed by the state of Ohio on October 18, 2006.³³³ To the end, he claimed his divine mission would soon be fulfilled. Though behind bars, Lundgren's last believing disciple, Danny Kraft, still claims the design of the Kirtland Temple validates Lundgren as a true prophet.³³⁴

The RLDS and Two Temples: Displacing and Re-placing

Kirtland, 1990-1996

The shocking Lundgren tragedy complicated an already ambiguous relationship between the RLDS community and the Kirtland Temple. For conservative, separatist

³³¹ Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 19:4-13; 20:12-13.

³³² Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 20: 10-11, 16.

³³³ Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, "Execution of Inmate Jeffrey Lundgren," <http://www.drc.state.oh.us/Public/press/press253.htm> (accessed February 19, 2010).

³³⁴ Russell, "The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland," 10:30; Lundgren's story is tragically integral to the story of the temple in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I do not share this story to glorify Lundgren or the violence he perpetuated. He murdered the aunt, uncle, and cousins of my college friends. He proposed to murder people I respect and love. He devastated the lives of all of his followers and their families, including his own. The pain he inflicted stays with each family and in the small town of Kirtland to this day. Literally dozens of men claimed to be the successor of RLDS Prophet Wallace B. Smith. These would-be successors garnered followers and issued new revelations. None of them murdered. Lundgren stands as the one violent prophet of death in the RLDS movement. His role as a guide in Kirtland and his belief in the temple's hyper-sacrality required explanation, however.

RLDS members the Kirtland Temple remained the only divinely commanded structure on earth. Church members and church employees who remained loyal to the RLDS leadership had to uneasily negotiate the Kirtland Temple's sacred relationship to the Independence Temple as the newer building continued to rise above the modest Missouri town. In the late 1980s, rumors persisted in the RLDS church that the hierarchy had placed the Kirtland Temple up for sale. The annoyed RLDS First Presidency wrote in the *Saints' Herald* that "perhaps some have supposed that with our plans to build the Independence Temple, we would no longer need to retain the one in Kirtland." Such a notion was misguided, they assured RLDS rank and file members. "Our heritage and history of ministries associated with the Kirtland Temple," continued the First Presidency, "are such as to make it an irreplaceable and invaluable part of our inheritance as a people. The Temple is not for sale."³³⁵ Despite such blunt reassurance that the Kirtland Temple was not a commodity, conservatives who remained within the movement, former members who separated from the church, and LDS members continued to pass on the rumor of the impending sale of the temple.³³⁶

Even with the assurances of the First Presidency that the Kirtland Temple was a vital part of the RLDS church's collective life, leaders and members sensed a tension between the two sites. Richard Brown, a long-time editor at the official RLDS publishing house, manifested this tension in an essay entitled "Restoration Foundations for the [Independence] Temple." After relating the history of the construction of Kirtland

³³⁵ Wallace B. Smith, "The Kirtland Temple," *Saints Herald* 134 (1987): 452.

³³⁶ Lachlan Mackay, director of Community of Christ Historic Sites, remembers such rumors when he arrived in Kirtland in the early 1990s, and he notes that the rumors have continued unabated to today. He has even been contacted by worried Community of Christ members in South and Central America who were told by their LDS relatives that the Kirtland Temple has been sold to the Utah-based church. Lachlan Mackay, interview by author, February 21, 2010, Nauvoo, Illinois, typescript.

Temple and the period of “spiritual manifestations (divine presence) during the [1836] dedication service,” Brown argued that Kirtland “has always functioned more as a meetinghouse and tourist site rather than a temple, despite the popular usage of its name.”³³⁷ Demoting the structure to a meetinghouse contradicted the intense feelings of generations of RLDS members who saw the 1830s edifice as “the first temple built ‘in the name of the Lord’ since ancient times.”³³⁸ This was a strategic move on Brown’s part; by de-emphasizing Kirtland’s role as a temple, he elevated the importance of the soon-to-be built Independence Temple. Still, Brown acknowledged that the Kirtland Temple “can offer us some insights today in the way that a ‘House of the Lord’ can function at the center of a Restoration faith community.” [Brown, 109] RLDS staff at Kirtland Temple also felt the tension between the two sites. One staff member remembers the early 1990s as “a time when there was a lot of excitement about the Independence Temple.” According to this worker, “Kirtland was seen as competition with the Independence Temple, so from a denominational leaders’ perspective, I don’t feel there was much emphasis on Kirtland.”³³⁹

While leaders and members wrestled with the theological and spatial relationships between the two structures, the Kirtland Temple itself could not wait for structural improvements. In 1993, the Community of Christ’s Restoration Trails Foundation rolled out a proposal for a \$7.34 million “overhaul that will go to the very foundation of the temple.”³⁴⁰ In addition to shoring up walls and support beams in the temple, the plan

³³⁷ Richard A. Brown, *Temple Foundations: Essays on an Emerging Concept* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1991), 107-108.

³³⁸ Harry W. Black, “A Temple from the Past,” *Restoration Witness* (June 1969): 8.

³³⁹ Lachlan Mackay, interview by author, October 25, 2008, Nauvoo, Illinois, typescript.

³⁴⁰ Greg Clark, “Kirtland Renovation Project Underway,” *Saints Herald* 140, no. 9 (1993): 361.

called for a several phases of added construction. In total the plan called for a new visitor's center, improved parking, and aesthetic visitor-centered alterations, such as a bed-and-breakfast house, RV parking, a meditation garden, extensive landscape work, and an irrigation system. "I'm thrilled with the site plan," stated the youthful new site director, Lachlan Mackay (a direct descendant of Joseph Smith). "Right now we are so cramped for space in our Visitor's Center that we're falling over each other. We have no room for museum exhibits or displays. It makes it difficult to share the temple properly."³⁴¹ David Ettinger, the director of the Restoration Trails Foundation (the group charged with funding historic sites), knew that raising the money would be difficult, especially since the Community of Christ had engaged in intense fund-raising for its Independence, Missouri Temple since the late 1980s. By 1993, the Community of Christ Independence Temple neared the dedication; the structure cost \$62.7 million and was nearly paid in full by that date—an enormous expenditure by the small 250,000 member RLDS church. With an Independence Temple endowment fund still in need of monies, there were many projects that vied for the contributions of the RLDS membership base—a base grown much smaller since the 1984 schism.³⁴² "Even if we don't raise all the money [for the full Kirtland Temple renovation master plan]," quipped Ettinger, "I think the membership when appropriately informed will respond and say, 'Yes, the Kirtland Temple is a significant enough building that we'll come up with the money somewhere to make sure that we properly maintain it for the years to come.'³⁴³

³⁴¹ Ibid., 362.

³⁴² "Temple Fund Progress," *Saints' Herald* 138 (October 1991): 97; "Temple Endowment Fund Update," *Saints' Herald* 142 (1995): 144.

³⁴³ Clark, "Kirtland Renovation," 363.

Ettinger left for another job in 1993 and the fundraising project imploded under a new director. The remaining staff scrambled to find donors for fixing the Kirtland Temple. RTF employee Pat Spillman traveled to Canada to make a presentation to the Shaw Foundation, a Canadian philanthropic group with historic RLDS ties. Spillman emphasized in his presentation how desperately the Kirtland Temple needed restoration work just to hold it together. A board member bluntly asked Spillman, “Why doesn’t the RLDS Church expend money to fix the building? Shouldn’t this be a church expenditure?” Wallace B. Smith, president of the RLDS church and a member of the Shaw Foundation Board of Directors, turned red in embarrassment. Spillman returned to Independence and received a phone call from the RLDS First Presidency. Spillman fell ill, fearing that he would be fired for unintentionally embarrassing his church president in front of wealthy donors. First Presidency Counselor “Bud” Sheehey met with Spillman the next day. To Spillman’s great surprise, Sheehey asked, “What will it take to fix it [the temple]?”³⁴⁴ After this interaction, the money to fix the temple would be forthcoming.

Yet, exactly where the money would come from was still unknown. Individual RLDS members tried to help the project by proposing direct funding at the 1994 RLDS World Conference. Des Moines Stake delegate Stephen Robertson proposed that \$11 million designated by the RLDS leadership for the Independence Temple endowment fund be cut by \$3 million to fund Kirtland. “I don’t see why we need to invest so much in that endowment fund at this time when there is so much glaring need for the Kirtland Temple,” Robertson complained to a reporter. The church’s chief financial officer, Norman Swails, responded by saying, “We do not feel that there is any immediate danger to the structure that hasn’t been repaired,” adding that church officials “do not intend to

³⁴⁴ Lachlan Mackay, interview by author, 24 March 2009, phone conversation, typescript.

leave it[the Kirtland Temple] alone.”³⁴⁵ Two years later, in 1996, the RLDS church from its general budget financed restoration work that greatly improved “the structural integrity of the sacred building” through foundation and interior structural stabilization.³⁴⁶ However, the new visitor’s center and further alterations to the land around Kirtland would have to wait for another ten years.

“We had a temple in Ohio at one time”: LDS and Kirtland
Temple, 1990-2008

Although LDS attempts to restore Kirtland temporarily ended in the early 1990s, building of a different sort continued in Kirtland. Karl Anderson continued to champion the site as his reputation as an authority on Kirtland grew within the LDS community. Through the official LDS church press in 1989, Anderson published a highly successful faith-promoting history of early Kirtland titled *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland: Eye Witness Accounts*.³⁴⁷ This book both would become a resource that LDS visitors would bring with them and would buy at the RLDS Visitor’s Center. (The LDS church did not and still does not sell items at their sites.) Anderson supplied the RLDS Visitor’s Center bookstore with copies of his work and the RLDS kept the retail profits beyond cost to help fund their site. This was one of many mutually beneficial relationships that developed between RLDS and LDS members at pilgrimage sites in the late 1980s and beyond.

³⁴⁵ Jan Smith, “Delegates OK Allocation of IRHS Money,” *Independence Examiner*, April 14, 1994.

³⁴⁶ Susan K. Naylor, “Historic Sites Keep Heritage Message Ever New,” *Saints’ Herald* (July 1998): 276; Mackay, interview by author, February 21, 2010.

³⁴⁷ Karl Ricks Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland: Eyewitness Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1989).

As RLDS members attempted to justify a temple in Independence with a temple in Kirtland, LDS members faced reconciling their own exponentially expanding temple spaces with the presence of the first Mormon temple outside of their direct control. Sociologists Gary and Gordon Shepherd noted a stark increase in temple references in LDS General Conference sermons after 1950.³⁴⁸ Increased theological emphasis went hand in hand with increased temple construction across the globe, especially in the last twenty years of the twentieth century.³⁴⁹ In 1978, the LDS church operated 17 temples. By 1990, this number jumped to 44, and by the end of 2000, the LDS church operated 102 temples across the globe.³⁵⁰

As part of this expansive plan for new temples, LDS Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley in 1998 announced that their church would build a temple in Columbus, Ohio, 150 miles from Kirtland. “We had a temple in Ohio at one time,” said Hinckley to a group of Columbus, Ohio LDS Stake members. “We were driven from it. It was desecrated. We do not have it. I think the time has come to build a temple in this great state of Ohio.”³⁵¹ Like those who had promoted the scourge narrative about Kirtland, Hinckley’s formula followed the narrative trope of possession, loss, desecration, and redemption. The individual Mormon conversion experience was writ large in such a narrative, making the story readily understandable to individual members.

³⁴⁸ Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, *A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984), 255.

³⁴⁹ Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive*, 89.

³⁵⁰ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Temples Around the World: Chronological List,” <http://lds.org/temples/chronological/0,11206,1900-1,00.html> (accessed April 2, 2009).

³⁵¹ “Time Has Come to Build a Temple in Ohio,” *Church News: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, May 2, 1998, <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30318/Time-has-come-to-build-a-temple-in-Ohio.html> (accessed February 17, 2010).

Over the next few years, Hinckley announced the construction of three temples at Mormon sites of historical significance—Palmyra, New York (near the site of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s first vision), Nauvoo, Illinois (built on the site of 1840s Nauvoo Temple that had burned in 1848), and Omaha, Nebraska (site of the 1840s winter encampment of Latter-day Saints who had fled from Nauvoo, Illinois in the mid 1840s). The Columbus Temple both met a practical need (the nearest temple for Ohio members was Washington, D.C.), but it also preserved space for the possible reacquisition of the Kirtland Temple by the LDS church. LDS discomfort over not owning the Kirtland Temple had manifested itself for well over a century. The Columbus Temple, along with the LDS church’s increased emphasis on temples, revived this discomfort once again while it also held out the possibility of reacquiring the 1830s structure.

To rectify this discomfort, LDS General Authorities attempted to buy the Kirtland Temple shortly after the 2001 name change of the RLDS Church to the Community of Christ. The then president of the Community of Christ, Grant McMurray, revealed as much in a keynote address at the Mormon History Association’s 2003 meeting in Kirtland, Ohio. Speaking from the pulpits of the Kirtland Temple, McMurray said a group of LDS General Authorities paid him a visit in his office in the Community of Christ Independence Temple. They assumed “we had taken on a new identity that cut connections with our tradition. . . . They said we were now a peace and justice Church, a community Church, and wished us well on our journey. And, oh, by the way, they said, if we would want to dispose of our historic properties, including the majestic Kirtland Temple, they would be happy to negotiate generous terms with us.” McMurray was perplexed by such reasoning. “Never for one moment did I assume we were parting from our past,” explained the Community of Christ leader. “We were just using it in a different

way, drawing a different set of meanings from what it offers us.”³⁵² McMurray summarily turned down the official offer. However, this did not prevent individual LDS members from persistently offering to buy the Community of Christ’s Kirtland Temple.

Not all LDS members or leaders were pleased by LDS attempts to buy the Kirtland Temple or the suggestion that the Community of Christ would gladly sell it for the right price. In 2007, LDS member Dave Banack attended a talk on LDS historic sites and the challenges posed by maintaining and interpreting these sites. Banack posted his reflections on this process on a popular independent Mormon blog; in the comments that followed, LDS members brought up the subject of the Kirtland Temple and whether or not the Community of Christ would sell it. Poster California Condor wondered, “How many millions of dollars do you think it would take for the Community of Christ to sell the Kirtland Temple? \$50 million? \$100 million? The LDS Church has the resources to buy it . . .”³⁵³ Banack responded that “the speaker did relate a plea from one of their [Community of Christ] representatives to the effect that they wish we’d stop offering to buy the Kirtland Temple.” “How would we feel about selling one of our temples?” added Banack.³⁵⁴ California Condor replied that the Community of Christ is “slowly fading away.” Changes, such as the name change and a prophet outside the Smith lineage, all suggested that the Community of Christ no longer valued its Mormon heritage. “As they fade out, I’m sure they wouldn’t mind a nice cool \$100-\$200 million for the Kirtland Temple,” typed California Condor.³⁵⁵ One LDS member replied to Condor’s post by

³⁵² W. Grant McMurray, “A ‘Goodly Heritage’ in a Time of Transformation: History and Identity in the Community of Christ,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 1 (2004): 70-71.

³⁵³ California Condor, comment on “LDS Historic Sites,” *Times and Seasons Blog*, posted August 22, 2007, <http://www.timesandseasons.org/?p=4038> (accessed July 29, 2008).

³⁵⁴ Dave Banack, comment on “LDS Historic Sites.”

³⁵⁵ California Condor, comment on “LDS Historic Sites.”

candidly asking him, “If we hit a rough stretch financially, should we sell the Salt Lake Temple?” Another added, “Unless they suggest that they want to sell the temple, why try to convince them to sell? It’s essentially saying, I know you have a price, and when I hit that price, you will give me what you want.”³⁵⁶ Condor persisted, though, adding “you have to admit that a number with nine figures might at least be a little eye-catching to the Community of Christ.”³⁵⁷

In his posts, California Condor believed that the Community of Christ saw the Kirtland Temple as a commodity that could be exchanged. Underlying California Condor’s critique of the Community of Christ is a common assumption of Protestant religious polemic as far back as the Reformation—a religious “other” must be practicing their faith only for terrestrial financial gain rather than “pure” spiritual motives. While other LDS members chastised California Condor for his/her insensitivity and inability to empathize with another perspective on the Kirtland Temple, California Condor persisted in his/her notion that the “fading” Community of Christ must consider Kirtland as disposable space or as a financial investment—a myopia reminiscent of the LDS General Authorities who approached Grant McMurray sometime between 2001 to 2003. Blogger Dave Banack revealed though, that, by 2007, some LDS officials connected with historic sites attempted to dissuade LDS members from continually offering to buy the temple.

For all his/her abrasiveness, California Condor correctly understood that sacred spaces are forms of capital, but he/she fundamentally misunderstood what kind of capital Kirtland Temple congealed for the Community of Christ. Using Bourdieu’s theory of the forms of capital, the Kirtland Temple may be seen as form of symbolic capital (a source of prestige, honor, or attention) for the RLDS church rather than as pure economic

³⁵⁶ Sam B, comment on “LDS Historic Sites.”

³⁵⁷ California Condor, comment on “LDS Historic Sites.”

capital. For the Community of Christ, the control of Kirtland Temple provided its members with a sense of identity and a unique standing within the communities of Latter Day Saint denominations. Economic capital alone could not substitute for the symbolic capital accrued by standing in close social proximity to the temple.

The same year that the LDS church announced the construction of the Columbus, Ohio Temple (1998), the LDS Historic Sites Committee (made up of representatives from the Church History, Missionary, and Physical Facilities departments) constituted a committee to propose construction of a restored Kirtland village dubbed “Historic Kirtland,” below the Community of Christ’s Kirtland Temple. Constructed on the “flats” around the Newel K. Whitney Store, Historic Kirtland was completed at a cost of \$15 million in 2003. The village included a renovation of the Whitney store, an inn, an ashery, a saw mill, a schoolhouse, and several wood-frame houses. A new LDS Kirtland visitor center welcomed guests and showed a Hollywood production values film with a “faith-promoting” story of an 1830s Kirtland Mormon family.³⁵⁸ The John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio was further restored in this project, too.

With a wealth of technical and financial resources at their disposal, LDS Historic Sites Committee members tried to balance the competing interests of historical accuracy, missionary outreach, and aesthetically pleasant grounds. Reflecting on the process of restoring Historic Kirtland in 2003, Senior Curator of Historic Sites and historical restoration expert Donald Enders wrote that “most people come to the sites of the restoration of the gospel as pilgrims, seeking to experience the events of the restoration in the setting in which they occurred.” In Enders’ opinion, “the more historically accurate the setting, the greater the opportunity for the visitor to vicariously experience the

³⁵⁸ For a summary of the process involved in the “the restoration of Historic Kirtland,” see Steven L. Olsen, “A History of Restoring Historic Kirtland,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 1 (2004): 120-127.

event.”³⁵⁹ However, not all sites in Historic Kirtland were restored with such precision and not all Historic Sites Committee members shared Enders’s enthusiasm for exacting standards of historical recreation. For instance, careful paint studies of the Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio revealed “interior colors that were vibrant by any standard.” When at least two committee members argued that, “We’d better not restore *these* colors. The Spirit of the Lord could never manifest itself in that setting,” Enders reminded them that the Spirit had certainly done so in the 1830s.³⁶⁰ Team members finally approved the home’s elaborate, brightly painted interior and repeated the bright colors in Kirtland home restorations.

Compromises were made, too, between the various LDS departments. The Missionary Department sought to evangelize non-LDS and instruct faithful LDS members at historic sites. Consequently, the John Johnson tavern was rebuilt with an 1830s exterior but housed interactive exhibits telling about the modern-day LDS church and how it connected to 1830s spiritual manifestations. This also allowed for historical interpreters to avoid the subject of how LDS dietary restrictions had varied over time (saints in the 1830s consumed beer and wine on a regular basis).³⁶¹ Site planners accordingly called the edifice an “inn.”

The LDS church literally re-mapped Kirtland with the new site; they prevailed with local authorities to move a state highway so that it went around rather than through their land. Like at other LDS historic sites in the late twentieth-century, LDS planners

³⁵⁹ Donald L. Enders, “Recreating Kirtland’s Physical Past: How Well Did We Do?,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 1 (2004): 128.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁶¹ For a discussion of alcohol use by the saints in Kirtland, see Robert C. Fuller, “Wine, Symbolic Boundary Setting, and American Religious Communities,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 3 (1995): 506-510.

constructed a buffer zone surrounding their site so as to create a quieter, more contemplative environment.³⁶² Initially in the early 1990s, the Kirtland city council, who had power to block the project, resisted the rerouting of the road, despite support by the non-LDS mayor. “Ask the Lord to change the mind of the council,” suggested Kirtland Mayor Mario Marcopoli to Karl Anderson. The Lord apparently intervened through the person of NFL quarterback Steve Young. As an active Mormon, Steve Young was photographed by chance in *Sports Illustrated* wearing a t-shirt with the Kirtland Temple on it, with the words “Kirtland, Ohio: City of Faith and Beauty.” A Kirtland elementary student cut out the photograph and brought it to his teacher who happened to be a member of the city council. The mayor had a photo blown up and framed for City Hall. Anderson arranged for the town council to meet Steve Young before he played the Cleveland Browns at the old Cleveland Municipal Stadium. Young signed the enlarged photograph which now hangs in Kirtland City Hall. As Anderson explains, the nationally publicized image of Kirtland Temple on the t-shirt of a sports icon along with the visit by Young “created tremendous good will” toward the LDS church in Kirtland. Subsequently, the Kirtland city council approved the road rerouting, a project completed in August 2001.³⁶³

³⁶² Daniel Olsen documents the creation of a buffer zone in 1999 between the Salt Lake Temple and the LDS Church office building. An entire section of “Main Street” in Salt Lake City was bought by the LDS church, the street removed, and the land rezoned to restrict the kinds of speech and conduct acceptable on the land. This drew the ire of many non-LDS residents of Salt Lake City, including the Utah chapter of the ACLU. See Daniel H. Olsen, “Contesting Identity, Space and Sacred Site Management at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah” (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2008), 163-170.

³⁶³ Anderson, interview by author, July 13, 2008; Shaun D. Stahle, “Sports Photo Makes Friends in Kirtland,” *Church News: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, November 17, 2001, <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40909/Sports-photo-makes-friends-in-Kirtland.html>, (accessed on April 3, 2009).

By 2003, Kirtland, once a place of desecration and disillusionment for the LDS, was decisively reincorporated into their collective memory. LDS pilgrims had visited Kirtland for decades. Yet, after “Historic Kirtland” opened its doors, LDS pilgrimage increased. In 2003, after the opening of the new site, perhaps as many as 30,000 LDS visitors came to Kirtland and toured the temple.³⁶⁴ By 2003, then, the geography of Kirtland had changed to include new “shrines” within its field. While LDS had maintained a small visitor center for decades before “Historic Kirtland,” the expansion of the site enabled LDS faithful to contest the prominent Kirtland Temple in a new way.

A New Visitor Center, a New Vision: Community of Christ

Expansions in Kirtland, 2002-2008

In March 2002, the first Community of Christ prophet outside of the Smith lineage, Grant McMurray, visited the Kirtland Temple. McMurray faced a difficult church conference ahead of him in a few weeks. He wanted to begin church discussions on ordaining openly practicing homosexuals and would receive severe resistance from some church members in North America, Africa, and Haiti. Whether or not his visit was connected to this looming controversy, he decided that the Community of Christ finally would build the new Kirtland Temple Visitor Center. A few weeks later, he announced this to the waiting conference. Behind closed doors, the Community of Christ bishopric and First Presidency agreed to a limited fundraising campaign. Instead of diverting tithing money from the church membership, church leaders targeted a carefully selected list of potential donors. Wallace B. Smith, now president emeritus of the Community of Christ, co-chaired the campaign along with a former presiding bishop, Francis “Pat”

³⁶⁴ This figure only includes those who filled out comment cards and indicated their affiliation as LDS. Based on LDS attendance percentages for LDS historic sites, probably 15,000 more LDS pilgrims visited Kirtland, for a total of 35,000 pilgrims. Over 44,000 visitors came to Kirtland Temple in 2003.

Hansen, bringing instant credibility to the project among Community of Christ members. Sixty-two families pledged a total of \$5 million to the new “Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center” dedicated on June 9, 2007.³⁶⁵

As in past dedications, community officials and Community of Christ officials were on hand to hail the new structure. LDS guests were also invited, but the then frazzled director of Community of Christ historic sites, Lachlan Mackay, only invited local LDS stake officials and LDS Historic Kirtland staff. Under an immense amount of pressure to pull the dedication together, he forgot many things. “They [the LDS] do a better job of making us feel important than we do them,” he candidly admitted in a 2009 interview.³⁶⁶

For the smaller denomination, the new visitor center was a decisive gesture toward fully reincorporating the temple into the unique spiritual geography of the Community of Christ. Symbolically, it indicated to all competitors the Community of Christ’s ongoing stake in the temple. Though LDS officials as late as 2001 had offered to buy the building, the Community of Christ symbolically rejected their request through their investment in the new visitor center. The awkward title of the structure, Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center, meant that the Kirtland Temple would be intended as more than simply historical space for the contemporary Community of Christ; it would be space intended to form people into disciples. A spiritual formation director, Bruce Crockett, was hired to work full-time to realize this end.

The visitor center featured museum space, classroom space, a meditation chapel, office space, a theater that can seat 106 guests, and a “mercantile” (gift shop).³⁶⁷ The

³⁶⁵ Mackay, interview by author, 21 February 2010.

³⁶⁶ Mackay, interview, 24 March 2009.

³⁶⁷ Mackay, interview by author, February 21, 2010.

theater featured an expansive picture window hidden behind a projection screen. Visitors watched a twelve-minute orientation video in the theater. Once the film was concluded, the screen automatically raised and the curtains parted, revealing a stunning view of the temple as a hymn (“The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning”) played over the speakers. Thus, visitors were brought from the presence of the simulated temple on film to view the actual temple through the theater’s mammoth picture window--all while still seated in the theater. The new visitor center, then, created a spacious, moderately high-tech staging area before entering the temple itself. With a reflection chapel, a museum, and a large theater, the center could be the portal to a sacred space or the opening to tourist space. Visitors could choose how to approach the temple in part by their choices of places to visit in the visitor center.

Proximity, Social Capital, Contestation, and Cooperation at

Kirtland

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social capital (discussed in chapter helps clarify the interaction between RLDS and LDS members in the decades between 1965 and the present. As a theoretical lens, it also provides a different way of thinking of Kirtland Temple’s ever-moving proximal relationships. Due to the mutual (but not equivalent) spiritual interests that LDS and RLDS members had in Kirtland Temple, Cleveland area members from both groups were brought into closer physical and social proximity to one another. In many other American cities, they could have largely ignored or avoided one another. The resacralization of Kirtland Temple by the LDS church (“lifting the scourge”) was based in part on building a requisite amount of social capital between key agents in the two groups. Karl Anderson, for instance, built relationships with RLDS staff. In turn, they learned to trust him. At crucial moments in the late 1970s, Anderson

was able to reassure nervous LDS hierarchy that RLDS leaders would not oppose the added LDS presence to Kirtland.³⁶⁸ His relationships with LDS hierarchy made him a bridge between RLDS and LDS interests in Kirtland. Anderson's relationship with RLDS staff had benefits and gave him extraordinary access to the Kirtland Temple, such as when he brought in groups of LDS hierarchy after touring hours. In the 1990s, Lachlan Mackay built social capital through both inherited means (he was a direct descendant of Joseph Smith) and as his role as the RLDS Kirtland Temple Site Director. Being socially connected to Mackay became advantageous for LDS individuals, from tour directors to local members like Anderson. In turn, Mackay gained credibility within his own movement as a bridge builder between denominations, partially realizing the mission of Community of Christ sacred spaces as sites of "peace, reconciliation, and healing." At least among a select number of individuals, social capital was built that had a "multiplier" effect beyond what one individual could have accrued on their own. A form of cooperation was built between those who stood in close geographical and social proximity to the temple.

This cooperation echoes the structure of conversion narrative, too. "When I first came in 1967 here," related Karl Anderson in 2008, "we didn't have any respect for the Community of Christ."³⁶⁹ "We have felt relationships with the RLDS Church, which owns the Kirtland Temple, warm over the years," he stated in a 1997 article.³⁷⁰ And finally, in a 2005 interview for an independent LDS magazine, Anderson described the

³⁶⁸ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 129.

³⁶⁹ Anderson, interview by author, 13 July 2008.

³⁷⁰ Karl Ricks Anderson, "In Kirtland, Family's Lives are Centered in LDS Sites," *Church News: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, January 4, 1997, <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29253/In-Kirtland-familys-lives-are-centered-in-LDS-sites.html>, (accessed on February 17, 2010).

Community of Christ as godly caretakers of the building. “They love the Lord,” he said, “and are so kind to share the building with us.”³⁷¹ Furthermore, Anderson relates to LDS visitors that the Community of Christ owns the temple “because God gave it to them. . . I say [to LDS pilgrims], Do you think they would have it if the Lord did not want them to have it?”³⁷² Community of Christ Historic Sites Director Lachlan Mackay also has related a marked improvement in denominational relations since he began working at the site in 1992 as a young historic interpreter (guide).

LDS and RLDS members have claimed improving relations for several generations. An RLDS Kirtland resident in 1979 recalled that. “ ‘Mormon’ used to be just a dirty word. There was no friendship at all between the two groups.”³⁷³ But by 1979, everything had changed, he felt. People from earlier decades, though, felt that their time was an age of new cooperation and harmony. In a 2008 interview, the former RLDS historic sites coordinator in the 1960s noted the difference between what he saw as antagonistic relations in the 1940s compared to the more positive relations in the era when he directed the site.³⁷⁴ In all cases, the era before was worse than the era in which one lived. The Western narrative of progress partially undergirds these stories, but more cogently, the Christian narrative of evangelical conversion underlies them all. The site was desecrated. Now it is holy. We were once enemies. Now we are friends. Once lost. Now found. This narrative bears some truth. A simple search of officially sanctioned

³⁷¹ Maurine Jenson Proctor, “A Passion for Kirtland: God is in the Details,” *Meridian Magazine*, 2003, <http://www.ldsmag.com/articles/030604details.html>, (accessed March 26, 2009).

³⁷² Anderson, interview by author, 13 July 2008.

³⁷³ Leigh Hermance, “Mormons’ Return to Kirtland May Trigger War for Converts,” *Plain Dealer (Cleveland)*, November 18, 1979.

³⁷⁴ Kenneth Stobaugh, interview by author, 1 October 2008, Independence, Missouri, typscript.

polemical literature generated by the churches about one another shows that the mid-twentieth century marks a turn to more cordial relations between the two churches.³⁷⁵ Cooperation was genuinely experienced by the two groups.

However, Kirtland's story is far more complicated than a linear narrative of spiritual harmony and generous orthodoxies triumphing over polemics and narrow-minded dogmatics. When cooperation becomes the teleological end point for Kirtland's biography, forms of physical proximal contestation become masked. If anything, physical proximal contestation has expanded at the site over the course of forty years. The state, the Community of Christ, the Restoration Branches movement, and the LDS church have added sites and signage close to the temple that, if not question, at least provide alternatives to each other's appropriation of sacred space and sacred narratives. Such additions illustrate a wider tendency present at many sacred sites. Kenneth E. Foote notes that "sanctified sites often attract additional and sometimes even unrelated monuments and memorials through a process of accretion." In other words, "once sanctified, these sites seem to act as foci for other commemorative efforts."³⁷⁶ The addition of LDS Historic Kirtland dramatically illustrates Foote's insight.

³⁷⁵ RLDS polemics against LDS include W.C. Cather, *Salt Land Heresies: An Investigation of Truth and Error, or the Path of Right and Where Found* (Atchison, Kansas: Lawless and Morgan, 1897); Elbert A. Smith, *Differences that Persist Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Utah Mormon Church* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1943); Russell F. Ralston, *Fundamental Differences between the Reorganized Church and the Church in Utah* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1960); Aleah G. Koury, *The Truth and the Evidence: A Comparison between the Doctrine of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Independence: Herald House, 1965). There is a marked difference in Ralston's tone and Cather's tone. Ralston is more of an apologist than a polemicist for the RLDS church. Cather writes highly polemical prose. For an example of LDS polemics against the RLDS, see Joseph F. Smith, *The Origin of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Question of Succession* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1909). A far less polemical work is Richard G. Moore, *A Comparative Look at Mormonism and the Community of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Millennial Press, 2010). Moore is an instructor in the Church Education System at BYU.

³⁷⁶ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 9.

Conclusion: The Temple as Tabernacle

As noted in the introductory chapter, contested sacred space can be described with layering metaphors (palimpsests) or geological allusions (layers of strata in sedimentary rock or a fold mountain). Having developed the narrative of Kirtland Temple's changing proximal relationships, I now add one more metaphor for understanding contested sacred—the metaphor of a tabernacle for Kirtland Temple. Like its Biblical archetype that Moses and the children of Israel carried through their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness, the Kirtland “House of the Lord” is a place of “dwelling” that is metaphorically in motion, traversing varied spiritual geographies over time and space. This mobile aspect of Kirtland Temple illustrates what anthropologist James Clifford terms “travel-in-dwelling.”³⁷⁷

On the other hand, when pilgrims travel to the temple, they may engage in a different phenomenon—what Clifford calls “dwelling-in-travel.” Pilgrims on the move bring with them durable dispositions, what Bourdieu calls a “habitus,” that are not readily itinerant.³⁷⁸ Such beliefs, practices, and habits inevitably collide with other disparate dispositions at a parallel pilgrimage site. Varied forms of scripted and improvised performances ensue in the interactions among pilgrims and site interpreters, as will be illustrated in Part III. Kirtland Temple has not just been socially constructed through the proximal placement of monuments, maps, plaques, new Scriptures, and new buildings (a large focus of this chapter); Kirtland Temple has been created and sustained through ritual performances, such as tour guiding, devotional worship, and plays. A parallel pilgrimage is not simply emplotted in a geography; it is necessarily performed. It is to this performative dimension that we now turn.

³⁷⁷ Clifford, *Routes*, 44.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

PART C:
PERFORMANCE AND KIRTLAND TEMPLE

CHAPTER 7: STAGING THE TEMPLE: RLDS AND LDS DRAMAS
AT KIRTLAND

Prologue to Part C

“Performance” offers a second theme found within contested and cooperative parallel pilgrimage. I draw on ritual studies scholar Catherine Bell’s work that defines performance as a ritual “metacommunication” that enacts “explicit statements announcing the beginning and end of an action, distinctive uses of metaphor and metonymy, stylized rhythms or distinctive vowel harmonies, and tempo or stress patterns.”³⁷⁹ Pilgrimage in itself is a type of ritualized performance, carrying with it a religiously scripted way of acting and experiencing a journey and a site. Pilgrimage as a performance can be seen in the language and intonation a Community of Christ historical interpreter uses to address a group or in the annual play performed by LDS Kirtland Stake members titled, “This is Kirtland!”³⁸⁰ Each group of performers calls attention to their message and meanings by both the stylized manner in which the performance is done and the extraordinary environments in which it is enacted. Such performers intend to shape their audiences in particular ways, including eliciting particular religious commitments. Further, as Bell summarizes, “the dramatic or performative dimension of social action” provides “the community a chance to stand back and reflect upon their actions and identity.”³⁸¹ “Performance” in a parallel pilgrimage allows also for religious contestation and cooperation, as religious communities may be repelled by the

³⁷⁹ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 75.

³⁸⁰ Howlett, “Field Notes,” 19 July 2008.

³⁸¹ Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 75.

movements and words of a competing group or may be caught up in a new way of acting and understanding their worlds.

In part III, I chart the changes in “performance” found at the temple over time. This includes an analysis of Community of Christ plays performed at the temple in the 1970s and 1980s as well as the “performance” done by guides on their historically-centered tours over the past forty years. Additionally, I will turn my attention to changes in LDS “performance” at their historic sites, including an analysis of recent plays and approaches to tours. I argue that the Community of Christ’s intentions have shifted over time from using the Kirtland Temple primarily as a platform to proclaim that they were the one true Latter Day Saints (aimed at shaping their own identity and proselytizing others), to a performance that primarily emphasizes professional standards of historical interpretation. Such changes accelerated in the aftermath of church schism (the late 1980s) and the Lundgren murder tragedy (1989). By these changes, the Community of Christ staff and church hierarchy shifted their “alliances” from a relationship with the sectarian elements in their community to an alliance with the secular, professional, academic interpretative community. Such performative changes were not neutral acts of power simply aimed at responsible interpretation. They were also moves toward distancing moderate and liberal Community of Christ members (and the public image of the church) from fundamentalists within the denomination. The changes also distanced Community of Christ members from their LDS cousins who emphasized spiritual lessons and heartwarming folk history over more academic historical narratives. In contrast, LDS performances have gone from regarding Kirtland Temple as a neutral or desecrated space toward affirming it as one of the holiest places on earth and the place where their own temple ordinances began. Finally, in the pen-ultimate chapter of this dissertation, I investigate how performances at Kirtland Temple can give insight into how religious Americans deal with a fractured, pluralistic religious America.

While previous sections have masked my own presence in this study, in the following chapters I rely more heavily on my own observations as a researcher and former guide at the site. In many of the post-2004 performances that I narrate, I have been a participant, as well as an observer. And I come to those performances with certain religious as well as academic commitments, as I revealed in my introductory chapter. Nevertheless, I believe that my own participation as a guide, a history course instructor for college-age Community of Christ guides, and researcher at Kirtland Temple offer a unique position for analyzing the variety of scripted and improvised performances at Kirtland Temple.

My reflexivity in how I participate in performances at Kirtland Temple reflects larger trends in the performance theory that have shaped many academics of my generation. Indeed, as Catherine Bell notes, “a greater awareness of the scholar’s own position is intrinsic to the [current] performance approach, articulating postmodernist concerns for reflexivity, critiquing claims to simple objectivity, and sometimes systematically deconstructing the whole scholarly stance.”³⁸² While my goals are far more modest than systematic deconstruction of “the whole scholarly stance,” I believe my reflexive stance honestly acknowledges that I have been just as involved in processes of contestation at Kirtland Temple as I have been in acts of cooperation. I do not stand outside these religious and political processes.

RLDS and LDS Traditions of Drama

Anthropologist Simon Coleman suggests that, at pilgrimage sites, “links to the past can be established as much by staged performance as by history or archeology.”³⁸³

³⁸² Catherine Bell, “Performance,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 210.

³⁸³ Simon Coleman, “Pilgrimage to ‘England’s Nazareth’: Landscapes of Myth and Memory at Walsingham,” in *Intersecting Journeys*, 65.

Plays performed at pilgrimage sites are among the most obvious kinds of staged performances which establish links between the past and the pilgrim. Since the late 1970s, Kirtland Temple and its surrounding interpretative sites have served as venues for dramatic performances in which the shrine's past is resurrected and performed on stage. Plays about Kirtland Temple have allowed audience members and actors to relate Kirtland's past to their present personal and institutional dilemmas and experiences, elevated the temple's status as sacred space, and shaped the way that individual groups socially construct the temple. If tour-guiding provides one way to experience the temple, dramas provide an alternative space where the temple is interpreted and incorporated into a "useful past" that shapes the lives of pilgrims. Finally, dramas further illustrate the process of parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple, as RLDS and LDS have constructed dramas drawing on common stories, with very different applications for those narratives.

For generations, Latter Day Saints have included plays as a feature of the pilgrimage experience at sacred sites. Starting first with the Hill Cumorah Pageant in 1937, LDS members offered summer pageants at many of the major stops along the Mormon History Trail, including outdoor plays in Independence, Missouri; and Nauvoo, Illinois.³⁸⁴ Folklorist Kent Bean notes that this Mormon proclivity for pageants was part of a much wider early twentieth-century American cultural fad that Mormons simply continued when such practices lost popularity elsewhere.³⁸⁵ Additionally, LDS dramas at historic sites draw upon an early twentieth century church-wide tradition of local stakes producing "road shows," or variety shows that interspersed theatricals with song

³⁸⁴ Additionally, outdoor pageants have been performed at Mesa Arizona (an Easter Pageant titled "Jesus the Christ"); Clarkston, Utah (the Clarkston Pageant titled "Martin Harris: The Man Who Knew"); Castle Dale, Utah (the "Castle Valley Pageant"); and Manti, Utah (the "Mormon Miracle Pageant"). See Kent R. Bean, "Policing the Borders of Identity at the Mormon Miracle Pageant," (PhD dissertation: Bowling Green State University, 2005): 16.

³⁸⁵ Bean, "Mormon Miracle Pageant," 17.

and dance.³⁸⁶ In the 1980s, the Cleveland LDS community drew together these two dramatic traditions—the pageant and the road show—to produce an indoor historical drama about Kirtland. After a run of a few years, the Clevelanders stopped producing the play, and a new drama was written and performed in 2002. Above all, these performances were a mimesis for how LDS should act in the present. They also functioned as mirrors for how the local Cleveland saints had incorporated Kirtland and its past into their own story.

Before any LDS Kirtland dramas developed, however, RLDS were performing their own productions at Kirtland Temple. From 1977 to 1984 and again in 1986, members produced and performed dramas at the shrine. These productions drew on the tradition of community theater rather than the distinctive LDS cultural tradition of stake-wide “road shows,” though the first RLDS productions also drew on the American tradition of outdoor pageants. Performed during the summer, RLDS dramas always stood in the shadow of much larger LDS dramatic productions like the Hill Cumorah Pageant (a grand outdoor play that could best be seen as dramatic spectacle).³⁸⁷ Aware of this, RLDS authors and actors attempted to shape their dramas in ways that would meet RLDS needs while not trying to compete with the larger, better funded LDS productions. Additionally, RLDS plays about Kirtland functioned as bellwethers for changes within the denomination. The dramatic performances did not simply reflect these changes. Actors and directors actively participated in creating these changes, too.

³⁸⁶ Terryl L. Givens, *A People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 265-266.

³⁸⁷ Givens provide a brief history of the Hill Cumorah Pageant in his *People of Paradox*, 267-268.

Rehearsing Kirtland's Past: RLDS Dramas, 1977-1986

Volunteer site staff first proposed an RLDS drama for performance at the Kirtland Temple in 1972. Senior guide Emma Phillips drafted an outline for a play and sent it on to the RLDS First Presidency for approval. Forwarding it to the denomination's official church historian, Richard Howard, the First Presidency asked for Howard's comments. While the play outline no longer survives, Howard's comments do, and they reveal some of the proposed play's contents. They also highlight the tension in the 1970s between professional staff at the RLDS headquarters in Independence and volunteers at Kirtland who embraced an older form of RLDS piety. Phillips's proposed drama followed a family of saints, the Bardells, through their sojourn in 1830s Kirtland, highlighting the early history of the restoration movement along the way. According to Howard, the drama had an "overriding preoccupation with Utah Mormon concerns." That is, the drama attempted to "clarify denominational differences" at every turn. Essentially, the drama explained why RLDS were not "Utah Mormons." Howard feared that such a drama would not only embarrass LDS "but would tend to breed attitudes of arrogance and self-righteousness" among the RLDS. Howard also worried that a drama in Kirtland might "cause the suspicion that the RLDS church were trying to compete with the now famous Mormon Pageant held each July at Hill Cumorah."³⁸⁸ Additionally, there appeared to be a clear proselyting element in the play, raising Howard's fears about its propriety at Kirtland Temple. "Drama should quicken RLDS people in their heritage in mission rather than hope to attract passing onlookers or already committed Utah Mormons en route to or from the Hill Cumorah Pageant."³⁸⁹ For Howard, the drama should be targeted at

³⁸⁸ Richard P. Howard to First Presidency, "Re: Proposed Kirtland Drama," September 15, 1972, in First Presidency Papers, "Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975," RG 29-3, f7, CCA.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

inspiring already committed members in the church's contemporary mission, rather than be used as a tool for evangelizing others. He also wondered if the proposed play was symptomatic of a much larger problem: "the misuse of historical sites, in terms of presumed proselytization values." Howard used this opportunity to rhetorically ask the First Presidency, "how do we use sites such as Kirtland—as historical, or as polemical?"³⁹⁰ Clearly, he desired the former.

Howard was not opposed in principle to dramas at Kirtland. In 1975, he served on a committee that drew up a master plan for the temple and its future as a historic site.³⁹¹ He supported a proposal by a Graceland College professor, Velma Ruch, to arrange a summer drama internship at the temple. Starting in the summer of 1977, Graceland College students could gain college credit in dramatic arts by guiding at the temple during the day and acting in a drama at night. While the plan was to attract theater majors, in practice, the summer program relied mostly on novices, some of whom had never been in a dramatic production. The play scripts, too, were produced by volunteers, only some of whom had experience as playwrights. The resulting production was amateurish and uneven in quality from year to year.³⁹² With no budget for the production and few volunteers, the RLDS staff in Kirtland made the best of their situation.

After two years of productions involving various amateur drama enthusiasts, the RLDS historic sites director recruited a director who had professional experience. From

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ R.W. Pearson to Duane E. Couey, et. al., "Re: Kirtland Temple Historic Center Workshop, February 16, 1975," 3 February 1975, "Kirtland: Workshop on Historic Sites, February 1975," in Historic Properties Papers, CCA, RG 26, f153.

³⁹² V. Lynne Matthews, interview by author, 7 January 2009, Independence, Missouri, typescript.

1979 to 1984, V. Lynne Matthews, fresh from a graduate program in theater at the University of Kansas, directed the Kirtland summer drama. Debra Bruch, another graduate student in theater at Kansas, also traveled to Kirtland to build sets for the production. Through revenue from advertising in the play program, Matthews and Bruch procured a rough set, sewed costumes, and spent night after night in rehearsal with their amateur cast. Bruch left before the first performance each year, but succeeded in improving the set and props from year to year. Matthews recruited a few actors with acting experience after the first few years; together, they helped coach the non-theater major college-aged guides who served in the cast.³⁹³

The scripts for these mid-summer plays mainly lack overt apologetic or evangelistic concerns, yet they still reflect particular RLDS views that would not be shared by their LDS cousins in the early 1980s.³⁹⁴ A different set of heroes and villains are portrayed than typically found in LDS stories. For instance, the character of Sidney Rigdon plays an important role in every RLDS Kirtland drama. Since Rigdon competed for leadership with Brigham Young after Joseph Smith's death, he had not yet been positively reincorporated into LDS historical memory. Additionally, Hildred Hoecker's *House of the Lord*, performed in 1977 or 1978, care is taken to differentiate between the different types of opponents to the early saints. E.D. Howe, famous for his 1834 work, *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic], is portrayed as deploring violence against the saints.

³⁹³ Matthews, interview, 7 January 2009; Deborah Bruch, interview by author, October 31, 2008, via e-mail.

³⁹⁴ The three scripts that I found in the KTHSSC are Hildred Hoecker, *The House of the Lord* (N.p., ca. 1977); Jo Roberson, *Kirtland Temple Speaks* (N.p.: 1982); and John A. Horner, *The Kirtland Rehearsal* (Independence, Missouri: The Worship Commission of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1986).

According to the script, he simply wanted to expose inconsistencies in the movement so that the church would quietly wither away rather than violently implode.³⁹⁵

Even with the care taken by RLDS authors to differentiate types of “persecutors,” there are plenty of scenes ripe with simplistic portrayals of the saints’ trials against evil villains—portrayed mainly as an angry mob with torches. When the temple is completed in Jo Roberson’s play, a crowd of hecklers gathers outside it. “Somehow—those poor wretched Mormons have managed to finish that –that place,” says one. “They call it God’s House. (Laughing) I’ve even heard rumors that they expect Him to be there,” says another.³⁹⁶ The saints of the story, in contrast, appear restrained in their reactions. After a scene in which Joseph Smith is tarred and feathered (a real historical event), a small boy expresses his outrage, crying, “How could they? Brother Joseph wouldn’t hurt a fly! I hate them!!” The boy’s father then gently chides him, “I know it’s hard not to hate them. . . . but God has given us His Church to help us be the kind of people that will show others he is leading us. We can’t do that if we are hating them.”³⁹⁷ The saints persevere, but so do forces of the opposition. Without fail, the spotlight falls upon outside opposition instead of internal problems. The saints-persecuted-by-gentiles theme reaches its crescendo when, in Jo Roberson’s script, *Kirtland Temple Speaks*, a meeting of the saints is broken up by their enemies firing a canon outside their gathering.³⁹⁸ This event might be high melodrama, but it lacked historical grounding.

The plays also reinforced particulars of in-house RLDS lingo and doctrines that were not shared with their LDS cousins. In an early scene in Hildren Hoecker’s play, the

³⁹⁵ Hoecker, *The House of the Lord*, 24-26.

³⁹⁶ Roberson, *Kirtland Temple Speaks*, 33.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

character Parley Pratt gives an exposition of the gospel that sounds suspiciously like mid-twentieth RLDS belief in building “Zion” communities to bring in the kingdom of God on earth (a mix of the Protestant Social Gospel and RLDS Scripture). Another character remarks that the Kirtland Temple is the only structure standing on earth built by the command of God.³⁹⁹ While in 1836, the Kirtland Temple was the only structure that early saints had built in response to a divine command, this last remark refers to a longstanding RLDS belief that LDS temples were not divinely commanded. While the authors perhaps did not intend the plays to be RLDS-themed, their plays spoke best to the beliefs, concerns, and heritage of RLDS members.

The mid-1980s were a period of dramatic upheaval at Kirtland Temple and in the RLDS denomination as a whole. In 1984, the RLDS drama program ended after the director, Lynne Matthews, decided to pursue other projects.⁴⁰⁰ The denomination became embroiled in a schism, too, directing much of its energies elsewhere as members disputed ordaining women to the priesthood. However, in 1986, church leaders wanted a program during the summer to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the Kirtland Temple’s dedication. Richard Howard, the church’s official historian, contacted a playwright and director, John Horner, who was finishing his PhD in theater at the University of California-Santa Barbara. Horner was a life-long member of the church and represented both the old heritage themes of the movement, as well as the progressive direction that the church had taken in the 1960s and 1970s. Howard asked Horner to write, direct, and act in a play that would be performed inside Kirtland Temple. With a small commission in hand from the RLDS church and enough money to hire five actors, Horner began to

³⁹⁹ Hoecker, *The House of the Lord*, 23, 38.

⁴⁰⁰ Matthews, interview by author, January 20, 2009.

write *The Kirtland Rehearsal*.⁴⁰¹ The play premiered at Kirtland Temple on July 16, 1986 and ran until July 26.⁴⁰² It was performed again for RLDS audiences in Independence, Missouri in the fall 1986. Finally, it was performed at the 1988 meeting of the Mormon History Association in Logan, Utah.⁴⁰³ The play is arguably the most critically serious and complicated drama about Kirtland ever performed at the site.

Within the limitations posed by the temple's interior itself and a small cast, Horner created a short subplay within the play. This subplay portrays themes and stories familiar to an RLDS and LDS audience: an account of Joseph Smith's first vision, shared by missionaries with Kirtland residents; a scene with Joseph Smith greeting Newell K. Whitney as he arrives in Kirtland for the first time; Joseph Smith healing Elsa Johnson's arthritic arm; Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon being tarred and feathered by angry mob in Hiram, Ohio; Joseph and Emma discussing the death of their twins and the chance of adopting a pair of motherless twins; Joseph and church leaders discussing the possible construction of the temple; a scene where women donate their china for the temple's stucco; and the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The five actors break up these scenes by a running series of conversations and arguments about the play. In the process, the actors raise matters of faith, belief, and doubt. Horner wrote each character to represent a point on the spectrum of RLDS members—from the extreme of an agnostic/cultural member to the other extreme of a conservative “true believer.” Additionally, he allowed characters to make the best case possible for their position in his play.⁴⁰⁴ His characters were wrestling not only with the past but also with present struggles within the church.

⁴⁰¹ John A. Horner, interview with author, Independence, Missouri, 6 January 2009, transcript.

⁴⁰² Horner, *The Kirtland Rehearsal*, 3.

⁴⁰³ Horner, interview, 6 January 2009.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

One such struggle reflected the debate upon gender roles which raged within the church in the mid-1980s. By 1986, the first RLDS women had been ordained to the priesthood and others followed. This sharp challenge to traditional gender roles sparked a revolt among conservative members. In some instances, entire congregations left the denomination. “The Kirtland Rehearsal” echoes these developments. At one point, an actor in a scene cries out in frustration at another actor’s portrayal of a scene, “God help us.” “Oh, *he* will,” retorts another actor. “He?” questions a female actor. The director pauses, and says, “Let’s not get into that right now.”⁴⁰⁵ Horner explained in a 2009 interview that he intended this last line as a reflection of the general feeling in the RLDS church. According to Horner, people were tired of arguing about gender roles, but it was a question that would not go away.⁴⁰⁶

While acknowledging the frustration that RLDS members experienced over endless arguments about gender roles, Horner both explicitly and subtly takes the side of fuller inclusion of women in the RLDS priesthood. In an early scene, a woman volunteers to play the part of Oliver Cowdery for the play within the play. “But you can’t play a man,” protests a male actor. “Why not?” asks the woman. “Because it just isn’t done,” retorts the other. “We’ll set a precedent,” responds the woman. “Reverse the conventions of Shakespeare’s stage where all the women’s roles were played by men,” muses another actor. The first woman explains, “I refuse to be relegated to the one big scene where the women bring the family china to be crushed into the mortar for the façade.”⁴⁰⁷ Here and elsewhere, Horner dramatizes intra-church conflicts over gender and makes his own concern clear: why should the priesthood only be open to men? By the play’s end, all five

⁴⁰⁵ Horner, *Kirtland Rehearsal*, 20.

⁴⁰⁶ Horner, interview, 6 January 2009.

⁴⁰⁷ Horner, *The Kirtland Rehearsal*, 19.

actors (including two women) have played the part of Joseph Smith, matter-of-factly and without dispute. Actors just read Joseph's lines and act them out as they debate how best the emphasis should be on a line.

The portrayal of Joseph Smith in "The Kirtland Rehearsal" stands in some contrast to the hagiographic rendering in previous RLDS plays. Horner's Smith is kind and understanding but feels real fear. This is highlighted in a section of the play where Horner focuses on the idea of miracles. In a scene in the subplay, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon are dragged from their homes in the dead of night by members of a mob. Rigdon is knocked unconscious. With a cold, angry demeanor, a mob member begins stirring a bucket of hot tar while other men threaten Smith. He cries out, "No—please? I beg of you... Isn't what you've done to Brother Sidney more than enough? Please don't hurt me! Please?" Joseph whimpers with fear as he pleads with the mob. He is vulnerable, self-interested instead of selfless, and scared. As the scene continues, the characters on stage all freeze, struck by the terrible violence. Then they slowly walk off the stage. In a trembling voice, one actor narrates what happened the day after Smith was tarred and feathered. The very next day, the audience learns, Joseph preached a sermon on forgiving enemies and converts "some of the very ones who the night before had tortured him." "Their [Joseph and Emma Smith's] adopted baby son died from the exposure [to the cold night air]," added another actor. Quietly, a third actor says, "miracles."⁴⁰⁸ Bittersweet irony tinges the word as the actor speaks it.

At another point, the play explores the ordinary versus the extraordinary nature of Joseph Smith in a scene where Joseph greets a Kirtland store-keeper and soon-to-be-convert, Newell K. Whitney. Horner drew this incident from an LDS folkloric tale in which Joseph greeted Whitney, a man he had never met, and said, "Newell K. Whitney,

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 48.

thou art the man!” In Horner’s rendition, the “true believer” actor portrays Smith confidently saying in a booming voice, “Newell K. Whitney, Thou art the man!” “Stranger, you have the advantage of me. I could not call you by name, as you have me,” says Whitney. “I am Joseph the Prophet,” imperiously states the first actor. “You’ve prayed me here. Now what do you want of me?”⁴⁰⁹ Horner’s skeptic actor interrupts the true believer playing Smith. “Play the man like a human being,” chides the one to the other.⁴¹⁰ The skeptic then steps into the scene and plays Joseph. As he approaches Whitney’s store, he mimes that he is reading a sign on Whitney’s store (bearing Whitney’s name), sees his opportunity to manufacture a miracle, and greets Whitney by name. Joseph is almost a charlatan in this portrayal. A third actor, a woman, then plays the scene, mediating between the two scenes that had gone on before her. The actor enters the store. Horner’s stage directions read, “She starts to take off her coat as she turns back to First [Newell K. Whitney in this scene], sees him and pauses as she studies his face. A delighted smile of realization spreads across her face.”⁴¹¹ Horner then writes the scene as follows: “(Savoring the words) ‘Newell K. Whitney.’ (First is caught off guard. Second moves toward him with extended hand, perhaps almost as surprised as he in her understanding.) ‘Thou art the man.”⁴¹² Whitney responds with his line. Then, “Joseph” says, “(delighted, almost not even believing it herself.) ‘I am Joseph the Prophet.’ (A very brief pause, then, explaining Newell’s own actions to him.) ‘You prayed me here.’ (Almost laughing) ‘Now, what do you want of me?’”⁴¹³ Here, there is a

409 Ibid., 34.

410 Ibid., 35.

411 Ibid., 36.

412 Ibid., 37.

413 Ibid.

miracle, but it is a quiet miracle. Joseph is not the all-knowing prophet, but a man surprised by the revelation that comes to him. By different inflections and stage actions for the same line, Horner shows three different visions for Joseph and three different understandings of church history. One is bombastically iconic. Another is a thoroughly naturalistic, almost cynical portrayal. The last is a quietly inspired revelation. Horner's dramatic medium allows him to raise these differences with his audience in a way that a written text could not accomplish.

The penultimate scene of Horner's play brings together the simmering conflict among various types of RLDS members over religious faith and history. In the play within the play, four women (two of them played by men) bring their china to be crushed into the temple's stucco. They address temple foreman Artemus Millett:

Fifth: We wish a signal offering to the temple that will stand with it through time and eternity.

Third: Measured in permanence.

Second: A sacrifice of substance that will quietly tell our daughters' daughter that, yes, we were undeniably a part of this.

Fourth: So our presence will stand here, a part of the temple itself.

First: But the temple itself in time may creak and crack and sway and crumble to the rubble of time.

Second: As may be, so long as we may be undivorced adornment to that rubble, that our presence may be present.⁴¹⁴

The "women" then hand Millett their fine china to crush into the temple's stucco to give the walls a sparkling sheen. The actors then step outside their historical characters, pause to reflect on the scene just portrayed, and one says that it "made me connect with them [the early saints] in a way I hadn't before." "Yeah, the sacrifice,"

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 57-58.

comments another. “Too bad it probably didn’t happen,” quips the skeptic.⁴¹⁵ He explains, “No one has ever found any contemporary account of the women taking their family china to be crushed for the stucco plaster. (cutting Third off) Any account.”⁴¹⁶ After some haggling, the true believer responds, “Tradition tells us,” to which the skeptic berates him, “Tradition. Tradition imprisons us in the past and atrophies the mind.”⁴¹⁷ The true believer shoots back, “Tradition helps ground us in . . . Don’t you have any faith at all?”⁴¹⁸ In the actual play, the true believer says this last line with gentle, evident hurt in his voice. Finally, the director, Horner’s mediator figure between the two extreme positions, steps into the scene. “I don’t think you even know what you’re arguing about,” says the director to both of the parties. “You think you’re caught up in some great debate about faith, and you’re not. . . What you’re arguing about is belief, not faith.” The director explains, physically bringing the two arguing parties together on the stage, “Faith is our relationship to and with God. And it is given meaning and life in our relationship to and with each other. We meet God and try to understand that meeting. He trying to understand—that’s belief. But it’s meeting that is faith.”⁴¹⁹ In Horner’s formulation, relationships bind people together while all belief propositions are simply better or worse expressions of those relationships.

The two antagonistic parties, without resolving their argument, come together and play the last scene—the triumphant dedication of the Kirtland Temple. After Joseph offers a dedicatory prayer, the play ends in a typical manner for Kirtland plays, with the

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 60.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

cast holding hands and singing the 1836 dedication hymn, “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning.” The director within the play breaks “the fourth wall” and gives the audience an invitation to stand and sing the last song with the cast. Thus, the audience becomes “actors” in the play itself. The hymn ends, and the director looks at the audience and then back at the cast. “Not bad. We’ll work on it tomorrow,” he quips, bringing back the frame of the play itself that has become blurred by audience participation.⁴²⁰ Since the audience is standing as the play ends, several friends suggested to Horner that this was “a cheap way to get a standing ovation.”⁴²¹

Yet, there is far more going on in this scene than an author’s playful self-mockery of his self aggrandizement (that is, Horner’s set-up for a standing ovation at the end). In the play’s last scene, Horner symbolically unites the actors across their differences. By playing their parts in the Kirtland drama (which stands for the “drama” of the continuing story of the RLDS church itself), the characters in “The Kirtland Rehearsal” held up the hope that RLDS members, despite their differences could make room for one another united around common symbols—even if those symbols were understood very differently. When written in 1986, this hope seemed a real possibility. Yet in the following years, RLDS members dissatisfied with women’s ordination (which began in 1985), began to withdraw in large numbers (perhaps twenty-five percent of the membership and even more of the active membership).⁴²² More directly, only Horner and one other member of his five-member cast remained active in the RLDS church in the years after *The Kirtland Rehearsal*. His cast followed various spiritual paths. A woman became a Wiccan, another just simply became inactive in church life, and another

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁴²¹ Horner, interview, 6 January 2009.

⁴²² Walton, “Counting the Progress of the RLDS Reformation,” 50, 58.

withdrew his activity due to the church's ambivalence on homosexuality in the 1980s. In a 2009 interview, Horner maintained, though, that the play had been an important part of his cast members' lives, even if they were no longer active in the RLDS church.

Ironically, *The Kirtland Rehearsal* signaled not only a growing trend toward creating a "big-tent" church that valued the rhetoric of diversity, it also signaled the construction of a much smaller denomination, as diversity proliferated and the church began a gradual, managed statistical decline.

After 1986, no more dramas were produced or performed by RLDS staff at Kirtland Temple. The denomination decided to devote its meager resources to other ways of conducting "staged performances," namely through better tour guiding and a long campaign for a new visitor center that would "perform" the site on a more permanent basis than the occasional staged dramas done in the summer. Yet, plays would disappear from Kirtland. As the RLDS tradition of Kirtland dramas was ending, the LDS tradition was just beginning.

"This is Kirtland!": LDS Dramas in Kirtland

While the Hill Cumorah and Nauvoo pageants were productions performed and directed by dedicated volunteers from across the LDS church (and promoted by official church publicity), the LDS Kirtland dramas were strictly local productions. In the early and mid-1980s, the LDS Kirtland Stake produced its first play. Probably in response to the RLDS plays staged at the temple after 1977, this project also extended the LDS tradition of sacred drama to a new locale. Sunny McClellan Morton, a Kirtland Stake member who was a teenager at the time, remembers the LDS play as "being dark and dramatic." She recalled being frightened by a scene in which Joseph Smith was tarred and feathered, as well as participating as a dancer in a scene where women mournfully danced around Emma Smith after she had lost twin infants. Morton explained, "As the church began to reestablish itself in Kirtland, it had to do some mourning." The play

itself was part of what she termed a “community grief cycle.” “We had to process some experiences and let them go,” she perceptively related.⁴²³ Coupled with the process of “lifting the curse” on Kirtland initiated by LDS members like Karl Anderson in the mid 1970s, Morton’s observation further demonstrates that the local Cleveland LDS church was engaged in a process of reintegrating Kirtland as part of their church’s historical metanarrative after generations of relative neglect. The 1980s LDS play also reflected a common LDS dramatic trope—the persecution of the saints of God. By emphasizing persecution and violence in the 1830s Kirtland era, the emerging LDS community in Kirtland could reassure themselves that they were the true saints of God in the midst of Babylon.

The 1980s LDS play was repeated for at least three years in a row, and then LDS dramas were discontinued until 2003 when a vignette production was mounted. In the following year the Kirtland LDS stake presidency formally commissioned a new drama that is still performed every summer. A small team led by professional director and choreographer, Polly Dunn, began work on the script, titled “This is Kirtland!” Morton, a free-lance writer and history buff, was pulled in to help with the script, and then later as one of the directors. As she recalled the stake presidency only required that the play “be fun and not focus on darker aspects, but just celebrate the history of the people at the time.”⁴²⁴ Morton’s mother, Cheryl McClellan, explained to me that “Kirtland needed to be remembered as Joseph remembers it. And I think he had a lot of good memories of Kirtland.”⁴²⁵ McClellan’s use of the present tense (“as Joseph remembers it”) startled this interviewer, but it well illustrates the LDS belief that the audience for religious plays

⁴²³ Sunny McClellan Morton, interview with author via phone, 17 July 2009, typescript.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Field Notes, 14 July 2009.

is not limited to those in attendance. For believing LDS members, Joseph Smith as well as countless other early Latter-day Saints, are exalted, embodied beings evolving toward godhood; as such, they are well aware of what is transpiring in Kirtland.

With a cast of fifty-four adults, teenagers, and children, “This is Kirtland!” portrays the saints’ arrival in Kirtland in 1831 and ends with the erection of the Temple in 1836.⁴²⁶ The fictional Christopher Crary, an amalgamation of a father and son with the same name from 1830s Kirtland, serves as the narrator for the play. Crary walks the audience through seven scenes in the hour and a half play. These include a scene in which a child asks God if the Book of Mormon is true, a scene about education in Kirtland’s various schools, a scene portraying a feast thrown for the poor (with a dance sequence), and a scene in which missionaries leave 1830s Kirtland to evangelize abroad.⁴²⁷ Audience members who are LDS can relate their own modern culture to these scenes—from LDS welfare assistance, to seminary/institute instruction, to the great emphasis placed on the Book of Mormon since the 1980s, to the contemporary missionary campaign of the church.

The writers and directors of the play intended their historical portrayals of Kirtland to relate directly to their contemporary LDS audience. In an interview, Morton acknowledged that “We [directors] have made it a point for people to extrapolate modern experiences out this [play].” She remembered “a scene where Parley Pratt rounds up the men to go on a mission and the women are left to talk about things. An old woman after the first year talked to me about how that scene reminded her of the men going off to World War II and the women had to take care of each other.” The play also portrays the

⁴²⁶ “About *This is Kirtland*,” <http://www.thisiskirtland.org/>, accessed on 5 March 2010; Morton interview, 17 July 2009.

⁴²⁷ Field Notes, 19 July 2008; *This is Kirtland*, playbill, in possession of the author.

adult conversion experience of Lorenzo Snow, one of the few early converts with a college education. “We have a lot of adult converts in our stake,” explained Morton. The Snow conversion scene was intended to speak to the needs of this audience, people who were not “cradle Mormons” but came to know the faith later in life.⁴²⁸

Joseph Smith’s portrayal in particular relates directly to the needs of contemporary Mormons. Scenes from the play mirror those in LDS Visitor Center films, such as portrayals of Joseph Smith running and playing with children. This figure is the very model of a kind father and friend to small children. He is also portrayed as the model husband. In one scene, Joseph sings a particularly poignant love song duet with his wife, Emma, modeling the kind of domestic tranquility and affection that contemporary LDS men are urged to share with their wives.⁴²⁹ This domestic Joseph dovetails well into the current LDS emphasis on the nuclear family as the foundation for the moral and spiritual well-being of contemporary culture.

The LDS production of “This is Kirtland!” dramatically illustrates what Davis Bitton famously termed “the ritualization of Mormon history.” According to Bitton, LDS confessional historians (who practice what is often referred to as “faithful history”) “celebrate that which is celebratable, ignoring much of the past as it was” and glossing over more problematic parts.⁴³⁰ Additionally, the writing of contemporary LDS confessional history does not allow for tragedies. Instead, as literary scholar Terryl Givens notes, all tragedies are turned into triumphs.⁴³¹ “This is Kirtland!” illustrates the

⁴²⁸ Morton, interview, 17 July 2009.

⁴²⁹ Field Notes, 19 July 2008.

⁴³⁰ Davis Bitton, *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 183.

⁴³¹ Terryl Givens, *People of Paradox*, 152-153.

point. For instance, the play conveniently omits any mention of the fracturing of the early Kirtland community due to the banking crisis of 1837. Instead, the Kirtland saints who emerge from “This is Kirtland!” are a happy, congenial folk who manage to find humor and God’s gentle guiding hand even in apparent trouble. In one scene, Parley and Thankful Pratt commiserate directly after their house has burned down. Pratt had been scheduled to leave on a mission but was reluctant to leave his family while their home was under construction. Now with his home in ashes, he does not know what to do. As the couple tenderly embraces, Thankful begins to laugh. When Parley questions his wife’s levity, she tells him that now he has no excuse to not to leave. Three friends now arrive, give Pratt a new coat and hat, volunteer a room for his family, and forgive his debts to them. “The Lord has left you with no excuses,” gently chides Thankful. “You better hurry on your journey or end up in the belly of a whale.” With a beaming smile, Thankful then sends her husband away to do the Lord’s work. This scene, based in part on an incident recounted in Pratt’s 1850s autobiography, elicited a knowing “hmmm” from the audience during a performance that I observed in 2009.⁴³² God always provides a way to accomplish His work, the mostly LDS audience collectively affirmed.

Participants in “This is Kirtland!” do not utilize the play simply as a way to instruct their audience members; it is also a way of to deepen their grasp of key episodes and, indeed to re-experience them. Morton reflected on how this experience has affected her eight-year-old son who was cast in the play in 2008. She related that “seeing him singing the songs we wrote and seeing these stories becoming important to him” was her best experience with the drama. “It’s great to see it becoming part of his mythos.”⁴³³ Gratifying his mother, he wanted to tour the Kirtland sites as a result of his participation

⁴³² Field Notes, 17 July 2009.

⁴³³ Morton, interview, 17 July 2009.

in the play. Additionally, directors may cast an individual in a role so that she or he may gain a greater spiritual experience from the process. Morton explains that the directors attempt to spiritually discern the right people for the right roles during casting, making this process distinct from other community theater experiences that she has had. “We consider very prayerfully the kinds of experiences people are having and really look for the Lord’s guidance for the roles people should play,” she told me. “A lot of what we are portraying is about the beliefs of the people, and that comes off best with people who believe them” she added.⁴³⁴ Both the perceived needs of actors, as well as their past spiritual experiences, play a role in the selection of actors.

In a church with a strong missionary emphasis, it is not surprising that the team which produces “This is Kirtland!” have evangelistic purposes. Morton acknowledges that most of the audience for “This is Kirtland!” is drawn from touring groups of LDS members on their way to Palmyra for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. She adds, however, that “our own stake’s primary interest is to reach our own members and reaching those within our stakes boundaries who are not part of our church. Our real targets are the locals.”⁴³⁵ Yet, like the tours performances at LDS historical sites, “This is Kirtland!” best reaches an LDS audience already enmeshed in a Mormon mythos. Morton and her fellow directors understand this, as they have written the script to relate to new converts or the experiences of families dealing with the absence of a loved one on a mission. Unfortunately, I was not able to interview any non-LDS or non-Community of Christ members who had seen the play. (Such a person is probably very rare.) However, I can recount my own reaction as a member of the Community of Christ who attended the play on several occasions.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

As a production, “This is Kirtland!” was a very entertaining play; it was filled with dancing, witty dialogue, and toe-tapping songs that I sang in my head for days afterward. Still, there was one scene that really affected me emotionally—and not in a positive way. I jotted down the following reaction in my field diary the day after a 2008 performance.

I must admit that I was strangely upset with the characters at times during the play. For instance, a beautiful love song duet is sung between Joseph and Emma, during which I felt like standing and pointing to Joseph and yelling “Hypocrite! You cheated on your wife in this time period when you were sleeping with Fanny Alger!” [Of course, I did not do so.] The magic of the play worked, and I was taking the characters as real individuals, but probably not in the way intended by the production staff.⁴³⁶

A few other Community of Christ staff who also attended the play were disturbed by the portrayal of Joseph in the drama. Clearly, the LDS construction of Joseph was not plausible for some Community of Christ members. I had been around LDS culture for years and studied it with some degree of academic detachment. I should not have been surprised in the least by its portrayal of Joseph Smith, yet I was taken aback. This experience further demonstrated how invested I was in my own movement and maintaining my own boundaries between myself and my ecclesiastical cousins.

The LDS historical drama, “This is Kirtland!”, functions for the local LDS community much like early twentieth-century pageants shaped local American communities. David Glassberg argues that pageants in this time period provided “a ‘common’ history. . . [and] a focus for group loyalties,” “plots to structure . . . individual memories,” and “a larger context within which to interpret new experiences.”⁴³⁷ Historical pageantry cultivated “the belief that history could be made into a dramatic

⁴³⁶ Field Notes, 19 July 2008.

⁴³⁷ David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 1.

public ritual through which the residents of a town, by acting out the right version of the past, could bring about some kind of future social and political transformation.”⁴³⁸

Glassberg believes this last function links directly to Progressivism in the era.

While Glassberg focused on dramas that primarily reflected American “civil religion,” his approach can help us understand the explicitly religious drama “This is Kirtland!” As a conduit for “a ‘common’ history” and a “focus for group loyalties,” the play both provides a common project that helps unite the Cleveland LDS community and projects the present community’s pride in their local past. Cleveland members may or may not be literal descendants of the Kirtland saints, but they claim spiritual descent from them and stand in close geographical proximity to the places portrayed in the play. Kirtland’s history is their history, as showcased in their dramatic efforts. With the play as a kind of structuring device (a part of the habitus, in Bourdieu’s terms), new and old members can find models for piety as well as examples of how to relate God’s work in their lives. The dramatized stories of Kirtland become part of a “usable past” that individuals may draw upon, seeing themselves caught up in a work initiated by their Kirtland ancestors. Finally, as a story that promises the possibility of social transformations, “This is Kirtland!” recounts how faithful saints engaged in highly successful missionary work and built a temple through sacrifice. So, too, the play obliquely teaches that LDS members who model their efforts after their ancestors can grow their local church community through missionary work. Furthermore, it suggests that faithful attendance at a modern temple may alter the spiritual fate of the living and the dead. “This is Kirtland” in effect promises that a religious transformation (a particular kind of socio-political transformation) will be enacted if people perform in appropriate ways.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 4.

Performing Religion, Dealing with Diversity

When compared, the plays about Kirtland described in this chapter reproduce two genres that have dominated literature produced by Mormons: miracle stories and hero narratives. Literary scholar and LDS member Terryl Givens notes that most “faithful LDS literature” seems completely constrained by these two genres.⁴³⁹ The RLDS plays fall into these tropes, too, though Horner’s “Kirtland Rehearsal” took these genres to surprising ends—plumbing how people struggle to work together in a diverse church where heroes are very human and miracles are mostly tinged with irony. In contrast, LDS plays portrayed different possibilities for the human condition. The kinds of hero and miracle stories present in LDS dramas avoid all suggestions of doubt by the faithful or internal dissent. This reflects a cultural orientation that most LDS members share. Terryl Givens laments that it is difficult “find space for doubt in a religious culture that asserts knowledge and certainty as a matter of course.”⁴⁴⁰ LDS plays, then, bifurcate doubt and faith as opposites instead of the mutual precondition for the other.

RLDS and LDS plays based on the Kirtland experience, too, reflect different solutions to the press of religious diversity. Horner’s “The Kirtland Rehearsal,” suggested that people with many different views can work together in a common cause through a process of give and take, mediation and meditation, argument and discussion. This was both symptomatic and constitutive of a growing religious diversity in the church. In contrast, LDS plays reflected on the unity coming from the dissolution of a cacophonous diversity. “This is Kirtland!” was written in an age of doctrinal standardization across the LDS church. Its promise is not that many people with many views can all make room for

⁴³⁹ Givens, *People of Paradox*, 268-269.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 274.

each other, but that people from all backgrounds can imitate the right models to gain unity.

Through their theatrical projects, RLDS and LDS members put Kirtland Temple in the service of their differing visions. Believers and pilgrims literally performed their parallel religions. Since plays have a limited run, though, most Kirtland visitors primarily have encountered a different type of “staged performance.” Pilgrims and site interpreters daily engage in the ritual of touring the temple. While there was an eighteen year gap between Horner’s Kirtland play and the LDS “This is Kirtland!” tour guiding has been performed continuously since Kirtland Temple admitted its first visitors in 1835. Touring the temple, perhaps more than plays, encapsulates the diversity, change, and challenge of parallel pilgrimage experience for hosts and guests.

CHAPTER 8: TOUR GUIDING AT KIRTLAND TEMPLE:
CHANGING AUTHORITIES, CHANGING PERFORMANCES

“Good morning, folks. It certainly is nice to have you come to see us here in this lovely old Kirtland Temple, this morning,” began Ray Lloyd, a temple guide, on a 1959 tour. “You have never seen a building like this before,” he continued. It “is the only building of its kind standing in the world today, that we know of, that was built by direct command of God.”⁴⁴¹ Fifty years later, as a guide, I began my tours in the Kirtland Temple Visitor Center with these words: “Welcome to Kirtland Temple . . . the Kirtland Temple is a National Historic Landmark and it’s also sacred space for many who come here.” With these short introductory statements, Lloyd and I advanced two different ways of guiding guests through the historic shrine. Lloyd gave a directly confessional belief about Kirtland Temple; I offered what might seem to be a more distanced, descriptive statement. But in fact, we both offered confessional statements. The content of our confessions was simply different. Lloyd was invested in an RLDS piety that saw his own denomination as the one true church and the Kirtland Temple as a unique manifestation of the will of heaven. In contrast, I was invested in an ecumenical Community of Christ piety that saw its church as one of many true churches and the Kirtland Temple as a manifestation of frontier revivalism and inspiration. I was equally invested in demonstrating my mastery of academic language and advancing non-religious forms of legitimation (notice my mentioning of the Kirtland Temple as a “National Historic Landmark” and use of the polyvalent academic term, “sacred space”). In sum, the RLDS church that Ray Lloyd inhabited and the Community of Christ/RLDS church that I lived in had marked differences.

⁴⁴¹ “Lecture of Bro. Ray Lloyd: 1959 Kirtland Temple,” uncatalogued, KTHSSC, 1.

This chapter investigates how and why tour performances have evolved in Kirtland. I argue that the evolution of tour guiding at Kirtland Temple reflects select and crucial changes within the Community of Christ/RLDS denomination over the course of the late twentieth century. Specifically, tour performances offer a window into the historical memories that the church deemed important, show how it desired itself to be known by the wider world, and reflect how the denomination interacted with its competitors and changing allies. As will be seen, Kirtland Temple tours tell as much about the Community of Christ's general left-ward turn in the late twentieth century as they reveal about changing academic knowledge of Kirtland Temple's past (and sources of authority deemed legitimate by script writers and performers).

For much of my analysis of guide performances, I use six different scripts used by guides at Kirtland—one from 1959, two from 1980, two from 1990, and one from 2000.⁴⁴² A few words of caution are necessary, though. The six different scripts that I quote were produced for different ends. The 1980 scripts, for instance, were written by anonymous site staff members for a guide manual. Tour guides used the 1980 scripts as models for their performances, but they were not necessarily bound by them. The scripts formed suggestive outlines of information that could be shared on tour. In contrast to the official status of the 1980 scripts, the 1959 script that I quote in my introduction actually was written by Ray Lloyd for a talk he gave to a group at another site (probably a church group). Within the text of the 1959 script, he represented his information as material that he regularly shared at Kirtland Temple. Of course, scholars cannot know how much the

⁴⁴² Lloyd, "Kirtland Temple, 1959"; "Tour Outline A" (circa 1980) in "Tours of Kirtland Temple," uncatalogued, KTHSSC; "Tour Outline B" (circa 1980) in "Tours of Kirtland Temple" folder; Clint A. Reine, "A Tour of The House of the Lord: Visitor's Center Copy" (1990) in "Tours of Kirtland Temple" folder; "A Tour of Kirtland Temple" in Morris T. Jonstone to Bill Knapp, 4 October 1990, in "Tours of Kirtland Temple" folder; and Lachlan Mackay, "A Sample Tour of Kirtland Temple: May 2001," in possession of author.

audience for whom he presented the “typical tour” shaped what he wrote in 1959. In sum, some of the scripts (1959 and 1990) are artifacts of live performances (or at least textual representations of what a performer wanted others to believe was shared on a typical tour). Other scripts (1980 and 2000) are proto-typical accounts of a tour that were created for staff education and intended to be memorized or used as the basis for guide performances. Consequently, the scripts that I use provide windows into guide performances at the temple, but they alone cannot be taken straightforwardly as unmediated records of actual performances. Other sources must necessarily be used to reconstruct past temple performances.

While much of my focus in this chapter will be on tour guides and what they shared, the guides were only one voice in a tour performance; multiple actors added content. The audience, of course, reacted to what was said. Drawing upon comment cards from the late 1960s and early 1970s, diary entries, my field notes from 2008 and 2009, and interviews with staff and pilgrims, this chapter narrates how guide performances were received by visitors. Rather than conceive of the audience for tours as a passive group, I will show how they participated and even shaped the narratives shared by the guides. I also will show how guides from previous decades formed a third voice that shaped performances at the temple. Guides constantly were correcting or changing tour content to reflect new understandings of the history and the meaning of the temple. Visitors listened to the tours, translated the information into their own understandings, and passed along the material to others. Many of these visitors returned to the temple years later, or taught people in their congregations what they had learned on tours. Consequently, guides from later decades would have to indirectly respond to the teachings of previous guides. In a metaphorical way, I was confronting Ray Lloyd as I guided guests in 2008—and he was “speaking” back at me.

The Temple as a Representation of Christ's Restored
Church: Lloyd's 1959 Tour

In 1959, Ray Lloyd, a senior guide at Kirtland Temple, outlined the tour he regularly shared with guests at the shrine. Lloyd emphasized three themes: the temple's uniqueness and God's providential design of the temple; the truth of the RLDS church as a restoration of the apostolic church in its structure and social ideals; and God's presence in the temple in the past and in the present. For Lloyd, a tour in the temple seamlessly led into a discussion of why his church represented God's authoritative church.

Lloyd began his tour by emphasizing the sacrality and uniqueness of Kirtland Temple. As noted in this chapter's introduction, he told guests that RLDS members believed that the temple was "the only building of its kind standing in the world today, that we know of, that was built by direct command of God."⁴⁴³ Lloyd saw God's providential hand everywhere in the temple's design. As he explained the construction of the temple, he drew guests' attention to the lighting for the temple. Pointing to the indirect lighting installed in the barrel-vaulted ceiling, he marveled that "the 'Divine Architect' must have anticipated that we were going to put electricity in the building and would want to install fluorescent tubes in the coves up there, because no changes were needed and they make the most efficient lighting system."⁴⁴⁴ He also speculated on the interior decorative design work inside the temple, stating that one design was "the old Egyptian Lotus Leaf, the symbol of happiness. Around the arch of the Colonial window—the carving at the very outer edge is the old Grecian Egg-and-Dart design, the symbol of fertility. The carving just inside that is another Grecian design, the symbol of

⁴⁴³ Lloyd, "Kirtland Temple, 1959," 1.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

Eternal Life.”⁴⁴⁵ Lloyd saw a great deal of intentionality in the designs by the temple craftsmen. The divine imprint and divine symbolism were everywhere in the Kirtland Temple, according to Lloyd.

Second, as Lloyd stood before the temple’s many tiered pulpits, he explained basic 1950s RLDS beliefs, including their belief in a restoration after a general Christian apostasy and a belief in building Zion, the kingdom of God on earth. Lloyd told his audience, “We are not a Protestant Church. We are a Restoration Church.”⁴⁴⁶ Then, Lloyd detailed the doctrine of apostasy and restoration. In typical traditional RLDS fashion, though, Lloyd added that his church thought that “the same social ideals that were in the original church were restored,” not simply the exact church structure. Lloyd explained that “most churches seem chiefly concerned with the matter of ‘What can I do to get to heaven?’ And that is a perfectly logical concern. . . . We certainly don’t want to miss it [heaven]; but we, as a church have had the social ideal of building a social order here on earth.” This social order was called Zion, a place “where human beings will live together as God would have them live.”⁴⁴⁷ In his explanation, Lloyd offered a typical RLDS amalgamation of the Social Gospel with traditional Latter Day Saint claims about church authority. Amazingly, all of his discussion of church social ideals was simply a preface for his explanation of the letters on the temple’s pulpits that represented various 1830s offices and priesthood groups. Lloyd used the temple as a platform for sharing the 1950s RLDS message to his captive tour audiences.

Third, Lloyd emphasized God’s presence in the temple in the past and in the present. Undoubtedly to the delight of his LDS guests, he shared Joseph Smith’s April 3,

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

1836 vision in the temple, quoting as his source an official RLDS church history volume (which itself drew upon an 1850s LDS newspaper). Lloyd then passionately testified to the truth of Joseph's account. "I have been in this church for more than 61 years," he solemnly noted, "and, in that time, have seen some rather wonderful things myself and I am as sure that Jesus appeared to these men that morning as I am that I am here speaking to you this morning." He then added that "Many wonderful things happened here in this Temple built by direct command of God, even down to very recently."⁴⁴⁸ For Lloyd, the temple was hallowed ground where Jesus had stepped.

In the question and answer time after his tours, Lloyd often engaged in educating his guests on the differences between his church and others. He wrote that, "It takes quite a bit of information and diplomacy to answer some of the questions asked and not have people leaving with hurt feelings." With one group, though, Lloyd was more than willing to argue—the LDS. "With them [the LDS], many times they insist on being argumentative, and in these cases I sometimes give them a rather rough time." At these moments, he typically "stress[ed] the decision in the Lake County Court" that RLDS members at the time believed awarded the temple to them by declaring their faith the legal successor of Joseph Smith's church.⁴⁴⁹

On his tour, Ray Lloyd transformed the temple into a physical witness for the RLDS gospel. At the time, a popular RLDS evangelistic tool featured a picture of a church building that symbolically represented "the church that Jesus built." It featured foundation stones labeled as various priesthood offices, doors that represented baptism by water and the spirit, and windows representing spiritual gifts and principles of the

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

gospel.⁴⁵⁰ RLDS elders would take prospective members through a slide series using this image as an introduction to each lesson. Some elders even built physical models of this iconic church that they used in their outreach. Ray Lloyd, in effect, took this evangelistic model and transferred it to the space of the physical Kirtland Temple. While Lloyd included basic information about the temple itself, he spent an inordinate amount of time addressing issues not directly connected to the history of the building. The temple represented the RLDS gospel writ large. For him, the temple was both a unique, original structure and a copy of a divine ideal about humanity's relationship to God and other humans. It was a part (an individual building) that could be taken for a whole (the RLDS denomination).

Touring in the 1960s and 1970s: RLDS Presentations and
LDS Reactions

During the 1960s and 1970s, the RLDS message that Lloyd included on his tours became more muted, but significant efforts were still made to proclaim the legitimacy of the RLDS church against LDS detractors.⁴⁵¹ Richard Hawks discovered this when he volunteered to guide at Kirtland Temple in the summer of 1969. Before arriving in Kirtland, he took a series of classes taught by an RLDS member that introduced him to LDS beliefs about temples and the afterlife. He remembers handling an LDS temple garment in one of the classes.⁴⁵² Resources at Kirtland, too, prepared the staff to answer and defend RLDS beliefs if necessary, including a book put together by a staff member

⁴⁵⁰ For a reproduction of this image, see Gary Metzger and Jon Tandy, *A Restoration of Truth: In Word and Power* (Kansas City, Missouri: TCS Press, 1991), back cover.

⁴⁵¹ According to a former summer guide, Richard Hawks, at least eighty percent of the visitors were LDS when he guided in 1969. Richard Hawks, interview by author, phone conversation, November 21, 2008, typescript.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

titled, *Materials for Use in Preparing to Meet the Church in Utah Elders*.⁴⁵³ While guides did not intentionally seek to argue with LDS pilgrims, the content of their tours and simply the RLDS presence at Kirtland inevitably raised questions from their LDS guests.

On rare occasions, RLDS efforts at proclaiming their church's legitimacy could lead to tense discussions with LDS guests. Hawks remembers giving a tour to a group that seemed to enjoy their visit until they reached the temple's third floor. At the time, the third floor, an attic story, contained a few original Kirtland artifacts and pictures of the leadership groups within the RLDS church (the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric). Hawks explains that, at this point in the tour, he explained "how Joseph Smith set aside his son [to be the next prophet], and these young ladies seemed to be pretty attentive until I talked about succession in the presidency." They began to ask hostile, pointed questions. "It became apparent to me that they were trying to verbally confound me. We were warned that this might happen," remembers Hawks.⁴⁵⁴ Two women left their group and went outside. Hawks later found out that these women were RLDS, and they left the tour to pray for Hawks in the foyer. After a while, the hostile questions stopped, and the tour continued much more calmly. Hawks felt grateful for the prayerful support he received and remains friends to this day with the women who prayed for him on that tour.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ *Materials for Use in Preparing to Meet the Church in Utah Elders* (N.p.: ca. 1966). This unpublished typescript was found in the Kirtland Temple Historic Site Special Collections among other uncatalogued files related to the temple. On the inside cover, Alvin Wadsworth (a guide from 1966 to 1972 at Kirtland Temple) wrote his name. The pamphlet quotes several texts from the early 1960s, hence my approximate dating of the text to around 1966.

⁴⁵⁴ Hawks, interview by author, November 21, 2008.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

At other times, LDS guests and RLDS guides saw the opportunity bear testimony of the truth of their church to one another. As Donald Brewer started his service as Columbus, Ohio Mission President in 1977, he was led on a tour of the Kirtland Temple by a young RLDS college co-ed. At the conclusion of her tour, she “bore her testimony that she felt one day the Temple would again be rededicated for the purpose for which it was originally intended, and in the not too distant future.” Brewer relates that “at the precise moment that she made this statement the Spirit bore witness to me that what she was saying was correct, but that it would be done by and through the only church on the face of the earth that had the right and power to do it—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Of this fact I so bore witness to her.”⁴⁵⁶ Ever the true believer, Brewer probably did not understand how offensive this statement was to the RLDS guide. Nevertheless, this kind of awkward witnessing by LDS members to RLDS guides is common to this day, even if Community of Christ guides do not bear their “testimony” in the same manner as the 1977 RLDS guide did on her tour.

Whatever the intended effects of their performances, the “actors” (guides and guests) in the last two examples were simply playing their culturally learned roles. LDS women dutifully challenged Hawks, and he attempted to deflect their questions. An RLDS guide bore her testimony of Kirtland Temple’s future, and Brewer immediately recast the “truth” in LDS terms. Given the reigning habitus that structured each participant, these interactions were predictable and, in a sense, ritualized. The respective traditions of each actor had formed him or her well and he or she knew how to respond.

Comment cards from the late 1960s and early 1970s provide some insight into how RLDS and LDS received the tours given by the temple guides. Generally, LDS guests enjoyed their tour experience at Kirtland Temple. Eighty percent of the LDS cards

⁴⁵⁶ Brewer, *Restoring Kirtland Village*, 23.

from July 1970, for instance, included positive comments. Most writers of comment cards included short phrases, such as a Provo family who wrote, “Inspiring, very well explained and cared for.”⁴⁵⁷ A California LDS family wrote, “Very interesting. We have wanted to see this temple for years.”⁴⁵⁸ And a Salt Lake City LDS couple gave perhaps one of the greatest of all LDS compliments: “Guide very capable—should be a missionary for us.”⁴⁵⁹ Clearly, most visitors enjoyed their experience in the Temple, or at least showed a good deal of civility in their comments. This probably reflects in part the learned, tacit knowledge (or the *habitus*) they already carried with them. Knowing how to act in a museum, as Bourdieu has argued, is not something natural but a cultural skill that must be learned; for Bourdieu, this is one expression of “cultural capital.”⁴⁶⁰ Similarly, LDS visitors before coming to Kirtland Temple had accumulated their own kind of “cultural capital”; they knew how to act in sacred spaces and could show good will toward their religious competitors as guests at a shared site.

Comment cards also show how all visitors, no matter their background, were trained to experience a “sacred” site. The majority of the guest comments testify to the beauty of the building, something that RLDS brochures on the Kirtland Temple had promoted since the 1920s. For instance, an LDS family from Columbus, Ohio, wrote, “Very impressed with beauty of architecture.”⁴⁶¹ An RLDS visitor wrote, “Loved the

⁴⁵⁷ Kirtland Temple Visitor Comment Card, 6 July 1970, uncatalogued, KTHSSC.

⁴⁵⁸ Comment Card, 24 July 1970.

⁴⁵⁹ Comment Card, 17 July 1970.

⁴⁶⁰ Rene Romig cites Bourdieu’s well-known work, *Distinction*, on this point and applies it to the guests at Kirtland Temple. See Rene Romig, “Hilltop Dialogues: Elite Entertainment and the Sharing of Sacred Space at the Kirtland Temple,” *Mormon Social Science Association Newsletter* 29, no. 2 (2008): 4. My thanks to Romig for sharing her research at various phases with me.

⁴⁶¹ Comment Card, 27 July 1970.

architecture,” adding, “Glad I’m RLDS.”⁴⁶² “A very beautiful and inspiring church,” scribbled a Quaker from Washington, D.C.⁴⁶³ The quotations confirm Thomas Bremmer’s generalized observation that modern Americans have learned to invest religion and the experience of religious space with an aesthetic element. He writes that religious Americans “harbor a modern aesthetic sense that regards the sacred as the highest level of beauty.”⁴⁶⁴ Whether guests were Quaker, RLDS, or LDS, most visitors invested Kirtland Temple with an exalted, rarified sense of beauty.

This is not to say that visitors experienced the site in a simply universal fashion. The particular backgrounds of the guests affected their experiences at the site, but it also built on a shared set of cultural practices. For instance, a Roman Catholic woman from Erie, Pennsylvania, wrote, “The temple is a lovely shrine for anyone.”⁴⁶⁵ Few RLDS or LDS members would have described the temple with the Catholic-influenced term, “shrine,” but, they certainly treated it as such. LDS guests had different sets of beliefs and practices, too, that made their experience of the site unique. For example, a New Mexico LDS member wrote, “This is a return to a building my great-grandfather, Isaac Morley helped build. I feel very close to him here.”⁴⁶⁶ RLDS also had ancestors who built the Kirtland Temple; yet, without the Nauvoo-era temple rituals for the dead that LDS practiced, RLDS did not relate to their ancestors as part of an eternal family linked together, “worlds without end.” Walking in the steps of their ancestors at Kirtland Temple meant something quite distinct for LDS versus RLDS visitors.

⁴⁶² Comment Card, 8 July 1970.

⁴⁶³ Comment Card, 15 July 1970.

⁴⁶⁴ Bremmer, *Blessed with Tourists*, 151.

⁴⁶⁵ Comment Card, 17 June 1971.

⁴⁶⁶ Comment Card, 1 August 1969.

In light of the comment cards, one may conclude that the content of tours varied according to the guide, particularly the degree to which guides related their personal religious testimonies or the truths embraced by the RLDS church. “Thoroughly enjoyed it,” wrote a Provo, Utah LDS man, “especially the fact that there was no emphasis on conversion every other sentence. I plan to bring my family next time I come.”⁴⁶⁷ Apparently, some RLDS guides bore their testimony on tours, as evidenced by one grateful LDS couple from Phoenix, Arizona who wrote, “We appreciate so much being able to enter the building. The guide bore such a strong testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁶⁸ Not all reacted so positively to these testimonies, however. An LDS woman with a large group from Boulder, Colorado wrote, “I believe that the man who testified to have seen Christ was a big fake. Having heard this has convinced me and strengthened my testimony in our church.”⁴⁶⁹ We may infer that some guides focused on the history of the site, and some used the history as a starting point to talk about their personal religious beliefs.

RLDS guides could offer apologetic content on their tours that directly contradicted LDS beliefs. Apparently, RLDS guides would occasionally inform guests that polygamy had originated with Brigham Young, not Joseph Smith. “I have read up on Joseph Smiths History and found that he had 3 wives [sic],” wrote an LDS guest, perhaps responding to what a guide had told him on tour.⁴⁷⁰ At other times, guides could be too defensive in front of their mainly LDS audiences. “Very interesting,” wrote one LDS

⁴⁶⁷ Comment Card, 1 September 1969, emphasis in original.

⁴⁶⁸ Comment Card, 27 July 1970.

⁴⁶⁹ Comment Card, 1 August 1969.

⁴⁷⁰ Comment Card, 30 March 1969.

man from Logan, Utah, but added “guide was on guard at all times, though, to defend all comments.”⁴⁷¹

A minority of LDS guests used comment cards to vent their frustrations with the tour, the RLDS church, the RLDS use of the temple, or the fact that the RLDS church owned the temple. “I think it is a disgrace to let unworthy persons into a building that has been dedicated to the Lord,” wrote an LDS pilgrim from Falconer, New York.⁴⁷² To underscore this, three more members from her party of seven left comment cards with the same message. “Very hard work put in by Mormons when reorganized took it away,” complained another LDS guest from Mesa, Arizona.⁴⁷³ One LDS woman from a large group from Waukesha, Wisconsin, wrote a statement that spilled over from the front of the comment card and filled the back side with invectives. “You can tell that your church isn’t the true one at all,” she emphatically wrote. Touching on the issue of presidential succession in church leadership (an old bone of contention between the two groups), she added, “I’d like to know what your church will decide to do about a prophet when the one you have now is gone. I’m sorry but I can’t except [sic] your church at all. IT IS VERY VERY FALSE. May be someday you will see how false it really is.”⁴⁷⁴ Comments like these were jabs back at the RLDS guides, reminding them of the differences between the two groups and reinforcing the faith of the LDS members who wrote them. However, the messages on these cards were the exceptions to what most guests wrote. Only nine out of the forty-nine LDS commenters from July 1970 engaged in some kind of doctrinal contestation or leveled a complaint about the tour. Most guests, if they did find areas of

⁴⁷¹ Comment Card, 30 July 1970.

⁴⁷² Comment Card, 18 July 1969.

⁴⁷³ Comment Card, 4 August 1969.

⁴⁷⁴ Comment Card, 1 August 1969, emphasis in original.

disagreement with their RLDS guides, did not voice these disagreements on tour or in their comment cards.

Tour Scripts in the 1980s: Sharing History, Passing along

Folklore

By 1980, RLDS staff members were working in earnest toward verifying what was said on tours. A PhD student in American history at LSU, Roger Launius, acted as a summer director at Kirtland Temple in 1978 and began to compose a history of the temple for temple guides. In a report to his superiors, he deemed it amazing “that none of the things that the past guides have said on tours can be verified with an ease. I think a lot of the interpretation was based on hearsay evidence and legend.”⁴⁷⁵ His text, published in 1986 as *Kirtland Temple: A Historical Narrative*, was the best work of its kind at the time.⁴⁷⁶ Launius returned in the summers of 1990, 1991, and 1992 as a history instructor for the summer guides.⁴⁷⁷ A comparison between two different 1980 tour scripts found in the guide handbook (labeled as “Tour Script A” and “Tour Script B”) is telling of his influence to reform the historical content of tours at the site.

“Tour Script A” in 1980 began by orienting the visitor to the site. It enabled the visitor to envision Kirtland village in the 1830s. Then, it explained the construction of the temple and took the reader inside the shrine. The function of each floor was explained and the tour ended with an account of the temple’s dedication service in 1836. Unlike

⁴⁷⁵ Roger D. Launius to F. Mark McKiernan, 19 June 1978, “Kirtland: Correspondence, 1975-1979,” in Historic Properties Papers, RG 26, f160, CCA.

⁴⁷⁶ Roger D. Launius, *Kirtland Temple: A Historical Narrative* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1986).

⁴⁷⁷ Roger D. Launius to William J. Knapp, 19 March 1990, uncatalogued, KTHSSC; “Employment Agreement between Roger D. Launius and Kirtland Temple Historic Center,” 29 May 1990, uncatalogued, KTHSSC; Lachlan Mackay, interview by author, 4 December 2009, Nauvoo, Illinois, typescript.

Lloyd's 1959 tour that included lengthy asides about the "restored gospel," the 1980 "Tour Script A" focused mainly on the building itself and its history. The script included details about activities done in the building of which Lloyd omitted (or was unaware), such as an explanation of the scholar Joshua Seixias's 1836 Hebrew classes. It also explained that, on the second floor, priesthood in the 1830s studied "restoration and Protestant theology."⁴⁷⁸ Overall, the main focus of this tour script was the historical temple. The exception was the tour portion on the temple's attic story.

For several decades (at least since 1969), guides had explained that each attic room on the third floor was used by a different priesthood group in the 1830s: bishops, elders, apostles, seventies, high priests, and the church first presidency. The source for this was an 1837 edition of the Mormon newspaper, the *Messenger and Advocate*. It specified that elders, high priests, and seventies met in quorum meetings during the week on the third floor. Joseph Smith, too, had an office in the western-most room.⁴⁷⁹ However, the *Messenger and Adovcate* did not specify in which room the groups met (other than the place for Smith's office). At some point in the 1960s, guides had assumed that various rooms were the exact locations for the meetings of nineteenth-century elders, seventies, and high priests. Guides problematically added two more leadership groups (bishops and apostles) to those discussed on tour and arbitrarily assigned these groups a particular attic-story room. Thus, the attic story conformed to the modern structure of the RLDS church. Site staff placed pictures of current RLDS officers in the corresponding attic story rooms, further instantiating the claims to church authority.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ "Tour Script A," 14.

⁴⁷⁹ "Our Village," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 4 (January 1837).

⁴⁸⁰ Hawks, interview by author, November 21, 2008.

The 1980 script includes stops at each of the rooms, explaining in detail the hierarchical structure of the RLDS church itself. This part of the tour could confuse or anger LDS guests. An LDS woman related to me in a 2009 interview that, as a new convert in the 1970s, she took a tour of the temple and got to the third floor. As she looked at the pictures of the RLDS First Presidency in the last room (Joseph Smith's office), she realized that she was not in an LDS building. Until that moment, she did not know that there were any other groups that traced themselves back to Joseph Smith.⁴⁸¹ In an interview I conducted in 2008, another LDS member related his 1978 temple tour experience. The third floor's images of RLDS officers provoked his normally cool father to argue with the guide about church leadership succession.⁴⁸² If the third floor display led to polemical exchanges, it is perhaps telling that what Ray Lloyd was doing during the entire tour of the temple in 1959 (that is, using the entire temple as a prop to talk about the contemporary RLDS church) had been relegated to the attic by the early 1980s.

"Tour Script A" retains elements of RLDS folklore about the temple. It celebrated the sacrificial contributions of the female Latter Day Saint pioneers "who had so few earthly treasures, freely gave of their fine crystal and china so that it might be crushed and mixed with the stucco so the walls would catch the sun's rays and sparkle."⁴⁸³ This was perhaps, then and now, the best-known story associated with the Kirtland Temple by both RLDS and LDS members. However, its message of sacrifice paled in comparison with the script's account of the interior plastering of the building. In the temple's lower court, the script explained, "This room is considered so sacred that when it was being plastered the horsehair that was commonly used as a binding agent

⁴⁸¹ Field Notes, 27 July 2009.

⁴⁸² Foster, interview by author, 25 September 2008.

⁴⁸³ "Tour Script A," 12-13.

could not be used and the church ladies cut their long hair so that God would be more pleased with the room.”⁴⁸⁴ In this rendition, the saints were bodily incorporated into the building itself—their hair was in it. Finally, Tour Script A claims that the divine presence was so manifest in the 1836 dedication service that “the Painesville Telegraph reported in the issue after the dedication that fire could be seen on the top of the spire at the Temple. But it was a fire which did not consume, but one which burned in the souls of the Saints. You can feel a portion of that same spirit here today, if you will but allow yourself.”⁴⁸⁵ All three details—the crushed china, the cut human hair, and the newspaper report of the temple on fire—cannot be verified from 1830s sources. However, the stories demonstrate the intense sacrality that RLDS members associated with the Temple in the early 1980s. As will be seen, the telling of these stories on tour would present future problems for guides with new tour scripts.

Despite these folkloric details, Tour Script A from 1980 represented a more historical approach rather than the apologetic approach represented by Ray Lloyd’s 1959 tour. Those who worked at the temple, though, were not usually trained as historians. Professional historians like Roger Launius (who graduated with his PhD in 1983 and became a historian for the U.S. Air Force and later the Smithsonian) or the director of RLDS historic sites, F. Mark McKiernan (a former professor of history at Idaho State University), provided seasonal and intermittent influence at the site. Left to their own devices, however, guides could develop idiosyncratic interpretations of the building that had little basis in historical sources.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

Kirtland's Symbolic Architecture: Folklore, Violence, and
Divine Messages

Tour Script B, also from 1980, represents the influences of a more traditional RLDS vernacular theology, or the theology constructed by average members⁴⁸⁶ This contrasts with the emerging historical professionalism represented by Tour Script A. In particular, the script reflects the more traditional RLDS vernacular hermeneutics in its interpretation of the temple's architectural elements. A brief analysis of the framework that guides used to interpret the temple's material elements reveals a diverging trend in interpretation between more traditional and more liberal members. It also helps explain how the interpretations of Jeffrey Lundgren, the temple tour guide turned authoritarian leader of an apocalyptic schismatic group, could be plausible for a small group of RLDS members.

First, traditional RLDS members embraced a kind of hermeneutics that emphasized the ability of an individual to discern scripture's truth for himself and denied that any interpretation of Scripture was necessary. Like evangelical fundamentalists in the same era,⁴⁸⁷ traditional RLDS members believed one only needed the Word of God, not "man's interpretations" of the Word, to understand divine truth. Truth was plain and self-evident if one was open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Traditional RLDS apologetics

⁴⁸⁶ In the 1980s, full-time clergy existed only as administrators over large units. Such men (and later women) might have professional theological training from a mainline Protestant seminary. However, most congregations were led by men (and later women) who had no professional theological training. Ministerial duties were spread throughout a congregation's priesthood that included most active adults. The traditional division between the "pews" and the "pulpit" in Protestant churches did not apply for RLDS churches. Those in the pews might well be in the pulpit on any given week. In such a setting, the theology of average members becomes the theology expounded by a particular congregation.

⁴⁸⁷ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 55-62.

relied on scriptural proof-texting to validate doctrinal points.⁴⁸⁸ An individual only had to be literate and be schooled in the faith’s general understandings of doctrine to make truth statements regarded as valid by other members. This led to a kind of “folk fundamentalism” among many RLDS members—and a suspicion of members who attended Protestant seminaries where the critical study of historical sources, context, and biblical languages undermined proof-texting.⁴⁸⁹ For traditional RLDS members, a lay person armed with enough proof-texts could be more knowledgeable about scriptural truths than any seminary educated member. All one needed was diligent personal study, memorization, and the ability to assemble atomized pieces of scripture together to confound unbelievers and liberals.

Second, many RLDS members read apologetic literature for the Book of Mormon that purported to show Christian symbols in ancient Meso-American architecture. This literature was produced by both RLDS and LDS members and encouraged people in the belief that laity without academic credentials and methods could discover valid evidence that confirmed their belief. A significant minority of RLDS members took tours of Meso-America and brought back slides documenting their trips that they showed in their congregations. Such members bolstered the traditional RLDS claims to the Book of Mormon’s historical validity as they pointed out crosses or other “Christian” symbols in

⁴⁸⁸ For examples of popular RLDS texts rife with proof-texting, see Gomer T. Griffiths, *The Instructor: A Synopsis of the Faith and Doctrine of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence: Herald House, 1977 [original 1893]); Jesse Ward, *The Call at Evening* (Independence: Herald House, 1920); Daniel MacGregor, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder: The Gospel Restored* (Independence: Herald House, 1923); Evan Fry, *The Restoration Faith* (Independence: Herald House, 1962).

⁴⁸⁹ Mauss uses the term “folk fundamentalism” to describe the religiosity of most LDS members who displayed typical fundamentalist traits such as “scriptural inerrancy and literalism. . . authoritarian leadership, and strict obedience to pastoral” directives. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive*, 158. By the late-twentieth century, RLDS “folk fundamentalists” tended to be suspicious of their leaders, too, unlike folk fundamentalists in LDS church where leaders largely mirrored the scriptural hermeneutics used by the laity.

stele after stele. Official RLDS publications through the early 1970s included evidence such as this to prove the Book of Mormon's historicity.⁴⁹⁰ As the RLDS leadership began slowly backing away from this kind of amateur scholarship in the late 1960s, many members continued producing it on their own.⁴⁹¹

The combination of faith in an individual's Spirit-inspired reason, proof-texting, and amateur archeology created a climate in which many RLDS members found elaborate symbolic meaning in the Kirtland Temple's architecture. Just as one did not need to know koine Greek to understand the New Testament, one did not need an understanding of architectural history to discern the hand of God in Kirtland's symbols. One only needed personal study and guidance from the Holy Spirit to see how God had inscribed His hand on the temple's design work. Given Kirtland's heightened status in RLDS culture by the 1970s, individuals ran wild with speculations about the temple's symbolic meanings.

Tour Script B from 1980 reflects a traditional RLDS vernacular hermeneutics applied to the design elements in Kirtland Temple. For instance, the script writers saw the temple's numerous circular guilloches as symbols pregnant with spiritual meaning. "It [the guilloche] represents eternity . . . It represents Christ. He is Alpha and Omega . . . it

⁴⁹⁰ Verneil Simmons, "Archaeology and the Book of Mormon," *Restoration Witness* (June 1969): 4-5, 14-15; Roy E. Weldon, *Other Sheep : An Examination of the Rich and Convincing Evidences in the Bible, Egyptian and American Archaeology, History, Literature, and Native Legends Relating to the Book of Mormon and Early Inhabitants of America* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1958); Roy E. Weldon, *The Book of Mormon Evidences Joseph Smith a Prophet* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1970); Roy E. Weldon and F. Edward Butterworth, *Criticisms of the Book of Mormon Answered* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1973).

⁴⁹¹ Most recently, see the following works by Community of Christ members: Richard E. Rupe, *The Book of Mormon, an Inconvenient Truth: The Battle for the Soul of a Church* (Lamar, Missouri: Little Eagle Publishing, 2009) and John Wolf, *Forest of Priests and Prophets* (Lamar, Missouri: Little Eagle Publishing, 2003). Older works include Roy E. Weldon, *Book of Mormon Claims and Evidences: A Cyclopedic Text of Evidences Pro and Con Relative to the Book of Mormon* (N.p.: 1979).

represents equality. Every part on the outside line is the same distance from the center of the source.”⁴⁹² A 1970s Kirtland Temple brochure similarly noted that the “ring without end or beginning (column top) is believed a symbol of ‘Creator’.”⁴⁹³ Similarly, Tour Script B claimed that the zig-zagging Greek-revival inspired fretwork on some of the temple’s pulpits was “a design that dated back to the ancient people on both sides of the world. Oriental people, Greeks, Babylonians, American Indians and others used this design. It always meant peace, love, brotherhood.”⁴⁹⁴ While these speculations seemed innocuous, the tendency to see divine messages in Kirtland Temple’s architecture had unforeseen, violent consequences in the 1980s.

In the mid-1980s, RLDS tour guide Jeffrey Lundgren greatly expanded on the notion that God had hidden messages in the temple. Based on a unique reading of LDS and RLDS interpretations of the Book of Mormon, Lundgren claimed that the chiasm, a form of symmetrical ancient Hebrew poetry, could be found in all revelations from God. Conversely, any purported revelation lacking a chiastic structure was not from God. The temple, accordingly, was designed as a chiasm—its symmetry proved its divine origin.⁴⁹⁵ Within the many Greek revival designs that adorned the temple’s walls and pulpits, Lundgren discerned hidden messages from God, including a decorative “dolphin” design above the priesthood pulpits. In his own highly idiosyncratic interpretation, the “dolphin” decorative work symbolized male power. The priesthood pulpits lacked any female symbols, he believed. Consequently, he concluded that God, through the design of

⁴⁹² “Tour Script B,” 26.

⁴⁹³ “Kirtland Temple” brochure, “Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975,” in First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7.

⁴⁹⁴ “Tour Script B,” 27.

⁴⁹⁵ Russell, “The 1989 Cult Murders,” 8:16-18, 21-28.

the temple pulpits, was signifying that only men could hold priesthood. RLDS Prophet Wallace B. Smith's 1984 revelation on women being ordained to the priesthood, consequently, was a false revelation.⁴⁹⁶

While Lundgren privately shared his interpretations of the temple's architecture with his small emerging group, he did not publicly share his teachings until he was asked to teach a class to an eager group of high school-aged RLDS youth in July 1988. The youth group's leaders had heard that Lundgren was very knowledgeable about the temple and wanted to impress the significance of the building upon the youth. Yet Lundgren's lecture, held in the temple, shocked the youth group and its leaders. Rambling on for an hour and a half, he worked through his most idiosyncratic teachings about the temple's architecture. Greg McDonald, the leader of the group and a supporter of the RLDS church's policies, and Milo Farnham, a moderate RLDS fundamentalist who would later leave the church, both decided to write letters to Lundgren's supervisor in protest.⁴⁹⁷ Consequently, the director of RLDS historical sites asked Lundgren to resign his position after the incident.

As noted in chapter six, Lundgren had recruited a community, including several college-aged guides. As the group radicalized, the design of the Kirtland Temple figured even more into their murderous machinations. They plotted to storm the temple, cleanse the area from the unrighteous, and wait for the second coming of Jesus. Danny Kraft, a young, former guide and art student, built a model of the temple for the group as they rehearsed their planned attack. Now, Lundgren found the date for the attack symbolized in the circular designs on the temple's exterior doors. In the end, they chose not to storm

⁴⁹⁶ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 125.

⁴⁹⁷ Gregory S. McDonald to Kenneth Stobaugh, July 23, 1987, "Correspondence, Kirtland Historic Site," P127, f3, CCA; Milo M. Burnett to Kenneth Stobaugh, July 22, 1987, P127, f3, CCA.

the temple, but murdered a family in their own group to cleanse themselves from all sin. In the months after the murders, only in the group stayed true to Lundgren—Danny Kraft. At his murder trial in 1991, Kraft argued that the divine instructions inscribed in the temple’s architecture proved that Jeff Lundgren was a prophet of God.⁴⁹⁸ Tragically, that message could be taken to justify unthinkably extreme actions.

Apart from Jeff Lundgren and his followers, the most idiosyncratic theorist of Kirtland Temple’s symbolism is a controversial RLDS member and fringe archeologist, Neil Steede. In 1990, he asserted that the fretwork in the Kirtland Temple copied the meso-American hieroglyphs that were “taken from the plates which Joseph Smith translated.”⁴⁹⁹ He published this claim in 1990 even after Kirtland Temple guides showed him copies of Asher Benjamin’s popular carpenter’s pattern guides from the early nineteenth-century (all major design elements in the Kirtland Temple can be found in Benjamin’s books). Steede acknowledged that the temple craftsmen “did use Benjamin’s work by comparison. In fact, a comparative view of the Kirtland Temple with Benjamin’s works makes the strange symbols all the more apparent. They were not originated by Benjamin.”⁵⁰⁰ Here was the crucial point. Not Benjamin but Joseph Smith originated the design, imitating characters from the Book of Mormon plates. Steede still teaches this and even took a tour group to Kirtland Temple three years ago to inspect the “hieroglyphs.”⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁸ Earley, *Prophet of Death*, 227-228; Russell, “The 1989 Cult Murders in Kirtland,” 10:49-50, 13:10.

⁴⁹⁹ Neil Steede, “The Symbolic Signs of the Kirtland Temple,” *The Cornerstone of Book of Mormon Archeology* 1, no. 3 (1990): 11.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁰¹ Mackay, interview, 21 February 2010.

By the early 1990s, temple tour guides ceased to seek symbolic meaning in Kirtland's vernacular architecture. In part this was a response to the Lundgren tragedy, but it reflected also a rising level of education in history among temple guides. Lachlan Mackay, the first full-time salaried site director, hired Kent State professor of architecture and LDS member, Elwin Robison, to teach classes to the staff on vernacular American architecture. The Restoration Trails Foundation, the foundation in charge of financing all RLDS historic sites, also hired Robison to conduct a professional historic sites study of Kirtland Temple. This resulted in Robison's 1997 book, *The First Mormon Temple: The Design, Construction, and Historical Context for the Kirtland Temple*.⁵⁰² For some, Robison put to rest the notions that the temple's design work represented eternal messages.

However, since guides had taught about spiritual symbolism in the temple's architecture for so many years, some RLDS or LDS members who took tours in Kirtland Temple during these earlier eras continued to repeat these notions decades later.⁵⁰³ LDS members, in particular, were well-schooled in finding symbolism in post-Kirtland LDS temple architecture. They quite naturally wanted to see divine symbolism at Kirtland Temple, a symbolism that was intentional by the architects of these modern temples. On tours that I gave in 2007 and 2008, I had scattered instance of LDS, Community of Christ, and former-RLDS individuals repeating matter-of-factly some of the speculative

⁵⁰² Robison, *The First Mormon Temple*.

⁵⁰³ For instance, an LDS blogger, William, compared the circular designs in the new Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple with the circular designs in the Kirtland Temple. He remembered "visiting the Kirtland Temple as a young man" and "the tour guide talking about circles in that temple. He said it symbolizes eternity because a circle has no beginning and no end. So, the circles in the new Oquirrh Mountain Temple have meaning for me." William, "Oquirrh Mountain Temple—Circles of Eternity," *Mormon Blog*, 26 August 2009, <http://www.mormonblog.com/articles/71/1/216/Oquirrh-Mountain-Temple---Circles-of-Eternity.html>, accessed on 25 November 2009.

interpretations that guides were sharing in the 1980s. It proved difficult to cite evidence to the contrary without giving offense. In my own experience, many were open to learning new things about Kirtland Temple's design work. However, finding hidden knowledge in mundane symbols has proved too seductive for some of Kirtland's visitors and past guides.

Contesting the April 3 Experience: RLDS Omissions, LDS

Reactions

For generations, LDS members visited Kirtland Temple to see the place where they believed Jesus, Moses, Elijah, and Elias had stood and restored various priesthood powers to Joseph Smith on April 3, 1836. Joseph Smith apparently only shared his experience with a few individuals. The vision itself did not become vitally important to LDS members until it was canonized in 1876.⁵⁰⁴ While Smith's own interpretation of the vision remains unclear, late nineteenth-century LDS members interpreted it as the event that restored the authority to conduct temple rituals for exaltation in the afterlife. RLDS did not share this temple theology and, consequently, lacked such reasons for sharing the vision. When RLDS guides discussed it in the 1950s, they saw it solely as evidence of the temple's significance as a site of apparitional appearances; they did not see the vision as evidence for the temple's significance as a site of a divine transaction conferring authority on Joseph Smith to promulgate temple rituals. Consequently, they could deemphasize the vision without questioning any of their foundational beliefs. In practice, downplaying or ignoring the vision was a quiet way to contest LDS beliefs—something not lost on LDS pilgrims.

⁵⁰⁴ In 1876, the LDS church added 26 sections to the Doctrine and Covenants from Joseph Smith (some directly written by him and some ascribed to him but actually written by multiple authors). Among the 26 sections was Joseph Smith's April 3 vision, now LDS D&C 110. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures*, 184-186.

Guides using Tour Script B were encouraged by the script writer to cast doubt on the April 3 vision. The script's author quotes a 1972 letter from RLDS Church Historian Richard Howard who cites an 1853 newspaper article in an LDS periodical, the *Millennial Star*, as the earliest source known for the April 3 vision. He explained that we do not "have access to the original handwritten documents. We have no further documentation regarding Moses, Elias and Elijah portion of this text."⁵⁰⁵ When Howard wrote in 1972, these statements were true. Joseph Smith's journals remained inaccessible in the LDS archives until their unauthorized publication in 1986.⁵⁰⁶ While Howard recounted accurately what historians knew at that time, the script's writer took his statement as confirmation that LDS members in Utah had altered the Joseph Smith's vision to fit LDS doctrines.

The author of Tour Script B writer noted that a prominent LDS apostle "tells about the appearance of Christ in the Temple. He depends on the *Millennial Star*, 1853, writing [sic.]. He gives no source that is primary and earlier. This means a great event such as this was not recorded for 17 years, and yet history was being recorded all the time. The Reorganization started in 1852. The Mormons were without this knowledge all those years. Makes one question the account."⁵⁰⁷ This conclusion played on deep, traditional RLDS prejudices that LDS members had altered historical documents to fit their own doctrines. RLDS members frequently cited this as a reason for repudiating records that implicated Joseph Smith in polygamy.⁵⁰⁸ In effect, average RLDS members

⁵⁰⁵ "Tour Script B," 32. Howard was citing "The History of Joseph Smith," *The Latter-Day Saints Millennial Star*

⁵⁰⁶ Scott H. Faulring, ed. *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 157-158.

⁵⁰⁷ "Tour Script B," 33.

⁵⁰⁸ William Russell, a historian and Community of Christ member now in his early 70s, noted that, in the RLDS church in which he came of age, "we took the position that you can't

could disbelieve any evidence that did not fit their own understandings of church history. While nineteenth-century Mormon historians did in fact alter and expand official histories to fit later church doctrines, the extent to which this was done was greatly misunderstood by the anonymous script writer, who sought strong polemical bulwarks against LDS doctrinal claims. Howard's careful research into primary sources was lost in the oversimplified reasoning of the script writer.

The effect of questioning the April 3 vision was telling on the tours at Kirtland Temple. By 1990, RLDS guides used scripts that omitted any mention of the vision.⁵⁰⁹ This upset LDS pilgrims. They felt that RLDS guides were hiding or de-emphasizing the spiritual history of the temple. One frequent visitor, Karl Anderson, explained in a 2008 interview that an RLDS director in the late 1980s "had a real problem with the four visions on April 3 and went to the files and pulled out a letter of Richard Howard saying that the vision in the LDS D&C was false and that the first recording took place in the Deseret News in 1854, and therefore was not to be discussed and any credibility given to it."⁵¹⁰ Anderson knew that the vision was in the second volume of the official RLDS church history, published in the late nineteenth century. He showed the reference to the director. "I remember how stunned he was," related Anderson.⁵¹¹ LDS members, like Anderson, felt deeply troubled that RLDS guides omitted mention of the vision.

trust 'Utah sources.' Once those Nauvoo diaries had been hauled across the plains and the mountains to the Great Basin Kingdom, they had somehow become corrupted." Russell himself challenged these assumptions in his teaching and writing. William D. Russell, "The LDS Church and the Community of Christ: Clearer Differences, Closer Friends," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (2003): 181.

⁵⁰⁹ Reine, "A Tour of The House of the Lord: Visitor's Center Copy" (1990); Jonstone, "A Tour of Kirtland Temple" (1990).

⁵¹⁰ Anderson, interview, July 13, 2008. Anderson misremembered the reference in Howard's letter. Howard had said that the earliest printing was in the *Millennial Star* in 1853, not 1854.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

By the mid 1990s, site guides began to offer a compromise in their tours that addressed LDS concerns about the vision's omission. With the unauthorized 1986 publication of Joseph Smith's journals, historians had clear evidence that Joseph Smith's scribe had recorded an April 3 vision related by the Mormon prophet. The new Kirtland Temple director in 1993, Lachlan Mackay, recognized that LDS guests expected to hear about the vision in Kirtland Temple. Mackay attempted to construct a way that guides could share about the disputed event but use "language that would still maintain some distance from the event." Whether or not the guides personally believed that the vision actually occurred, they could tell visitors that "a vision was recorded in Joseph's journal on April 3, 1836" and then read part of the journal account to their guests.⁵¹² This stood in contrast to guide Ray Lloyd's enthusiastic pronouncement on his 1959 tour that he was "as sure that Jesus appeared to these men that morning as I am that I am here speaking to you this morning."⁵¹³ RLDS guides (personally trained by Mackay) were now using language that mimicked how guides at state-run historical sites might talk about a religious event. This approach would continue into the present, too. Not all LDS guests reacted well to this more distanced approach; for some, qualifying adjectives were jarring.⁵¹⁴ However, the vision was now being shared again on tours.

By the late 1990s, guides had a new tour script that included the April 3 vision. Since the full text was too long to cover in one tour, guides were allowed to select and abridge passages and this to individualize the tour. Consequently, guides were not

⁵¹² Mackay, interview with author,

⁵¹³ Lloyd, "Kirtland Temple, 1959," 2.

⁵¹⁴ An LDS pilgrim told Rene Romig in 2007, "At the Temple, they kept clarifying things, they kept saying things like 'the movement at the time,' as if they were trying to distance themselves from the people or the philosophy. . . . It felt like a separate group of people, trying not to be connected with the history . . . Almost like they were an unconnected group of people giving tours." As quoted in Romig, "Hilltop Dialogues," 9.

required to share anything about the April 3 vision if they so wished. However, as one guide explained to me, after interacting with LDS pilgrims in 2006, he felt compelled to include the April 3 vision on his tour. Due to his desire to please his guests, he discovered his “inability to not say it.” With a “desperation of wanting to say that there is a great history to this building that does not have to incorporate the kinds of things” upon which LDS focused, he found himself ambivalent about sharing the vision.⁵¹⁵ The difficulty was compounded by the differing reactions of LDS visitors and non-LDS visitors (Catholics, Protestants, and non-religious visitors). The former typically were offended if he failed to discuss the vision, but the latter were offended if he did. (Community of Christ tended to be pleased or relatively indifferent.) In the end, with much ambivalence, he touched upon the vision in most of his tours.⁵¹⁶ His audience, and his perceptions of his audience, had altered the content of his tour performances.

Between the early 1990s and 2008, LDS made a subtle change in their reason for wanting to hear about the “vision.” When he first arrived on site in the early 1990s, Mackay relates that most of his LDS guests came “to see where Elijah stood.”⁵¹⁷ In LDS theology, Elijah held the “keys” to baptisms and sealings of the dead, a major activity in modern LDS temples. With a re-emphasis on temple rituals and the expansion of the number of temples since 1978, LDS members were keen to see the place where they believed Elijah handed Joseph Smith “the keys” in the April 3, 1836 vision.

The desire to “see where Elijah stood” could have possibly been heightened by a 1985 article by an LDS astronomer, John P. Pratt, in the official LDS magazine, the *Ensign*. Following orthodox LDS theology, Pratt asserted that “Elijah’s coming had been

⁵¹⁵ “Brian,” interview with author, Nauvoo, Illinois, 6 August 2009.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Lachlan Mackay, phone interview by author, Kirtland, Ohio, 22 November 2006.

prophesied more than twenty-two centuries earlier by Malachi” when the biblical figure appeared to Smith. Pratt correlated Elijah’s appearance to Joseph Smith with a speculated date for the first Easter. He concluded, “On Easter, may we not only remember the restoration of the Savior’s physical body, but also the restoration of the fullness of the priesthood to the body of his church.”⁵¹⁸ Thus, even Jesus’ resurrection at Easter was subordinated to remembering the LDS plan of redemption that centered on temples.

Perhaps based on a second-hand account Pratt’s article, at least one Israeli tour guide in Israel who curried to guests who he perceived as Mormons began telling his groups in the 1980s, “I have read your three books, I have read your history, and I know there has been a temple built, commanded by the Lord himself and received by the Lord himself. But did you folk know that when Elijah came to Joseph and Oliver and this experience took place, did you know that this was the night of the passover?”⁵¹⁹ Thus, the guide asserted, prophecy had been fulfilled and Elijah had returned, but not to the Jews. One may reasonably speculate that the guide was simply telling his guests what they wanted to hear. As Jackie Feldman has documented, Israeli “guides who specialize in the Christian market often invest significant energy in improving their knowledge of Christianity and the Bible and in fine-tuning their presentations” toward their audience.⁵²⁰ The same is true of guides who specialize in a Mormon market.⁵²¹ That the

⁵¹⁸ John P. Pratt, “The Restoration of Priesthood Keys on Easter 1836, Part 2: Symbolism of Passover and of Elijah’s Return,” *Ensign* (July 1985): 55-64.

⁵¹⁹ Tommy Thomas, a conservative RLDS member from Kirtland, Ohio, recalled this experience. See *The House of the Lord*, DVD, directed by Don Beebe (2001).

⁵²⁰ Feldman, “Constructing a Shared Bible Land,” 356.

⁵²¹ An LDS couple in Salt Lake City²⁰⁰⁷ told me that an Israeli guide who specializes in Mormon tours of the Holy Land told them of Elijah’s appearance in Kirtland as a fulfillment of the ancient prophecy in Malachi.

story of Elijah at Kirtland Temple was being told by an Israeli tour guide in Israel demonstrates the importance of Elijah in LDS theology at the time.

If LDS guests to Kirtland Temple in the 1980s and 1990s wanted to see “where Elijah stood,” LDS visitors by 2008 by and large “wanted to know where ‘the Savior’ stood.” Mackay and Walden, both experienced guides who gave thousands of tours in the 1990s and 2000s, believed that such a shift had occurred during their time at the Temple.⁵²² As evidence to back their claim, I found scattered quotes from contemporary LDS guests who, more often than not, emphasized Jesus’ appearance over Elijah. For instance, Tamara Dame, a young LDS member, exulted after a 2003 visit that “It was amazing to be in the room where Jesus Christ, Moses, and other prophets appeared to Joseph Smith.”⁵²³ Mackay felt that the emphasis on Jesus over Elijah reflected a general LDS trend to emphasize Jesus more in their theology and public image.⁵²⁴ This observation, though, does not mean that LDS had not come to Kirtland before the 2000s with a desire to see where the Savior stood. Indeed, LDS pilgrims from 1905 and the 1930s frequently asked RLDS guides, “Where did the Savior stand?” The shift from Elijah to Jesus from the 1980s to the 2000s simply shows a change in emphasis—and one that varies among individuals.⁵²⁵

⁵²² Mackay, interview, 22 November 2006; Babara Walden, phone interview by author, Kirtland, Ohio, 22 November 2006. “The Savior” is the term almost always used by LDS members for Jesus. Community of Christ and Restorationists do not consistently use this term in this way.

⁵²³ Paul VanDenBerghe, “Kirtland: School of the Saints,” *New Era* 35, no. 5 (May 2005): 24.

⁵²⁴ Mackay, interview, 22 November 2006.

⁵²⁵ Several current LDS leaders apparently see the Kirtland Temple as the site that contains “the Spirit of Elijah.” Mackay had an LDS guest inform him that, in a service in the Kirtland Temple, LDS Apostle M. Russell Ballard stated “people think that the spirit they feel in the Kirtland Temple is the Spirit of Jesus; it’s not, it’s the spirit of Elijah.” Mackay was not present for the service, but has no reason to disbelieve the LDS guest who was there. Mackay,

Even as RLDS guides' accounts of Smith's vision increasingly was informed by the study of historical sources in the 1990s, LDS members, like Karl Anderson, began to contend that Joseph Smith's self-described vision was not a "vision" at all but an "appearance" of the Savior. Karl Anderson intentionally made this distinction when he talked to group of LDS missionaries about the April 3 experience in July 2009 at Kirtland Temple.⁵²⁶ Mormon theology teaches the physicality of God (called "Heavenly Father"—often without the article "the"—by LDS). Jesus, who Mormons believe is in the exact physical image of Heavenly Father, is also embodied in flesh and blood.⁵²⁷ For LDS members like Anderson who want to assert the physicality of God, "vision" does not adequately describe the embodied, fleshly appearances of divine beings that they believe Joseph Smith experienced. Anderson was glad that Joseph Smith's "vision" was being shared in Kirtland Temple, but he wanted it now to be known as an "appearance." In sum, what people want to hear from guides changes just as much as what guides share on tours.

Contention over Joseph Smith's April 3 experience reveals much about the process of parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple. LDS and RLDS encountered religious differences and had to choose to confront or ignore them. In the process, both parties shaped each other. LDS pilgrims altered how RLDS guides talked about the April 3 vision. In the 1980s, this meant that RLDS guides did not always mention the vision or cast doubt upon it when questioned by LDS members. At the heart of this exchange was the RLDS desire to distance themselves from modern LDS understandings of temple

interview, 21 February 2010. In 2008, Karl Anderson opined that may be the Kirtland Temple's future mission is as "a monument to Elijah." Anderson, interview, 13 July 2008.

⁵²⁶ Field Notes, 8 July 2009.

⁵²⁷ Davies, *Introduction to Mormonism*, 75-77.

rituals. RLDS guides did not want Kirtland Temple associated with such rituals, especially since they believed the LDS based the linkage on a faulty source. In the 1990s, RLDS guides told the story that LDS pilgrims wanted to hear, but did not explain it in the way that pilgrims wanted. They used a distanced, historical perspective; they did not affirm to their guests that they knew by the power of the Spirit that the event occurred. In contrast, LDS guides at LDS sites, especially since the late 1990s, would affirm that they experientially knew a supernatural event had occurred at a site.⁵²⁸ Parties at Kirtland Temple, then, had to negotiate with one another, working out compromises along the way. In the process, no one received exactly what they wanted. Differences were not effaced or dissolved. Instead, an ongoing dialectical tension between cooperation and contestation, mimesis (imitation) and alterity (the conscious construction of difference) was maintained.

The 1990 Scripts to the Present: Cooperation with
“Experts” and the Professionalization of Tours

Tours at the Kirtland Temple became more sophisticated in the 1990s; tours increasingly reflected less of temple folklore and more of information based on verifiable 1830s sources. Much of this was due to the increased education site staff received and the greater attention that scholars in general gave to Kirtland Temple. Historian Roger Launius returned in 1990 to educate the summer staff.⁵²⁹ For a time in the early 1990s, RLDS and LDS staff met together to better understand the beliefs of each group. The RLDS director of historic sites, David Ettinger, taught the RLDS classes and Karl Anderson taught the LDS classes.⁵³⁰ Lachlan Mackay, the new site director appointed in

⁵²⁸ Madsen, “Mormon Meccas,” 156, 169-170, 180-181.

⁵²⁹ “Employment Agreement”; Mackay, interview, 4 December 2009.

⁵³⁰ Anderson, interview, July 13, 2008.

1993, increased the educational programs for his mostly volunteer and seasonal staff. For a series of classes on early American architecture, he hired a professor of historical architecture from Kent State University, Elwin Robison, who was also LDS. Several RLDS graduate students in religion were hired to teach classes about nineteenth century worship practices. These students also completed research assignments. Mackay assigned RLDS graduate students Vickie Wilsie and Scott Gunn to compile a list of all known references to worship practices in Kirtland Temple in the 1830s.⁵³¹ By the late 1990s, summer students were required to read scholarly texts as part of their internship at the temple.⁵³²

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Kirtland guides benefited from better and newer research on the Kirtland Temple's history. Mackay brought Kim Loving to teach several classes based on his research from his master's thesis about the Kirtland Temple lawsuit in 1881. Loving's work radically revised the common understanding of the court case and RLDS ownership of the temple.⁵³³ Mackay taught classes to his summer students for college credit; his 1998 article, "Kirtland Temple in a Time of Transition, 1840-1880," expanded scholarly knowledge about the Kirtland Temple during the middle of the nineteenth century.⁵³⁴ The next site director, Barbara Walden, was trained in material culture and museum curatorship at the well-known Cooperstown Graduate Program. She took her expertise and made painstaking investigations into the temple's alterations over the course of the nineteenth century. Based in part on research for her

⁵³¹ Mackay, interview, 4 December 2009.

⁵³² These works included James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 1989), Roger D. Launius, *The Kirtland Temple*, and Robison, *The First Mormon Temple*.

⁵³³ Loving, "Ownership of the Kirtland Temple."

⁵³⁴ Mackay and Mackay, "Kirtland Temple in a Time of Transition."

master's thesis, she shared with her summer students and staff how early Latter Day Saints shared similar traits with other nineteenth-century communal groups.⁵³⁵ She also taught classes in which students and staff analyzed how state and private groups represented American communal groups in museums. Walden tried to get her students to think more critically about how museums and historical interpreters "created" historic sites (and how the students themselves were involved in this process at Kirtland Temple). She even led field trips to state historic sites, as well as LDS historical sites, where students compared the various goals and methods of historical interpretation at different sites.

Other scholars were brought in to help with education and site interpretation. Starting in 2006, I was appointed to teach a three-hour college credit history course on Kirtland history to the guides. My course material drew liberally from primary sources, American religious history scholarship, and the New Mormon history. Mark Staker, an employee of the LDS Church History Department, also expanded the staff's knowledge of Kirtland's early era by sharing his path-breaking research before it was published (his work is currently in press).⁵³⁶ Former LDS members who were now Community of Christ converts even conducted training sessions with the staff (2008). They offered guides different ways of presenting their tour information that would not compromise Community of Christ beliefs but would not unduly offend LDS guests. In sum, since the early 1990s, Kirtland's staff members, both permanent and temporary, became increasingly educated about their site's history, the wider historical context that produced

⁵³⁵ Barbara B. Walden, "Rampant Religion and Scandalous Sects: The Interpretation of Socially Sensitive Topics at Nineteenth Century Utopian Communities" (MA thesis: State University of New York at Oneonta, Cooperstown Graduate Program, 2002).

⁵³⁶ Staker, *Hearken O Ye People*.

nineteenth century Mormonism, and the contemporary kinds of pilgrims who visited them.

In tandem with the push for greater staff education, Mackay removed some elements that had been standard parts of the Kirtland Temple tour in past eras. For instance, he removed the materials explaining various RLDS hierarchies that were on exhibit on the temple's third floor. He realized that he had no primary source that stated that an 1830s group, like the presiding bishopric, met in the attic room that guides interpreted on tour as the bishop's room. Additionally, he was having trouble getting new pictures of the ever-changing RLDS leadership.⁵³⁷ Consequently, it seemed logical that he needed to remove the exhibits and talk about what historians knew for certain about the use of the third floor in the 1830s.⁵³⁸ The rationale for having these exhibits in the first place was declining, too. By the 1990s, most RLDS members (and leaders especially) did not emphasize that they possessed the one true authoritative church; the need to legitimate their hierarchy was not as crucial as it had been in past generations. The removal of the third floor exhibits also took away a point of contention with LDS pilgrims who, as we have seen, found the materials a direct challenge to their exclusivistic pronouncements about their own church's hierarchy.

Due to the research done by site staff and other historians, Mackay included new information on his tours about worship in the temple and its use after the 1830s. Mackay trained all of the staff, wrote a new tour script, and subsequently, they, too, included new historical information on their tours. Staff made a point of talking about ownership of the temple through adverse possession rather than the 1880 lawsuit. Due to a lack of

⁵³⁷ RLDS leaders in the highest priesthood groups do not serve for life, unlike the highest LDS leadership groups.

⁵³⁸ Mackay, interview, 4 December 2009.

historical documentation from the 1830s, historical interpreters at the temple stopped talking about broken china in the exterior stucco or human hair in the interior plaster (both of which had been important details in the 1980 tours). Site interpreters, though, tried to emphasize the “truth” that stood behind the stories of women crushing their china or cutting their hair for the temple. Mackay, for instance, often quoted a non-Mormon observer from the 1830s, Truman Coe, who had commented that the early Latter Day Saint women “were instructed to part with even the necessities of life” to build the temple.⁵³⁹ The Coe quote affirmed the notion that the early Mormons gave greatly to the temple; the quote also left unsaid the more historically problematic stories about china and human hair.

By the late 1990s, guides tried to use “accessible” language that could be understood by RLDS members, LDS members, and the general public. During training of new personnel, staff stressed that they were offering a historical tour of the temple rather than using it as a platform for evangelization.⁵⁴⁰ This placed them in a self-conscious distinction from LDS tour guides at LDS sites who used their sites as places for evangelization and strengthening the “testimonies” of current LDS members.

The more distant “historical approach” of the Community of Christ staff did not mean that the church was walking away from spiritually connecting to its past. Rather, Mackay and his staff represented a trend among Community of Christ leaders who sought new ways to connect to their church’s heritage beyond more traditional forms from the 1950s and 1960s. Contestation with their LDS neighbors had not ended with this new approach, too. Community of Christ staff simply legitimated themselves in relation to

⁵³⁹ Mackay, “A Sample Tour of Kirtland Temple: May 2001”; the quote is from Truman Coe, “Mormonism,” *The Ohio Observer* (Hudson), 11 August 1836.

⁵⁴⁰ “Sara,” interview, January 6, 2009.

their LDS neighbors through a different set of issues: the Community of Christ's openness to the truths of other peoples and what they saw as "responsible" historical interpretation versus the exclusive claims by the LDS church to ecclesiastical authority and the sectarian history believed by many LDS members. The tours also reflected an intentional process of "demythologization" and "remythologization" of the early Latter Day Saint past by Community of Christ leaders in the late twentieth century.⁵⁴¹ What was the effect of this process on the numbers of Community of Christ guests who toured Kirtland Temple? A brief analysis of the changing demography at Kirtland Temple is now in order.

Changing Visitors to the Temple: 1964 to 2007

If the content of tours has changed over time, so, too, has the audience for tours. Figure 1 provides visitor statistics for Kirtland Temple from 1964 to 1967, 1975, and 2003 to 2007. These figures are based on monthly reports and year-end reports from the 1960s, 1975, and spreadsheet data from the 2000s.⁵⁴² While it would have been ideal to have visitor statistics for all years, only the years I have selected have complete data sets for yearly totals or for month by month totals. I was not able to access any visitor statistics from the 1980s or 1990s. Taken at face value, visitor statistics from the 1960s compared to the 2000s reveal a clear trend: Community of Christ/RLDS visitors have

⁵⁴¹ For example, see Anthony Chvala-Smith, "The Spirit, the Book, and the City: Retrieving the Distinctive Voice of the Restoration," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 19 (1999): 16-28. The need for a remythologization of the RLDS tradition was first suggested to RLDS leaders by a Trappist priest and former Methodist seminary professor, W. Paul Jones. See his "Theological Re-symbolization of the RLDS Tradition: The Call to a Stage beyond Demythologization," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 16 (1996): 3-14.

⁵⁴² Statistics for 1964 through 1967 and 1975 may be found "Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975," First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7. Statistics for 1975 may be found in "Kirtland Temple, 1967-1975," First Presidency Papers, CCA, RG 29-3, f7. Statistics for 2003 to 2007 accessed from excel spreadsheets recording visitor statistics, Kirtland Temple Historic Site, Kirtland, Ohio. My thanks to Barbara Walden, former director of Kirtland Temple, for granting me access to the spreadsheet data.

declined both in raw numbers and as a percentage of visitors to Kirtland, and registered LDS members have increased in raw numbers while remaining approximately the same as a percentage of Kirtland guests. However, several factors qualify such conclusions.

How visitors were counted in the 1960s versus the 2000s is important. Every month since the 1960s, site directors at Kirtland Temple filed reports that provided visitor statistics that included the number of visitors, the state (or country) of origin for visitors, and the religious affiliation (if any) for visitors. In the 1960s, visitors who toured the temple and those who attended services there were not counted separately. By the 2000s, visitors who toured the temple tours and those who attended temple services were placed in different categories. I have no source for how statistics were compiled in the 1960s. In contrast, I was able to interview site directors about statistics for the 2000s. This leads me to offer several caveats and cautions about how statistics are interpreted. In the 2000s, the number of visitors at Community of Christ-led services exceeded the number of Community of Christ members who went on tour. If the numbers are included for Community of Christ services for 2006, 1371 visitors must be added to the 458 Community of Christ visitors. Yet, these figures must be qualified, too. Not all of the 1371 who attended services were Community of Christ members. Three hundred of the 1371 attended the July 10 Emma Smith Hymn Festival (started in 2004 and with only 25 Community of Christ members in attendance) and the annual Christmas and Thanksgiving services in the temple. Perhaps a total of 600 people attended the Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Emma Smith services, approximately 75 of whom were Community of Christ members. Additionally, the majority of Community of Christ members who attended services in the temple probably had taken a tour earlier in the day. Some members, too, would be counted twice if one added temple visitors to the overall figure. During my field observations, I noted that some Community of Christ groups arrived after tour hours and only have time for a scheduled service. To further complicate

Table 1: Visitors to the Temple, 1964-1967

Year	All Visitors	RLDS	Percent	LDS	Percent	LDS Other	Percent	DNR or DNI	Percent	Other Faiths	Percent	Total Percent
1964	11,122	1,360	12.23%	5524	49.67%	11	0.10%	1456	13.09%	2771	24.91%	99.90%
1965	10,032	1332	13.28%	4795	47.80%	7	0.07%	1645	16.40%	2253	22.46%	100.00%
1966	12043	2272	18.87%	3664	30.42%	4	0.03%	3206	26.62%	2897	24.06%	100.00%
1967	16504	1987	12.04%	5110	30.96%	22	0.13%	6265	37.96%	3120	18.90%	100.00%

Table 2: Visitors to the Temple by Month, 1975

1975	All Visitors	RLDS	Percent	LDS	Percent	LDS Other	Percent	DNR or DNI	Percent	Other Faith	Percent	Total Percent
Feb	307	40	13.03%	96	31.27%	0	0.00%	128	41.69%	43	14.01%	100.00%
Mar	844	198	23.46%	189	22.39%	0	0.00%	349	41.35%	108	12.80%	100.00%
Apr	712	150	21.07%	264	37.08%	0	0.00%	147	20.65%	152	21.35%	100.14%
May	1574	253	16.07%	340	21.60%	0	0.00%	554	35.20%	427	27.13%	100.00%
Jun	2502	418	16.71%	1094	43.73%	0	0.00%	489	19.54%	501	20.02%	100.00%
Jul	5794	395	6.82%	3969	68.50%	0	0.00%	832	14.36%	604	10.42%	100.10%
Aug	3703	481	12.99%	2175	58.74%	26	0.70%	419	11.32%	602	16.26%	100.00%
Sep	953	417	43.76%	260	27.28%	6	0.63%	83	8.71%	187	19.62%	100.00%
Oct	1357	352	25.94%	201	14.81%	0	0.00%	471	34.71%	336	24.76%	100.22%
Nov	585	108	18.46%	162	27.69%	9	1.54%	224	38.29%	82	14.02%	100.00%
Dec	249	30	12.05%	118	47.39%	0	0.00%	28	11.24%	73	29.32%	100.00%
YTD-Jan	18580	2842	15.30%	8868	47.73%	41	0.22%	3724	20.04%	3115	16.77%	100.05%

Table 3: Visitors to the Temple, 2003-2007

Year	Total Guests	CofC/RLDS		LDS		LDS Other		DNR/DNI		Other Faiths		Total Percent
2003	37098	1308	3.53%	19393	52.28%	1556	4.19%	14201	38.28%	640	1.73%	100.00%
2004	29135	497	1.71%	18277	62.73%	1367	4.69%	8385	28.78%	609	2.09%	100.00%
2006	26190	458	1.75%	14092	53.81%	150	0.57%	11079	42.30%	411	1.57%	100.00%
2007	24061	525	2.18%	9809	40.77%	101	0.42%	13287	55.22%	339	1.41%	100.00%

matters, if a guest registers as “RLDS,” they are counted as Community of Christ unless the guide knows that they are Restorationists. Some Restorationists inevitably will register as RLDS since some still claim their old name. There were no Restorationists in the 1960s since the movement separated from the RLDS church in the 1980s. Finally, in 2006, 11,079 guests toured the temple who either did not record their religious affiliation or failed to fill out a comment card. They were listed as “did not register” in the visitor statistic reports. For the reasons listed, the available statistics must be treated with caution.

However, even with allowance for guests who attended temple service but did not tour and for others who did not fill out comment cards, the raw number of Community of Christ visitors at Kirtland Temple has declined from the 1960s to the present. For this decline, there are several possible explanations. First, the 1980s schism probably reduced the numbers, since RLDS conservatives associated the temple as a symbol of their faith against the Independence Temple, the symbol of the liberal leadership. Fewer rank-and-file Community of Christ members are now touring the temple because some of the core group that visited it in the past have aged, died, or left and not been replaced by an equal number of younger members. Second, the number of Community of Christ visitors from the 1960s compared to the 2000s has declined in the exact same percentage as the number of members from non-Latter Day Saint traditions (or no tradition) who visit the temple. In 2006, for instance, only 1.57% of Kirtland’s visitors who filled out a comment card indicated a non-Latter Day Saint Tradition. This was down from 16.7% of visitors who registered a non-Latter Day Saint religious tradition in 1975. In this same year, 15.3% of guests registered as Community of Christ. The aggressive evangelism of LDS guides at their historic sites may account for the decline of non-Latter Day Saint comment cards. Contemporary LDS guides implore guests repeatedly to fill out comment cards so that missionaries may visit them. There were no LDS sites in Kirtland in the 1970s, and LDS historic sites in general lacked this kind of evangelistic emphasis.

Another explanation may simply lie in the decline of the American family vacation. The percentage and number of Americans traveling to historic sites has declined since the zenith of heritage tourism in the 1960s. Community of Christ members may simply be following the larger cultural trend while the more conservative LDS have simply continued this tradition.

When one takes into account the number of members who visit Kirtland Temple every year versus their total church population, a different picture emerges when compared with LDS members. For the year 2006, the Community of Christ reported 136,197 members in mission centers in the United States and Canada (a world-wide total of 195,605 members).⁵⁴³ This meant that at least 0.33% of the North American membership visited the temple. In contrast, the LDS church reported 5,954,699 million members in the U.S. and Canada for 2006.⁵⁴⁴ At least 14,092 LDS guests visited Kirtland Temple or 0.24% of LDS members in the U.S. and Canada. Both churches count inactive members in their membership figures.⁵⁴⁵ However one may calculate, there are probably more Community of Christ members visiting Kirtland Temple every year than LDS members relative to their church's population size. Still, attendance figures from 1965 or 2006 show that LDS pilgrims made up the overwhelming number of pilgrims. Kirtland Temple has always served the needs of the RLDS movement, but it also has served as host to tens of thousands of LDS members for every year surveyed.

⁵⁴³ The statistics reflect 2006 membership numbers but were issued in 2007. Carina Lord Wilson and Andrew M. Shields, "Church Membership Report," in 2007 World Conference Monday Bulletin, 26 March 2007, Community of Christ, 2007, 269-276.

⁵⁴⁴ *Deseret Morning News 2008 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Morning News, 2008), 648, 650.

⁵⁴⁵ For an analysis of over-reporting in LDS statistics, see Rick Phillips, "Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10, no. 1 (2006): 52-68. For an analysis of RLDS statistics, see Walton, "Counting the Progress of the RLDS Reformation."

Conclusion: Tour Content and Religious Identity

By 2008, Community of Christ tours reflected the aims and identity of leaders and liberal to moderate members who saw their denomination as an ecumenical, liberal ecclesiastical body and that was open to academic historical scholarship about their church's past. These Community of Christ members contrasted their new image to what they saw as their more inwardly focused tradition from the 1950s that created high, sectarian barriers between themselves and "the world." Yet, Community of Christ members did not end their contestation with their LDS neighbors through the tours. The issues for their disagreements had simply changed. Contrasting themselves with their LDS neighbors who were missionaries who happened to be stationed at immaculately restored historical sites, Community of Christ site staff now identified as professional museum personnel and professional historians. If RLDS staff and LDS members argued in the past over whose leaders and priesthood lineages were most authoritative, they now primarily disagreed about the correct way of interpreting a sacred site.

By the later twentieth century, new points of contention emerged. There were clear political party divisions (Republican and Democrat) among Latter Day Saint denominations on major social issues. By the mid-1980s, RLDS and LDS were on opposing sides of the great American culture wars of the time. Community of Christ (especially the denomination's leaders) had a strong and growing contingent of moderate and progressive Democrats while LDS members and leaders were overwhelmingly conservative Republicans.⁵⁴⁶ This meant that LDS found allies with Evangelicals and

⁵⁴⁶ A 2009 study by the Pew Forum found that 65 percent of LDS members in the U.S. identify as Republican or lean Republican while 22 percent identify as Democrat or lean Democrat. The study concluded that "they are somewhat more conservative and Republican than members of evangelical Protestant churches." See Allison Pond, "A Portrait of Mormons in the U.S.: Social and Political Views," July 24, 2009, <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=429>, accessed on March 8, 2010. The drift by LDS members toward the right in politics is well documented by Armand Mauss in his study, *The Angel and the Beehive*, 108-119. Community of Christ political affiliation is difficult to document and is based mainly on my perceptions as a

conservative Catholics while RLDS/Community of Christ found friends among old mainline-Protestant denominations and liberal Catholics. Just as a denominational realignment occurred in the wider world, the old competitors at Kirtland Temple similarly went through a realignment of allies. A third group, explored in chapter nine, also arose which complicated parallel pilgrimages at Kirtland Temple, too: former RLDS members who identified themselves as “Restorationists.” The pilgrims were considerably more conservative than most Community of Christ members and much closer to the majority of LDS members on social and political issues.⁵⁴⁷ Consequently, Kirtland Temple would not be free from the larger divisions in American culture. Since the late 1960s, pilgrims and site interpreters have used the temple as a platform to discuss or contend over issues of race, gender, and sexuality. It was also a space where LDS, RLDS, and Restorationists devised strategies for dealing with religious diversity in an increasingly pluralistic world.

participant in the denomination. Few Community of Christ members have held national public offices. The only Community of Christ member of Congress in the modern era is Iowa’s Leonard Boswell, a moderate Democrat. See the appendix to David Masci and Traci Miller, “Faith on the Hill: The Religious Affiliations of Members of Congress,” December 19, 2008, <http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/congress/appendix.pdf>, accessed on March 8, 2010.

⁵⁴⁷ For a summary of Restorationist beliefs and practices, see William Russell, “The Fundamentalist Schism, 1958-present,” in Roger D. Launius and W.B. “Pat” Spillman, *Let Contention Cease: The Dynamics of Dissent in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, Missouri: Graceland/Park Press, 1991): 125-151 and David J. Howlett, “The Restoration Branches Movement: Bodily Boundaries and Bodily Crossings.” In *Scattering the Saints: Schism within Mormonism*, eds. Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Ann Arbor, Michigan: John Whitmer Books, 2007): 315-330.

CHAPTER 9: DEALING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AT KIRTLAND
TEMPLE: PILGRIMAGE PERFORMANCES AS PROCLAMATION,
PROTEST, AND PEACE-MAKING

“Katya” joined the Community of Christ as a young adult in a small town in Russia in 2007. Before coming to the U.S. for the summer, her only experience with Christianity had been with the Russian Orthodox Church or with her small Community of Christ congregation. In July of 2009, she was appointed to the tour staff at Kirtland Temple for one month as part of an international exchange program among Community of Christ members. Before arriving in the U.S. that summer, she had never met an LDS person. Katya explained to me, “The most remarkable event was the first time I met Mormons. So, it surprised me, because, I think that [Community of Christ Apostle] Len Young is a missionary in Russia, [and] he had never told me, ‘Katya, would you like to be a member of my church? We have the one true church.’ When I met Mormon people, I heard these things a lot. They always said, ‘Have you read the Book of Mormon? You have to read it!’ They said, ‘You have to join our true church.’ I think this is pushed. I don’t like this.”⁵⁴⁸ Katya had known Apostle Young years before she even knew he was a missionary. When, in 2007, she finally asked to join his denomination, he was hesitant, making sure that she, her family, and even her friends, knew what she was doing. (In an interview in 2009, she reported that she was almost offended by his hesitancy.) In her guide’s role at Kirtland, as she encountered LDS pilgrims, she came to believe more strongly that she had made the right choice by joining the Community of Christ. She found LDS pilgrims overbearing in pushing their beliefs on her—something that she told me would never be tolerated in Russia.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁸ “Katya,” interview by author, July 30, 2009, Kirtland, Ohio, typescript.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

Katya's reaction to her encounter with religious diversity goes to the heart of this study. What happens when people encounter religious diversity at a sacred site? This chapter approaches this question by examining the most frequent performances that happen at Kirtland Temple: tours and worship services. As a guide who gave tours day after day, Katya went through a process of comparing her church with a religious other, and she constructed a revised religious identity, in part, that was based in alterity—she was definitely not “Mormon.” LDS and Restorationists have a comparable experience as they encounter Community of Christ members and guides at Kirtland Temple. As will be seen, they construct their identity, in part, through opposition to what they receive from the Community of Christ guides and bolster the barriers which separate the two faiths. With LDS sites and an LDS Visitor Center just down the road from the temple, visitors to the temple have ample opportunity to compare LDS approaches to a sacred site with the Community of Christ's interpretation of a sacred place. The quiet competition between the two groups almost demands such comparisons.

Since 1965, other factors have entered in to LDS and RLDS cross-comparisons at Kirtland Temple. Whether on the left or the right, religious groups in late twentieth-century America positioned themselves as arbiters of social morality related to race, gender, and sexuality. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some temple visitors look at the temple as a place of encounter where social questions can be explored, questioned, and argued. This is not totally without precedent. Before 1965, the social morality argued about at the temple dealt almost exclusively with nineteenth-century Mormon polygamy. By the 2008, the issues were still about sexuality, but they had changed. The primary social issues that draws visitors' attention are the Community of Christ's position on same-sex relationships and gender roles.

Still, the temple serves as a place for cooperation between groups. Individuals share commonalities, not just differences, that allow them to interact at the shrine. My final section investigates how and why visitors and staff put aside areas of contestation

and cooperate with each other. Kirtland Temple was and is a platform for reinforcing the identities of various religious groups as well as a place where they can momentarily transcend their differences.

Race, Gender, and Sexuality at the Temple: Questioning,
Proclaiming, and Healing

Tours at Kirtland Temple have never been simply about remembering the past, but inevitably address wider social issues, too. Over the course of the last forty years, temple visitors and staff have discussed social issues related to race, gender, and sexuality. Often, visitors see the question and answer times on a tour as an opportunity to dialogue about or even tacitly debate these issues. The wider denominational struggles of various Latter Day Saint groups with racial constructions, gender roles, and proper human sexuality affect the kinds of interactions at the temple. Reflecting a more general trend in American culture, the conversations between guests and guides have shifted from questions about race to questions about gender roles to now questions on human sexuality.

Race was a particularly salient issue in the late 1960s and 1970s. While the RLDS church in 1865 had reaffirmed an 1830s practice of ordaining African-Americans to the priesthood,⁵⁵⁰ the LDS leadership, citing a text from the Book of Abraham with added justification from a pronouncement by Brigham Young, excluded blacks from their temples and the priesthood until 1978 when both bans were lifted.⁵⁵¹ As the national

⁵⁵⁰ In 1865, Joseph Smith III gave a revelation proclaiming, “it is expedient in me that you ordain priests unto me, of every race who receive the teachings of my law, and become heirs according to the promise.” RLDS D&C 116: 1c.

⁵⁵¹ Connell O’Donovan, “The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Walker Q. Lewis: ‘An Example for His More Whiter Brethren to Follow,’” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 81-88; Armand Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 212-230.

Civil Rights movement in the U.S. moved into a new phase of activism in the late 1960s, many LDS members sought to defend their church's racial policy against public pressure from the NAACP and other groups; a small minority in the LDS church quietly worked for change from within on the exclusionary policy.⁵⁵²

Racial tensions occasionally surfaced in tour experiences at Kirtland Temple in the late 1960s. RLDS elder Richard Hawks was an African-American and Graceland College student serving at the temple in the summer of 1969. Hawks and another college student, Dennis Clinefelter, had guide offices in the small rooms beneath the temple's twin staircases. From there, they could see guests approaching the temple from the parking lot. On one occasion, Hawks saw a group of LDS pilgrims from Utah pull up to the temple. Clinefelter went out to greet them, and talked with them for a few minutes on the temple steps. Hawks could see the guests shaking their heads as Clinefelter spoke to them. Then, they turned around and left, not going on a tour. Clinefelter returned and told Hawks about the encounter. "They saw me in the office and said the temple was polluted," related Hawks. "They were just so shocked that they saw a black man in the temple that they would not come in. Dennis could not believe that they were this prejudiced. This happened twice [in course of the summer]."⁵⁵³ This LDS reaction flowed from racial tensions present in America in the 1960s, as well as official LDS policies that institutionalized racial hierarchies.

Despite these two incidents, Hawks maintains that LDS pilgrims were mainly more curious than prejudiced. The great majority were respectful and happy to see him. However, even in some of these more respectful interactions, a more latent form of

⁵⁵² Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 232-266; Claudia L. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (Greenwood, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 93-96.

⁵⁵³ Hawks, interview, November 21, 2008.

racism was manifest. “A few times, people would ask what island I was from,” related Hawks. “It was easier for me to be from the Caribbean rather than an American black. They were from an area without black people, so I was kind of an interesting reaction because of who I was racially.”⁵⁵⁴ RLDS members, maintains historian Bill Russell, were probably just as prejudiced against African Americans in the 1960s as other Americans, but the RLDS ordination policy readily became an issue that they could use to differentiate themselves from the LDS.⁵⁵⁵ Richard Hawks served as a physical witness to LDS/RLDS differences on race and on priesthood ordinations.

Gender became a point of contention within the RLDS church in the 1970s as individual members agitated for women’s ordination while conservatives warned that such a move would throw the church into apostasy. With the passage of Wallace B. Smith’s revelation opening the priesthood to women at the 1984 RLDS World Conference, the temple became a place for contesting or affirming women’s ordination. As noted in a previous section, Kirtland Temple guide Jeffrey Lundgren proclaimed to at least one RLDS tour group in 1987 that Wallace B. Smith had issued a false revelation. His denunciation of the revelation cost him his job. In contrast, in 1990, Lundgren’s former fellow guide, Eleanor Lord, was ordained to the office of elder in Kirtland Temple

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ William D. Russell, “Re: Race and RLDS,” email message to author, March 10, 2010. Two RLDS apologists, Seventy John Bradley and Apostle Russell Ralston, used the ordination issue as a way of confirming the RLDS church’s faithfulness to Joseph Smith’s original church and the LDS church’s wandering from the former standard. See John W. Bradley, “Race in Restoration Scriptures,” *Saints Herald* 110 (1963): 772-775, 812-813, 816, 851-852, 861; and Russell Ralston, *Fundamental Differences*, 230-234. In the early and mid-1960s, Russell worked as a junior editor at Herald House, the RLDS publishing house. He asked all eighteen senior leaders of the RLDS church to sign a “good neighbor petition” from the Kansas City Council on Religion and Race in which the signatories pledged to not discriminate by race when selling their homes. Six of the eighteen leaders signed the petition. Russell, “The LDS Church and the Community of Christ,” 183.

in a special service.⁵⁵⁶ The RLDS Kirtland congregation that had recently suffered a heart-rending schism related to women's ordination in 1988 and endured the shock of the Lundgren cult murders. Lord's ordination service in the temple was both a reaffirmation of their loyalty to their church as well as it was a service of healing.

In the last decade, gender became a much more visible issue with the 2002 appointment of a twenty-five-year-old Community of Christ priest, Barbara Walden, as the temple site director. Fresh from her graduate program in museum studies at Cooperstown, New York, Walden experienced the challenges of both her gender and perceived youth in her interactions with the LDS community. At LDS historic sites, the site director is always a senior-aged male priesthood member. His wife also plays a role, but as an auxiliary. She works with other women and entertains guests. Compounding the differences between LDS and Community of Christ, a senior male priesthood member always directs an LDS temple (which is closed to the public after the dedication ceremony). Walden's appointment sharply challenged LDS expectations for a historic sites director, let alone for the guardian of a working temple.

On numerous occasions during her tenure, LDS members misidentified Walden as "the site director's wife" or as a "young sister missionary." For instance, in May 2003, Salt Lake City television reporters arrived in Kirtland to cover the dedication of the LDS Historic Kirtland village. They filmed a few scenes at the Community of Christ's Kirtland Temple Visitor Center, including one of Walden giving a tour to a large group. Months later, the sister missionaries at Historic Kirtland shared the video tape of the news story with Walden. She saw herself giving the tour on film, and then the footage cut back to a Salt Lake City news anchor, who stated, "It's interesting to see that they [the

⁵⁵⁶ Eleanor Lord, interview by author, 7 January 2009, Independence, Missouri, digital recording.

Community of Christ] allow our sister missionaries to give tours of the Kirtland Temple.”⁵⁵⁷ It did not make sense to the Salt Lake City anchor that Walden could be the Community of Christ site director. On another occasion, an LDS member had just ended a tour and told the male guide, “Tell your supervisor that you did an excellent job.” He responded, “Well, you can tell her yourself. She’s standing next to me.” The guest looked mortified and confused as he looked at Walden. “Tell your supervisor you did a great job,” the guest repeated, still not addressing Walden.⁵⁵⁸ From the point of view of many LDS, a woman had no right to a supervisory role at a sacred site.

The aforementioned examples were not isolated incidents. Tensions over Walden’s gender were often quietly manifested on an everyday basis. Walden related, “If I am leading the tour and have a male staff member following, LDS members will often ask a question to me, and turn to the male member as if to confirm or affirm what I have said. And the male staff member will often be someone I’ve trained or had as a student in one of my classes. It’s painful but comical at the same time.”⁵⁵⁹ At Walden’s request, I could not cite more pointed examples of these gender-biased interactions; she was willing to be honest with me, but she also wanted to keep peace with her LDS “neighbors.”

Walden’s gender did not always prove so problematic for guest interactions. It sometimes worked to her advantage. She explained that “within the Community of Christ, and the Community of Christ audience, there is a sense of empowerment with having a young female as the site director.” Community of Christ members are well aware of the LDS “cult of domesticity” and many are fiercely proud of their church’s stand on women’s equality. Walden has been able to inspire some LDS guests, too. After

⁵⁵⁷ Barbara Walden, interview by author, Kirtland, Ohio, 11 July 2008.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

a 2006 hymn festival in the Kirtland Temple involving staff members from both Kirtland sites, an LDS sister missionary pulled Walden aside. The sister missionary said that “seeing me [Walden] in my position inspired her in continuing her college education and her aspirations for a career.”⁵⁶⁰ A group of liberal LDS women, both active and inactive, held a retreat in Kirtland in October 2007 and reported similar positive experiences. At the request of the LDS women, Walden and two other Community of Christ women shared their experiences as priesthood members. According to several who attended, their presentation was well received.⁵⁶¹ For more moderate to liberal LDS members, the Community of Christ provides a positive example of what their own church could be. For them, the Kirtland Temple has been a place where they could imagine new gender roles within their own lives and church community.

Contemporary site visitors often query guides about the Community of Christ position on women’s ordination. “Why does the Community of Christ ordain women?”, prompting the guide to give some justification. “They are a pretty liberal church, then, aren’t they?” an LDS pilgrim once asked me after I gave him an explanation. “Yes,” I responded, “or they can be thought of as pretty normal if women’s ordination is what one has grown up with.” He smiled, and we both knew that we did not see eye to eye on this issue.

Beyond challenging or reaffirming values about gender, pilgrims have used the Kirtland Temple as a site to define proper forms of sexuality. An LDS stake in 2008 held a youth conference at Kirtland focused on chastity before marriage. To culminate the conference, the stake leadership led a worship service in Kirtland Temple. Walden

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Sarah, “Midwest Pilgrims Retreat,” October 15, 2007, on “Hope is Power”, <http://hopeispower.wordpress.com/2007/10/15/midwest-pilgrims-retreat/>, accessed on July 29, 2008.

attended the service as the Community of Christ staff member on duty (staff are always present during services in the temple). She remembered that a visiting LDS priesthood member gave a talk on “keeping oneself pure before marriage” and directly tied this to the future experience of temple ordinances by the gathered young adults. Without sexual purity, LDS youth would not have “the fullness of an experience in the [contemporary LDS] temple[s]” to which all should aspire.⁵⁶² The service then proceeded with an hour of testimonies by LDS youth who shared what they had learned during the weekend. The Kirtland Temple, then, served as the setting for LDS leaders to encourage their youth to practice monogamous, heterosexual sex within a marriage sealed in an LDS temple. The holiness of the location served to reinforce these values.

The Kirtland Temple has also been a place used to inspire the struggle for full acceptance of same-sex relationships. Along with mainline Protestant denominations, the Community of Christ in recent years has struggled to affirm or to disavow gay ordination and gay marriage. The North American membership is divided on these issues. As of January 2010, the church does not permit priesthood to marry gay couples or allow openly gay members to be ordained to the priesthood. This follows a 1982 church policy that is currently under debate (and may be struck down at the April 2010 church conference). Exceptions to the official 1982 guidelines abound across North America.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² Barbara Walden, interview by author, 15 July 2009, Kirtland, Ohio.

⁵⁶³ I personally know of many openly gay priesthood members who are active in their local congregations. The Community of Christ’s Norton Heights congregation in Kansas City operates a ministry called “Stonewall,” dedicated to bringing ministry to the LGBT community “across denominational lines.” The president of the second quorum of the seventy, Kris Judd, and her husband, Peter Judd (a former counselor in the First Presidency), are both active in this ministry. See “STONEWALL: An Open and Affirming Ministry of Norton Heights Community of Christ,” <http://www.galaweb.org/content/Stonewall%20Survey.pdf>, accessed on March 9, 2010.

In 2008, thirty members from an unofficial Community of Christ group, GALA (Gay And Lesbian Acceptance), held a weekend retreat at the Temple Grove reunion grounds in western Pennsylvania. GALA membership is composed mainly of LGBT Community of Christ members (some of whom are active, ordained priesthood members) and heterosexual members who support LGBT causes. The GALA organizers for the Temple Grove retreat in 2008 included a special “healing” worship service in Kirtland Temple as the culminating point of the retreat. “Every activity at the retreat touched my heart, but the worship service at the Kirtland Temple was the most significant for me,” wrote GALA member Peter Smith. “While we were there, I felt our bond strengthen as we worshiped as brothers and sisters, and I also felt a connection to those who first worshipped there so long ago and the struggles they faced.” For Smith, the contemporary struggles of gay and lesbian Community of Christ members were analogous to the struggles of the early Kirtland saints. “We like they know what it is like to feel rejection and isolation from the world around us. And we, like they, have chosen to press forward anyhow, and to share our stories and our message wherever people are willing to listen.”⁵⁶⁴ Another GALA member, Pat Danielson, related that “as I departed from the healing service at the Kirtland Temple, as part of this year’s GALA retreat, I felt different. I felt warmth from these, my new friends, which I had not felt in a long time.” Empowered by this acceptance, she preached a sermon the next week at her Community of Christ congregation and shared testimonies from people she had heard at the healing service. “I was nervous as to how my message would be accepted” since this was the first time that she would talk about the gay community and “say the word ‘lesbian’ from the pulpit.” Pat reported, though, that her message was well received by her congregation. “I was so pleased when one particular congregation member came up to me and said,

⁵⁶⁴ Peter Smith, “Retreat Reflections,” *GALA Newsletter* 19, no. 6 (November 2008): 4.

‘Thank you for sharing your testimony. You know, there are some of us who are still growing’.”⁵⁶⁵ Kirtland Temple, then, served as a place for inspiring LGBT Community of Christ members to struggle for greater acceptance in their denomination.

In recent years, LDS pilgrims often pose questions about the Community of Christ’s stance on homosexuality. LDS pilgrims speak for a church which officially opposes all forms of homosexual activity and urges its members to oppose it politically.⁵⁶⁶ Thus, pilgrims’ queries about homosexuality usually have a hostile slant. A 2007 encounter I had with a group of LDS junior high students well illustrates this, as well as my own willingness to contend with LDS members on this issue.⁵⁶⁷

As an experienced guide, I was asked by the site director to give a tour to a junior high bus group led by staff from a Western-based tour company. This company’s guides had a particularly bad reputation for arguing with Community of Christ guides on tours. I strongly suspected that most LDS tour operators instructed their groups to be polite and gracious at the Community of Christ site, holding any potentially divisive questions until they could talk as a group off tour; I speculate that these particular tour leaders, however, probably told their students to verbally challenge the Community of Christ guides they would encounter. From the very beginning of the tour, students attempted to derail my usual tour script by asking pointed doctrinal questions at every opening. Such questions

⁵⁶⁵ Pat Danielson, “Retreat Reflections,” *GALA Newsletter* 19, no. 6 (November 2008): 2-3.

⁵⁶⁶ “Church Readies Members on Proposition 8,” 16 October 2008, “The Newsroom: The Official Church Resource for News Media, Opinion Leaders, and the Public,” <http://www.newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/church-readies-members-on-proposition-8>, accessed on 9 March 2010.

⁵⁶⁷ As a scholar who has taken both emic and etic positions at Kirtland, I would be less than honest to not acknowledge my role in contesting beliefs and practices at the temple. Consequently, I share my 2007 experience rather than quote in the body of my text from a similar experience by a colleague.

had nothing to do with the Kirtland Temple's construction or use in the 1830s. "What does the Community of Christ think about homosexuality," a student asked me in a very condescending tone. This question followed a young teenage girl's question, "Why does the Community of Christ *not* believe the second article of faith?" (a statement by Joseph Smith about God's nature). Whether accurately or not, I perceived the question about homosexuality as a rhetorical ploy, aimed at affirming the LDS church's moral superiority over the Community of Christ. I attempted to explain the complicated negotiation that Community of Christ members have with monogamous homosexual relationships, some affirming their morality and some rejecting their morality. As an international church that contained many people from many cultural backgrounds, the Community of Christ was still trying to work out the appropriate response to homosexuality. Judging from the student's facial expression, my answer simply reaffirmed her church's conservative stance on homosexuality.

With manifest contempt, another student then asked "Why does the Community of Christ ordain women?" I honestly felt as I had as a substitute teacher with a junior high class out of control. Standing with my group on the temple's second floor, the space for the 1830s School of the Apostles, I decided to take control again and fought back. "It's because of revelation," I said coolly, using a concept with which my LDS guests were familiar. I explained the Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants section that authorized women's ordination, section 156, along with a brief explanation of women being ordained in Paul's time with references to the Greek in Romans 16. I knew that just by naming the number of the Doctrine and Covenants section, 156, I was subtly telling the group, "My church has prophets who still give revelations; your church does not." (The LDS church prophets have only issued three additional canonical sections of scripture since Brigham Young's 1847 revelation.) Then, I said, women's ordination was also due "to cultural pressures, much like the LDS church's experience with the 1978 boundary." I did not name that boundary, but everyone in my group knew to what I

referred—the 1978 LDS revelation to ordain African Americans to the priesthood. Members of my group dropped their eyes when I mentioned “the 1978 boundary.” I knew that I was “twisting in the dagger” at that point. I then ended by saying, “I am fine with answering genuine questions, but I would also like to talk about the temple since this is a temple tour.” I then took my group to the lower court and we ended the tour more positively with stories about the 1836 dedication service.

Few contemporary tours at Kirtland Temple exhibit such contentious interactions in the question and answer times as the one I have just related.⁵⁶⁸ This tour was probably the tensest tour that I ever gave. However, from interviewing other guides and based on my own guiding experiences on hundreds of other tours, I know that LDS pilgrims frequently and politely ask about the Community of Christ’s position on women’s ordination and human sexuality.⁵⁶⁹ Like my junior high guests, for many LDS members, these questions affirm the truth of their community over and against my own. For a small minority, the act of questioning expresses their own hopes for change in their church to

⁵⁶⁸ One former guide, Lucy, however, told me about a tour just as confrontational as the one I have shared. In a 2008 interview, Lucy told me the following experience. In the summer of 2003, she gave a tour to a bus group of LDS youth from Alabama. “In the upper court on the second floor, the kids just started asking pointed questions. When I asked any questions about the curtains the question was, ‘So why do you ordain women?’ And my response was, ‘I personally have never ordained a woman.’ Then, I looked at her and asked ‘Are you asking why the CofC ordains women.’ I went over the general story of how in 1984 the CofC discussed and voted on ordaining women. I think it took her back that I took her first question literally. With visitors, even when they are asking a pointed question, I will make them ask the question directly. If you are going to ask it, come out and ask it instead of being coy about it. And then with that group, once we got downstairs, I thought that dedication service won them over. The leader filled out a card, that said this was a wonderful tour. Then I got four more cards that ranged from ‘You’re stupid’ to ‘Y’all are retards and not going to heaven’.” “Lucy,” interview by author,” 8 July 2008, Kirtland, Ohio.

⁵⁶⁹ Field Notes, 9 July 2008; “Lucy,” interview, 8 July 2008; “Cara,” interview by author, 15 July 2009, Kirtland, Ohio; “Sara,” interview, 6 January 2009. Lucy opined that there are two sets of LDS members “who ask questions . . . One can ask, ‘Do you ordain women?’ And those who ask, ‘So why do you ordain women?’” The former is asking a genuine question, noted Lucy, while the latter is asking a far more pointed question.

become more like the Community of Christ. Questioning in both cases is not simply about gaining information; it is a form of play-acting that reinforces religious boundaries.

Breaking the Rules: Challenging Authority, Transgression,
and Capturing the Temple's Presence

Beyond issues of race, gender, and sexuality, contemporary guides and visitors contend or agree about more mundane issues, such as photography inside the temple. While the Community of Christ permits photography of the temple's interior with special permission, no pictures may be taken during a tour. This restriction, seemingly petty, illustrates how larger conflicts over ownership and church doctrines can be sublimated by guests and guides into small infractions of the "rules" and their dutiful enforcement by those in positions of authority. As I will argue, the conflict, enforcement, and cooperation over the no-photography rule also illustrates how prohibitions on certain "ritual" actions may actually aid in the sacralization of a site.

At the beginning of all tours, Community of Christ guides ask guests to "refrain from photography while we are inside the temple. Outside the temple, you may take as many photos as you want." In place since the early twentieth century, this policy reflects copyright concerns, but it also reflects the Community of Christ's desire to control how images of the temple (or at least its interior) are used by individuals and organizations. Staff in Kirtland see the photography policy as a way to "control traffic" inside the temple and keep the tour time at an hour. Pauses for photography would lengthen tour times, especially with large groups. "I personally appreciate the photography policy as a preservation concern," related site director Barb Walden in 2008. The policy is "not only [about] preserving the physical temple, but respecting and preserving the story of the temple as well. I have seen at so many historic sites the interpreter sharing the story of the

site and observing visitors attempting to get the perfect photograph and completely ignoring what the interpreter is sharing.”⁵⁷⁰ The policy about photography, then, allows the Community of Christ to direct audience attention towards its messengers and, thus, assert control over the narrative of the temple while on tour.

The no-photography policy, while functioning as a way to maintain control of a narrative, also functions as an integral component in the creation of Kirtland Temple as sacred space. Since the late nineteenth century in America, photography by travelers carried with it an association with tourism.⁵⁷¹ Often, pilgrimage and tourism have been seen as separate activities by those engaged in these practices. Consequently, the no-photography policy helps construct Kirtland Temple as a sacred space versus a tourist space. The policy sets the temple apart as sacred, aesthetic space, gazed at in person and only rarely photographed by special permission. It also plays on an LDS cultural logic where temples are closed, secret spaces, only photographed in their interiors by special permission. Though Community of Christ members have a different temple theology that emphasizes public access to sacred space, the no-photography policy allows for a common touchstone, perhaps even signaling to LDS pilgrims that Community of Christ members regard the temple, too, as sacred space.

While the vast majority of guests today respect the no-photography policy, there are exceptions. Policing the policy is difficult, especially during the height of the summer tour season. Temple staff are serious about enforcing it, though. Former site director Lachlan Mackay (director 1993-2002) recalls that the only time he actually asked a person to leave his tour was due to a blatant infraction of the photography policy. He

⁵⁷⁰ Walden, interview, 12 July 2008.

⁵⁷¹ Steven Hoelscher, “The Photographic Construction of Tourist Space in Victorian America,” *The Geographical Review* 88, no. 4 (1998): 549.

asked a woman three times to cease taking pictures and finally expelled her from the tour when she persisted in the forbidden action.⁵⁷² Several guides that I have interviewed have witnessed guests take pictures on their tours.⁵⁷³ Most violations of the policy are momentary lapses on the part of the guests, followed by a dutiful reminder by the guide of the policy and an embarrassed apology by the pilgrim. However, one guide explained to me that his guests often pretended that they did not hear his warnings about the policy.⁵⁷⁴

Of course, not all pilgrims who break the rules are caught in the act. “They didn’t allow pictures inside the temple,” wrote a Pennsylvania LDS pilgrim blogging under the name “Fetcher.” “But those of you who know me, shouldn’t be surprise that I took some when the tour guide took the rest of the people downstairs to the first floor.” With only a tinge of remorse (and a helping of self-congratulatory pride), Fetcher added, “I know that I am sneaky, and I’ll repent if needs be.”⁵⁷⁵ Fetcher proudly posted his pictures of the temple’s interior on his blog.

Interior photographs of the temple are available for sale at the Kirtland Temple Visitor Center’s bookstore. It offers inexpensive postcards, coffee-table books, an inexpensive illustrate history, and framed prints that provide interior shots of the temple.⁵⁷⁶ Additionally, the internet abounds with images of the temple’s interior,

⁵⁷² Mackay, interview, 25 October 2008.

⁵⁷³ “Linda,” interview by author, 19 July 2009, Kirtland, Ohio; “Sara,” interview, January 6, 2009. As a part-time summer guide at Kirtland Temple from 2004 to 2009, I witnessed guests take photographs inside the temple on a regular basis despite my reminders.

⁵⁷⁴ Mackay, interview, 25 October 2008.

⁵⁷⁵ Fetcher, “Vacation Finale,” 21 July 2008, “And so it goes . . .” blog, <http://thosefetchingpalmers.blogspot.com/2008/07/vacation-finale.html>, accessed on July 22, 2008.

⁵⁷⁶ “Mercantile Sales, 7-11-2007 to 7/11/2008,” report in possession of the author.

including the Kirtland Temple's official website.⁵⁷⁷ Clearly, when guests like Fetcher violate the photography policy, there is something more at stake than a desire to save an image of the temple for a scrapbook. Transgressing the wishes of a religious competitor is a way of contesting the other's legitimacy and demonstrating that those who own the Kirtland Temple cannot control all of it. Photographers symbolically claim control of the site by their acts, as well as attract attention of other group members who witness their surreptitious transgressions.

Comparing Kirtland's Sites, Reinforcing Identities

Since the late 1990s, the LDS church has increasingly sacralized its historic sites through official efforts, reflected in part by increased efforts to evangelize on tours and by revised tour scripts that give simple, faith-promoting messages understood primarily by insiders.⁵⁷⁸ Following guidelines established by the Historic Sites Committee,⁵⁷⁹ LDS historic sites directors at the turn of the new millennium pressured the sister missionaries at the Whitney Store to get "referral cards" from guests.⁵⁸⁰ These cards asked guests to fill out the names and addresses of people they knew who might be interested in hearing the LDS gospel. Additionally, the tour scripts that missionaries used were re-written to include short, simple spiritual messages at every stop on the tour. A

⁵⁷⁷ "Kirtland Temple: A National Historic Landmark," <http://www.kirtlandtemple.org/>, accessed on 10 March 2010.

⁵⁷⁸ Madsen, "Mormon Meccas," 156-157.

⁵⁷⁹ The Historic Sites Committee consists of the Executive Director of the Historical Department (chair), the Assistant Executive Director of the Missionary Department (vice-chairman), the Managing Director of the Historical Department, the Managing Director of the Missionary Department, the Managing Director of Physical Facilities Department, and other members of the three departments as assigned. Madsen, "Mormon Meccas," 103.

⁵⁸⁰ Madsen believed that this reflected the influence of the Missionary Department (through the Historic Sites Committee) on site policies. Madsen, "Mormon Meccas," 164-165.

former-LDS member, John Hamer, remembered touring LDS historic sites as an active LDS teenager in the 1980s before this measure was enacted. After touring the LDS sites in Kirtland in 2007, however, he was taken aback by the new approach, writing on his blog that “in every room, the sister-missionary whipped out the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants and asked someone to read a verse called for in the script. Then she'd make a point like, ‘just as the Saints used lathes to fashion rough logs into sculpted banisters, God wants to fashion us into righteous blah-blah-blah, whatever.’ Every single room!”⁵⁸¹ At the time of his tour, Hamer was a former LDS member (self-identifying as a “cultural Mormon”), and his reaction is perhaps predictable.⁵⁸² However, according to a recent study, some active LDS pilgrims are uncomfortable with this aggressive approach, too.⁵⁸³ Visitors like Hamer simply wanted to learn about the history of the site (his ancestors lived in Kirtland); active LDS members want an edifying message, but not one that treats them as juveniles.

My own brief survey of blogs by visitors to Kirtland found criticism of LDS sites largely relegated to the blogs of non-LDS or former LDS.⁵⁸⁴ Most LDS bloggers write

⁵⁸¹ John Hamer, “Tragedy at Historic Kirtland,” 1 July 2007, “MikeandJohn” blog, www.mikeandjohn.com, accessed 18 September 2007.

⁵⁸² On April 6, 2010, Hamer was baptized into the Community of Christ by the current director of the Kirtland Temple, Ron Romig. Hamer made his first visit to the Kirtland Temple in 2000 where he met Community of Christ members for the first time. After working with Community of Christ members at historical conferences from 2004 to 2009, Hamer decided he wanted to join the Community of Christ. John Hamer, “Next April 6. . .”, email message to author, 11 December 2009.

⁵⁸³ Madsen writes, “Latter-day Saints who visit Mormon historical sites today are being ‘proselytized’ by their own missionaries within a physical and situational context that was clearly designed for non-Mormons. My experience at Mormon historical sites suggest that this can be an uncomfortable experience for many LDS visitors.” Madsen, “Mormon Meccas,” 175.

⁵⁸⁴ Between September 2007 and April 2010, I located and copied 23 publicly accessible blog entries by visitors to Kirtland Temple, 2 blog entries by staff at Historic Kirtland, and one blog entry by a Community of Christ Kirtland Temple staff member. In addition, I found 7 blog discussion boards or blog entries with extensive discussions about a visit to Kirtland Temple. These primary sources inform much of my discussion in the text that follows.

glowingly of their experiences at LDS sites, sometimes contrasting it with their experiences at Kirtland Temple. An LDS member and professional motivational author, Marnie Pehrson, blogged about her family's eight-day road trip in 2008, which included a stop at the LDS-run Johnson Farm in Hiram, Ohio, and the Kirtland historic sites. At the Johnson Farm, "the minute we stepped out of the car we felt the same Spirit we'd feel at a chapel or a temple," wrote Pehrson. "Couple that with the guided tour by the sister missionaries and it was an amazing experience." In contrast, she found "a marked difference between the farm and the Kirtland Temple." She granted that "the temple was beautiful and it was wonderful to be able to visit it, but it felt like any other historical building." At the Johnson Farm, she and her family sensed "the Spirit was so thick you could scoop it with a spoon at the Johnson Farm," but they had no such experience at the Kirtland Temple. " 'Hollow' was the word Caleb [Pehrson's son] used as he leaned over and marked the contrast in this 'temple' and those we attend today," wrote Pehrson. "The glory of its angelic moments long since past, it [the Kirtland Temple] has forgotten its purpose -- much like what can happen to any of us who forget the purpose for which God has created us." Pehrson ended her blog for the day with a moral that her readers could take with them: "A farmhouse in the middle of the country can be more sacred than the finest historic temple. Yes, it is the Spirit of God which makes a holy place and it is remaining true to our God-given mission that makes our lives Spirit-filled as well." Pehrson felt a qualitative spiritual difference between Community of Christ and LDS sites. While she did not see the Kirtland Temple as a desecrated space, she felt it had been totally evacuated of God's spirit—transformed into mere undifferentiated secular space, "like any other historic building."⁵⁸⁵ The differences that she felt did not lie only

⁵⁸⁵ Marnie Pehrson, "Road Trip Day 2: The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning," 10 July 2008, "The Power of Gratitude" blog, <http://marniep.typepad.com/>, accessed on 14 July 2008.

in a spiritual feeling. The performances by the sister missionaries made the Johnson Farm holy for her, too. She did not comment on the performance of her anonymous Community of Christ guide, and the silence is telling.

Pehrson does not appear to be alone in her assessment of the Community of Christ's Kirtland Temple tour contrasted with the LDS Historic Kirtland. In 2007, Rene Romig conducted a study that included a section on pilgrim satisfaction with their experience at Kirtland Temple. In a follow-up phone interview of an LDS pilgrim, she was told, "At Historic Kirtland . . . how do I say it . . . it was presented in a 'this is the way it is' way." In contrast, the pilgrim noted that "at the Temple, they kept clarifying things, they kept saying things like 'the movement at the time,' as if they were trying to distance themselves from the people or the philosophy. . . . almost like they were an unconnected group of people giving tours." The pilgrim affirmed that he/she enjoyed the experience better at Historic Kirtland, adding that "it was a good experience at both, the Temple [and Historic Kirtland], but the fact that they [Community of Christ guides] were trying to distance themselves gave it a bit of a cold feeling."⁵⁸⁶ Several LDS bloggers that I read echoed this pilgrim's assessment.⁵⁸⁷ Romig's larger study demonstrates that LDS guests generally enjoy the tour experience at Kirtland; they simply have a harder time relating spiritually to the tour content.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ Romig, "Hilltop Dialogues," 9.

⁵⁸⁷ For instance, one blogger wrote after her visit, "I know that it's bad to say, but for some reason, the Church of Christ people just seem a little weird. I don't know why. I have lots of friends and acquaintances who aren't LDS and it's perfectly fine with me. Maybe it's their spin on history. Maybe it's that they view it as more of a historical place than a spiritual place. I don't know what it is...but I DO know that the true church makes MUCH better movies than they do." See Kim, "Road Trip: Thursday July 17," 18 July 2008, "Hardy Family" blog, <http://www.hardy-family.net/blogs/index.php/roadtrip2008/2008/07/18/thursday-july-17>, accessed on 29 August 2008.

⁵⁸⁸ Romig, "Hilltop Dialogues," 9.

While LDS guests may relate better to Historic Kirtland, most non-LDS visitors to Kirtland or former LDS members find Community of Christ tours more satisfying. For instance, Holly was a returned missionary who left the LDS church after her mission. She visited Kirtland with a friend and took a tour of the temple. She blogged, “We toured the Kirtland temple . . . which is owned by the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), who don't do much proselytizing; they're mainly interested in promoting intelligent and open discussion.”⁵⁸⁹ Holly contrasted this tour with her experience at Historic Kirtland with a young sister missionary.

At Historic Kirtland, Holly and her friend proceeded through the tour and half-way through revealed that they were both returned missionaries who were now inactive. The LDS sister missionary took this as a spiritual challenge. “She talked about how membership in the church brings us so much joy, as does sharing it with others, then said, ‘But you guys already know that, because you both served missions’.” In this way, the sister missionary reminded the two women that they had lost something by leaving the church. Holly, who until then had tried to avoid any conflict, finally fought back. “I wouldn't call what the church brings ‘joy,’” said Holly hotly. Her friend intervened, and said, “Holly’s mission was very . . . difficult.” Holly, though, did not back down. “It wasn't just my mission,” Holly responded. “It's the whole structure of the church. It is not a benign institution. You think it's this great thing, but I think much of what it does is evil, downright evil. It retards spiritual and human development. It makes people small

⁵⁸⁹ Holly, “Feminism vs. Mormonism: the Argument after the Panel Part II,” 28 September 2005, “Self Portrait as:” blog, http://selfportraits.com/archives/2005/09/feminism_vs_mor_1.html, accessed 29 July 2008.

and afraid."⁵⁹⁰ Holly did not account how the tour then proceeded, but one could reasonably speculate that it did not end in a moment of *communitas*.

Holly used the tour of Historic Kirtland as a place to enact her own protest performance against the LDS church. In her blog, a written performance in its own right, she used the Community of Christ as a foil against her construction of the LDS church as a confining, patriarchal, anti-intellectual institution. For her, the Community of Christ promoted intelligence and reasonableness, while the LDS church promoted fear. Holly's tour, like the tour of faithful LDS members, confirmed deeply held beliefs. The content of these beliefs, however, was radically different.

Blogs and interviews of people from non-Latter Day Saint traditions indicate that the Community of Christ's accessible, historically oriented temple tours are generally well received by the public.⁵⁹¹ A Catholic blogger, James, recalled a tour he had taken with a mixed group of pilgrims and visitors: "a couple of people who were members of the Community of Christ, a Catholic (myself), a lapsed Lutheran (my roommate), and a dozen or more people who belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS)." The Community of Christ guide in the course of the tour asked her audience about their religious backgrounds, but, as James explained, "she did not ask our religious

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ In addition to blog entries by James and Holly that I cite in the text, I interviewed a Missouri Synod Lutheran after her tour of Kirtland Temple in July 2008. She told me, "I was fearful there might be a lot of proselytizing, but there was not. There was definitely enthusiasm from the tour guide and a sense of pride, but those were all positive things. It was presented in a way that it made you find out more. I loved the big window that looks at the temple at the end of the movie. That was very unexpected and nice. I would not hesitate to bring company there, because they are not trying to sell their religion." Field Notes, 14 July 2008. A few days later, a Community of Christ guide told me about an (eastern) Orthodox Christian couple who were in a random tour group with mostly LDS members. The guide noted that "at the end of the tour, the Orthodox guests mentioned how appreciative they were that the tour was more historically based rather than toward proselytizing. The couple lived 45 minutes away; they heard of the temple and decided to go check it out." Field Notes, 16 July 2008.

affiliation in order to try and convert anyone that day. It was in order to help her to explain the services that were conducted in the Temple in terms we could understand.” “It was all very non-confrontational,” wrote James, “and I believe that it helped each of us better understand what happened in the Temple.”⁵⁹² Pleased with the tour, James then traveled down the hill to Historic Kirtland.

James, like Holly, starkly contrasted his experience at Kirtland Temple with his experience at Historic Kirtland. “After asking the religious affiliation of everyone on the tour,” he wrote, the LDS sister missionary at Historic Kirtland “use[d] the information in an attempt to evangelize my roommate and I.” James was surprised by the content of the tour. Like Hamer in 2007, he complained that “every single bit of actual useful information that she [the sister missionary] gave us seemed to be followed with something along the lines of ‘*and I testify to you that I know in my heart that Joseph Smith is a prophet and...*’ It got annoying very quickly.” Finally, at the end of the tour, the sister missionary cornered James and asked him what he thought of Joseph Smith. He evaded the question, but she persisted. James “finally told her that I believe that he is one of the greatest frauds this world has ever seen.” After listing his reasons, the sister missionary shot back with her impassioned testimony, “I testify to you that I know in my heart that Joseph Smith was a prophet, the Book of Mormon is true, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church of God on earth.” Without missing a beat, James shot back, “I testify to you that I know in my heart that Joseph Smith was a fraud, the Book of Mormon is false but is an interesting read, and the Catholic Church is the true Church of God founded by Jesus Christ on the Rock of Peter.”⁵⁹³ James then

⁵⁹² James, “A Visit to the Kirtland Temple,” 29 March 2008, “Ad Te Levavi Animam Meam” blog, <http://adtelevavi.wordpress.com/2008/03/29/a-visit-to-the-kirtland-temple/> accessed on 14 July 2008.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

explained that just because one claims something is true does not make it so. A group of senior LDS elders came to the sister's rescue and tried to turn the tables on James, questioning his Catholic beliefs. James, a seminarian well-informed of his beliefs, claims that he held his own. Finally, the LDS elders walked away and the confrontation ended.

Much like Holly, James reacted to his experience by blogging about it, asking his anonymous cyber audience to experience the two different tours through his narration. Like Holly, too, he used the Community of Christ as a model for emulation at other sacred historic sites. He writes, "My experience with the LDS missionaries that day could not have been more different than my experience with the Community of Christ missionary." While the LDS missionary was "pushy, rude, and ignorant," the Community of Christ "missionary" was "helpful, friendly, and knowledgeable." At Kirtland Temple, he had "the kind of experience that makes you want to go back" but he "could not say that about my experience at the Historic Kirtland Village." James then added a postscript to "all Mormon missionaries who might be reading." The way "Mormon missionaries operate . . . is not the way to 'win converts'." In the end, he was left "with a great deal of respect for the way the members of the Community of Christ handle themselves in religious discussions and with absolutely no respect for the way LDS missionaries handle themselves." If LDS members wanted to make converts, perhaps the LDS missionaries "should take a page or two on evangelization from the Community of Christ."⁵⁹⁴

Whether or not James's experience is indicative of all non-Mormon visitor's experiences in Kirtland, his blog illustrates the limits of comfortable religious discourse held by many Americans. He holds up open discussion, accessible language, and non-threatening information as the most effective tools for creating good-will by the public toward a church who is attempting to share its message. In this way, James's attitudes

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

model what James Davison Hunter has called the “ethic of civility” embraced by the vast majority of Americans in the late twentieth century. That ethic is one of “gentility and studied moderation. It speaks of a code of social discourse whereby religious beliefs and political convictions are to be expressed discretely and tactfully and in most cases, privately.”⁵⁹⁵ The Community of Christ guides have by and large mastered the language appropriate for the “ethic of civility.” LDS guides, like most Americans, have also been influenced by this general cultural orientation, but they have another ethic that hampers their attempts to share their message with non-LDS guests. LDS espouse what I call the “ethic of evangelization” or the assumption that one may freely, vigorously, and publicly disseminate beliefs to others. Both of those ethical standards derive from liberal democracies. Actions consistent with the ethic of civility, though, appear less threatening to non-LDS guests at the Kirtland Temple.

No matter the goals or intentions of site guides, historic sites for both the Community of Christ and the LDS church function primarily to serve denominational identity. Community of Christ leaders and the vast majority of members desire full acceptance in the public square. Presentations by guides at Kirtland Temple promote a liberal, ecumenical agenda markedly different from the larger LDS church. LDS site guides use scripts rife with insider language that most effectively reaches their own members. Community of Christ guides use scripts designed to be accessible for all, mirroring the gospel of inclusion promoted by the church since the 1980s.⁵⁹⁶ According to the current mission statement for the Kirtland Temple, adopted by the staff in 2008, the site exists for “engaging visitors in the legacy of the Kirtland Temple, embracing the

⁵⁹⁵ James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 152.

⁵⁹⁶ For a contemporary instantiation of this message, see Don Compier, “Unity in Diversity,” *Herald* 157, no. 1 (2010): 12-14.

sacred and secular significance of the historic site, and promoting religious tolerance and open dialogue among all people.”⁵⁹⁷ Both churches promote a “gospel,” it is just a different gospel.

If one grants that the two churches have different ways of interpretation and self-presentation at their historic sites, and that these presentations affect how guests encounter the site, are there other factors that affect the experience of pilgrims? For instance, how does one account for varying spiritual responses to Kirtland Temple from members of the same church? Karl Anderson, for instance, promotes a highly exalted view of Kirtland Temple. In a 2008 interview, he told me that “the feeling there [in Kirtland Temple] is similar to what I had in Jerusalem when I visited the garden tomb and the garden of Gethsemane. . . I sense that angels are not far when I enter it.”⁵⁹⁸ This differs sharply from Pehrson’s experience in Kirtland Temple with her family. They felt no spiritual presence at the shrine. Neither Anderson nor Pehrson were disgruntled members; they were faithful, temple-recommend carrying LDS members (a member who complies with dietary constraints, tithes, and confesses basic LDS doctrines without reserve). What then accounts for their different experiences?

A sports analogy may be useful here, harkening back to an argument in my introductory chapter. Anderson and Pehrson may be thought of as players on the same team. “Trained” in similar ways (due to a homogenizing LDS educational system), they nonetheless have different positions related to Kirtland Temple. Anderson is a forty-year resident of Cleveland who helped develop a narrative for “redeeming Kirtland” from the

⁵⁹⁷ “Kirtland Temple: A Nation Historic Landmark,” <http://www.kirtlandtemple.org/>, accessed 5 March 2010; Barbara Walden states that the mission statement “helped bridge the history and spiritual formation components of the site.” Barbara Walden, e-mail message to author, March 5, 2010.

⁵⁹⁸ Anderson, interview, 13 July 2008.

“scourge” in the 1970s. He also has deep friendships with Community of Christ members. Pehrson was a passing pilgrim, with no long-term relationships with Community of Christ members. Additionally, even with a readily available sacralizing LDS narrative for Kirtland Temple, there are counter narratives that also have plausibility for the average LDS member. Within a highly structured church, players still have a range of ways to “move” on the “field.”

Parallel “Homes,” Parallel Temples: Worship Services at
Kirtland Temple

In 2006, 26,190 people toured Kirtland Temple with an additional 3,822 attending services.⁵⁹⁹ A Salem, Oregon, pilgrim in September 2006 wrote that “though I had seen vivid pictures and studies in some detail the characteristics of the temple, the written accounts and pictorial records had betrayed the true beauty of that ancient house. It was not made beautiful by the splendor of man, nor gold or gemstone. Rather, it was the abiding Spirit by which it was built and wherein it retains its history in the hearts of the faithful that clothed this house of worship with an unmistakable and familiar glory.”⁶⁰⁰ This saint then related a worship experience within the temple that confirmed his faith and renewed his purpose as a member and a missionary—but his experience did not confirm his faith in the thirteen-million strong Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or the two-hundred thousand member Community of Christ. Instead, Elder Brian Herren had his faith renewed in a different Mormon faction, the Restoration Branches movement, a conservative break-away group from the 1980s RLDS church. By the dawn

⁵⁹⁹ “2006 Tour Attendance” and “2006 Temple Services,” Excel spreadsheets, Kirtland Temple Historic Sites Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center.

⁶⁰⁰ Brian Herren, “The Kirtland Gathering,” *Restoration Voice* no. 169 (September/October 2006): 5.

of the new millennium, parallel pilgrimage to Kirtland Temple was further complicated as guides interacted with guests from more than the two prominent Mormon factions.

In opening quote in this section from Herren, he notes how the temple, by virtue of the Spirit, retains “an unmistakable and familiar glory” within its walls. Like pilgrims from many different cultures and religions, Herren traveled a long distance to experience something that was very familiar. In Victor Turner’s classic formulation, a pilgrimage shrine is a “center out there” or a home on the edge of the unfamiliar.⁶⁰¹ Unlike “the tourist” who seeks novelty, the pilgrim, Erik Cohen argues, is in search of the familiar—a home.⁶⁰² A home, though, is not simply constituted by a familiar place. Rapport and Dawson argue that for many contemporary individuals in Europe and America, home has come to mean “routine sets of practices, rather than fixed places.”⁶⁰³ Following Rapport and Dawson’s insights, this section analyzes how pilgrims claim Kirtland Temple as a sacred “home” through conducting worship services in the structure. Kirtland Temple, I argue, is not a sacred center simply because of the stories that people bring to it or the collective memories denominations generate about it. The Kirtland Temple becomes sacred, also, because of what people do when they visit it. By engaging in practices similar to those of their home congregations or wards, pilgrims claim Kirtland as a home away from home. My analysis of services held by LDS, Community of Christ, and Restorationists at the site clarifies how parallel pilgrimage instantiates particular religious beliefs in the face of the religious diversity that surrounds an individual pilgrim. First,

⁶⁰¹ Turner, “The Center Out There,” 213.

⁶⁰² Erik Cohen, “Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence,” in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. by Alan Morinis (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992), 57.

⁶⁰³ As quoted in Coleman and Eade, “Introduction,” in *Reframing Pilgrimage*, 5.

though, I offer a brief excursus describing Restorationists and their reasons for visiting the temple.

Restorationists: Traditional Conservative RLDS Piety and
the Temple

In 2003, perhaps as many as 1,000 Restorationists visited Kirtland Temple--nearly ten percent of the total number of active members.⁶⁰⁴ As self-described fundamentalists, Restorationists separated from the Community of Christ in the mid-1980s over the ordination of women to priesthood offices. For Restorationists, women's ordination was simply one of many issues that they protested, including the Community of Christ's ecumenical emphasis, the declining use of the Book of Mormon, peace and justice theology, seminary education, openness to discussing homosexual ordination, and new interpretations of the church's history. In all of these instances, Community of Christ members crossed boundaries that Restorationists choose not to cross. For Restorationists, Community of Christ members, especially the "liberal hierarchy" of the "institutional church," had apostatized, just like early Latter-day Saints believed the primitive Christian church had. As a group of congregations (called "branches") with no official hierarchy, Restorationists paradoxically embrace the concept of having bishops, apostles, and a

⁶⁰⁴ Staff at the Community of Christ Kirtland Temple Visitor's Center compile yearly statistics on denominational affiliation. No category includes Restorationists. Staff place them within the category, "LDS,(All Others)." For 2003, 1556 individuals were placed in this category. There are nearly 200 living Mormon denominations, with nearly at least a dozen with membership over 1,000. Anecdotally, I have given tours to polygamous LDS groups that would fit under this category. However, Restorationists probably account for the majority of the "LDS (All Other)" category since several LDS groups, such as the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), do not see the Kirtland Temple as a significant building. In addition, Restorationists link pilgrimage to Kirtland Temple with intense millennialist concerns; this promotes a higher than average pilgrimage rate by Restorationists.

prophet, but they have not formed such a hierarchy due to their fear that they lack the authority to do so.⁶⁰⁵

Despite their claims to be followers of the “original teachings of the RLDS church,” Restorationists have engaged in theological innovation of their own. In particular, they have appropriated language, beliefs, and attitudes from evangelical Protestants in the last few decades. Restorationists vary from extreme evangelical fundamentalism (complete with anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish sentiments) to moderate evangelical conservatism (pro-Zionist and open to limited, non-sacramental participation with other Christians). While no study has ever documented Restorationist exiting tendencies, based upon anecdotal evidence, Restorationists typically become evangelical Protestants if they leave their church. Many of those who exit the Restoration Branches affiliate with fundamentalist or charismatic evangelicals. Very few become LDS. This observation simply underscores the differences between the LDS and members of the historic RLDS tradition--differences which have become more pronounced in the last few decades for both Restorationists and Community of Christ members. Ex-members would rather become a Baptist than a “Mormon.”⁶⁰⁶

Since the late 1990s, Restorationists have visited the Kirtland Temple, seeking what they term the “endowment.” Like their millennialist Latter Day Saint ancestors, many Restorationists believe that the fiery second coming of Christ is imminent. Before this coming, however, Restorationists believe that the true saints must build a physical city of refuge, Zion, where people will “dwell in righteousness,” be “of one heart and one

⁶⁰⁵ Russell, “The Fundamentalist Schism, 1958-present,” 125-151 and David J. Howlett, “The Restoration Branches Movement,” 315-330.

⁶⁰⁶ I make these observations based upon my experience as a former member of the sect. Dozens of Restorationists who I know have joined a fundamentalist Baptist congregation in Independence, Missouri since the early 2000s.

mind,” and live with “no poor among them.”⁶⁰⁷ While the wicked will be destroyed before the Second Coming, the righteous will gather in safety to Zion, centered on Independence, Missouri. With the Community of Christ in “apostasy,” many Restorationists believe that a spiritual endowment of power is needed to unify “the church,” spread their gospel in power to unify all righteous people in one church, and enable them to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Individual perfection is a prerequisite for this task.

Due to Kirtland’s special place in their past, many Restorationists believe that it will be a place of a coming endowment of power. Revelations from Joseph Smith, Jr., in the 1830s indicated that saints would receive “power from on high” and, if they “sanctified” themselves, “the days will come that you shall see him [God the Father]: for he will unveil his face unto you.”⁶⁰⁸ Restorationists, then, have come to Kirtland seeking such power.⁶⁰⁹ For instance, in 2004, several elderly “patriarchs” (a priesthood office) came to Kirtland literally seeking to “see the face of God.” While they were disappointed that the manifestation did not occur, many came away with a measure of what they felt was a spiritual blessing.

⁶⁰⁷ These lines quote from RLDS D&C 36: 2h [LDS Moses 7:18 in the Pearl of Great Price], a verse frequently cited in Restorationist literature and sermons.

⁶⁰⁸ RLDS D&C 38:7c and 85:19b [LDS 38:32 and 88:68].

⁶⁰⁹ For instance, see the entire July/August 2001 issue of *Tidings of Zion: Conference of Restoration Elders*. The cover features a photograph of the Kirtland Temple and the caption, “Preparing to be Endowed.” The issue features quotes and articles about past spiritual experiences by early Latter Day Saints and RLDS members at Kirtland Temple. This special Kirtland Temple issue of the *Tidings of Zion* was intended to help prepare and to encourage Restorationist elders who would be attending a weekend series of meetings at Kirtland Temple on November 10-11, 2001. “A Gathering of the Elders at the Kirtland Temple,” *Tidings of Zion* no. 49 (July/August 2001), 16.

In the last few decades, the writings of the late, former caretaker of the Kirtland Temple, Earl Curry,⁶¹⁰ have gained great influence among Restorationists. Curry privately published a pamphlet titled “The Endowment” in 1957. In this short work, he recorded his private revelations received while he prayed for two hours every day on the third floor of Kirtland Temple. In prayer, Curry asked “when shall the day of marvelous spiritual endowment be?”⁶¹¹ The answers he received were poetic, but vague. Essentially, “the day of the marvelous endowment” would come when a worthy, sanctified people sought it during the troubles of the last days. For Restorationists desperate for righting a world gone so wrong, Curry’s pamphlet promised deliverance through their own individual and collective agency. In the last five years, Restorationist Sunday School classes across the United States and Canada have studied Curry’s pamphlet.⁶¹² Enthusiastic students have reformatted the pamphlet according to what they claim is Hebrew “poetic form” and “restored words, phrases and lines based on a manuscript that predates present editions.”⁶¹³ Curry’s writings, then, have been elevated to an informal canonical status among some that study them. Such Restorationists (and there are many) pour over Curry’s book to understand the keys to the coming spiritual endowment. Inspired by Curry’s writings, Restorationists today regularly come to Kirtland seeking this endowment.

⁶¹⁰ For brief overview of Curry’s life and work at Kirtland Temple, see Kevin W. Bryant, “Earl Roy Curry: A Vision of Future Needs,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 28 (2008): 239-255.

⁶¹¹ Earl R. Curry, *The Endowment* (Independence, Missouri: Zarahemla Research Foundation, 2001), iii.

⁶¹² The unofficial website of the Restoration Branches movement lists 185 “branches” (a congregation with at least six members) or “study groups” (a group with less than six members). Like the Community of Christ, the strongest center for the Restoration Branches movement in North America is the Kansas City metropolitan area. “Centerplace.org Restoration Branches,” <http://www.centerplace.org/Branches/>, accessed on 10 March 2010.

⁶¹³ Curry, *The Endowment*, ii.

Restorationists view the Kirtland Temple as a place where their broken, fractured church and world will be healed. With high expectations for their visit to the Kirtland Temple, some Restorationists leave the temple discouraged. At the time of this writing, no Restorationist member has claimed to have seen God's face on his visit to Kirtland. No one testifies to having received the promised pentecostal power to bring about the millennial reign. Yet, many experience what they feel are partial "endowments" of God's presence.

Restorationists struggle with the Community of Christ's presence in Kirtland. Given their belief in the Community of Christ's apostasy, Restorationist visitors to Kirtland Temple resent being forced to negotiate temple time with a dead church and to take tours led by spiritually blind guides. Anecdotally, I have witnessed a few Restorationist groups treat Community of Christ guides with extreme hostility on tours.⁶¹⁴ Yet, while Restorationists demonstrate intense contempt for the Community of Christ as an institution, many Restorationists in practice take a more conciliatory approach to Community of Christ members. Most Restorationist families have relatives who still worship with the Community of Christ (such as my own family). As a result, Restorationists declare the spiritual blindness of an institution while they make the best of divisions and avoid making waves at family gatherings. Following these informal familial peace treaties, Restorationists uneasily make alliances with the Community of Christ at historic sites in exchange for access to a worship space that they believe may ultimately restore creation to its edenic bliss.

⁶¹⁴ Field Notes, 11 July 2009.

“Testimonies” in the Temple: Ritual Practices in Context

One of the most common services held within the Kirtland Temple by all groups is a “prayer and testimony” service. Many of these services are scheduled by youth groups from all Latter Day Saint groups. While drawing on a similar nineteenth-century heritage that modified Methodist class meeting services, each denomination practices different rituals and produces different orienting structures (*habitus*) for their members.

Typically, LDS youth, led by their ward bishop, hold a “sacrament” service in which bread and water are served, preceded by a short talk by an elder, and typically followed by a prayer and testimony meeting. LDS testimonies are distinctly liturgical, with little deviation. Typically, an individual stands and recites the following elements:

I know this church [the LDS church] is the one true church and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true and that Thomas Monson is a prophet of God. And I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.⁶¹⁵

Testimonies usually are spoken with great emotion. In a church that officially rejects all Christian creeds, liturgy and credal theology is nonetheless present in the standard LDS testimony. It serves as affirmations of sacred social bonds between the saints and their community. Standing in the pews of Kirtland Temple where Joseph Smith and their ancestors once worshipped, many LDS share their souls (which for LDS, are “body and spirit . . . inseparably connected”) through these formulaic affirmations.

Restorationists and Community of Christ members also give testimonies in services, but these individual affirmations are very different. For members of both groups, testimonies are personal stories of how God has acted in their individual lives. Both groups use a distinctive vocabulary in their testimonies not necessarily shared by the other group. However, they use a narrative, non-liturgical style, unlike the more

⁶¹⁵ While the order of each element may vary and there is no officially dictated liturgy, LDS youth and adults that I have observed almost always follow this informal liturgical text.

liturgical LDS testimony. Restorationist testimonies are often very formal, emotional, and serious. In part, the Restorationist tone is influenced by a reading of Joseph Smith's 1832 revelation in which God promised to unveil God's face to worthy followers and instructed them to "Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you: cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter far from you."⁶¹⁶ Accordingly, Restorationist testimonies in the temple are typically solemn. Community of Christ testimonies usually lack such pronounced contrition and affirm God's presence within their lives in the past week. If Restorationists emphasize tradition and seek God's immediate endowment, Community of Christ members emphasize immediacy and expect God's unveiling to occur within the fragmentary experiences of life, not necessarily within the temple.⁶¹⁷

In the past two decades, mid-week prayer meetings have declined in frequency among Community of Christ congregations. Due in part to small congregation sizes and changing priorities, fewer members participate regularly in such weekly disciplines. This does not necessarily mean that such meetings are unimportant within the Community of Christ. Prayer and testimony meetings still continue at youth camps and reunions. Like the decline of ordinary people partaking of the medieval Eucharist, the decline of prayer meetings may actually sacralize all the more a prayer meeting when it is held.⁶¹⁸ What might be seen as a decline in pietistic practices, then, may make explicit practices in a sacred site all the more important.

⁶¹⁶RLDS D&C 85:19a [LDS 88:69].

⁶¹⁷ This generalization is taken from my own observations of dozens of Restorationist and Community of Christ services, as well as the observations of Lachlan Mackay and Barbara Walden. Mackay, interview, 22 November 2006; Walden, interview, 22 November 2006.

⁶¹⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 111.

Testimonies in Kirtland Temple are strategically enacted practices that produce varied ends. Catherine Bell argues that “intrinsic to ritualization are strategies for differentiating itself . . . from other ways of acting within any particular culture.”⁶¹⁹ “The Christian Mass and the gift are not models for a normal meal or family shopping; they are strategic versions of them.” Ritual practice, according to Bell, carries with it a “fundamental strategic and contextual quality.”⁶²⁰ In context, then, LDS testimonies produce a continuing affirmation of the exclusive authority of their church, its hierarchy, and its beliefs. For Restorationists, testimonies temporarily make whole a broken church and pledge greater effort to help initiate the millennial reign. For Community of Christ members, testimonies affirm individual connections with God and help produce a sense of history that grounds the individual in an ever-new past. All three practices, then, both give rise to a confessionally differentiated habitus and claim Kirtland Temple as a “home” for the pilgrims.

Tour Guiding as a Pilgrimage: Community of Christ

Identities in Formation

If pilgrims travel to a site, hold services, and confirm their faith in their individual traditions, tour guides are similarly involved in a kind of confessional pilgrimage during their time at Kirtland Temple. In tourism literature, the dichotomy between “hosts” and “guests” has long been seen as an ideal type whose boundaries are always blurred in real-world studies. Similarly, the division between “guides” and “pilgrims” is blurred when one examines how guides talk about their time at Kirtland Temple. Guides come to a site for a time (usually a summer, sometimes longer), learn the history of the site, engage in a

⁶¹⁹ Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 90.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

repeated ritual performance (tour guiding), and then depart. In most cases, too, guides leave with a new personal sense of connection to their church and its people.

Encountering people from other faiths does not lessen their commitments to their church; in most cases, it strengthens them. Guides themselves are a type of pilgrim.

Reflecting on her experience as guide in 2001, Eva Wasonga, a Community of Christ member from Kenya, wrote that she “came to connect more personally to my church RLDS ‘Community of Christ.’ Just listening to the story every now & then and telling it makes me feel part of the church in every way, i.e. both spiritually, emotionally & physically.” Wasonga further wrote that she did not think she would like guiding at first, but the experience positively enriched her spiritual life.⁶²¹ Brian, an American guide with a long family history in the Community of Christ, told me that he first saw the experience as “just a job.” He had actually wanted a summer job guiding at a Civil War site, but took on the Kirtland internship when he did not receive that position. At Kirtland Temple, to his great surprise, he found that guiding was changing what he thought about his own faith. “It forced me to reevaluate what I believed and what I stood for—when people asked you every day what your church believes and what they believe about the Book of Mormon. So it was what the church believes, and then I had to answer [for myself] what I think about that.”⁶²² The act of guiding made him much more self-conscious about claiming the faith of his church for himself. Guiding also made him feel as if he had “done a lot more for the church than I probably have.” “Day to day, we are the ambassadors for the Community of Christ.” Brian realized that he did not represent a single member of the church to many guests; he *was* the Community of Christ for most

⁶²¹ *Journal, 1993-2004*, Kirtland Temple Historic Site Library; this source contains occasional entries by guides from 1993 to 2004.

⁶²² “Brian,” interview, 6 August 2009.

visitors. “Whatever you say [to a guest], it is the belief, the opinion of the Community of Christ. Even if you warn them that this is just your opinion, it becomes to them the opinion of the Community of Christ.” Consequently, he had “to stay up to date on church goings on to speak authoritatively on what we are doing.”⁶²³ Both Brian and Eva became far more connected to their church after guiding; they could personally claim their church as their own. And both felt as if they had made an important contribution to their community of faith.

Guiding not only strengthens existing religious connections, it also creates new social bonds for the tour guides themselves. Sara, a summer guide and social science major, related that she chose to be a guide because she “always had an interest in museums, and I saw that as a way to explore that further. But also, I was excited to meet other Community of Christ youth my age, because I went to school in _____ and there were zero people my age there . . . And I did meet some great people through the guides.”⁶²⁴ Brian also appreciated how guiding at the temple forged a new set of friendships and connections with other Community of Christ members. “In just about every congregation there is someone who has worked, volunteered, or visited a historic site,” related Brian. “There is kind of this fellowship that it creates, the ultimate icebreaker there.” For Brian, meeting Community of Christ leaders while working as a guide was a great experience. . . “Taking [Apostle] Ron Harmon through on a tour, [First Presidency Counselor] Becky Savage, and meeting [former prophets] Grant [McMurray] and Wally [B. Smith] multiple times” helped him to “know that these people are not just

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Sara, interview, 6 January 2009.

names.”⁶²⁵ Guides create new relationships that stretch across the church and gain new social capital within their church.

Guides almost universally feel a strong connection to the temple after working there. For some, it is like a quiet, gradual conversion experience. A senior guide, Linda, intermittently guided at the temple across three decades. When I interviewed her in the summer of 2009, her husband had passed away the previous fall. She told me that he “loved this place, that the last time, 1998, must have been, we were at South Rigdon [a house across the street from the temple], he would walk over to the window and say, ‘That [the temple] is the most beautiful sight.’ Over the years, I thought, my feelings and my caring were because of his feelings.” However, she told me that, “Now that I have come alone. . . [I have realized that] those feelings were mine, too, and I did not realize it.”⁶²⁶ Another guide told me that his first tour was actually part of his own conversion experience. “On my first day of my internship [in 1992], they [the staff training the new guides] took me upstairs in the temple. I thought in the third and second floor, this is great historic space, and then as I walked into the first floor, I had the Spirit come over me.” He admitted, “It was not a radical change, but it was a start for me that there was more to the story than just great history.”⁶²⁷ Kirtland Temple was indelibly part of his personal spiritual narrative. In sum, the ritual of guiding, over and over again, etched the temple into the spiritual lives of the guides.

Guiding at Kirtland Temple has been an important part of connecting international Community of Christ members to the “home” church in North America. Since the mid-1990s, the denomination has brought international members to serve short

⁶²⁵ Brian, interview, 6 August 2009.

⁶²⁶ Linda, interview, 19 July 2009.

⁶²⁷ Ian, interview, 25 October 2008.

four- to six-week tour guiding stints at their historic sites. Typically, four to six guides will cycle through Community of Christ historic sites in Independence, Nauvoo, and Kirtland. The majority of these guides know little about early Latter Day Saint history before guiding at Kirtland, or for that matter, know very little about other Latter Day Saint groups.⁶²⁸ International Community of Christ members, even if they have had limited experience with LDS members, quickly construct differences between the two groups' approaches to Kirtland Temple. This was evident in an interview I conducted with Anastasia, a Community of Christ member from Russia. She explained to me that "LDS want to see Joseph Smith Jr.'s church [the Kirtland Temple] and know a lot about his visions, but for us, it is a very spiritual place, and the temple is the church for everyone. For us, it is not so important to speak about Joseph Smith, Jr. He was the founder, and he built the temple. I think there were a lot of people with him, too. They built the temple."⁶²⁹ Anastasia wanted to emphasize the community effort in building Kirtland Temple, de-emphasizing Joseph Smith's larger-than-life-role that she perceived LDS members held. She still connected with the temple, though, as sacred space. "It's a really spiritual place. And we should behave ourselves like, not in a guiding place [a tourist attraction], [but] like in the church, like [a] present church, not just a church in the past."⁶³⁰ For her, the Kirtland Temple was a living, sacred space and a symbol of her community.

⁶²⁸ The exception to this those who are former LDS members; I have met two in my time as a guide or researcher in Kirtland. Both were teenage converts to the LDS church and now are active elders in the Community of Christ.

⁶²⁹ Anastasia, interview by author, 30 July 2009, typescript.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

In a study of tour guiding in contemporary Israel, Jackie Feldman observes that “as guides engage pilgrims in making places, they engage in remaking themselves.”⁶³¹ What is true of “Holy Land” tour guides is also true of Kirtland Temple guides. They use the experience to explore their own faith, build new social bonds, and, generally, they find themselves far more connected to their church than they had been before they began guiding. Community of Christ guides do not perceive themselves as missionaries, but they are, in a very real way, converting themselves to their church by guiding day after day in the temple. And, international members take those connections and extend them across the world. In a church that lacks the homogeneity of the LDS church, this experience helps spread a common international Community of Christ identity.

Cooperation at Kirtland Temple

With all of the examples of religious differences and contestation explored in this chapter, it may seem that the site simply serves as a platform for individuals airing their grievances. Yet, contestations at the temple presuppose a measure of accepted cooperation between Community of Christ members and those of competing Mormon denominations.

Staff at the Community of Christ’s Kirtland Temple and the LDS Historic Kirtland engage in direct forms of cooperation and sharing that allow for a somewhat harmonious and amicable relationship between the two churches—at least in Kirtland. Former site director Barb Walden compared the situation to a family. Author and journalist Philip Burnham characterized the relationship between LDS and RLDS sites as a dysfunctional family, noted Walden.⁶³² Walden begged to differ. “Just like in any

⁶³¹ Feldman, “Constructing a Shared Bible Land,” 367.

⁶³² She cited Philip Burnham, *How the Other Half Lived: A People’s Guide to American Historic Sites* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995). Burnham compares the RLDS site in Nauvoo with the LDS site in the same community, but I could not find his explicit characterization of the

[good] family,” she countered, “there is mutual respect and appreciation for members of the family, there is kindness and affection, and a shared heritage, as well as an identity in some aspects.” This does not mean that all is harmonious. “We certainly have our differences in theology, politics, and gender roles, but we also have the ability to agree to disagree and continue to respect one another,” she observed. But, “we genuinely get along despite our differences.”⁶³³

Walden notes that trust does not come automatically. It has to be built over time. Staff turnover at both sites sometimes makes this difficult. “You create a genuine friendship with these LDS missionary couples and you have to see them return home after two years. Each time they leave, you realize how close and intimate that relationship was with that couple and you sincerely miss them as they are gone.”⁶³⁴ Then, new relationships have to be built with the couples that replace them. Walden explained how distraught she and the staff became when in 2008 they received word that a former LDS Historic Kirtland director had been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. A few months later, two LDS missionary couples travelling together had a serious traffic accident and one missionary was killed. The Kirtland Temple staff had “worshiped with these couples, and they had met their families. They felt like they had lost a friend.”⁶³⁵ Some staff visited the injured in the hospital, sent cards, and kept abreast of their condition. In the “Daily Prayer for Peace” at the Kirtland Temple Visitor Center, the injured couple was lifted up in prayer for physical and emotional healing. For Walden,

two groups as a dysfunctional family. I assume that Walden drew an inference from the tone of Burnham’s somewhat iconoclastic text in her comment.

⁶³³ Walden, interview, 12 July 2008.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

this drove home how important the relationships between site staff had become to her.⁶³⁶ Despite many differences, the LDS staff and the Community of Christ staff see themselves as family.

Throughout the year, the two groups reinforce goodwill in a series of ceremonial interactions. A Christmas Eve service in the temple always includes participation by the LDS missionaries at Historic Kirtland, in addition to ministers and priests from the local Catholic, Congregational, and Unitarian communities. Every summer, the Community of Christ sponsors a hymn festival honoring the birthday of Emma Smith (born July 10, 1804). Staff from Historic Kirtland gladly participate in this festival, supplying singers, readers, and sometimes even choir directors. Additionally, Community of Christ and LDS staffs hold a joint summer picnic that occupies the better part of an evening. LDS staff invite Community of Christ staff to all major events at their sites, including a Christmas tree lighting ceremonies and “missionary send-offs” (services in which the departing missionaries share their testimonies about their time in Kirtland).⁶³⁷

The cooperative relationships cultivated by both groups result in mutual benefits. This is perhaps best illustrated by a special joint tour conducted by Community of Christ and LDS staff several times a year. A new group of young LDS elders and sister missionaries rotate into the Kirtland, Ohio Mission every six weeks. On their very first morning on the ground in Cleveland, they travel to Kirtland Temple where the Community of Christ site director and Karl Anderson (or the LDS Mission President) jointly give a tour of the shrine. In a July 2009 tour, Community of Christ director Barbara Walden emphasized the construction, architecture, and worship functions of the temple, allowing Karl Anderson to talk about parts of the third floor and the first floor as

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.; Field Notes, 14 July 2009; Field Notes 15 July 2008.

it related to LDS doctrine.⁶³⁸ Invoking God’s command to Moses in Exodus, “take off your shoes you are on holy ground,” Anderson added, “we are on holy ground because of what happened here and the presence of deity here. I often call Kirtland holy ground,” stated Anderson. “This room [Joseph Smith’s office] and the room downstairs are perhaps the holiest places in the temple. The [Heavenly] Father visited here.” Karl then described other appearances by angels in the room, including an account of a vision of “Father Adam,” the first of all humans, appearing in the temple. “Elder Maxwell was here about fifteen years ago with his family,” he told his group, “and he noted that our sacred sites are plain sites in which extraordinary things happened. And they are plain sites, just like this room [which lacked the architectural ornamentation of the rest of the temple].”⁶³⁹ Anderson discussed key words, recognizable authorities, and important LDS theological concepts that translated Kirtland Temple into especially sacred space for his audience of LDS missionaries.

On the first floor, Walden explained the architectural influences in the temple and then outlined a typical worship meeting of the 1830s. Then, Anderson took over and gave his understanding of the keys given to Joseph Smith in his April 3 vision. For Anderson, these keys represented the “three-fold mission of the church” that was commonly defined by LDS as preaching the gospel, redeeming the dead, and perfecting the saints.⁶⁴⁰ “You are so blessed to have started your mission in the place where it all began,” he told the group of new missionaries. “The blessings you received and the keys to the three-fold mission of the church were delivered here.” Anderson had each LDS missionary read a

⁶³⁸ Field Notes, 8 July 2009.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid. In 2010, the LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles added a fourth point to the LDS mission of the church in 2010: the church is to “care for the poor.” As quoted in Laurie Goodstein, “Christians Urged to Boycott Glenn Beck,” *New York Times*, 11 March 2010.

line from LDS Section 110, the text detailing Smith's April 1836 vision.⁶⁴¹ By the conclusion of the tour, LDS missionaries had a combination of the Community of Christ's tour script (emphasizing the temple's historical aspects) along with an LDS theological understanding of the events that happened in Kirtland Temple.

This unique cooperative tour benefitted both communities. New LDS missionaries stood in the place where they believed the contemporary mission of their church began. They heard their story told by a trusted LDS member and a gracious Community of Christ host. They saw the two groups cooperating together, easing the tensions which might have existed in the minds of the new missionaries. For the Community of Christ, the tour helped set up a friendly, rather than an adversarial, relationship with the new missionaries. Both groups potentially can make the lives of the other group miserable, but as the cooperative tour illustrates, both groups seek ways of interacting that are mutually beneficial.

Visitors do not come to Kirtland with the long-standing relationships that the two staffs share with one another. However, visitors feel the effects of the pre-existing cooperative relationships. The staffs notify one another if an unscheduled bus tour arrives, and both staffs encourage visitors to tour the sites run by the other group. Most directly, both staffs encourage visitors to treat staff at the other sites with respect. For instance, during the summer, Karl Anderson regularly teaches busloads of LDS pilgrims in classes that are pre-scheduled with him by some of the larger bus companies or visiting LDS stake groups. Anderson explains that, "the Community of Christ is valued by members who live around here whereas visitors that come in from the West sometimes have a bitterness over the ownership issue."⁶⁴² Just the day before my 2008 interview

⁶⁴¹ Field Notes, 8 July 2009.

⁶⁴² Field Notes, 13 July 2008.

with Anderson, he related that he had “just dealt with an [LDS] adult group . . . and we spent 45 minutes talking about Community of Christ, and a lot of them were just venting their feelings about doctrine and ownership. I just try to be patient with them.”⁶⁴³

Anderson tried to teach the pilgrims respect for the Community of Christ as the guardians of the temple. “Do you know why they have the temple?” Karl asked the bus group. “It’s because God g-g-g-g-gave it to them,” he said with a bit of good-natured levity.⁶⁴⁴ He gently poked fun at how difficult that concept might be for LDS pilgrims. No Community of Christ member could ever make the same assertions to an LDS audience with the positive effects that Anderson achieves.

While he officially has no role at LDS Historic Kirtland, Anderson’s celebrity as a faithful LDS author and Kirtland historian, along with his longstanding relationships with LDS hierarchy and Kirtland Temple staff, place him in a unique relationship with visiting LDS pilgrims. He acts as a kind of LDS ambassador to the Community of Christ. In the process, he helps make the visitor experience for both LDS pilgrims and Community of Christ staff less confrontational. The Community of Christ staff that I interviewed greatly value this relationship with Anderson and worry who will take his place as he grows older; he turned 72 in 2009. Anderson possesses social capital not easily transferable to another LDS member in Cleveland. Cooperation, just like contestation, is always transitory.

Cooperation at Kirtland between Community of Christ and LDS site guides may be attributed to more than just the efforts of Anderson, Walden, Mackay, and others. Cooperation is borne out of a much larger trend in advanced industrialized nations: a

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

prevailing culture-wide “ethic of civility” that I defined earlier in this chapter.⁶⁴⁵ The “ethic of civility” is part of a general habitus, or set of “structuring structures,” that Community of Christ guides, LDS staff, and pilgrims or visitors of all backgrounds share in common. Cooperation, then, is the result of both individual choices by various players and the cultural assumptions that underlie those choices (what Michael Polyani would call “tacit knowledge”).⁶⁴⁶ By acting in a congenial, cooperative manner, the players in the drama of parallel pilgrimage act out the roles given them by their pre-existing social and religious communities.

Conclusion: Kirtland Temple and Managing Religious

Diversity

Wuthnow suggests that contemporary Americans mainly deal with religious diversity by an “implicit strategy of avoidance.”⁶⁴⁷ Groups ignore one another rather than engage one another. Differences are glossed over and conflict is avoided. However, parallel pilgrimage to Kirtland Temple forces pilgrims, site interpreters, and guests, to engage religious diversity more directly than they often do in everyday life. To claim, as I do in my introductory chapter, that parallel pilgrimage is emblematic of a much wider phenomenon of religious diversity, is not to say, then, that it simply replicates engagement with religious diversity in everyday life. Rather, I mean that the strategies employed by pilgrims and site interpreters at Kirtland are representative of the types of engagement that Americans enact when they actually are forced (or choose) to do more than ignore their neighbors.

⁶⁴⁵ Hunter, *Evangelicalism*, 152.

⁶⁴⁶ Michael Polyani, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 4, 24-25.

⁶⁴⁷ Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 229.

This chapter has highlighted several strategies that people at Kirtland in the last few decades deploy when they encounter religious diversity. First, they use an encounter with a religious other as an opportunity to reinforce their pre-existing religious identities. Reflecting on what increased contact between cultures has meant for pilgrimage in general, William Swatos has argued that “processes of globalization can stimulate the rediscovery of different kinds of particularism and localism.”⁶⁴⁸ Multi-culturalism, Rebecca Kim argues, leads more often than not to the reinforcing and rebirthing of particular identities, not their effacement.⁶⁴⁹ Community of Christ guides, while embracing a general ethic of inclusivity and tolerance for other groups, have their connection to their church strengthened by encountering LDS members. LDS members, generally, walk away from the shrine convinced more than ever that their church is the one true church. Disputes over race, gender, and sexuality that occur on tour reveal this, as do the responses by bloggers as they compare the two sites. The other group’s ways are foreign and different enough that the perceiver rediscovers what she already supposed—she is different from the other group and different for a good reason. This is a process of identity formation through alterity.

Second, people manage differences through scripted performances that keep conflicts to a minimum. Tour guiding, investigated in this chapter and the previous chapter, provides one type of scripted performance that leads to the containment of conflicts. When disputes occur, they are typically over small issues, such as picture taking inside the temple or asking loaded questions aimed at tripping up a tour guide. The small conflicts mask much larger disputes that Community of Christ members and LDS

⁶⁴⁸ As summarized by Simon Coleman and John Eade, “Introduction,” in *Reframing Pilgrimage*, p. 15.

⁶⁴⁹ Rebecca Kim, *God’s New Whiz Kids: Korean American Evangelicals on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 26.

members have over ownership of the temple and human redemption. Tours, with a guide in charge and an audience that listens and asks questions, allow for a “passive-aggressive” relationship rather than one that comes to physical violence. Institutional structures and cultural scripts help to minimize conflict. Individuals come to Kirtland Temple and know how to act on tours. They know what kinds of disputes are acceptable and what kinds are not acceptable. A culture-wide “ethic of civility” helps constrain their conflicts. The one time that physical violence threatened the temple grounds—the Lundgren plot—came at a time when institutional structures were in disarray for RLDS fundamentalists. Violence was a plausible response for Lundgren and his followers only after they had detached themselves from the mediating social structures that had contained violence—their professional roles as guides, their church, and their extended families.

Beyond guiding, ceremonial performances help manage diversity by creating a sense of commonality among participants. In a wider context, this reflects the primary way that most religious Americans engage the press of pluralism in America. Americans rarely take classes about other faiths or engage in sustained dialogue with people from other religions; on special occasions, members of religious communities will attend interfaith services, though. This is true at Kirtland Temple. Performances like the Emma Smith Hymn festival or the Easter service celebrate a common heritage and common beliefs, even if Emma Smith or Christ’s redemption are not understood in the same way by Community of Christ and LDS members. Interfaith worship services limit the kinds of conflicts that people can express and allow them to ceremonially stand together as one. Ceremonial performances contain and constrain actors.

Third, people carve out space for themselves in the midst of differences by conducting practices that transform a disputed site into a “religious home.” While interfaith services occur at the temple several times a year, most services are scheduled by a single group that wants worship time alone in the temple after tour hours. In these

meetings, LDS, Community of Christ, or Restorationist pilgrims perform services in a similar manner as they would in their home congregations or wards. The claims of other groups are momentarily shut out by those worshipping in the temple. In the midst of diversity, that which is familiar is reestablished and reaffirmed through spiritual practices.

Fourth, people manage religious diversity based on their social connections to another person insofar as that other person has something they need. Passing LDS pilgrims may dismiss the Community of Christ as unspiritual liberals, but LDS staff at Historic Kirtland must find different ways of dealing with the church. Similarly, Community of Christ staff have a stake in engaging LDS members in a way that a traveling Community of Christ pilgrim does not. Community of Christ members may ignore LDS members in their neighborhood; staff at Kirtland must deal with LDS members every day. LDS staff have influence with LDS pilgrims (gently cajoling them to treat the Community of Christ with respect) and Community of Christ staff control access to the temple (not just on daily tours, but for special services and cooperative tours with LDS officials for new LDS missionaries). A congenial, positive relationship that emphasizes cooperation over contestation is in the interest of staff at both sites.

In sum, the rhetoric and practice of cooperation manages diversity and allows people to “live together,” while small acts of contestation ensure that the shrine does not become unimportant to either the Community of Christ or the LDS church. Contested space is important space. Through acts of cooperation and contestation, Kirtland Temple remains one of Mormonism’s holiest shrines.

CHAPTER 10: PARALLEL PILGRIMAGES, PARALLEL TEMPLES

Three sets of three chimes rang through the air of a small chapel, honoring the triune God. A picture window in the chapel opened to a view of the Kirtland Temple. A candle was lighted in the chapel and a reader at the front solemnly greeted a small group of worshipers:

Welcome to the quiet of this sacred place as we gather to worship. Each day in the Independence Temple, dedicated to the pursuit of peace we pray to God for peace in our world. In addition, each day we pray for a different country. Here at the Kirtland Temple we lift our voices in prayer as well. Today we will hold up the people of China in our prayers.⁶⁵⁰

It was just after one o'clock in the afternoon on July 11, 2008 as the liturgically centered service progressed. I glanced around the meditation chapel and saw three Kirtland Temple staff members in chairs around a simple center-piece for worship. A Community of Christ woman on vacation had also stopped to attend the short twenty-minute service. I would see her again at a service a week later, and I would learn that she had attended the Kirtland Temple "Prayer for Peace" twice on a three-week vacation across the United States. After a time of hymn-singing and silent prayer for various concerns, the service ended with a chime sounded once, signifying God's unity.⁶⁵¹

I wandered out of the chapel and immediately saw LDS pilgrims thronging the Kirtland Temple Visitor's Center "Mercantile" or book store. They bought postcards and replica copies of early LDS Scriptures. Other LDS pilgrims sat in the visitor center foyer and chatted as they waited for a new tour of the temple to begin. While an announcement over the visitor center intercom had invited all to the daily Prayer for Peace in the meditation chapel, none of the LDS pilgrims attended. This was typical. During my field

⁶⁵⁰ David Howlett, "Field Diary," 11 July 2008.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

work in the summer of 2008 and 2009, I never once met an LDS pilgrim who had attended the daily Prayer for Peace. On tight itineraries that included sites owned by the LDS church near Kirtland Temple, LDS pilgrims had to keep to their schedules. More importantly, they visited Kirtland Temple to confirm their faith in their own church rather than to participate in a worship ritual deeply connected to contemporary Community of Christ identity. LDS, in essence, were visiting a very different place for very different reasons than the lone Community of Christ pilgrim I observed at the Prayer for Peace. While I had apprehended this basic insight for years, it was not until a few days before my July 11, 2008 observations that I began to form the concept of “parallel pilgrimage” that I have explored in this dissertation.

Models of Parallel Pilgrimage

To review, parallel pilgrimage is shaped by the dialectical relationships between multiple groups at the same shrine, between cooperation and contestation, and between relations of proximity and performances within a field of play. I have offered multiple models describing various aspects of parallel pilgrimage. Models, of course, are useful but imperfect devices for describing a phenomenon. My use of multiple models to describe aspects of parallel pilgrimage helps to mitigate the limitations of any one model. In Part II on proximity, I likened a parallel pilgrimage site to a tabernacle, or a sacred site that is constantly in motion. In my introduction, I used the example of two teams trying to play different sports on the same field as a model for disparate performances at a sacred site. In this conclusion, I will lay out one more model that describes some of the dynamics of parallel pilgrimage, review the changes in contestation and cooperation at Kirtland, and conclude with an explanation of how parallel pilgrims and site interpreters work together at a sacred space in spite of differences.

First, my case study of Kirtland suggests a further model for understanding the dynamics of parallel pilgrimage beyond the model of a tabernacle in motion or a

contested field of play. I offer the next few points not as law-like regularities that apply to all human constructions of sacred space, but as ideas that may be “useful to think with.”⁶⁵² Parallel pilgrimage, I have argued, is constituted by a dialectical relationship between contestation and cooperation. Contestation at a site may heighten a site’s sacrality as religious groups worry that a place is in danger of appropriation by a religious competitor. Sacrality, as Jonathan Z. Smith asserts, is about marked attention, and contestation dramatically draws attention to a pilgrimage site. Yet, cooperation is also needed at a sacred site since competing groups must form alliances to get access to resources or relationships otherwise denied. This situation may be likened to the notion of surface tension on a soap bubble. Too much air pressure from one side or the other on the bubble’s soapy skin bursts the fragile structure. The right amount of surface tension, however, allows the bubble to retain its shape. Similarly, too much contestation may literally destroy a site. Too little contestation makes the site unimportant. Too much cooperation may erase the religious particularities which cause a site to be important. Too little cooperation makes life at the site unmanageable and miserable for pilgrims and hosts. Parallel pilgrimage retains its shape through optimal amounts of cooperation and contestation, forever being renegotiated and transformed as new groups, new interests, and new conflicts emerge.

⁶⁵² My model for parallel pilgrimage has been formulated based on a particular sighting that I had as an ethnographer at Kirtland Temple. Yet, Kirtland Temple is not the only contested religious site in the United States. I expect that somewhat different conclusions would be drawn from another site. Thomas Tweed notes that a theory is useful not just for its explanatory value for other instances but also for its ability to generate accounts that challenge it (Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 166). I welcome other accounts.

Kirtland Temple Pilgrimage: A Summary of Findings

The dialectical interaction between contestation and cooperation at Kirtland has had a long and varied history. Part I developed the relevant historical background for Kirtland Temple, reviewed the origins of the Mormon concept of a temple, and then traced two divergent conceptions of temples after Joseph Smith's death. Smith's temples were wonderfully versatile for many uses. Ironically, this fungibility lent itself to the splintering of temple practices as divergent followers emphasized one set of practices to the exclusion of others. As the RLDS church emerged in the 1860s and began occupying the Kirtland Temple, the new church used the structure as a platform to air their differences with their Utah LDS cousins on issues intimately connected to LDS temples—polygamous marriages, ritual sealings of families, and rituals for the dead. RLDS even tried to manipulate court decisions regarding the temple's ownership to legitimize their new movement as Joseph Smith's true successors. In the same period, LDS began emphasizing stories associated with Kirtland Temple that showed their denomination's ambivalence toward the historic structure. In the 1870s, LDS canonized Joseph Smith's April 3, 1836 vision in the temple and told lurid tales of Kirtland Temple's later desecration by farmers penning sheep in its pew boxes or its defilement by raucous circuses held within its walls. (Both latter stories were folklore at best.) A once holy site was "now but a house" in the hands of religious competitors who LDS felt did not understand the real use of temples. In the late nineteenth century, the temple became a center for RLDS and LDS identity formed through alterity.

With the deaths of the first generation of Mormons, Kirtland Temple grew in importance for both RLDS and LDS pilgrims. It served as a sacred trace of now departed holy people. Its growing importance coincided with the growth of tourism in America. In the late nineteenth century, the American middle class became increasingly wealthy and mobile. When this combined with a growing infrastructure of railroads and roads in the United States, tourism grew and then blossomed into a mass affair in the early twentieth

century. After the Second World War, thousands of RLDS and LDS families regularly included Kirtland Temple on their vacation itineraries. As the 1960s dawned, Kirtland Temple was a place of interest for LDS pilgrims on their way East to LDS owned sites; in contrast, it was the holiest building on earth for many RLDS members.

This background set the context for the theme of Part II—proximity. Here, I explored how people need what John Urry has called “facing-the-place” relationships to socially significant sites. Kirtland Temple pilgrimage helped meet such a need for human proximity to powerful places. Part II also documented changing proximal social and religious relationships mediated by the Kirtland Temple. I explored how the geographical field of the shrine changed for RLDS and LDS pilgrims with the addition of new physical structures, routes, and pilgrimage sites in relationship to the temple. I investigated how RLDS and LDS understandings of their relationship to the temple reflected shifting alliances between members within their respective denominations. And finally, I showed how Kirtland Temple’s changing proximities shaped and reflected interactions between RLDS and LDS and the relationship of these groups to a larger public. A brief summary of this history follows.

RLDS and LDS dramatically began to alter Kirtland Temple’s surrounding landscape in the 1960s and 1970s. RLDS dominated Midwestern Mormon pilgrimage sites in this era located in Independence, Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois; and Kirtland, Ohio. In the 1960s and 1970s, RLDS sought to increase their hegemony in Kirtland by buying up more land surrounding the temple, as well as constructing a visitor center (1969) near the temple that added to the temple’s status as a “destination.” The guide center became almost like a preparatory shrine before pilgrims visited the temple itself and simultaneously added to the temple’s “musealization.” In the same era, LDS slowly began to reassert their influence in Ohio. They opened a historic site thirty miles from Kirtland in Hiram, Ohio, and then competed with the RLDS church for old homes in Kirtland that could be used as new historic shrines (such as the Newel K. Whitney Store).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, LDS and RLDS engaged in competition with each other through their property purchases.

LDS members in Cleveland grew in numbers after World War II. The upshot of this growth was a need for a religious explanation of why a holy site in their backyard was in possession of an old religious competitor. In the mid 1970s, local LDS leaders in Cleveland like Karl Anderson and Donald Brewer provided the answer to the problem by lifting up a relatively neglected LDS narrative that asserted that a scourge or curse had fallen on Kirtland. Anderson and Brewer proposed three ways to lift the curse: evangelism in Kirtland, the establishment of a ward (congregation) in Kirtland, and the construction of an LDS Visitor Center in Kirtland. Anderson and Brewer convinced LDS leaders in Salt Lake City of their redemptive plan and by 1979 all three solutions were approved. In a formal ceremony for the groundbreaking of the LDS ward building in Kirtland, an LDS apostle officially lifted the scourge on the land. Kirtland Temple went from occupying a cursed region to standing on a blessed land, and the cursing of the site simply became one stage in a larger process of site sanctification. By 1984, the formal LDS dedication of the restored Whitney Store in Kirtland placed Kirtland Temple more firmly within the realm of LDS sacred space. Over the next twenty years, Kirtland accumulated more and more LDS-operated structures. These new sites simultaneously drew on Kirtland Temple's power as a sacred locus of LDS memory and gave LDS new ways to contest the temple's centrality. By lifting up journal accounts about heavenly messengers appearing in various buildings in Kirtland, LDS officials and laity could assert that there was more than one building in Kirtland where Jesus appeared—and the other buildings were under their control. In sum, the LDS transformation of Kirtland's landscape between 1974 and 1984 showed that the manipulation of sacred space may be used to answer theodical questions that shore up a group's claims to legitimacy.

The mid- to late-1980s witnessed a schism within the RLDS church that had deadly consequences in Kirtland. RLDS guide Jeffrey Lundgren taught a small group of

followers that Kirtland Temple was to be the place for a bloody siege directly before the second coming of Jesus (who was to personally descend on the temple). Meanwhile, RLDS liberals commemorated the 150th anniversary of Kirtland Temple by holding special commemoratives services, a play, and a peace colloquy at the site. As the RLDS church divided, the temple was used to promote two dramatically different RLDS eschatological visions for human redemption. Lundgren's vision elevated Kirtland as the most important site for the end of days and a place that could only be cleansed by blood. His vision resulted in his murder of five followers on his nearby Kirtland farm (and his own later execution by the state of Ohio). The RLDS leader's vision posited Kirtland Temple as a place that could inspire the non-violent action of members who sought God's peaceable kingdom made tangible on earth through social justice. This liberal vision resulted in a schism within the movement, a loss of as many as 30,000 members, and a fresh reinvention of the denomination as a "peace and justice" church. Kirtland, too, became one of two temples in the RLDS church by the late 1980s as construction began on an Independence Temple, dedicated to the pursuit of peace. Once a singular sacred center unmatched in importance to the RLDS, the Kirtland Temple became a more peripheral sacred shrine for them in the early 1990s.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the LDS church entered a phase of rapid temple construction across the globe; the Kirtland Temple remained outside their ownership, but the curse narrative from the 1970s asserted that "the land of Kirtland" was slowly being reordered and redeemed by the LDS church. While LDS added a temple in Columbus, Ohio (1998), they did not attempt to build a temple in the Cleveland area, despite having enough members to justify construction of a new structure. LDS leaders clearly still had designs for the Kirtland Temple and on at least one occasion in 2001 or 2002 they attempted to buy the historic structure from the newly named Community of Christ (formerly called RLDS).

The LDS church finally opened their long-awaited, expanded Kirtland Visitor Center in 2003. While they had been operating the Whitney Store in Kirtland since 1979 as a temporary visitor center, the new, much larger center showed that the LDS leaders were ready to make Kirtland a more central part of the LDS story. They restored or reconstructed a small village, too, in Kirtland, dubbing it “Historic Kirtland.” A much larger LDS interpretive staff, all missionaries, arrived to operate the new sites. The Community of Christ dominance of Kirtland’s geography was waning, and LDS leaders thought that the importance of the temple to the Community of Christ was also in decline.

Despite LDS perceptions that the Community of Christ had given up on its heritage with its left-ward turn in the 1980s, Community of Christ members invested in a new visitor center for Kirtland Temple, finally dedicated in 2007 at a cost of \$5.5 million. The Visitor Center had a “spiritual formation center” attached to it and a full-time Community of Christ spiritual formation minister staffed the center (this in addition to a full-time historic site director for the temple). By these acts, the Community of Christ signaled that Kirtland Temple had been reincorporated into the contemporary mission of the Community of Christ. For instance, in 2007 and 2008, Community of Christ leaders held a series of retreats at the temple aimed at renewing and refocusing their spiritual lives. The temple’s importance to the Community of Christ had been adapted to new circumstances, and the level of monetary commitment by the small denomination demonstrated that Kirtland Temple would continue to be an essential part of the Community of Christ’s narrative about itself—at least for the time being.

In sum, between 1965 and 2008, avenues for contestation at Kirtland Temple increased rather than decreased. Sanctified sites often accrete more monuments and shrines, notes Kenneth Foote, and, in Kirtland, the temple attracted alternative centers that challenged the RLDS/Community of Christ interpretation of the temple. By 2003, LDS had more sites and more personnel on the ground than they had ever had in the past 150 years in Kirtland. These personnel needed to cooperate with the Community of

Christ to ensure access to the site for LDS pilgrims and themselves, but they could also offer more directly (and more dramatically) an LDS interpretation of the temple. The possibilities for contestation had proliferated. My analysis of Kirtland Temple's changing proximities reveals a far more complicated story than a narrative of rivals becoming friends at Kirtland--a popular notion upheld by contemporary LDS and Community of Christ. Instead, Kirtland Temple's changing proximities reveals ever-changing forms of contestation and new avenues of cooperation at the site.

In Part III, I narrated what happens within the continually morphing spiritual and physical geographies of Kirtland Temple and its surrounding environs; here I addressed the theme of "performance." My basic narrative asserted that performances by RLDS/Community of Christ hosts (plays and tours) have shifted from dramatic enactments that affirmed their church was the one true church with the one true faith-shaped history to performances that asserted that the Community of Christ was an ecumenical church among churches who offered responsible, professional historical interpretations of the shrine. This meant a shift in alliances by the staff at Kirtland Temple. They went from desiring legitimacy from and community with conservative elements of their church to primarily desiring inclusion within the professional academic community and affirmation by the liberal elements of their church. Parallel to Community of Christ performances, LDS performances went from creating Kirtland as neutral or desecrated space to affirming Kirtland as one of the holiest places on earth. Through their tour guiding, LDS missionaries posed themselves as representative of the one true church and purveyors of the one true spiritual interpretation of Kirtland. By 2008, Community of Christ staff emphasized that they met the needs of guests for an accessible historical interpretation of Kirtland Temple, while they affirmed that LDS missionaries met the needs of LDS pilgrims for a uniquely LDS spiritual explanation of the structure. Their account of guide performances in Kirtland, then, emphasized the complementary nature of the two churches' staffs to meet diverse needs rather than an

admission of competition between the two groups. Seen another way, if acts of cooperation at shared sacred sites may be also acts of contestation, as Simon Coleman and John Elsner assert, the converse is also true.⁶⁵³

Plays performed at Kirtland provided a fertile source for understanding one dramatic type of performance at Kirtland. Both RLDS and LDS plays allowed pilgrims to relate Kirtland's past to their present-day experiences and helped elevate the temple as sacred space. Plays at Kirtland also showed how the same basic historical events could be reconstructed with very different applications. Additionally, Kirtland's dramas spoke to how RLDS/Community of Christ and LDS chose to deal with religious diversity within and without their churches. The RLDS answer that emerged from their Kirtland dramas was that people across a range of spiritual persuasions could work together in a common cause and find unity in diversity. This answer itself reflected the very real and growing diversity in the RLDS church since the 1970s. In contrast, LDS plays affirmed that a denomination should deal with diversity by dissolving it. Here, the emphasis was on unity based on imitating the right models—the conduct of ancestors—which revealed how one should act in the world. This answer in many ways reflected the correlated culture of the LDS church in the late twentieth century—a church that attempted to assert a homogeneous identity across a growing global denomination. The dramatic performances at Kirtland revealed far more than simply history; they revealed the commitments of each church for how they dealt with difference.

Tour guiding provided another locus for performance at Kirtland Temple. Tour guides wanted to shape their audiences with particular messages about the temple, but their audiences came with expectations, too, about what should be said on tours. The audience shaped what performers did and added content of their own to the

⁶⁵³ Coleman and Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions*, 51.

RLDS/Community of Christ tours, as revealed by the conflict over mentioning Joseph Smith's April 3 vision. Additionally, guides from previous decades also added "content" to tours as returning visitors carried with them past expectations about what the tour should cover. Conflict was inevitable.

My analysis of the interactions between hosts and guests at Kirtland serves as one example of how Americans (and international members of American-based churches) in the late twentieth century dealt with religious diversity. People at Kirtland constructed their religious identity in part by what they were not. Encountering a religious other proved to be a way of mainly strengthening already existing religious commitments. Religious differences were brought into sharp relief on tours. The Kirtland Temple, too, was not just a place to air doctrinal differences, but it was also a platform for asserting how doctrinal differences were implicated in social practices that divided humanity along the fault lines of race, gender, and sexuality. In recent years, questions posed on tours about gender and sexuality were mainly used as a way to assert the truth of one group over another (LDS over RLDS and vice versa). In rare instances, questions on tours about gender and sexuality were ways for liberal LDS pilgrims to express their hope for change in their denomination, too. Pilgrims and site interpreters, then, dealt with diversity in most instances by shoring up denominational boundaries. Just as it was in the late nineteenth century, denominational identity was reinforced through alterity. The issues that divided RLDS and LDS had simply changed.

Despite occasional conflicts manifested on tours, the scripted performances at Kirtland Temple largely served to minimize conflict at the shrine. Guides and pilgrims operated under a culture-wide "ethic of civility" that informed how they should act at a historic site. Additionally, participants on tours carried with them cultural scripts for how one should act in a museum or a historical tour. Rather than outright contestation, conflict most often revealed itself in what I classify as "passive-aggressive conflict," such as forbidden picture taking inside the temple by pilgrims and dutiful reminders by guides

about the “rules.” These small conflicts sublimated much larger conflicts over church doctrine and temple ownership. In another way, prohibitions on interior photography also aided in establishing the temple as sacred space, set off from ordinary space that could be photographed. Finally, ceremonial performances, like interfaith worship services in the Kirtland Temple, helped LDS and Community of Christ imagine themselves as standing together as friends in faith and inheritors of a common past. Cooperation, above all, was upheld in these latter interactions at a shared sacred site.

Final Thoughts: A Shared Site, Different Places, and
Cooperation through Miscommunication

In what senses can we characterize Kirtland Temple as a shared site if it means radically different things for Community of Christ and LDS? One way of accounting for differences can be found in the work of Susan Naquin and Chun-Fang Yu who argue that individuals “build” sacred sites through varied discourse on what a site means.⁶⁵⁴ According to Naquin and Yu, each pilgrim and each site guide are best seen as building the Kirtland Temple and contributing to its collective meaning.⁶⁵⁵ In the preceding, I argue that despite the relatively fixed location of the site, the agents who build Kirtland Temple are actually in the process of constructing confessional and ideological sites rather than a singular site, temples rather than a singular temple. Drawing on Jacques Derrida’s discussion of linguistic play, I argue that the physical temple itself simply provides the finite set of terms out of which groups have created many different variations.⁶⁵⁶ Just as a jazz improviser uses a fixed set of notes to create endlessly varied

⁶⁵⁴ Naquin and Yu, *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites*, 22.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁶⁵⁶ Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences,” in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 289; without citing Derrida’s analysis of sign and symbol, Chidester and Linenthal offer similar

music, diverse religious groups (pilgrims and interpreters) have built confessionally varied Kirtland Temples. The physical site itself has become a platform for improvised ecclesiastical performance and contestation. Various Mormon groups use the temple as a place to shape, transform, and justify their particular group commitments. In this sense, various groups build temples on the physical site that may have radically divergent architecture. The temples, too, are not static, but continually change through contested and cooperative practices. Parallel pilgrimage at Kirtland Temple shows the dynamic ways that a place may move and divide over time in relation to ever-changing pilgrimage groups.

Deep differences persist at Kirtland Temple between pilgrims and hosts, Community of Christ and LDS. Even the commonalities formed at Kirtland Temple can be seen as collective fictions; when LDS and Community of Christ join together to honor Emma Smith at their annual July 10 hymn festival, they understand Smith in very different ways and embrace her for contradictory reasons.⁶⁵⁷ Their common ancestor may be seen as none too common. Nonetheless, the collective fictions that guides and pilgrims have constructed allow for the pilgrimage site to function. Indeed, contested pilgrimage sites like Kirtland Temple work best by miscommunication. Discussing the idea of communication in general, John Durham Peters notes that “to say that communication in the sense of shared minds is impossible is not to say that we cannot

arguments. They state that “when space or place becomes sacred, spatially scarce resources are transformed into a surplus of signification. As an arena of signs and symbols, a sacred place is not a fixed point in space, but a point of departure for an endless multiplication of meaning.” Furthermore, “due to the inherent surplus of signification in ‘the sacred,’ no appropriation can ever be final, no exclusion can be total, and, therefore, conflict over ownership and control of symbolic surplus remains endemic in sacred space.” Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 18- 19.

⁶⁵⁷ For many Community of Christ, she is the foe of polygamy and a courageous voice of dissent against her husband’s excesses; for many contemporary LDS, she is the model of a dutiful wife and a testament for how hardship can break one’s faith.

cooperate splendidly.”⁶⁵⁸ The religious meaning of Kirtland Temple does not have to be the same for Community of Christ guides and LDS pilgrims to worship with one another or to take tours together. People talk past one another and, yet, still engage in satisfying sharing and cooperation at a common sacred site—even if that shared site proves to be a place of multiple Kirtland Temples standing in the same physical location. Without the conditions for contestation, cooperation is impossible.⁶⁵⁹

Parallel pilgrimage has made Kirtland Temple the house that Joseph built and a metaphorical series of temples that his spiritual descendants constantly reconstruct. As such, the temple is a place of sharp contestation and a place of peaceful cooperation. It is a shrine to the past successes and failures of a movement and a contemporary witness to how Americans deal with religious differences in their present. Almost one hundred seventy-five years after its dedication, it remains Mormonism’s most contested sacred space and a contact zone for trans-denominational cooperation.

⁶⁵⁸ John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 29.

⁶⁵⁹ This follows what Derrida would call the logic of the supplement. As Barbara Johnson explains, the logic of the supplement does not follow the “traditional logic of identity” in language. Instead, supplements “are at once additions and substitutes simultaneously bridging and widening the gap” between one party and another. According to Johnson, this is the logic of writing itself. If the Kirtland Temple(s) is seen as a text, inscribed and created by many parties, acts of contestation and cooperation are really acts of textuality, and, hence, they follow the logic of the supplement. See Barbara Johnson, “Writing,” in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 45.

APPENDIX: RLDS/COMMUNITY OF CHRIST AND LDS
HIERARCHY AND TERMS

Aaronic Priesthood: One of two divisions of priesthood in both churches dating back to the Kirtland period of early Latter Day Saint history. This “order” consists of the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. RLDS/Community of Christ calls men and women to these offices. Holding an office does not carry with it any salvific consequences. A person may be any age and be called to an office. In contrast, since the late nineteenth-century, the LDS church generally calls males at age twelve to be deacons, fourteen to be teachers, and sixteen to be priests. For LDS males, holding these offices is an integral part of a path towards eternal exaltation in the afterlife.

Apostle: In both the RLDS/Community of Christ and LDS churches, a high-level regional administrator who advises the president of the church and participates in the most important administrative decisions. In the RLDS/Community of Christ, an apostle is called by the church president into the office, serves for a term, and then moves on to other service. Most serve on average for ten years. Apostles are generally middle-aged men and women. In the LDS church, apostles serve for life and tend to be fairly elderly men (women are not ordained). The oldest apostle generally succeeds the LDS prophet at his death (though there have been exceptions in the LDS church).

The Brethren: a respectful LDS term for the senior leaders of the church who are seen to act as one in the interests of the church.

Bishop: In the Community of Christ/RLDS, a bishop is a financial officer in the church. The “Presiding Bishopric” is made of three bishops who manage the church’s finances

and stewardship endeavors. In the LDS church, the “Presiding Bishopric” also manages finances. However, at the local level bishops preside over stakes (diocese-like structures).

First Presidency: in both the RLDS/Community of Christ and LDS church, the highest leadership group in the church. It consists of the church prophet and his two counselors. In the Community of Christ, members of the First Presidency serve as long as the prophet calls them to serve. They generally do not serve for more than ten to fifteen years and are middle-aged men or women. In the LDS church, members of the First Presidency serve for life and or, if they are counselors, the death of the prophet who calls them. At a prophet’s death, the LDS First Presidency is dissolved and the new prophet calls his own counselors.

GA or General Authority: an LDS term for a member of the First Presidency, Presiding Bishopric, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and First Quorum of the Seventy. They are elevated in authority and importance above other church officers and bureaucrats.

General Conference: an LDS term for the church conference held in Salt Lake City every six months (in October and April). Conferences approve new general authorities by unanimous acclamation. Conference is dominated by reports and sermons by LDS General Authorities. Since the late twentieth century, they have been broadcast by satellite to local stakes across the world. LDS members gather at stake buildings to watch the telecast of General Conference. LDS members generally take conference sermons as particularly important indications of official beliefs and new directions in their church.

Melchisidec Priesthood: one of two ministerial divisions in Restoration churches. Melchisidec priesthood offices in both churches consist of elders, high priests, seventy, patriarch/evangelists, bishops, apostles, and the prophet or “President of the High

Priesthood.” In the LDS tradition, a male must hold the Melchisidec Priesthood to even have the possibility of ascending to the highest levels of resurrected glory in the afterlife (godhood). Males at age eighteen are generally ordained to this priesthood. In the Community of Christ/RLDS church, Melchisidec Priesthood carries with it no salvific consequences. Any member at any point in his or her life may be ordained to it.

Mission Center President: a Community of Christ term for a man or woman who presides over a large geographic area of between thirteen to thirty congregations. Mission Center Presidents may be full-time employees of the church or volunteers. Generally, they have a graduate degree in theology. Before moving to the Mission Center organizational model in 2001, Community of Christ/RLDS had Stake Presidents as the functional equivalent of a Mission Center President. The LDS Stake President is the functional equivalent to a Community of Christ Mission Center President.

Mission President: an LDS married man called by an apostle to preside over an evangelistic mission for a term of three years. The Mission President coordinates the activities of the proselytizing elders (usually young men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five years old who serve for two years), sister missionaries (usually young women at least twenty-one years old who serve for eighteen months), and senior missionaries (married retired couples who serve from three months to three years). In areas with an LDS Visitor Center, a Mission President runs the center.

Pastor: an elected office by the congregation in the RLDS/Community of Christ. A pastor is drawn from the priesthood members in the local congregation. Pastors generally do not preach every Sunday but coordinate ministry in the congregation (including the calling of new priesthood members). The LDS church had pastors in England in the 1850s but

discontinued the office as the position of bishop or “branch president” (for a group smaller than a stake) evolved into the functional equivalent.

Prophet: in both churches, the president of the entire church. He (or potentially she in the Community of Christ) is the senior member of the First Presidency and “President of the High Priesthood.” In the Community of Christ/RLDS church, the prophet is generally designated by the outgoing prophet (who may retire). In the LDS church, a new prophet is generally the oldest apostle at the death of the prophet. In the Community of Christ/RLDS church, the prophet brings revelatory counsel that is regularly added to their canonical Doctrine and Covenants. In the LDS church, a prophet may do the same, but rarely does so. In the twentieth century, LDS prophets gave revelations for inclusion in LDS the Doctrine and Covenants only twice; RLDS prophets gave 37 sections in the same century. An LDS prophet’s words during a general conference are taken as quasi-canonical statements when he declares that he is speaking as a prophet. These statements, however, are not incorporated into their Doctrine and Covenants.

Regional Representative: a now defunct LDS administrative office for a region who reported to an apostle in Salt Lake City.

Seventy: an office in the Melchisidec Priesthood in both the RLDS/Community of Christ and LDS church. In the RLDS/Community of Christ, a seventy is often a self-sustaining missionary. In the LDS church, a seventy is a high-level administrator below an apostle and considered a “general authority” in the church.

Stake: a diocese-like structure in both the LDS and RLDS church. In 2001, all stakes in the Community of Christ were reorganized into “mission centers” which served more people with fewer administrative officers.

Ward: an LDS word for a congregation of 200 to 500 members. LDS call a group smaller than this a “branch.” Community of Christ use the terms congregation or branch interchangeably but do not use the term ward.

World Conference: an international gathering of RLDS/Community of Christ delegates held now every three years (until 2004 held every two years). Delegates from mission centers from around the world vote on legislation for their denomination during World Conference. New canonical sections for the Doctrine and Covenants are approved by majority vote at the World Conference. Votes are rarely unanimous and serious dissent at the conference has resulted in past schisms within the church (1925 and 1984).

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