

between the *Infancy Gospels*³⁵⁹ and the real Gospels, no matter how many points of contact one may detect between them. The Latter-day Saint endowment was not built up of elements brought together by chance custom, or long research; it is a single, perfectly consistent, organic whole, conveying its message without the aid of rationalizing, spiritualizing, allegorizing, or moralizing interpretations.

Describing the endowment itself, Nibley wrote:³⁶⁰

The Mormon endowment... is frankly a model, a presentation in figurative terms. As such, it is flexible and adjustable; for example, it may be presented in more languages than one, and in more than one medium of communication. But since it does not attempt to be a picture of reality, but only a model or analogue to show how things work, setting forth the pattern of man's life on earth with its fundamental whys and wherefores, it does not need to be changed or adapted greatly through the years; it is a remarkably stable model, which makes its comparison with other forms and traditions, including the more ancient ones, quite valid and instructive... Those who have been to the temple hundreds of times know that "age cannot wither... nor custom stale [its] infinite variety."³⁶¹ What [the] few bits of information [about parallels in other religions and cultures] do is to supply a new dimension to the experience, along with the assurance that a wealth of newly found records confirms the fundamental thesis of its antiquity and genuineness.

Regarding the aspect of genuineness, Nibley says elsewhere:

[O]rdinances are more than just symbols—they go beyond that... They always have a double nature: they are or mean something that is real. You see that as soon as you try, in music and art, to give religious experience a third dimension. The Gospel actually *has* that third dimension, of course... Once you know the real thing, everything else is an anticlimax.³⁶²

The temple ordinances are classed among "the mysteries of the kingdom, even... of the knowledge of God" in which "the power of godliness is manifest."³⁶³ In its broadest religious meaning, a mystery is a truth that can be known and understood only by divine revelation.³⁶⁴ Among the most important of the truths that are learned in the temple is a knowledge of "who we are, and who God is, and what our relationship to Him is."³⁶⁵ Giving his own summary of temple ordinances, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote that they concerned:

... washings, anointings, endowments, and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which anyone is enabled to secure the fulness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds.³⁶⁶

359 See, e.g., M. Barker, *Infancy Gospel of James*; W. Barnstone, *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*.

360 H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. xxix.

361 W. Shakespeare, *Antony*, II:iii:234-235, p. 1357.

362 H. W. Nibley, *Conversation*, p. 66.

363 D&C 84:19-20.

364 H. B. Lee, *Light*, July 1961, p. 211; D. A. Bednar, *Pray Always*, p. 41; H. W. Nibley, *Conversation*, p. 67. See *Excursus 53: Comparative Explorations of the Mysteries*, p. 663.

365 C. Broderick, *Adversity*, p. 129.

366 J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 4 May 1842, p. 237.