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Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

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Words of Comfort: Funeral Sermons of the Prophet Joseph Smith

CAN-97

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This FARMS preliminary paper was presented at the symposium "Pioneers of the Restoration" on 8 March 1997. It is being further edited for inclusion in a forthcoming collection of papers in honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson. Although it is not ready for final publication, this paper reflects substantial research and is made available to be critiqued and improved and to stimulate further research.

WORDS OF COMFORT: FUNERAL SERMONS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

Donald Q. Cannon

Joseph Smith taught some of the most profound doctrines of the Restoration in funeral sermons. While some eulogistic elements were present in these sermons, the major emphasis was on doctrinal exposition. Some of these sermons were delivered early in his career, but the majority given were in the latter part of his ministry. The compassion and tenderness of the Prophet Joseph Smith is also evident in these funeral addresses.

During his lifetime Joseph Smith probably attended dozens of funerals. Available historical evidence, however, records a much smaller number. According to the historical data Joseph Smith preached eleven funeral sermons. A written text is available for only eight sermons. He also made retrospective comments about four individuals who had died. Both the sermons and the comments demonstrate Joseph Smith's compassionate nature. A complete chronological list of his sermons and comments is found in Appendix A.¹

Eight of Joseph Smith's eleven funeral sermons were preached in Nauvoo. In the early period of his ministry Joseph Smith preferred to have others give the sermons, whether general or funeral. Thus, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery gave more sermons than Joseph Smith. One thinks, for example, of the first public discourse of the Church by Oliver Cowdery. As he gained experience Joseph began to deliver sermons more frequently. The number and frequency of his sermons increased in the Nauvoo era, and certainly his best-known funeral sermons were presented during the final year of his life.

Perhaps some of the content of his funeral sermons grew out of his life experience. Death was a frequent visitor at the Smith home, both during his childhood and his adult years. One thinks, for example, of the death of his brother Alvin while they were living in Palmyra. The untimely loss of Alvin, coupled with the pessimistic funeral sermon preached by the local clergyman, had a strong impact on Joseph and his family.² This bitter experience was followed by the loss of several of his own

children. During their married years Joseph and Emma experienced the deaths of six of their eleven children.³ The tragic loss of so many children had a powerful influence upon the Prophet, which caused him to pay attention to the loss of children in death.

These experiences with death and tragedy shaped Joseph Smith's personality in a very meaningful way. Through these life experiences he developed a sense of compassion, a dominant character trait of Joseph Smith.

One example of his compassion will serve to illustrate its influence in his association with others. In a reminiscence Samuel Tyler, a convert from Pennsylvania, who later served in the Mormon Battalion, recalled:

One scene was particularly touching, and showed the goodness of the Prophet's heart. A man who had stood high in the Church while in Far West was taken down with chills or ague and fever. While his mind as well as body was weak, disaffected parties soured his mind and persuaded him to leave the Saints and go with them. He gave some testimony against the Prophet. While the Saints were settling in Commerce, having recovered from his illness, he removed from Missouri to Quincy, Illinois. There he went to work chopping cordwood to obtain means to take himself and family to Nauvoo, and provide a present to the injured man of God if, peradventure, he would forgive and permit him to return to the fold as a private member. He felt that there was salvation nowhere else for him, and if that was denied him, all was lost as far as he was concerned. He started with a sorrowful heart and downcast look.

While on the way, the Lord told Brother Joseph he was coming. The Prophet looked out of the window and saw him coming up the street. As soon as he turned to open the gate, the Prophet sprang up from his chair and ran and met him in the yard, exclaiming, "O Brother, how glad I am to see you!"

He caught him around the neck, and both wept like children.

Suffice it to say that proper restitution was made, and the fallen man again entered the Church by the door, received his priesthood again, went upon several important missions, gathered with the Saints in Zion, and died in full faith.⁴

Occasionally Joseph Smith made retrospective comments about people who had died. One example of such retrospective remarks are his statements made regarding his brother Alvin. In 1836 Joseph received a revelation which concerns Alvin. This revelation was later canonized and included in the Doctrine and Covenants. Relevant passages from section 137 follow:

The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell.

I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire;

Also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son.

I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold.

I saw Father Adam and Abraham; and my father and my mother; my brother Alvin, that has long since slept;

And marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of his sins.

Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.

In August 1842 Joseph Smith described his brother Alvin and paid him this tribute, now recorded in the *History of the Church*.

Alvin, my oldest brother—I remember well the pangs of sorrow that swelled my youthful bosom and almost burst my tender heart when he died. He was the oldest and the noblest of my father's family. He was one of the noblest of the sons of men. Shall his name not be recorded in this book? Yes, Alvin, let it be had here and be handed down upon these sacred pages for ever and ever. In him there was no guile. He lived without spot from the time he was a child. From the time of his birth he never knew mirth. He was candid and sober and never would play; and minded his father and mother in toiling all day. He was one of the soberest of men, and when he died the angel of the Lord visited him in his last moments.⁵

In addition to retrospective comments, Joseph Smith also preached sermons at the time of death in a regular funeral service. Perhaps the earliest formal funeral sermon which Joseph gave was in 1831 in Missouri. Soon after arriving in Missouri Polly Knight, wife of Joseph Knight, died. Although she was ill, she had great desire to travel with the Saints to Missouri and be buried there. No text or record of the sermon is extant, but Joseph Smith preached her funeral sermon designating Polly Knight as "a worthy member."⁶

The loss of fourteen members of the Zion's Camp expedition in a cholera epidemic was especially painful for Joseph Smith. Later in the year he reported having a vision concerning the state of the victims of the cholera epidemic in Missouri. Concerning that vision the Prophet said: "I have seen the men who died of cholera in our camp. If we get a mansion as bright as theirs I ask no more."⁷

During the next year Joseph Smith preached a funeral sermon in honor of Nathan Harris, the son of Preserved Harris, who was a brother of Martin Harris. On 18 November 1835 the Prophet preached on the subject of resurrection. He said that the audience was very attentive.⁸

In 1838, when David W. Patten died at the Battle of Crooked River, Joseph Smith did not preach a formal sermon, but called at the Patten home and made an observation about the fallen hero. Pointing to the lifeless body, Joseph Smith said: "There lies a man that has done just as he said he would—he has laid down his life for his friends."⁹

During the same year the Prophet also preached a funeral sermon for James Marsh. He reported that they were greatly edified on the occasion.¹⁰

As previously mentioned, most of the funeral sermons given by Joseph Smith were presented in Nauvoo. Not only do most of the sermons occur in this period, it is also the time for which the best documentation exists. In other words, there are texts or diary entries containing some of the sermons which Joseph Smith delivered in Nauvoo.

The earliest known funeral sermon given by the Prophet in the Nauvoo era was given in honor of Seymour Brunson. On 10 August 1840 Seymour Brunson, a member of the Nauvoo High Council, died and Joseph Smith spoke at his funeral held on 15 August 1840. On that occasion the Prophet spoke for the first time on the subject of baptism for the dead. Although no contemporary record of the sermon exists, Heber C. Kimball and Simon Baker did prepare reminiscent accounts. Baker's brief record of the sermon follows:

I was present at a discourse that the prophet Joseph delivered on baptism for the dead 15 August 1840. He read the greater part of the 15th chapter of Corinthians and remarked that the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought glad tidings of great joy, and then remarked that he saw a widow in that congregation that had a son who died without being baptized, and this widow in reading the sayings of Jesus 'except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,' and that not one jot nor tittle of the Savior's words should pass away, but all should be fulfilled. He then said that this widow should have glad tidings in that thing. He also said the apostle was talking to a people who understood baptism for the dead, for it was practiced among them. He went on to say that people could now act for their friends who had departed this life, and that

the plan of salvation was calculated to save all who were willing to obey the requirements of the law of God. He went on and made a very beautiful discourse.'¹¹

Later that year Joseph Smith referred to the Brunson funeral sermon in this way:

I first mentioned the doctrine in public when preaching the funeral sermon of Brother Seymour Brunson; and have since then given general instructions in the Church on the subject. The Saints have the privilege of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, whom they believe would have embraced the Gospel, if they had been privileged with hearing it, and who have received the Gospel in the spirit, through the instrumentality of those who have been commissioned to preach to them while in prison.¹²

Indeed, the doctrine of baptism for the dead would speak comfort to the hearts and minds of many Saints who wondered about the fate of loved ones who had left mortality. This wonderful doctrine of the Restoration explains that there is a way for the gospel to be preached to those who departed this life without opportunity to hear the gospel. Further, it provides for vicarious ordinances, such as baptism, to be performed by caring descendants.

On 14 September 1840 Joseph Smith, Sr., died. The funeral sermon was preached by Robert B. Thompson. The Prophet did not preach, but he prepared a eulogy, which was later published in the *History of the Church*.¹³

During July 1841 Joseph Smith joined Sidney Rigdon in preaching a "general funeral sermon" to the Saints in Nauvoo. No text or notes remain but Joseph commented: "I followed him, illustrating the subject of the resurrection by some familiar figures."¹⁴ Their dual sermon was designed to comfort and instruct the Saints, especially those who had lost relatives through death.

In March of 1842 the Prophet delivered a powerful sermon on the subject of death and the resurrection. This address was a Sunday sermon, but it was partly a funeral discourse, because Wilford Woodruff recorded that the body of a recently deceased child was in the congregation. Although Elder Woodruff did not identify the child, it was probably the child of Windsor Lyon, likely his daughter Marian.¹⁵ Joseph's concern and compassion is evident as he addressed the question of why infant children are taken from friends and family. This was a question he would take up on several other

occasions—a subject which obviously concerned him. In this sermon he answered the question by explaining:

The Lord takes many away, even in infancy, that they may escape the envy of man, and the sorrows and evils of this present world; they were too pure, too lovely; to live on earth; therefore, if rightly considered, instead of mourning we have reason to rejoice as they are delivered from evil, and we shall soon have them again.¹⁶

On 7 April 1842 Ephraim Marks, son of President William Marks, died. On the ninth of April Joseph preached a funeral sermon in honor of the young man. Among other sentiments the Prophet said:

I never felt more solemn; it calls to mind the death of my oldest brother, Alvin, who died in New York, and my youngest brother, Don Carlos Smith, who died in Nauvoo. It has been hard for me to live on earth and see these young men upon whom we have leaned for support and comfort taken from us in the midst of their youth. Yes, it has been hard to be reconciled to these things.

When we lose a near and dear friend, upon whom we have set our hearts, it should be a caution unto us not to set our affections too firmly upon others, knowing that they may in like manner be taken from us. Our affections should be placed upon God and His work, more intensely than upon our fellow beings.¹⁷

About one year later, 16 April 1843, Joseph Smith preached a funeral sermon in honor of Lorenzo Barnes, who had died in England, while serving as a missionary. Joseph Smith said he would have felt better about the death of Elder Barnes if his body could have been brought back to Nauvoo. As it was, Lorenzo Barnes was buried in England. Joseph went on to teach that it is a great blessing to be buried among family and friends. He then expressed his earnest desire to be buried near his father, Joseph Smith, Sr. He looked forward to being resurrected and taking his father by the hand on resurrection morning.¹⁸

On 13 August 1843 Joseph Smith stood before the Saints and preached a funeral sermon in memory of Judge Higbee. Elias Higbee had served as a lawyer and judge in Missouri and Illinois and was revered by the Saints. As the Prophet said: "We are called this morning to mourn the death of a just and good man—a great and mighty man."¹⁹ Joseph went on to say that it would be tragic to lose a friend in death if we had no hope of ever seeing him again. Further, he said how serious it would be

if we had no hope of the resurrection. However, he stressed that we do have hope of resurrection and of seeing our dear friends again. More words of comfort!²⁰

Sometimes the Prophet used funeral sermons as a vehicle for teaching unique doctrines of the Restoration. Such was clearly the case with the funeral sermon for Judge Higbee. He taught, for example, the doctrine of election. As Willard Richards reported:

. . . When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother. . . . The speaker continued to teach the doctrine of election and the sealing powers and principles, and spoke of the doctrine of election with the seed of Abraham, and the sealing of blessings upon his posterity, and the sealing of the fathers and children, according to the declarations of the prophets. He then spoke of Judge Higbee in the world of spirits, and the blessings which he would obtain.²¹

At 2:00, on the afternoon of Monday, 9 October 1843, Joseph Smith spoke on the demise of James Adams. Like Judge Higbee, James Adams was a prominent and respected member of Nauvoo society. He was a probate court judge in Springfield, Illinois, who ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1834, and was also personally acquainted with Abraham Lincoln.

Joseph Smith's opening statement had a dramatic flair. "All men know that they must die. And it is important that we should understand the reasons and causes of our exposure to the vicissitudes of life and of death, and the designs and purposes of God in our coming into the world, our sufferings here, and our departure hence."²²

Following a series of provocative questions, the Prophet set about the task of providing answers. Thus, he said: "Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject."²³

Elaborating on the heavenly nature of things he said:

The organization of the spiritual and heavenly worlds, and of spiritual and heavenly beings, was agreeable to the most perfect order and harmony: their limits and bounds were fixed irrevocably, and voluntarily subscribed to in their heavenly estate by themselves, and were by our first parents subscribed to upon the earth. Hence the importance of embracing and subscribing to principles of eternal truth by all men upon the earth that expect eternal life.²⁴

Concerning the incompatibility of truth and error he proclaimed: "Concerning Brother James Adams, it should appear strange that so good and so great a man was hated. The deceased ought never to have had an enemy. But so it was. Wherever light shone, it stirred up darkness. Truth and error, good and evil cannot be reconciled."²⁵

On the afternoon of Sunday, 7 April 1844, Joseph Smith delivered what has been called his greatest sermon,²⁶ the King Follett Discourse.²⁷ The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke in honor of King Follett, a member of the Church who had died in an accident during the previous month. This sermon has been published more frequently than any other of Joseph Smith's speeches. In that discourse, which lasted over two hours, the Prophet spoke concerning some 158 doctrinal subjects, including the character of God, the origin and destiny of man, the unpardonable sin, the resurrection, and Joseph Smith's love for all men.²⁸

The Saints held their conference sessions outdoors. In fact, they did not build any meetinghouses in Nauvoo. Virtually all of their large public meetings were held outdoors in places called "groves." They held meetings in three different groves located on the edge of the bluff or in natural amphitheaters to the east, west, and south of the Nauvoo Temple.²⁹

While it is apparent that such groves would accommodate large crowds, the actual size of the congregation on 7 April 1844 is a matter of dispute. Some of those attending the meeting wrote in their diaries that 20,000 were present. Present-day historians, however, believe that the actual number is somewhat smaller.³⁰

As Joseph Smith spoke, three men made official notes and one recorded the sermon on his own. The official recorders were Thomas Bullock, William Clayton, and Willard Richards. Wilford Woodruff made unofficial notes. Their original handwritten notes are held in the LDS Church archives, and are the source of the printed versions of the sermon.³¹

This two and one-half hour sermon which Joseph Smith delivered contained many unique LDS doctrines. Several of the 158 topics which Joseph Smith discussed are teachings which clearly distinguish Latter-day Saint doctrine from doctrines espoused by others. Some of these unique doctrines relate to God.

In the King Follett discourse Joseph Smith stressed the importance of knowing God and having a correct understanding of him.

There are but very few beings in this world who understand rightly the character of God. If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend their own character. They cannot comprehend anything that is past or that which is to come; they do not know—they do not understand their own relationship to God. The world knows and comprehends but little more than the brute beast. If a man knows nothing more than to eat, drink, sleep, arise, and not any more, and does not comprehend what any of the designs of Jehovah are, what better is he than the beast, for it comprehends the same things—it eats, drinks, sleeps, comprehends the present and knows nothing more about God or his existence. This is as much as we know, unless we are able to comprehend by the inspiration of almighty God. And how are we to do it by any other way?

I want to go back, then, to the beginning that you may understand and so get you to lift your minds into a more lofty sphere and exalted standing than what the human mind generally understands. I want to ask this congregation—every man, woman, and child—to answer this question in their own heart: What kind of a being is God? Ask yourselves! I again repeat the question: What kind of a being is God? does any man or woman know? Turn your thoughts in your hearts, and say, have any of you seen him? or communed with him? Here is a question that will, peradventure, from this time henceforth occupy your attention while you live.³²

Closely related to the admonition to learn about God is the challenge to become as God is. This task is expressed in the well-known saying:

"As man now is, God once was

As God now is, man may be [become]."

It was Lorenzo Snow who coined this phrase, but he had learned the doctrine from Joseph Smith, Sr., and the Prophet.³³

Concerning the nature of God and mankind's potential Joseph Smith taught:

What kind of a being was God in the beginning, before the world was? I will go back to the beginning to show you, so open your ears and eyes, all ye ends of the earth, and hear, for I am going to prove it to you with the Bible. I am going to tell you the designs of God for the human race, the relation the human family sustains with God, and why he interferes with the affairs of man. First, God himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a man like unto one of yourselves—that is the great secret! If the veil were rent today and the great God that holds this world in its sphere and the planets in their orbit and who upholds all things by his power—if you were to see him today, you would see him in all the person, image, fashion, and very form of a man, like yourselves.

Contemplate the saying that they will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit and enjoy the same glory, powers, and exaltation until you ascend a throne of eternal power and arrive at the station of a God, the same as those who have gone before. What did Jesus Christ Do? 'Why I do the same things that I saw my father do when worlds came rolling into existence.' Saw the Father do What? 'I saw the Father work out his kingdom with fear and trembling and I am doing the same, too. When I get my kingdom, I will give it to the Father and it will add to and exalt his glory. He will take a higher exaltation and I will take his place and am also exalted, so that he obtains kingdom rolling upon kingdom.'³⁴

As the congregation listened they might have asked the question, how does one become a God? Joseph Smith put it very succinctly: "When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom rung."³⁵

The King Follett Discourse contained much about knowledge. Joseph Smith put it this way: "knowledge saves a man."³⁶ His succinct statement has been elaborated upon by subsequent Church leaders. According to their statements spiritual knowledge is of paramount importance. This key concept received full attention in Joseph Smith's funeral sermons.

In the course of this long sermon Joseph Smith taught about the importance of tolerance. At one point he declared: "meddle not with any man for his religion."³⁷ Stressing the role of government in matters relating to tolerance he stated, "All laws and governments ought to tolerate and permit every man to enjoy his religion, whether right or wrong."³⁸

In the wide range of topics covered in his discourse, the Prophet taught about hell. Focusing on a unique LDS concept of hell he said:

A sinner has his own mind and his own mind damns him. He is damned by mortification and is his own condemner and tormenter. Hence the saying: they shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. I have no fear of hell fire, that doesn't exist, but the torment and disappointment of the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone—so is the torment of man.³⁹

Still another distinctive teaching of Mormonism set forth in the King Follett Discourse is the concept of intelligence. An appropriate excerpt from the sermon reads: "The mind of man—the intelligent part—is as immortal as, and is coequal with, God himself."⁴⁰

The intelligent part or intelligence is eternal, without beginning or end. Intelligence was not created. The relationship between intelligence and creation is crucial. According to Joseph Smith, there is no creation out of nothing—no ex-nihilo creation. Thus, Latter-day Saints are able to clearly and logically explain creation as a process of organization of already existing matter.

Concerning the Plan of Salvation Joseph Smith taught that it had its foundation in a heavenly council. As he stated it: "In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods, and they came together and prepared a plan to create the world and people it."⁴¹

The King Follett Discourse stands as a witness of the divine calling of Joseph Smith. Certainly it is the longest and most quoted funeral sermon of Joseph Smith. It does not stand alone, however. In the early years of his ministry and especially during the Nauvoo era, Joseph Smith provided words of comfort and consolation as he taught doctrinal truths to the Saints at the death of loved ones. The ideas in these sermons fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. They are a reflection of his life and calling. These funeral sermons, taken together testify of the divine calling of Joseph Smith. They provide a sure witness of his role as Prophet of the Restoration.

Appendix A

Sermons:

1. Polly Knight	Kaw Township, Missouri	7 August 1831
2. Nathan Harris	Kirtland, Ohio	18 November 1835
3. James Marsh	Far West, Missouri	9 May 1838
4. Seymour Brunson	Nauvoo, Illinois	15 August 1840
5. General Funeral Sermon	Nauvoo, Illinois	25 July 1841
6. Marian Windsor	Nauvoo, Illinois	20 March 1842
7. Ephraim Marks	Nauvoo, Illinois	7 April 1842
8. Lorenzo Barnes	Nauvoo, Illinois	16 April 1843
9. Elias Higbee	Nauvoo, Illinois	13 August 1843
10. James Adams	Nauvoo, Illinois	9 October 1843
11. King Follett	Nauvoo, Illinois	7 April 1844

Comments:

1. Alvin Smith	Palmyra, New York	November 1823
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Retrospective comments by the Prophet. 21 January 1836 and 22 August 1842.

2. Zion's Camp Victims	Clay County, Missouri	June 1834
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Retrospective comments by the Prophet - Fall 1838

3. David W. Patten	Far West, Missouri	27 October 1838
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Remarks given by the Prophet at the home of D. W. Patten.

4. Joseph Smith, Sr.	Nauvoo, Illinois	14 September 1840
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Comments and eulogy written by the Prophet.

ENDNOTES

1. The figure of eleven funerals and four comments was derived from a search of the *History of the Church*, the major biographies of Joseph Smith; J. Christopher Conkling, *A Joseph Smith Chronology* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1979); and references from a current study of the ideas of Joseph Smith being pursued by the author with Larry E. Dahl.
2. Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977), 60.
3. LaMar C. Berrett, "Joseph, A Family Man," in *The Prophet Joseph: Essays on the Life and Mission of Joseph Smith*, eds. Larry C. Porter and Susan Easton Black (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1988), 45.
4. Hyrum L. and Helen Mae Andrus, compilers, *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1974), 53-54.
5. HC 5:126-27.
6. William G. Hartley, "They Are My Friends:" *A History of the Joseph Knight Family, 1825-1850* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1986), 80-81.
7. S. Dilworth Young, *Here is Brigham*. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964). The original citation came from Joseph Young, *History of the Organization of the Seventies* (Salt Lake City, 1878, 2. For a general study of Zion's Camp, the cholera experience, etc., see Roger D. Launius, *Zion's Camp* (Independence, Missouri; Herald House, 1984).
8. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1984) 89-90.
9. HC 3:175.
10. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992) 2:240.
11. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, compilers and editors, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1980), 49.
12. HC 4:237.
13. HC 4:189-197.
14. Ibid., 4:389.
15. Ibid., 4:553; *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983) 2:159. Hereafter referred to as *Woodruff Journal*.

16. *HC* 4:553.
17. *Ibid.*, 587.
18. *Woodruff Journal* 2:226-27.
19. *HC* 5:529.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.* 5:530-31.
22. *Ibid.* 6:50.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.* 51.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Many students of Joseph Smith agree that the King Follett Discourse was his greatest sermon. See, for example, Preston Nibley, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake: Deseret News Press, 1944) p. 503; Joseph Fielding McConkie, "A Historical Examination of the Views of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on Four Distinctive Aspects of the Doctrine of Deity Taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith," (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968) p. 135; John J. Stewart, *Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake: Mercury Publishing Company, 1966) p. 207; George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1972) p. 479; Jay R. Lowe, "A Study of the General Conferences of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1901" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1972) p. 212. For a general study of the development of the King Follett Discourse see Donald Q. Cannon, "The King Follett Discourse; Joseph Smith's Greatest Sermon in Historical Perspective," *BYU Studies* (Winter 1975): 179-192. Hereafter referred to as Cannon, "Greatest Sermon."
27. There is some discrepancy in the early records on the spelling of the name *Follett*. Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, and William Clayton spelled it *Follet*, and Thomas Bullock spelled it *Follit*. Almost all of the published accounts of the King Follett Discourse use the current spelling—Follett—which is the correct spelling, according to the Genealogical Department and members of the Follett family.
28. Donald Q. Cannon and Larry E. Dahl, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse: A Six Column Comparison of Original Notes and Amalgamations* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1983). Hereafter referred to as Cannon and Dahl.
29. David E. and Della S. Miller, *Nauvoo: The City of Joseph* (Salt Lake and Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1974) pp. 70-71; James L. Kimball, Jr., "Nauvoo: Life and Worship," *Deseret News*, Church Section, 1 May 1976.

30. T. Edgar Lyon believes that 8,000 would be closer to the actual size of the gathering (interview with T. Edgar Lyon, 5 December 1975). In their book, *Nauvoo: The City of Joseph*, David and Della Miller maintain that both Mormons and non-Mormons in nineteenth century Illinois regularly overestimated the population (Miller, *Nauvoo*, p. 5). James L. Kimball, Jr., says that census figures for Nauvoo effectively discount the accuracy of the 20,000 figure. State census records from 1845, in the possession of Brother Kimball, report 11,057 inhabitants in Nauvoo. Even with the influx of Church members from surrounding communities, Kimball sees no way that 20,000 people could have been in attendance during April conference of 1844. In addition, according to Kimball, the groves would not accommodate 20,000. Also, one must bear in mind the impossible task of speaking to 20,000 people without the aid of a loudspeaker (Ibid.). Then where did the 20,000 figure come from? The noted American historian Daniel J. Boorstin has suggested a plausible answer. He argues convincingly that nineteenth century Americans spoke and wrote in terms of anticipation. Instead of current population figures, they used numbers which they anticipated, resulting in a "language of exaggeration," definitely related to the language of the twentieth century advertising. (Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* [New York: Random House, 1965] pp. 289-98. Thus, the residents of Nauvoo spoke of the 20,000 people who would eventually live there, and not of the 11,000 who actually did.

31. Cannon, "Greatest Sermon," 182-183, especially notes 18-21.
32. Cannon and Dahl, 19-21.
33. Clyde J. Williams, compiler *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1984), 1-2.
34. Cannon and Dahl, 27 and 33.
35. Ibid., 35.
36. Ibid., 61.
37. Ibid., 25.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 63.
40. Ibid., 49.
41. Ibid., 39.