

MORMONISM AND THE TEMPLE  
EXAMINING AN  
ANCIENT RELIGIOUS TRADITION

HELD OCTOBER 29, 2012  
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY, LOGAN, UTAH

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Published by BYU Studies in conjunction with Utah State University Department of Religious Studies and the Academy for Temple Studies.

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## About This Publication

This volume contains the presentations given at the first conference of the Academy for Temple Studies, co-sponsored by the Department of Religious Studies at Utah State University in Logan, Utah, on October 29, 2012. The underlying papers and transcripts of presentations and panel discussions were edited and prepared on behalf of the Academy for Temple Studies by Jennifer Hurlbut, Marny K. Parkin, and other staff of BYU Studies at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

The contents are conference presentations and most should be considered as preliminary reports of works in progress. We present them as a record of this conference, for the edification of readers who wish to know about current efforts in the field, and to stimulate further research and discussion. Temple studies as an academic discipline is a fairly young field. Some of the ideas explored and presented at this conference have not yet undergone peer review or full source checking.

The Academy for Temple Studies was formed in 2012 by a group of American scholars and interested

supporters who came together as a result of their participation in the Temple Studies Group in London. They invited Dr. Margaret Barker and Rev. Dr. Laurence Hemming of the London group to present at this first conference in North America. The London Temple Studies Group “promotes and enables study of the Temple in Jerusalem, believing that the world view, traditions, customs and symbolism of the Temple were formative influences on the development of Christianity.” More information about its objectives and symposia can be found at the website [templestudiesgroup.com](http://templestudiesgroup.com).

The website of the Academy for Temple Studies is [www.templestudies.org](http://www.templestudies.org). On this site one can find videos of the 2012 Logan conference presentations as well as suggested readings and a growing bibliography of temple studies publications. We are grateful to the many people whose assistance, support, and attendance have made all of this possible. We hope this website will be of great use to those interested in all aspects of ancient and modern temples around the world.

Gary N. Anderson  
Philip L. Barlow  
John W. Welch



# Welcome and Opening Comments by Presenters

## **Philip Barlow**

We'd like to welcome everyone this morning. My name is Philip Barlow. I'm the director of the Religious Studies Program here at Utah State University, and we are delighted that you are here. Religious Studies is helping to sponsor this event, and I must say that I'm glad that they saved a space for me because tickets are in high demand here.

There are a number of people, too many to name, who helped make this event possible, but we want to indicate our general gratitude to them. They have helped publish the proceedings of this event, rent this space, and get our friends from abroad here to join with us—the scholars who will present, especially Margaret Barker and Laurence Hemming. These donors have made a great public gift.

We thank particularly Monica Ingold and Diane Buist, who are the staff assistants in the History Department and the Religious Studies Program, who have done extraordinary service. What began as a vague expectation to have thirty-five or fifty people attend grew to the four hundred we have registered today, not counting the many we had to turn away for want of seats. Most of all we'd like to thank the scholars who have come to us here from the region and from Britain. It is you—bolstered by your intelligence and by your untold hours of research—whom we have come to hear today. We thank all of you audience members for being here as well, and we hope that you'll be partly receptive but also partly interactive. We note that you have come here to Logan from not only Utah but from all over the intermountain area, the United States, and beyond. It's a pleasure to have you here, and this meeting should make for a rich exchange.

With an audience this size, I expect that for some of you the academic study of religion may not be a familiar enterprise. A number of you are scholars yourselves, either formally or informally. Some of you have read widely. Others of you I anticipate are simply interested in the topic. The temple has a particular resonance here whether you are a Latter-day Saint or not: it's an important fixture in the culture and is worth studying on those grounds alone. But especially for Latter-day Saints, the temple has a vibrancy, a live religious concern. Talking about the temple academically, however, can be hard. It can be terrifically rewarding, but it can be challenging if you don't have much preparation. If this is the case for you, I urge you not to get discouraged if Gary Anderson or some wise guy on the program seems to be talking over our heads; we'll bring them around a little bit with the questions we ask (and Gary will explain shortly the process of how we'll go about posing our questions from such a large audience). I urge you not to grow anxious if you grasp only 30 or 50 percent of what's going on in a given scholar's talk. That's a place to start. There will be time for questions and follow-ups even beyond this conference. We are contemplating the possibility of reassembling in a year or so; we'll see how you feel about that by the time the day is over, and we'll seek your feedback about that possibility. So let's work hard today, but also enjoy ourselves. Don't get discouraged, take what you can, and that will begin our explorations together.

Within the academy, within the formal academic study of religion, we use diverse methods. There are many different ways to parse the topic of religion. The academic study of religion is not exactly

a “discipline”—or at least scholars who do it professionally debate whether it is a discipline or not—but it is safe to say that it is a topic that has a lot of disciplinary approaches. We study every imaginable aspect of religion and from many angles. If I were to show you the American Academy of Religion annual program book, you’d see that it is thick like a telephone book. The various approaches include sociology and religion, psychology of religion, ritual studies, specific tradition studies like Buddhism or Jainism or Christianity, history of religions, comparative religion, philosophy of religion, science and religion, and many others. The enterprise “gloms” onto every possible topic. It is all highly interactive.

At the most basic level, there is a distinction between theological studies and religious studies, and the meanings of all related terms are debated. Even what religion *is* is debated and notoriously difficult to define for the approval of all. People do have some intuitive sense of what religion is, of course, but when you start examining it, start trying to demarcate the concept, then it can get complex.

With broad strokes, what I tell my students is that theological studies is not the study of doctrine or dogma or philosophy (which is one way that people frequently use the term “theological”); theology in a more active sense is critical reflection on faith from within a religious tradition. As Anselm famously put it in the eleventh century, it is “faith seeking understanding” with rigor. Religious studies is a “cooler” discipline than theological studies, because the former tries to have less passion and be more in the direction of “seeing from outside” a tradition, or at least seeing more neutrally. Scholars need not be a member of the religion they are studying. These two approaches need each other for the most rigorous result. The two approaches can be compared to biography and autobiography. In my analogy, theological studies is analogous to autobiography, where you’re thinking about the tradition, its meaning, its doctrines, and its values from within and trying to understand it. To define it with equally broad brushstrokes, religious studies is studying religion biographically from without. And there are both dangers and values to each of those approaches. Autobiography has value because there’s no way you can get fully inside

me and understand me, of course, and so there are aspects to understanding me that are unique to me. And insiders, believers within a religious tradition, a broad one like Judaism or Christianity, speak an internal language, have an internal mode. There are dimensions that, to fully understand, one has to be there internally and feel it and practice it. On the other hand, if I want my story told as an individual, as Philip Barlow, and if it happened that I became a publicly important person—if I were to become the real first Mormon president of the United States after Mitt Romney’s candidacy fails, for instance—and people were to attempt to tell my story and get at the meaning of my life, it wouldn’t be sufficient just to have me autobiographically reflecting on it. Others would have angles of vision that would be necessary to the story. Historians of a Barlow presidency might have an IQ six times mine and have four PhDs in four different subjects and be better able than me to get at my psychology, locate my gender, my Mormonness, my Americanness, my station in history in relation to a lot of larger forces. Similarly, theology needs the critical outside questioning of religious studies, and religious studies needs the inside critical reflection of theological study. I suspect you’ll hear little strands and wafts of these distinctions at work throughout the day, even if they remain unspoken, and you might attune your ears to them.

Finally, the definition of religion can be a complex matter even in a legal sense, and the courts of the land, including the Supreme Court, have had quite a history in trying to define it. They used to call on impressive thinkers like the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich to testify about what it is. There were tricky groups who, for instance, were not too keen on religion but didn’t want religion getting a tax break, so they’d invent their own religion, like the religion of Bacchus, the religion of Epicureanism. Someone could say, “My religion is ‘pleasure,’ and what I want is to make whoopee with whomever I want to make whoopee with, and I want alcohol upon demand and red Maseratis. That is my religion, and I want tax breaks for all this.” Sometimes issues like this would end up in the courts, and the secular courts would be in the awkward position of having to define religion. So they’d call in some



scholar or another to testify. In that capacity, Paul Tillich defined religion as “one’s ultimate concern” or, as others have cast it: “what one does when no one else is looking.” Some have defined religion as “the quest for the transcendent.”

As a preface to today’s proceedings, I’m going to propose to you that religion has a number of common elements if it’s going to be a full-blown religious movement. As you may have been reading these days, perhaps the fastest-growing segment of the population is what we call the “Nones,” that is, those who define themselves as having no religion or no organized religion. Some of those people are irreligious and skeptical, and some of you present may be among them. The majority of them, however, fly under the flag of “I am spiritual but not religious.” We are seeing an increasing rejection of organized religion, which is part of the American drift towards less regard for institutions as such. This is a tricky, debatable, and dangerous direction in my estimate but certainly a strong current.

I’m going to suggest, as a preface, that one way to define a full-blown religious movement is to identify four elements. Catherine Albanese, a scholar of American religion, uses a series of words beginning with the letter C to help us remember them. She suggests that a religion includes (1) a creed: things that the group believes, a world view; (2) a code: values and moral structures; (3) community: people who do these things together (the word “religion” has a contested etymology, but the predominant sense is “to bind together,” to bond together); and (4) cultus, which is a Latin technical term for ritual system.

So we’re going to talk about temple. While we’ll discuss several aspects of the temple, we’re going to have ritual on our minds and have our ears attuned to ritual. I’ve read of anthropologists arguing that if people don’t have ritual, they’re not fully human; they’re not a fully human society. The ritual is a symbol system sometimes in motion, an enacted symbol system of the community and of the value system and of the belief system. So ritualists are terribly important. In the annual program book of the American Academy of Religion that I mentioned earlier, there is an important sliver of professionals who study rituals. Ritual studies could take the form of the study of sacraments or pilgrimages or

any number of enacted rituals. There are important compelling ones to study, and not just in the Judeo-Christian tradition of temples and the rituals enacted or represented in them. So I’m particularly excited for the intellectual feast that we’ll have during the day in connection with that.

A contrast in the study of ritual occurred here last week: we had an academic expert, Dr. Hong Lee, and two monks from Tibet visit and take four full days to build, grain of sand by grain of sand, a gorgeous colored sacred sand mandala. The meaning of it was so rich, and being able to exchange with them all week long as they constructed this thing was even better. Then they stuck a knife in my heart and made me participate in taking a broom made of peacock feathers to undo the mandala, after all of that meticulous construction. I wanted to keep it here for a year or two; it was so wonderful. But that represented in me, according to Buddhist understanding, attachment. I was too attached to it. And part of the ritual was precisely to disaggregate things to symbolize the transience of the cosmos and of all things and to help us feel the process of detaching. Through this we were indulged in a very different way of the study of ritual, which provides a morsel of context for our deliberations today.

Now I’ll introduce my friend Gary Anderson to you. Among other things, he will instruct us on what is to come. Many of you, if you’re here locally, will know Gary and know that he is not a “cowboy intellectual,” which we do have in these parts, but a “lawyer intellectual.” Gary is wonderful, and he’s been central to bringing this event into fulfillment. Let us welcome him.

### **Gary Anderson**

Thanks to Phil Barlow, because without him and his gracious staff, this event would not have happened. It’s remarkable to see so many people here today.

Now, let me move toward getting into the program. I’m just going to tell you what got me into temple studies and then what brings us to today. To give you a framework, let me quote from Hugh Nibley’s article “The Meaning of the Temple”:

The temple must be here. It is not just a myth, it is the core of all of our civilization. In 1930 this

concept began to reemerge at Cambridge. The Cambridge School began calling what they taught there *patternism*, because they saw the ancient teachings all falling into the same pattern. . . . The ordinances of the Egyptian temple were the essentially the same as those performed in ours. And that can be explained very simply: they have a common origin. The clue is given in Abraham 1:26. “Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign in Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth” (Abraham 1:26). He sought diligently, he sought earnestly, to imitate the order that went back to the fathers of the first generation in the first patriarchal reign. The Egyptian ordinance also always had one purpose—to go back to the *sp tpy*—the First Time, the time of the first man, who was Adam. The Egyptians didn’t have it, and they knew it. So they sought to imitate it. . . . The ancient temple ordinances, called mysteries, are found in various degrees of preservation. If you ask what Joseph Smith knew about real temples, I reply, everything.<sup>1</sup>

Of course that’s Hugh Nibley talking from a Mormon perspective, but what I’m going to talk about, since we have both a Methodist preacher and a Catholic theologian with us today, is the very interesting interconnections among us.

Let me shift gears now and talk to you about my connections with the Temple Studies Group and two of the founding members, Margaret Barker and Laurence Hemming. I first became aware of Margaret, the Methodist preacher, some years ago. I had run across some things she had written about early Christianity and the temple. My interest increased when she spoke at the Worlds of Joseph Smith Symposium in 2005 at the Library of Congress. Through some friends, I started sending emails to her on items about temple studies. When I went to England to visit my grandkids and do some family history research, I ended up going to visit her and her husband in Borrowash, Derbyshire, a few

miles away from Heaner, where some of my ancestors lived. Then I found out that they were starting temple studies seminars, and I attended the first one at St. Stephen’s House in Oxford, where I met Laurence Hemming, a Catholic theologian who was presenting a paper on Melchizedek. That was interesting for me.

With that in mind, let me identify some unique doctrines that Joseph Smith introduced into the Christendom of his day through the Book of Mormon and his revelations. Then I’m going to compare that with some of the things that relate to temple studies. Most of you, if you are LDS, may be familiar with these doctrines, and for those of you that aren’t, I’ll try to help you understand what Joseph Smith was doing in his own day that was somewhat revolutionary.

First of all, he taught that the Bible is not complete or totally accurate (Article of Faith 8). There are a number of books that we do not have, referred to throughout scripture, and Joseph Smith had a revelation on what we should do with those books. The Apocrypha contains many things of worth (Doctrine and Covenants 29). He said that Jesus Christ is Jehovah or Yahweh, God of the Old Testament—Margaret has said a lot about that too. Joseph Smith taught the importance of Enoch and Melchizedek, who have almost been eliminated from the Bible. Joseph Smith actually, when he was translating the Bible, came up with a new book called the Book of Enoch, and Joseph’s revelations talk a lot about Melchizedek. He also talks about an understanding of the relationship between the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods. And that’s frankly how Laurence and I got really well acquainted because we got into a heavy discussion on that topic. I found out that Laurence was coming to Salt Lake two weeks later, and we’ve been fast friends ever since. Joseph Smith also talked about seeing God face to face. It’s possible in our era, just as it was in the Old Testament. That’s what we call the First Vision. (When I say “we,” again I expect that you understand that I am LDS.) Joseph taught the plurality of gods and that man can become as God as well as the concept of a Mother in Heaven. The temple is the focus of religion and needs to be among God’s people so that sealing ordinances can be performed.

1. Hugh Nibley, “The Meaning of the Temple,” <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=58>.

Now let me get you to go to the temple study site that the Temple Studies Group in the UK has up on the web. Just Google “Temple Studies Group.” I’m just reading from some things there:

Temple theology suggests:

That the current Old Testament is neither the text nor the ‘canon’ that was known and used by the first Christians;

That the non-canonical writings were preserved by Christians and excluded by Jews because they marked important differences between them;

That Sola Scriptura has hindered rather than helped the understanding of Christianity;

That Christianity was heir to the temple tradition and was by no means a new religion in the first century.<sup>2</sup>

This sounds eerily familiar. Margaret has told me on more than one occasion you cannot understand the Bible unless you understand the temple.

I met Laurence Hemming when I first went to the Temple Studies Group symposium. He stopped in the middle of his paper on Melchizedek and commented that it is the Mormons who point him in the right direction when he’s looking for something. There were only three of us in that group, and I thought, “What’s he talking about?” He has taught me much through his study of early Christian liturgy. I quote from a letter he wrote to me:

Gary, you and I have often discussed the meaning of Priesthood in our different traditions. The remarkable closeness of this understanding is a constant source of amazement to me. It was not easy to reach in my own tradition. Its expression in Catholic worship is carefully hidden and revealed at the same time. Something in the same coyness and religious hesitation about speaking publicly of sacred things is also a part of your tradition, something else we have in common. The relationship between the Priesthoods of Aaron and Melchizedek, the Levitical inherited ordained Priesthood and the Priesthood conferred on the church for the sake of eternity is no longer dwelled upon by many Catholics, even by many theologians. But it is here in our own non-canonical sacred texts, the texts of our

ancient liturgy. [Again, I’m trying to be as clear as I can. Liturgy, I have learned, for a Mormon, is going to the temple.] Next to the canonical scriptures, the texts of the sacred liturgy are the most sacred texts we have. My own researches have consistently led me to believe their origins or roots are grounded in the first Jerusalem temple. They are the memory and record of the secret and open traditions God has given for the work of restoration and exaltation of the whole creation that I mentioned earlier. They tell a story that is often remarkably confluent with the story told by Latter-day Saints, especially in the writings of Joseph Smith, writings which I have come to know.

My connection with Margaret and Laurence is what led me to think about organizing this conference and inviting them to participate. So without further ado, we’d like to hear from Margaret and Laurence and then John Hall, Jack Welch, and Dan Petersen.

What we’re going to do first is to give time for Margaret and Laurence, but I will draw your attention to the fact that we’re all sitting at the same table, and I think that speaks volumes given what we’ve gone through in the last few months in political debates. I think it will be a lot more respectful and dignified than that, and I hope that it will be much more enlightening. So Margaret, please go ahead. Thank you.

### **Margaret Barker**

What I’m going to do now is tell you a little bit of my autobiography in the sense of how I came to write what I did. I realize that another person who had a different life path and met different people but was interested in temple studies would perhaps have produced something very different, but I can look back to certain events in my life, meeting with certain people and say, yes, that was a point at which a new section started. But this all began a long, long time ago when I was an undergraduate student in Cambridge, England. When I had finished my three years there, I was left with a feeling not of elation but in fact of disappointment; I didn’t stay to do any postgraduate work because I felt somehow everything we had done had missed the point. Now, this is a terrible thing to say because I

2. <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Temple/Implications.htm>, linked from [templestudiesgroup.com](http://templestudiesgroup.com).

had some wonderful teachers, but it wasn't what I was looking for. And one of the things that struck me most was that in the stuff I was taught—and I may have gone to all the wrong lectures, but I don't think I did—there was no obvious link between the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the life of the early church and its worship. These were separate compartments. Later in my life I was asked by a very distinguished Cambridge don (teacher) why I studied the Old and New Testaments, and he was very surprised when I said they are usually sold as one volume. You see, this is what we're up against. Now as undergraduates, we looked at all sorts of things, which was like constantly peeling the vegetables and never actually getting a meal. We looked at the sources of the Pentateuch, J, E, D, and P—lots of people have been drilled in that, haven't you?—and we looked at the sources of the books of Kings and Chronicles and at the end of it, we had learned about all these redactors that the Germans were so very fond of. We did the sources of the Psalms. That got a little bit nearer to theology, but, you know, not close enough to be much use. In the New Testament, we did the source of the Gospels and then we came to the fourth Gospel, and the big question was not what was John talking about or writing about, but did he know the synoptic gospels? And I thought at the end of this "Goodness me! This is a course in literary criticism." It wasn't really what I was hoping for. So I didn't stay in Cambridge; I went off and did my own thing.

I discovered the Apocalypses, which aren't taught very much in England—I think not at all at the time. I discovered Enoch in particular and started working on my own on Enoch. It happened that we had living next door to us in the village in Derbyshire, where I was by then married, an elderly Anglican clergyman who was retiring and downsizing his library. He said to me one day, "There are some books, would you like them?" And he gave me R. H. Charles's first edition of the Enoch in English and the three volumes of the Swete Septuagint. And I went off like a squirrel and put these in my treasure place. That's how I got interested, really interested, in Enoch and particularly in different varieties of texts, because I could look at those, such as the Septuagint with all those terrible footnotes

that go on forever and ever and get smaller and smaller, and think, "Well, how is it possible that this Greek came from this Hebrew?" And that's when I first started being aware of the varieties of the text.

Then I wrote *The Older Testament* and *The Gate of Heaven*, things like that, and they were published. They were published because I was fortunate to meet a very distinguished Jesuit theologian, biblical scholar Father Robert Murray, a great Syriac scholar and wonderful man. People sometimes ask me, How did you meet Father Murray? Because he was a great man, and I was a Derbyshire housewife. And the answer is, we met on the bus. We met on a bus going to Birmingham. He was obviously very tired from flying in from Rome and he fell asleep on my shoulder and we have been friends ever since. He's still alive, a very frail old gentleman, but he was a great influence on me and opened up all sorts of ways for me, and he encouraged me to publish. And that's why my first book was dedicated to him. So that was the first extraordinary thing, you know, how I came to meet these people, and this elderly vicar who gave me books.

Then, I did a study day in Oxford; I often do study days around the place, but I started doing them a long time ago. And one young lady came up to me afterwards. She had just completed her first class degree from Oxford and she said to me, "You know, the question that worries me is what happened to Yahweh in the New Testament." And I thought, that's a very good question, and that's when I wrote *The Great Angel*. But *The Great Angel* wasn't the book I set out to write. I set out to write something very different. When I was about a third of the way through the other book that never came to be a book, I realized I was having to reject a lot of evidence. In the end, I used that rejected evidence to write *The Great Angel*. So that was the next step forward.

I had the great privilege of knowing the late great Mary Douglas, the anthropologist and a wonderful, wonderful lady. She has been dead some six or seven years now. But she was just an experience. She was at that stage of writing about atonement in Leviticus. When I was listening to her talking about atonement, all sorts of things clicked into place for me. That's when the characteristic treatment I had of atonement came about.



Then I had an invitation out of blue from the University in Aberdeen. I'd never been so far north in England. The problem of getting a train ticket from Derbyshire to Aberdeen is quite something. In those days it was amazing. But I went up, and I did these lectures and I was exploring the idea—for the first time I was using early Christian liturgy material—I was exploring the idea that resurrection was more than simply a sort of physical restoration. And I looked at the idea of a resurrection which became a kind of temple characteristic, the idea that resurrection is what some religious groups nowadays call being born again and the implication of that for the study of early Christian texts. Because the millennium was approaching at about this time, I thought I would do what I wanted to do for a long time and write on the book of Revelation. I did that and incorporated for the first time Dead Sea Scrolls material. That's a very interesting thing to do.

Meanwhile, on another part of my desk I was writing the Isaiah section of the Eerdmans New Millennium Commentary. I discovered for the first time the problems of freedom of speech if you are writing something that these advocates of freedom of speech don't actually like. When they control publishers, things become quite difficult. I sent my thing on Isaiah in. It was the right length, and it was on time, and the book was delayed and delayed and delayed. I got back to the editors, and they said it was delayed. So I thought, somebody hasn't submitted on time and wondered who it is. Eventually one of them said, "Well, actually you're the problem; they don't like what you've written." And I said, "Well, they shouldn't have asked me." And I refused to move, and in the end, Eerdmans Millennium Commentary now has another title and was published in 2003,<sup>3</sup> and that's one of the reasons. So that was my real first brush with people who did not want to publish what they did not like.

Then *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* was published and was reviewed for the *Times Literary Supplement* by David Melling. He got in touch with me as a result of writing this review, and it turned out that he was currently compiling an Orthodox

encyclopedia. He is a great authority on the Orthodox Church and wonderful musician. He died a few years ago, and I dedicated one of my books to him. But we got in touch, and I was telling him certain things that I had been talking about and thinking about, and he said, "Oh, do you know this?" And he produced a copy of this wonderful Byzantine hymn honoring Mary called the Akathist hymn. I read it through, and although I had never seen it before, I knew exactly where all these titles had come from. I said to him, "Well, I know where this stuff has come from," and he said, "That's why I showed it to you." That started me down this path, which wasn't a seriously scholarly method, it was simply joining dots. From further research I could see where other things had come from. So that's where the Lady first came into my temple studies.

Then another thing happened in my life. I found myself invited—it was a huge honor and totally unexpected—I was invited to join the Environment Symposium of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and joined his team of people who set things up.<sup>4</sup> Wonderful inspiration. I was the biblical scholar in that outfit for thirteen years. That is now on hold a bit because the lady who organized it is terminally ill, and so we're not sure what is going to happen. But that made me realize all sorts of other aspects of temple theology, the application to the environment, things like that. From that there came the creation book, and then all sorts of other things followed.

A really quite extraordinary mix of things simply happened in my life. As I've looked back now, and I've been signing books this morning, my life has been flashing before me as I see all these titles. I believe, yes, if I hadn't met that person, if I hadn't been in that place, if that penny hadn't dropped (if you use that expression in America), if something just hadn't happened or hadn't clicked with me, this would never have happened. So, looking back over how I have done temple studies, this is in some ways my autobiography. Somebody else doing temple studies with a different life path would have picked up different emphases, would

3. *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003).

4. See the Religion, Science and the Environment Movement at <http://www.rsesymposia.org>.

have written books with different titles, picked up different things. So, given that there are so many people interested in temple studies, with all their different life paths and experiences, I have a feeling that there is an awful lot out there still to do. I hand over now to Laurence, who is going to tell you something about temple studies in England.

### **Laurence Hemming**

Thank you very much, Margaret. I want to begin by thanking Professor Phil Barlow for hosting this year and thanking my friends in Utah, too many to name, but especially Gary Anderson, Professor Jack Welch, and Professor John Hall, for making this event possible. It's tremendously exciting for me to be here with you. I have never had a cool welcome in Utah. I've been here several times, and this is one of the warmest welcomes I've ever had. It's a privilege to be on this platform. I could tell a very similar story to Margaret, but she's asked me not to, but rather to talk about the foundation of the Temple Studies Group in Britain. But I want to begin where I think Phil Barlow left off. Phil Barlow gave you some definitions of religion, and one of those is Paul Tillich's definition, the one which I think still sits at the foundation. Tillich's definition is very interesting because he was a theologian; he wasn't a religious studies man, but he belongs in religious studies. His definition of religion is that it is our "ultimate concern." And the question there is, who is the *we*? Well, it's a human *we*. Now, religious studies, as far as I can see, is the human study of religion. But if you're a theologian, you ought to be doing something slightly different, and what is that? For me, the faith and the work of theology has always been not about ultimate concerns, which it seems to me is about where humans reach out for the highest, but Tillich's has something to do with ultimate concerns: it's when God speaks. That's when religion begins, when God speaks. All of us live out of religious foundations. Joseph Smith is an immensely important religious founder and very recognizable to a Catholic like myself, because my own tradition is filled with charismatic religious founders. But these are not men and women who made it up. They are men and women who listened, who opened themselves or were opened in some

unusual way to when God speaks. And the history of temple studies for me is about understanding how it is that God has spoken on the earth. And that's what led me into temple studies. For me, as a Catholic, the sacred liturgy is not the words that God uses, because they are human words, but it is the throat, it is the voice which God adopts or God gives to humanity to sing his praises and to give glory to God. My own biographical account of my way into temple studies would dwell on my frustration with sitting in universities where I was constantly told that theology was a human concern, when my heart constantly told me that my job was not to make it up, but to listen.

One of the jokes that I often make when I'm in Utah is that the thing I really like to talk about is the difference between mainstream Christians and Mormons—but when you're in Utah, Mormons are the mainstream, so people like me that start using phrases like that look ridiculous. One of the things that I keep saying to my fellow Catholics is, you are no longer mainstream. We have been through a convulsion in the Catholic Church in the last one to two hundred years that has transformed our self-understanding. And I tease many Catholic theologians that the modern understanding sees Jesus as a terribly nice guy probably with a beard who, if he hadn't been born in Israel, he would have gone to Berkeley, used to speak German, but he's got over that and he now speaks English and goes around the world doing good. No one in any form of Christianity, as far as I can tell, believed that until about a hundred years ago. And therefore, one has to ask the question, what happened in that last hundred years? I was so frustrated with the way I was taught both the Old and the New Testament, I just gave it up, I kind of put it on a shelf. The liturgy became an outlet for me to be able to express the things that I really knew and wanted, knew were mainstream in the tradition and wanted to believe.

It was Margaret who actually helped me to rediscover the Old and New Testaments that I really believed. And just to coda to that, a very old and venerable theologian who taught me a lot, Fergus Kerr, once took me aside and said to me, "Remember, the Septuagint is the Catholic Old Testament, not the Hebrew scriptures." I knew that, but

nobody had ever said that to me before. So I came across Margaret's work, and saw that in the course of explaining how Jesus was not a hippie but rather somebody who fully understood who he was as the Son of God, as Yahweh, she showed that the early church fully understood that Jesus is Yahweh. And temple studies is the way to open up the path and to ask what has happened to so-called mainstream Christianity, what turned Christianity into something that its antecedents would not have recognized. And that's why we founded the Temple Studies Group. Not in polemic either, not in the modern way of bringing Christians of different traditions together to sit round a table and try to come up with a common formula—which actually means forgetting even more of what made you who you are. You're not going to say, "Well, since you don't like that, let's rub that out of my experience," but rather look for common ground.

The common ground we share is one of the murkiest periods in Christian experience. It is the first hundred to hundred and fifty years of the foundation of the Christian church. I tease my friends in the LDS Church History Department that at the origin of my form of Christianity we have icons, and in the origin of yours, you have photographs. But the reality is that the origin of our common Christian parentage is those murky hundred and fifty years which are so ill-documented but which Margaret's work has opened up. Much of what I know of my own tradition corroborates many things that she has taught me, but many things that Latter-day Saints have taught me tells me we share a common root. And that's why I think Mormons have been so important in the unfolding of temple studies, that's why I've always been delighted when I know that there are some Mormons at the Temple Studies meetings in the UK, I know I have friends because I'm more likely to have things thrown at me by modern Catholics or Protestants, who don't know what they ought to know, than by Mormons, for whom this material is actually much more readily accessible. That is why so many of you come here today. The Temple Studies Group was founded to help, as a gesture, to help the finding of the whole of Christianity back into an understanding of those first hundred and fifty years and how those

first hundred and fifty years shaped our respective traditions and inheritances. So that we know that maybe Jesus did have a flowing robe and maybe he did have a beard, but he also understood the meaning of priestly vestments, and he also believed that he was the owner of them. And when we understand that, then we can begin to do temple studies. That, I hope, explains why I am here.

### **John Hall**

Thank you, Laurence. I think I'd like to say that my exposure to temple studies really began in my freshman year at BYU with a man named Hugh Nibley. Professor Nibley was the man from whom I guess I took the most classes as a student. He taught me Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha and temple studies in an approach that I would have been unable to define at the time, namely, the approach that Gary Anderson mentioned of Cambridge patternism, a comparative approach that is very productive in seeing beyond the text to what lies underneath the text. Now, when I first began to participate in the Temple Studies Group in London, as an attendee and reading papers, at that point in time Temple Studies was meeting in a magnificent location, and in which it continues to meet, namely the Temple Church, built by the Templars in medieval times. And now it is administered by the Church of England and by a very good scholar by the name of Robin Griffith Jones, the Master of the Temple—that is his title. He welcomes us to that location to have the Temple Studies Group meetings in London. Those who attend represent a variety of disciplines. They may be Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, Russian Orthodox, or Greek Orthodox, but the value of those meetings and the papers read there is the varying perspectives which are brought to a single subject. From that variety of perspective great synergy happens, so that we reach a greater understanding of the subject. Temple studies is what we might call an ecumenical study, a study that allows for the interchange of information, for the exchange of perspective in such a way that we are able to use the comparative approach that constituted Nibley's work for his whole career, to learn about the temple in all contexts—Judeo-Christian but also in context that precedes Judeo-Christian, like ancient Egyptian

or Greek or Roman or Middle Eastern religions, etc. For that reason, as we glean from the history of man information about the temples that existed and that they were sites whereby man thought he could become closer to the divine and move into the presence of the divine, we are able to understand what the temple is in relation to ourselves and in relation to whatever our respective beliefs might be. Therein is the great value of temple studies. As this conference proceeds today and as papers are given on various topics, I hope that you will keep in mind that comparative approach, that ability to look at the temple from many perspectives. From each of those perspectives will come beneficial knowledge to help us better hone our own individual perspectives into our relation to our Father and to Jesus Christ as we believe because the temple in all ages are structures that relate to them and to what they would have man understand about them in man's quest to return to them.

### **Daniel Petersen**

I guess we're speaking autobiographically. Mine will be brief. I have not been a major contributor though I've been a major follower of temple studies for quite some time. Like so many Latter-day Saints, like most of those who have gotten seriously involved in it, I suppose my introduction, the pivotal experience for me, came with the introduction to Hugh Nibley. He taught not only specific facts about antiquity, but more important for me, he introduced an approach, a way of thinking about antiquity—whether this or that particular proposition survives continued study or not is less important than the overall model, the way of thinking about things that has been enormously influential on me and that I've found enormously fruitful. I'm not surprised to see such a large crowd here. In a smaller group last night, I mentioned the fact that years ago, I think it was in connection with Nibley's retirement, Klaus Baer, an Egyptologist from the University of Chicago, came to BYU to deliver a series of lectures on the Egyptian temple. And the way he approached it, as I recall it anyway—it's been a long, long time now, I was an undergraduate student then—his approach to the temple, to my mind, drained the temple of most of its interest. It

was mostly about the economic role of the temple in Egyptian society and so on and so forth, which I found not particularly exciting. But nevertheless, he was stunned because he normally spoke to groups of five, ten, twelve people at most, and here he had hundreds of people. You know, they were standing in the doorways at BYU to listen to this man speak about the Egyptian temple. He was shocked. I was not, because Latter-day Saints are that interested in the temple because it's the central thing for us. Many of you know that we talk about it constantly. The most important thing we can do is, of course, bring people to Christ, but we also talk about bringing people to the temple, getting them to the temple, to take the covenants there. Now, Nibley did not seem to have an impact on the next generation. It skipped a generation in a way, in an odd way, I think, but in temple studies as in so many other regards, the next generation, the grandchildren of Nibley, have continued to contribute, and I think I'm very proud of the fact that, for example, two rather significant books on the temple, more than two actually, published by non-LDS publishers (Thames and Hudson, and Praeger), have been dedicated to Hugh Nibley, namely, Bill Hamblin and David Seely's *Solomon's Temple: Myth and History*, and John Lundquist's *The Temple of Jerusalem*, which is a really important volume on the temple as a meeting place of heaven and earth. It continues very much the spirit of Nibley, and I don't know many people noticed the dedication in each of those to Hugh Nibley. That's significant for those who know the background, the intellectual background he gave us. I just wanted to say one other quick autobiographical thing. I think, I'm not sure, but I may be the first Latter-day Saint who noticed the work of Margaret Barker. I'm not sure, and I can't claim any great virtue in that, since it was sheer dumb luck. I was at an AAR-SBL meeting (the American Academy of Religion–Society of Biblical Literature) and there was *The Great Angel* sitting on the shelf. I go to those meetings; yes, the sessions are interesting, but I love what Bill Hamblin and I call "the Bookanalia," which is the big book sale. All the books are on sale for 50 percent off, 90 percent off. I mean it's horrible, it's just horrible; my house is awash with stacks of books. I have no longer the shelf space for them, but I saw that



book and thought, “This looks really interesting.” I brought it home and it sat there for a few weeks and then one night I was sitting in my office and it began to sort of pulsate on the bookshelf: “Read me, read me!” So I pulled it down and I have to say, and I don’t know how she’ll take this, but I have to say that I began reading it, and I thought, “Good grief, this person has to be a Mormon! But no, she’s not, yes she is! She’s got to be!” There were so many things there that were so stunning to me that I had never read from anybody other than one of our sectarian co-believers. I was just stunned at the book and began talking to people about it. As I said I don’t claim any great credit for having found it, but I did and it was transformative for me, just fascinating, stunning. So it’s really exciting to have a program like this. I’m really pleased to be here.

### John W. (Jack) Welch

Thank you, Dan and everyone. It’s wonderful to be here today. We’re looking forward to a great day, and I just want to say that I certainly share a lot of the autobiographical experiences that we’ve heard from the others including Hugh Nibley, who was my Honors Book of Mormon freshman first semester teacher. Nibley had the kind of mind that moved many inert mental mountains, and mine was one of those. Margaret has had a similar effect. The friendship that we’ve had is very productive. You know things are moving in the right direction when ideas are generative, when you are going down a path and you keep finding good things. It’s good to have these introductions so you can get to know people on a personal level. Margaret and Laurence have introduced us to many ideas and have introduced us as Latter-day Saints to the Temple Studies Program when we’ve spoken over in London, so it’s our great privilege to welcome them on this occasion here to the United States. But this takes me back to one other time I welcomed Margaret, and that was the occasion of the Joseph Smith Bicentennial at the Library of Congress. Margaret was one of the speakers in the session dealing with Joseph Smith and his perception of and very deep insights into the ancient world. I picked Margaret up at the airport; she was hobbling because she was in great pain, so we put her in a wheelchair and brought

her to the hotel. That kind of dedication is the sign of a dedicated life, the kind of life that Laurence as a dedicated Catholic priest deacon lives, and that we as Latter-day Saints can live. I appreciate that Margaret would have come under those conditions. I picked her up the next morning when we were on the way right over to the Library of Congress to have her speak, and one of the parts of her paper dealt with the tree of life and the white fruit mentioned in 1 Nephi 8 in Lehi’s vision. True to form, Margaret had been up early in the morning rereading 1 Nephi 8 to be sure she had all of this fresh in mind. As we were going over to the Library of Congress, she said, “I saw something very interesting I’d never seen before as I read through this. There it talks about an iron rod that leads to the tree of life. And all of a sudden it connected in my mind that in Psalms 2:9, the King James says that God will there ‘[beat people] with a rod of iron,’ but the Hebrew can just as well be ‘leads people with a rod of iron.’”<sup>5</sup> Well, I use this as an example of when God speaks, when God blesses us with ideas, it’s not just dumb luck sometimes, sometimes it is on our part. It always is on our part, but it’s the hand of the Lord blessing people like Margaret, Laurence, and so many of us who all want to understand. We seek not just a rational theology that takes care of the creed we believe, not just a moral theology that takes care of the code, nor just a natural theology that takes care of community. What Margaret has introduced is a temple theology. Margaret, I believe you’re the first person to use that phrase, and I hope you’ll all read her book *Temple Theology*, which adds to our religious experience and understanding of theology that is based on patterns, on priesthood, on ordinances, on structure, on mystery, on revelation, on things that belonged to the temple originally and still do today. Today we celebrate temple theology. Margaret, Laurence, welcome to both of you and thanks to all of you for being here.

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5. See Margaret Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 77.



# Restoring Solomon's Temple

*Margaret Barker*

The Christians saw themselves as restoring Solomon's temple, and Christian theology grew rapidly around this fundamental claim. Some forty years ago, when dealing with the formation of the first Christian teaching, Martin Hengel wrote, "One is tempted to say that more happened in this period of less than two decades than in the whole of the next seven centuries, up to the time when the doctrine of the early church was completed."<sup>1</sup> He was writing about the title "son of God," which was a part of temple teaching (Psalm 2:7), but his observation applies to temple theology as a whole: How did the first Christians know so much, so soon?

There is an ambiguous attitude towards the temple in the New Testament: Jesus drove the traders out of the temple, declaring that the house of prayer had become a den of robbers (Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:14–16). He told parables that condemned the temple authorities: they were the wicked and greedy tenants of the LORD's vineyard who would be punished (Matthew 21:33–41; Mark 12:1–9; Luke 20:9–16). He prophesied that the temple would be utterly destroyed (Matthew 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2; Luke 21:5–6). The whole of the Book of Revelation is about the destruction of the temple, preceded by the opening of the seven seals of the little book, the seven trumpets, and then the seven vessels of God's wrath tipped upon Jerusalem (Revelation 5–6; 8–11; 16). Despite this, Peter taught newly baptized Christians that they were living stones in a spiritual temple, a royal priesthood, God's own people called from darkness into light (1 Peter 2:4–10); and

the unknown writer of the book of Hebrews used temple symbolism to explain the meaning of Jesus's death (Hebrews 9:1–14).

The explanation for these two very different attitudes lies over six centuries before the time of Jesus, but the results of events so long ago were still important. From the end of the eighth century BCE, the time of the prophets Hosea and Isaiah, there had been pressures building in Jerusalem to change the ways of the temple and to give greater prominence to Moses, rather than to the king, and these pressures finally triumphed in the time of King Josiah a century later. There are two accounts of this period in the history of Jerusalem:

- The biblical one in 2 Kings 24:1–4 says that Jerusalem had been under the rule of wicked kings who did not observe the law of Moses as set out in Deuteronomy, and because of their evil ways, the temple was destroyed and the people were scattered;
- The nonbiblical one in 1 Enoch 93:9 says that this was a period when the temple priests lost their spiritual vision and abandoned Wisdom, and so the temple was burned and the people were scattered.

Thus the writer of 2 Kings saw the changes as good, and the writer of 1 Enoch saw them as a disaster. Since 2 Kings is in the Bible and 1 Enoch is not, this has coloured most reconstructions of the events.

The crisis came in the reign of King Josiah, who supported the pro-Moses group and in 623 BCE began a series of violent purges to rid his kingdom of the older ways, which he regarded as impure (2 Kings 22–23). He removed many of the ancient furnishings from the temple because they symbolised

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1. Martin Hengel, *Son of God* (London: SCM, 1976), 2.

certain teachings which he would no longer allow: in particular, he removed all traces of a female figure, represented by a great tree, which he burned by the sacred spring and had its ashes beaten to dust and scattered. We should probably recognise this tree as a great menorah. Then he purged his kingdom, destroying all the hilltop places of worship out in the countryside, the sacred trees and the pillars. Many of the priests of these places were driven out. Finally, Josiah celebrated a great Passover, the major feast of the pro-Moses party.

Then came the disaster. The Babylonians invaded Josiah's kingdom: they came first in 597 BCE, took away all the temple gold and removed the ruling class into exile. They appointed a puppet ruler, but he proved unreliable, and so they returned and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE. They burned the temple and the city, and took more people into exile. Others fled as refugees to Egypt (2 Kings 24–25). Such a catastrophe was long remembered, and other significant details can be found in Jewish writings as much as nine centuries later. These details shed a very different light on Josiah and his cultural revolution. Many people deserted Jerusalem and went to join the invading Babylonians. Jeremiah says that King Zedekiah was afraid of these people (Jeremiah 38:19), and the Jerusalem Talmud, compiled about 400 CE, tells us where they went. It has a cryptic reference to "80,000" young priests who fought with the Babylonians against Jerusalem, presumably to regain their position after Josiah had driven them out. These young priests later settled in Arabia.<sup>2</sup>

What Josiah purged from his kingdom and from the temple in Jerusalem was not a forbidden Canaanite cult; it was the religion of the patriarchs as described in Genesis. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had worshipped where the LORD appeared to them: Abraham saw the LORD by the oak of Moreh and set up an altar there (Genesis 12:6–7); Jacob had a dream vision of the LORD at Bethel and set up a sacred pillar there (Genesis 28:10–18). There are many examples. *The religion of the patriarchs was the religion practised in Judah until the time of Josiah.* Abraham had met Melchizedek, the priest-king of

Jerusalem who offered him bread and wine (Genesis 14:17–20), and we know that the Davidic kings in Jerusalem had been Melchizedek priests (Psalm 110:4). In other words, the Melchizedek priest-kings serving in Jerusalem were the kings whom later historians condemned for failing to observe the law of Moses. This, then, was the contrast: the older ways of Melchizedek and Abraham which were those of Solomon's temple, purged by Josiah; and the newer ways of Moses and his brother Aaron the high priest, which were the ways of the Second Temple.

This sums up the difference between the temple of Solomon and the Second Temple that was built when some of the exiles returned from Babylon to reestablish Jerusalem in about 525 BCE. Accounts from the period are not clear, but it seems that the people returned from Babylon in several groups over a considerable period of time. A temple was built and the city walls were repaired. The newly established community was then required to expel anyone who had married a foreigner, including a grandson of the high priest (Nehemiah 13:28–31). Many of those who had formerly worshipped the LORD in the first temple were excluded under what must have been new rules, and the prophet [Third] Isaiah spoke for them: foreigners who kept Sabbaths and observed the covenant were acceptable in the temple, which should be a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:3–8). The worship in the newly built temple was a mockery, he said, and the LORD would punish those responsible (Isaiah 66:1–6). Voices in 1 Enoch described this as an apostate generation whose offerings were not pure (1 Enoch 89:73; 93:9). The compiler of the Isaiah scroll, who wrote an introduction to the whole collection of prophecies which is now the first chapter of the book, lamented that the faithful city of Jerusalem had become a harlot (Isaiah 1:21). The Christians agreed with this: Jesus quoted Isaiah's words about the temple being a house of prayer for all people when he drove the traders from the temple (Mark 11:17); and one of the visions in the Book of Revelation is a great harlot dressed in purple and scarlet, holding a golden cup of abominations. This text is in Greek, but underlying it is Hebrew wordplay that was characteristic of temple discourse. In Hebrew, abomination or ritual corruption was *māšlāt* מַשְׁלָת,

2. Jerusalem Talmud *Ta'anit* 4.5, written about 400 CE.

and consecration (as in the oil of consecration) was *mišhâ* מִשְׁחָה. The written forms of the words were almost identical. The harlot of the Book of Revelation, dressed in purple and scarlet, represented the Second Temple, and instead of pouring out the holy anointing oil from a golden vessel, she poured out corruption. Presumably the harlot had replaced the banished Lady of Solomon's temple, who would have poured out the anointing oil.

Hence the two attitudes towards the temple in the New Testament. Jesus condemned the temple he knew, and he prophesied that it would be destroyed; and the Christians saw themselves as restoring the original temple of Solomon. Christian rituals were based on first-temple rituals, Christian teaching developed from first-temple teaching, and when they were eventually able to erect their own buildings, Christian places of worship resembled the temple.<sup>3</sup> They described Jesus as their Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14), but not as the Aaron high priest. Jesus was Melchizedek restored (Hebrews 7:11-25).

*Recovering what can be known of Solomon's temple is therefore more than an exercise in ancient history; it is a key to understanding how early Christianity developed, and, more important, why. What vision inspired Jesus? Why was he described as Son of God, King, Messiah? Why was resurrection a part of the expectation?*

Restoring the religion of the first temple was restoring the religion of Abraham, because it was the ways of Abraham that Josiah had purged. Those young priests who settled in Arabia must have taken with them the religion that emphasised Abraham and Melchizedek, and one of the curious characteristics of the Dead Sea scrolls is the amount of extra information they have about both Abraham and Melchizedek. The refugees who fled to Egypt and became the Jewish communities in that country also took with them the older religion, and some of their writings preserved teaching about the female figure whom Josiah removed from the temple. They knew her as Wisdom, as did the Enochic writings, which said that the priests abandoned Wisdom just before the temple was burned. The Wisdom of Solomon extolled her as

the guide and protector of their ancestors (Wisdom 10–11); and Philo knew Wisdom as “the daughter of God, the first-born mother of all things.”<sup>4</sup> Was this just the fiction of a later age, or was it ancient material that was not included in Genesis? The same can be asked of the Targums, the Aramaic translations of biblical texts that sometimes include extra information, and of later texts such as the Life of Adam and Eve. Was the extra material the product of a later author's imagination, or was it as old as the text it embellished, or even older? The “extra” material is a potentially valuable source of information about Solomon's temple.

In the Old Testament itself there is a striking example of this dilemma, and it does concern Solomon's temple. The Chronicler's description of Solomon's temple is usually said to be later than the account in 1 Kings, the pro-Moses account, but it includes more information than 1 Kings:

- The LORD revealed the plan for the temple to David and he gave this to Solomon (1 Chronicles 28:19).
- There was a golden chariot of cherubim in the temple (1 Chronicles 28:18).
- There was a great curtain in the temple, “the veil” (2 Chronicles 3:14).
- Music was important in the temple (1 Chronicles 16:4–42).

These were not a later fiction; they were details of temple tradition that the writer of 1 Kings did not include because they had no place in his pro-Moses scheme. The veil of the temple and the chariot throne, for example, were items in Solomon's temple that were important for the cult of the anointed king. He represented God with his people, hence his title Immanuel, “God with us” (Isaiah 8:8). He was the visible presence of the LORD, but Deuteronomy said that this was not possible; the LORD could not be seen. He was not seen when the law was given to Moses; only the voice was heard (Deuteronomy 4:12). Such discrepancies alert us to the possibility that authentic memories of the earlier temple were deliberately excluded from some texts. The Greek

3. See my book *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

4. Philo, *Questions on Genesis* IV.97.



title for Chronicles is *Paraleipomenōn*, which means, literally, “the things left out,” and there must have been a reason for choosing that title.

The biblical texts compiled and written by the pro-Moses group all condemn the ways of the older temple, implying that they were adopted from forbidden Canaanite practices. They called the temple tree that Josiah removed an *Asherah*, but all the Hebrew inscriptions with a similar name have it as *Ashratah*. The pro-Moses scribes changed the name, but the inscriptions have not been “edited.” The original *Ashratah* was the Lady of the temple, the Mother of the LORD, and she had formerly appeared in the ancient poem now called the Blessing of Moses. The present Hebrew text is confused, but usually read as: “The LORD came from Sinai . . . with flaming fire at his right hand . . . when Moses commanded us a law . . . thus the LORD became king in Jeshurun” (Deuteronomy 33:2–4). The flaming fire is easily read as *Ashratah*, [ʾšdt / ʾšrth, אַשְׁרָתָה / אֲשֵׁרָה, bearing in mind that *r* and *d* look similar in Hebrew]; and Moses looks very like “anointed” [mšh / mšh, מִשָּׁח / מִשָּׁחָה]. It would have been a simple matter to change this poem about the first-temple ceremony when the anointed king, representing the LORD, read out the law and blessed the assembled people. At his right hand was the queen mother, representing the Lady.<sup>5</sup> Changing a couple of letters transforms a poem about the old temple into a poem about Moses at Sinai. The Moses tradition celebrated the Law-giving at Pentecost, but there is evidence in the Hebrew scriptures, as we shall see, for the Lawgiving at Tabernacles. Presumably this was an echo of the earlier custom.

Another example might be how one of the Lady’s titles was changed. When Solomon’s son Rehoboam was king, the pro-Moses writer described the state of the land: “They built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there was also a male prostitute in the land” (1 Kings 14:23–24). This sounds suspicious—one male prostitute—but if the word is read with different vowels, it is the name

5. For example, in the poem about Wisdom in Ben Sira 24, there is confusion in the text around vv. 22–25, and Moses and the Law have been inserted into a poem about Wisdom.

*Qudshu*, one of the many names of the Lady. It means “Holy One.” The same thing happened in the account of Josiah’s purges; he removed many male prostitutes from the temple, but with different vowels, they become holy ones, angels (2 Kings 23:7). Underneath the account of Josiah and the temple purges there may once have been the Lady and her angels who were driven out.

The practice of changing older Hebrew texts has long been recognised, but described as “restorations of the scribes.”<sup>6</sup> The scribes removed what later generations perceived as blasphemies. In other words, the religion changed and so the holy texts had to change too. Some of these changes are well known, but there may be more than have been identified so far. The pattern in the changes is clear: two objects of the scribes’ attention were the Lady—as we have seen from the changes to *Ashratah*—and the “sons of God.” So sensitive was the matter of the sons of God—the angels—that when the Hebrew text clearly said “sons of God” it was forbidden to translate it that way. Thus R Simeon b. Yohai, in the mid-second century CE, said the words had to be translated “sons of noblemen,” and he cursed anyone who translated the words as “sons of God.”<sup>7</sup> Others simply changed the Hebrew text, and the “sons of God” in Deuteronomy 32:8 became “the sons of Israel.”<sup>8</sup> The implications of this for recovering the knowledge of Solomon’s temple are very great. Since the Lady and the angels were removed from both the temple and from the Hebrew Scriptures, evidence for other changes to the temple is not likely to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Some nonbiblical texts tell a different story, for example about the origin of temple customs. There is a longer version of part of Genesis, known as the *Book of Jubilees*, small pieces of which have been

6. See D. Barthélemy, “Les Tiququné Sopherim et la Critique Textuelle de L’Ancien Testament,” *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* IX (1953), 285–304.

7. Genesis Rabbah XXVI.5. See also P. S. Alexander, “The Targumim and Early Exegesis of ‘Sons of God,’” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23 (1972), 60–71.

8. Changing *bny yśrl* בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל back to *bny ʾlhym* בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים. The Qumran text is broken, but shows *bny ʾl* בְּנֵי אֵל, so it cannot have had the Masoretic *bny yśrl*.

found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>9</sup> An assumption has developed among biblical scholars—maybe an unconscious assumption—that this book is in some way inferior to Genesis as a source of information about Abraham because it differs from the biblical text of Genesis. Jubilees says that some of the later Jewish temple festivals were not established by Moses, but by Abraham and the patriarchs. The feast of Tabernacles, for example, the greatest of the temple festivals, was celebrated in the autumn. The Moses tradition said it reminded the people of the time when they lived in the wilderness (Leviticus 23, 37–44), but in Jubilees, Tabernacles was the great festival inaugurated by Abraham at Beersheba to mark the birth of Isaac, who would be the father of a nation of priests and a holy people (Jubilees 16:19–31). Abraham offered sacrifices and incense, and then cut branches of palm and willow to carry in procession around the altar seven times each day.

Solomon dedicated the temple at this time of the year, although the feast itself is not named (1 Kings 8:2, 64–66). As soon as they returned from Babylon, Jeshua and Zerubbabel set up an altar in Jerusalem and kept the feast of Tabernacles (Ezra 3:1–6). Later, Ezra gave a public reading of the Law at Tabernacles before the people went to gather the branches and keep the festival (Nehemiah 1–18). Disciples of the prophet Zechariah added some of their own oracles to the end of their master’s collection, and these show that at Tabernacles the LORD was expected to return with his angels as king of the whole earth. On that day, living waters would flow from Jerusalem, and all nations would go to the temple to keep the festival (Zechariah 14). Tabernacles was associated with the return of the LORD as King, and several scholars have argued that the Davidic kings were enthroned at Tabernacles.<sup>10</sup> The Christians believed this. A great crowd waving palms and wearing white robes was one of the visions of heaven in the Book of Revelation. They stood before the throne of God on which the Lamb, that is, Jesus,

was enthroned (Revelation 7:9–12). This was their heavenly Tabernacles.

The Mishnah describes the rituals for Tabernacles in the time of Jesus: how the branches of palm, myrtle, and willow had to be cut and tied into bundles. People carried them in procession into the temple whilst singing Psalm 118. The whole bundle was called a *lûlâb* ללל, literally a palm, and when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey it must have looked like a Tabernacles procession (Mark 11:1–11). In a separate ritual, people went to gather willow branches which they then set up around the great altar, bent over to form a covering.<sup>11</sup> There is no explanation of this ritual, but it was familiar to Christians. Hermas, a Christian prophet in Rome in the early second century CE, described a vision of a huge willow tree that covered all who were called by the name of the LORD. The angel of the LORD cut branches and gave one to each person. Then the angel took the branches back and examined them: the people whose branches were green with buds, or green with buds and fruit, were allowed into the angel’s tower, which represented the temple or church. He gave them crowns of palm and white robes.<sup>12</sup> There were many conditions for the willow branches in Hermas’s vision that made the branches unacceptable, just as there were many conditions that made the willow branches unacceptable for the Tabernacles ritual. Whatever the symbolism of the willow branch, it was an important part of Tabernacles, and for the Christians it was a sign of their status “called by the name of the LORD” and an indication of their spiritual state.

The Mishnah also describes a procession out from the temple to bring water from the pool of Siloam in a golden jug. This was poured out on the great altar as a libation. As the procession reached the eastern gate, the people turned back to face the temple and proclaimed: “Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs towards the temple of the LORD and their faces towards the east, and they worshipped the sun towards the east; but as for us our eyes are turned towards the LORD.”<sup>13</sup>

9. Jubilees is part of the Old Testament in the ancient church in Ethiopia.

10. Starting with S. Mowinckel, who argued this on the basis of several psalms and their original setting.

11. Mishnah *Sukkah* 4.5.

12. *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitude viii.2.

13. Mishnah *Sukkah* 5.4.

The leaders in the Second Temple emphasised that they kept Tabernacles differently from the older festival. They no longer turned east to pray, presumably at this festival. The prophet Ezekiel was the son of a first-temple priest and seems to have supported Josiah. He condemned a temple practice that could well have been the old-style Tabernacles. He received a vision, and the details are precise: twenty-five men stood between the temple porch and the great altar, bowing towards the sun, and stretching out branches to their faces. Only priests were allowed to stand in that part of the temple, as Ezekiel would have known. The correcting scribes have changed this text, so that the men are not holding branches up to *their* faces but sending wickedness or possibly a foul smell<sup>14</sup> into the face of the LORD—“*my face*.” The original “branches” ritual looking towards the sun had no place in the Second Temple.

For the Christians, however,<sup>15</sup> the original form of the ceremony was very important. That vision in Revelation 7 of the heavenly feast of Tabernacles, with a vast throng holding palm branches before the Lamb on the throne, begins by describing 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. It was recalling the time of Solomon, before the kingdom divided and only two tribes were left in the southern kingdom. The people of the twelve tribes were waiting for an angel from the sunrise bearing the seal of the living God, who was to mark the servants of God on their foreheads. This would protect them from God’s imminent judgement. In other words, they were waiting to be marked with the X, the ancient sign of the name of the LORD that was marked on the priests and protected them. The priests in the vision were drawn from all the tribes, not only from the house of Levi. The vision was the fulfilment of the Jubilees understanding of Tabernacles, which marked the birth of the father of a nation of priests and a holy people.<sup>16</sup> This is how

14. The word branch, *zmrw* זמורה, could be word play on *zmmh* זממה, wickedness, reflected in the LXX *muktērizontes*, sneering, but D. J. A. Clines, *Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, 2009), 101, proposes the meaning “stench.”

15. So too the Essenes, Josephus, *War* 2.128, and the Therapists in Egypt, Philo, *Contemplative Life* 27.

16. *Jubilees* 16:19–31.

Peter described the newly baptised Christians: “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people . . . called out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The Tabernacles vision represented the new temple and the new priesthood; or rather, the old temple and the old priesthood restored, and the King enthroned.

### The Rewriting of the Hebrew Scriptures

When John the Baptist was preaching to the Jews, he warned them not to think that being children of Abraham would save them from God’s judgement: “God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (Luke 3:8). When Jesus himself was debating with the Jews in the temple, they made the same claim—“We are Abraham’s children”—but Jesus said that they did not behave like the children of Abraham (John 8:39–40). Perhaps the most interesting of all is the fact that after Saul was converted and became a Christian, changing his name to Paul, he went away to Arabia for three years (Galatians 1:17). Why Arabia? It is possible that he went to the descendants of those first-temple priests who had settled there after Josiah’s purges. What is certain is that when he returned, his understanding of Christianity was clear, and he began to teach that the roots of his “new” faith were in fact in the religion of Abraham and therefore were far older than the religion of Moses and his law. He first outlined this in an early letter (Galatians 3:6–9) and then developed it fully in his great letter to the Romans, where he wrote, “The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law [of Moses] but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13). The Christians were building their faith on the promise to Abraham, and so they were not bound by the law of Moses. Christianity, then, did not develop from Judaism as it was known in the time of Jesus, but from the earlier “Hebrew” religion of the first temple that Josiah had purged and that the “restoring scribes” were removing from the Hebrew scriptures.

The transmission of any sacred text is a difficult matter to determine, but there are several clear examples of a Hebrew text used at Qumran being different from the one that became the standard “Masoretic” Hebrew text at the end of the first



century CE—the beginning of the Christian era. According to the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran,<sup>17</sup> Isaiah told King Ahaz to ask for a sign from the Mother of the LORD, *m'm yhwah* מֵאִם יְהוָה (Isaiah 7:11), and he gave the prophecy of the Virgin who would bear a son. The Masoretic Hebrew has “Ask a sign from the LORD,” *m'm yhwah* מֵעַם יְהוָה—no Mother. This difference requires changing one letter into another that is very similar.<sup>18</sup>

According to the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran, the mysterious servant of the LORD was an *anointed* man, *mšhty* מִשְׁחָתִי, but the Masoretic Hebrew has a *disfigured* man, *mšht* מִשְׁחָה (Isaiah 52:14). This difference requires removing, or adding, one letter to the end of the word. The Christians understood the word as “anointed” and said this was a prophecy of Jesus, but the Masoretic text excludes this understanding. The Targum of Isaiah (the Aramaic translation made by a Jew), however, did have a text that said “anointed.” So too the texts of Deuteronomy 32:8 and 32:43 are different in the Qumran and Masoretic forms, and in each case, the Masoretic text excludes the Christian interpretation of the verse. From this we could conclude that the Masoretic Hebrew text is not reliable as evidence of the scriptures that the Hebrew Christians knew and used, and so not the best source for what they knew about the first temple and its teachings.

It is widely recognised that the texts in the Old Testament include only a part of the older Hebrew traditions. We do not know what criterion was used to make the selection. The writers of the Book of Kings mention other texts, presumably the ones they used as sources: the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41); the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings 15:31; 16:20); the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings 22:45). There are several others. The compilers of the Pentateuch (the five Books of Moses) quote ancient poetry: the Blessing of Jacob (Genesis 49: 2–27); the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1–18); the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1–43); there are many more. It is unlikely that the poems included in the Pentateuch were the only ancient Hebrew poetry.

One wonders, for example, if the compiler of Genesis knew the story in the Genesis Apocryphon, another version of Genesis found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which says that Abraham travelled down the Euphrates to its mouth, and then around the coast of Arabia until he reached the northern end of the Red Sea and thence returned to Hebron.<sup>19</sup> The phrase “rewritten scripture” is often used to describe this process, but who was doing the rewriting? Was it the compiler of the Genesis Apocryphon or the Book of Jubilees, or was it the compiler of the biblical Genesis? The pro-Moses scriptures might not have wanted to include anything that legitimated the old Adam priests in Arabia. The Enoch tradition is quite clear that the returned exiles who built the Second Temple and who compiled the texts that became the Hebrew scriptures were an “apostate generation” and were rewriting the scriptures (1 Enoch 89:73; 104:10–11).

The work of restoring the scriptures lost in the destruction of Jerusalem was linked to the name of Ezra, a controversial figure. The story about him in 2 Esdras is set at the beginning of the Second Temple period, when the exiles were returning, and it tells how he entered a visionary state and then dictated to his scribes the 94 lost books. He was told by God Most High to give to his people only 24 of the books, and to keep the other 70 only for the wise. The scribes had to write in an alphabet they did not know (2 Esdras 14:37–48). Ezra is also said to have introduced a new alphabet, the square character Hebrew that is the present Hebrew script. Before his time (the fifth century BCE) there had been the older “palaeo-Hebrew” letters, a form of which is still used by the Samaritans. The new script was introduced to distinguish the “Jewish” writings from the others.<sup>20</sup>

Most people accept that in its present form, the story of Ezra and the holy books was written after the destruction of the Second Temple, about 100 CE, when Ezra’s spiritual heirs were the scribes who decided which books, and also which versions of those books, should become the Jewish scriptures. Seventy books, the majority of the old scriptures, were not given back to the people. Presumably

17. 1Q Isaiah A.

18. נ into ם.

19. Genesis Apocryphon XXI.

20. Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 21b.

Ezra's scribes were the "restoring scribes" who produced new versions of the scriptures for the new situation after the temple had been destroyed by the Romans. A significant factor in the new situation was the emergence of the Christians, with their claim to be restoring the older temple, and it was the Christians who preserved this Ezra legend, to explain the existence of far more holy books than the ones that became the Hebrew scriptures.

This raises again the question of the sources of material found in later Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Were they simply later elaborations of the biblical stories, or were they remembered and included by the later storytellers? The most famous example is the story of the fallen angels, mentioned briefly in Genesis 6 as the cause of the wickedness that led to Noah's flood. A much more detailed version of the story is told in 1 Enoch, but it would be unwise to assume that Enoch's story was the product of a later imagination. It was in fact the major myth of the first temple. Sins that Enoch attributed specifically to the fallen angels—metal working to make weapons, predicting the future with charms, even the invention of kohl to beautify eyelids—were known to Isaiah in the late eighth century BCE (Isaiah 2:6–8; 3:16–17), and there is much in Isaiah to suggest that he did know the story of the fallen angels. Presumably the story was not included in Genesis because that compiler did not want to include the major myth of the first temple that contradicted a fundamental of the pro-Moses group: personal responsibility for keeping the Law given to Moses. The myth of the fallen angels blamed their influence for human sin. The myth of the fallen angels—the sons of God—is the key to understanding the Book of Revelation because it had been the myth underlying the Day of Atonement, which preceded Tabernacles in the cycle of temple festivals. The goat who represented their leader Azazel was driven out into the desert, taking with him the sins he had caused. This link between the fallen angels in 1 Enoch and the day of atonement can only be reconstructed, however, from nonbiblical sources such as the Targums, the Mishnah, and 1 Enoch.<sup>21</sup> The pro-Moses group

21. See "Atonement. The Rite of Healing," in my book *The Great High Priest* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 42–55.

even removed the day of atonement from their festival calendar (Deuteronomy 16:1–17).

### Searching for Traces of the Temple in Nonbiblical Sources

It is clear that the world of Solomon's temple is unlikely to emerge from a study of biblical texts, and so we now look at a few examples of this other material, both Jewish and Christian, that may preserve memories of the older temple. Jewish material from a much later period has memories of the temple items that disappeared in the time of Josiah: the fire, the ark, the menorah, the Spirit, and the cherubim is one list, preserved in the great commentary on Numbers. All these items, and presumably the teachings they represented, would be restored in the time of the Messiah. The Babylonian Talmud preserves the tradition that in the time of Josiah the ark, the anointing oil, the jar of manna, and Aaron's rod were hidden away.<sup>22</sup> Origen, the great Christian biblical scholar who died in 253 CE, knew that the temple furnishings represented the temple teachings, "the secrets of mysterious Wisdom," that only the high priests could see—that is, *know*.<sup>23</sup> The earliest Christian writings show that these missing items were restored to their temple world view: the fire and the Spirit returned at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4); the cherubim formed the throne in the holy of holies that was seen in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 4:1–11); the ark was seen again in the temple just before the Lady appeared (Revelation 11:19); and the menorah was seen by the throne (Revelation 4:5, as the seven torches, and Revelation 22:1–5 as the tree of life). The writer of Hebrews knew about the ark, the jar of manna, Aaron's rod, and the cherubim, and that these things could not be discussed in public (Hebrews 9:3–5). The true temple was restored because the Messiah had come.

The menorah that represented the tree of life was restored to the temple. There had been a menorah in the Second Temple, as can be seen from the one depicted among the temple loot on the arch of Titus in Rome. Nevertheless, there was a cultural memory

22. Numbers Rabbah XV.10; Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

23. Origen, *On Numbers*, Homily 4.

that this was not the true menorah: maybe it had stood in the wrong part of the temple, or maybe it no longer represented the tree of life. The true menorah, said the other voices, would return only in the time of the Messiah. Enoch was told by the archangel Michael that after the great judgement, the fragrant and beautiful tree would be restored again to the temple of the LORD, and its fruit would be given to the righteous and holy ones (1 Enoch 24:3–25:7). The menorah, the tree of life, was a symbol of Wisdom (Proverbs 3:18), and restoring the tree to the temple of the LORD represented restoring the Lady to the temple, restoring the so-called Asherah that Josiah had removed and burned. The Christians claimed that the story in Genesis 2–3 had been reversed: Adam and Eve had eaten from the forbidden tree and so lost access to the tree of life, but Jesus promised his faithful followers that they would once again have access to the tree of life (Revelation 2:7; 22:14).

The fragrant and beautiful tree also gave oil. The perfumed oil used in the temple was blended by Aaron to imitate the oil from the tree of life, according to an early Christian text.<sup>24</sup> Adam had been anointed with the true oil, not an imitation. When he had been driven from Eden and become a mortal, he knew he was approaching death. He sent Eve and Seth back to the gate of Eden to ask for some of the oil, here called the oil of mercy. Michael refused the request and said that the oil would be restored only in the last days.<sup>25</sup>

The Garden of Eden where the tree of life had stood was Solomon's temple, and the story of Adam and Eve being driven from the garden encoded the story of the priests being driven from the first temple. These were not the priests whom Josiah expelled, who settled in Arabia; they were the priests who remained in the temple and accepted the new regime, those whom Enoch said had forsaken wisdom and thus caused the destruction of the temple.

The original story of Adam in the Eden/temple has not survived. but there are within the Hebrew scriptures two examples of the Eden story being

rewritten. Ezekiel described an anointed angel figure who was driven from Eden because it<sup>26</sup> had abused its God-given wisdom. The original Hebrew text, as the old Greek translation shows, said the angel wore all the jewels of the high priest and had been set in Eden as the great seal of the divine plan. But the angel high priest abused its wisdom for the sake of trade; it was driven from Eden, became mortal, and died (Ezekiel 28:12–19).<sup>27</sup> The first rewriting of the text made it an oracle against Tyre; Tyre and Zion look very similar in the palaeo-Hebrew script, and the list of jewels was muddled. The second rewriting was the familiar story in Genesis 2–3, where Adam, before he was divided into male and female, was set in Eden. Adam had “to till and to keep” the garden, but these words also mean “to lead a temple liturgy and to preserve the teachings” (Genesis 2:15). Adam was created to be the high priest, but he ate from the forbidden tree and so lost access to the Wisdom of the tree of life. Like Ezekiel's angel high priest, Adam rejected wisdom, was driven from Eden, became mortal, and died. Adam returning to Eden and to the tree of life meant the original priesthood returning to the true temple.

There is nothing in the Genesis story to suggest that Adam had been created as a glorious angel-figure, and yet the nonbiblical texts have considerable evidence for this glorious figure and for the original Eden story. Genesis Rabbah, the great Jewish commentary on Genesis, notes that in Rabbi Meir's copy of Genesis, Adam had had garments of light, presumably the garments he lost when he listened to the snake and realised that he was naked (Genesis 3:7).<sup>28</sup> Rabbi Meir's scroll is thought to be the master scroll that had been kept in the temple, which differed from later Hebrew texts.<sup>29</sup> All the Targums knew that Adam had garments of light. The Christians knew this too: Ephrem in fourth-century Syria said that God clothed Adam in glory,<sup>30</sup> and

26. The text is a mixture of masculine and feminine forms, and so I use “it.”

27. Compare LXX Ezekiel 28:13, which has the full list of high priestly jewels as in Exodus 28:17–20.

28. Genesis Rabbah XX.12.

29. J. P. Siegel, *The Severus Scroll* (Missoula, MT: SBL, 1975).

30. Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis 2*. So too in *The Book of the Cave of Treasures*, 1.

24. *Clementine Recognitions* 1.46.

25. *Life of Adam and Eve* 36, 41, 42.

at the same time in Egypt, Christians were reading that Wisdom gave her children high priestly garments woven from every wisdom.<sup>31</sup> These were the vestments for glory and beauty worn by Aaron the high priest (Exodus 28:2), but originally by Adam, the first high priest.

Another text outside the Bible answers this question: why was there a snake in Eden? The story in the Life of Adam and Eve begins with the creation of Adam, the image of the LORD God. The LORD God blew the breath of life into his image, and the Targums say that this gave Adam the power of speech. Then the LORD God commanded all the angels to worship him. Satan refused, protesting that Adam should worship him, because he had been created first and was the older. The LORD God then drove Satan and his angels from heaven. On earth, Satan plotted to have Adam expelled from heaven too.<sup>32</sup> Some said that Satan planted the second tree in Eden, and thus contrived to have Adam and Eve driven from Eden. Although this story is not in the Bible and there is no proof of its age, Jesus and the first Christians knew it. When Jesus, the new Adam, was tempted in the wilderness, Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world if he would, at last, worship him. Jesus refused. In the Book of Revelation, Satan worked through exactly the same system. The beast, the deceiver, gave breath to his image so that it could speak, and anyone who would not worship his image was to be killed. The servants of the beast wore his mark, which was his name, on their hands and on their foreheads (Revelation 13:13–17). The servants of the LORD wore *his Name* on their foreheads too; this was the X, used in the first temple to mark the high priests with the holy oil, and adopted by the Christians as their sign of baptism.

This, then, was Adam, the high priest of the first temple. He was the image of the LORD God, vested in glory, marked with the Name of the LORD. He had been the glorious angel figure that Ezekiel described, set in Eden as the seal of the divine plan. The LORD God had commanded the angels to worship him, and then he had fallen from heaven due to the wiles of Satan. The priests who fought with

the Babylonians against the new regime in Jerusalem would have known about Adam the high priest. Their leader, recently driven from his heavenly temple and taking refuge in Arabia, would have seen himself as Adam. The presence of first-temple high priests in Arabia may explain why the Kaaba is a cube-shaped structure, exactly like the holy of holies in Solomon's temple which was a 20 cubit cube lined with gold (1 Kings 6:20). The Kaaba is almost exactly the same size as Solomon's holy of holies,<sup>33</sup> and could have been the temple of the refugee priests.

Hints of Adam's original role can be heard underneath the present Hebrew text of Genesis. Adam was commanded "to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it; and to have dominion" (Genesis 1:28). Translated in this way, the words have caused many problems. But there is an echo of the older Adam underneath these Hebrew words:

- "be fruitful" is very similar to "be beautiful"<sup>34</sup>;
- "multiply," can also mean "be great"<sup>35</sup>;
- fill the earth [with glory];
- "subdue" is similar to "harness" or "heal"<sup>36</sup>;
- "have dominion" implies maintaining peace, as did Solomon (1 Kings 4:21, 24).

This was Adam, the King and High Priest, vested with beauty and glory, and enthroned as the image of the LORD God. But Adam in Eden broke the covenant entrusted to him, and so he was not a faithful seal of the plan. This Eden story encodes the faithless priests whom Enoch described, those who abandoned Wisdom and so lost their spiritual sight. There is nothing of this in Genesis, but Hosea knew about it at the end of the eighth century BCE, the beginnings of the pro-Moses revolution. In despair at his people's sin, the LORD spoke through Hosea and said:

33. If we reckon a cubit as slightly over 50cm, this would make the holy of holies a cube of approximately 11m. The Kaaba has a floor area of approximately 11m x 12m and is 13m high. This cannot be coincidence.

34. *prh*, be fruitful; *p'r*, be beautiful.

35. *rbh*.

36. *kbš*, subdue; *hbš*, restrain, harness, bind up.

31. *The Teaching of Silvanus*, CG VII.4.89.

32. *Life of Adam and Eve*, 12–16.



I desire steadfast love, not sacrifice,  
 And knowledge of the angels, rather than  
 burnt offerings.  
 But like Adam they transgressed the covenant,  
 There they were faithless to me.  
 (Hosea 6:6–7).

The covenant with Adam must have been based on steadfast love and knowledge of the angels, but temple worship in Hosea's time had become nothing more than a cult of bloody sacrifices.

The pro-Moses group redefined the concept of covenant. Scholars recognised long ago that the Sinai-style covenant with the ten commandments appears in the ancient Hebrew texts only from the late seventh century BCE onwards. In other words, it appeared in the time of Josiah. Before that, there had been the covenant upheld by the first temple high priests. This was the covenant that bound the creation into one great system, and when this covenant was broken, the creation began to collapse. Isaiah described such a scene, when heaven and earth were withering away because the people had violated the divine statutes and broken the everlasting covenant (Isaiah 24:5). The pre-exilic texts in Isaiah know nothing of Moses and the ten commandments.<sup>37</sup> It was this creation covenant that Adam had to secure with steadfast love and knowledge of the angels, that is, heavenly knowledge. This covenant began to collapse when Adam chose knowledge from the forbidden tree, and so the ground was cursed and brought forth thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:17–19). He had rejected the tree of life and the Wisdom that bound all things together (Proverbs 3:20 LXX), he had lost access to the holy oil, the oil of mercy.

This Adam ideology had been the myth of the Davidic kings. Here are examples from three royal psalms.

- Psalm 89: David the servant of the LORD was anointed, and the LORD promised to support him with faithfulness and steadfast love. He became his firstborn son. The foundation of his throne would be righteousness and justice.

37. There is a good summary of the history of covenant concepts in E. W. Nicholson, *God and His People. Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

- Psalm 72: the people prayed that the LORD would give his justice and righteousness to the king, so that the mountains and hills would prosper and the poor would be helped.
- Psalm 110: The king was born as the LORD's son in the holy of holies when he was anointed with "dew," the holy oil. He became a priest of eternity, Melchizedek. This was not a name; it was a title, written as two words: the king of righteousness / the king who brings righteousness.

In other words, when the Davidic prince was anointed, he became the firstborn "son" of the LORD, his image. This was his heavenly birth and in temple discourse, this was resurrection. The anointed one was, by definition, resurrected. His just rule, based on steadfast love (the gift of the anointing oil), enabled the creation to flourish and human society to prosper. He maintained the everlasting covenant because he was its seal. He was the original Adam.

In the Hebrew scriptures there is only one detailed description of an enthronement ceremony, and this is the Chronicler's account of how Solomon was made king (1 Chronicles 29:20–25). The Hebrew text is damaged, but reconstructing it in the light of the Greek version and also Psalm 110 which describes the same ceremony, something emerges from the confusion. First, it is clear that the assembled people worshipped the LORD and the king, but in/as one person. The LORD was the king and the-LORD-and-king sat on the throne of the LORD. The English is invariably mistranslated because the Hebrew is so unexpected. Second, Solomon was anointed into a double role: as the LORD, the ruler (literally "the one revealed"<sup>38</sup>) and as Zadok, the priest. This corresponds to the Psalm 110:3, another damaged Hebrew text, where the human prince becomes the son of the LORD—"I have begotten you"—and also a priest like Melchizedek. Thus Solomon became the king/priest, MelchiZedek.

Zadok/ Zedek was an ancient title for the priest king in Jerusalem and it meant "the Righteous One,"

38. Hebrew *ngd* means "be conspicuous" and so to announce or reveal a mystery. The person is a "leader," but there is the implication of a revealed leader.

“the one who makes righteous.” AdoniZedek was king in the time of Joshua (Joshua 10:1, 3), and that name has the same form and meaning as MelchiZedek. **Zadok anointed Solomon, but Zadok was the priest’s title, not his personal name.** The community described in the Damascus Document thought of themselves as the true sons of Zadok who had not gone astray, and they claimed for themselves the prophecies of Ezekiel, that they would serve in the true temple when it was restored (Ezekiel 44:15–16). Fragments of a MelchiZedek text were found at Qumran, and they show that Melchizedek was a divine figure, expected to appear again at the very time that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. There were high expectations that Solomon’s temple would be restored at that time, or at any rate, its high priesthood.

The first Christians knew all this; they proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, as the new Adam (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45), as Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:11–17), and as the Righteous one (Acts 3:14). One of their first hymns describes Jesus as the Adam high priest, upholding the everlasting covenant.

He is the image of the invisible God  
 The first born of all creation . . .  
 He is before all things,  
 And in him all things hold together . . .  
 (Colossians 1:15,17).

The Christians believed that the high priesthood of Solomon’s temple had been restored. They believed too that the Lady had been restored to her temple and so they honoured Mary as the mother of the LORD. Visions in the Book of Revelation describe the seven fiery torches by the throne and the tree of life by the throne (Revelation 4:5; 22:2). Both were ways of describing the true menorah that had been banished from the temple by Josiah. The Lady was seen again in the temple, giving birth to her son who was taken up to sit on the throne of God (Revelation 11:19–12:6). The return of the menorah meant that the tree of life, the Lady, and her son the King had been restored.

For us today it is more difficult to reconstruct and so to restore Solomon’s temple. We have to probe beneath the text of the Hebrew scriptures and beneath the many layers of biblical scholarship that have not been willing to look too far beyond the pages of the Bible; and we must be prepared to recognise that texts outside the biblical canon may preserve valuable information about Solomon’s temple, perhaps even more information than is in the Bible itself.

# Chapel, Church, Temple, Cathedral

## Lost Parallels in Mormon and Catholic Worship

*Laurence Paul Hemming*

It is a great privilege to be with you here today, and I would like to offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to the organisers of this event for the warmth of their hospitality and for putting together such a strong and successful conference.

I want to move a few centuries from Margaret's area to perhaps more contemporary questions. And yet Margaret's paper has illustrated extremely vividly that these, inasmuch as they are questions for us today, concern history. At the bottom of this is the question of history itself. I am speaking today from what has led me to be concerned with the understanding of the Temple among contemporary Christians, and in my case, Catholics. If we want to call ourselves Christians we have to understand ourselves as a historical people. Whose history *is* it that is at stake? If I've learned one thing above all from my many Latter-day Saint friends, it is the overwhelming sense of a continuity of history not, let us say, simply from Joseph Smith's first visions. Not too long ago I received a very gracious invitation from the Mormon Church History Department to spend a day with several of the historians and archivists working on the Joseph Smith papers. I joked on that occasion that whereas our church history begins with papyri, faint images, and icons, yours begins with typed documents and even photographs. And yet in neither case is that really true. For if I have learnt one thing above all from my many friends among Latter Day Saints, it is the overwhelming sense of a continuity of history, *not*, let us say, simply from the early stirrings of Mormonism from the 1820s onwards, but a history understood as itself founded in Adam's expulsion from Eden, in the experience and proclamations of

the prophets, in the wandering and formation of a people who at times have called themselves the children of Abraham, the nation of Israel, the Church that lives through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,

This is not strictly speaking a human history: rather it is itself the history of divine revelation. At the centre of this history is the patriarchal, priestly figure of Adam, and the city of his dwelling place, which has gone under various names, but is always rooted in the meaning of the places we know as The Garden, as Eden, as Jerusalem, as the Temple, but most important of all, as the *city*. It is not without significance that of all modern Christian traditions, only Mormons have self-consciously preserved the very ancient distinction between the temple and other localities of worship. What I mean by that will, I hope, become clear as we proceed.

In contrast to your own tradition, the presence of the Temple appears to modern Catholics quite strange. This strangeness carries with it a sense of distance. When I flew into Salt Lake City the first time, the pilot alerted us to notice the Salt Lake Temple from the air. My friend Bradford Houston met me from the airport, and I asked him, what's this thing "the temple" that you lot have got here? I've come a long way since then. If we non-Mormons think to ourselves that much of what occurs in your temples is hidden from us, yet more hidden is the proximity to the temple of those Christians I am going to call (for want of a better name) "Creedal." (By Creedal I just mean non-Mormon.) This proximity is one for which we have much less reason to feel disbarred—there is no sense in which our access to our churches is nowadays ever limited (except

when they function more as museums or tourist attractions than places of worship—note that in some places in Europe such as Italy you have to pay to enter a medieval cathedral; that is how we limit access to our version of the temples), and yet we are, above all historically, cut off from their meaning and their roots. If Mormons are often, and unjustly, accused of being secretive about the Temple, we are keeping secrets we do not even have the interest or understanding to acknowledge we are keeping. The consequences, I believe, have been, and continue to be, very serious for much of Creedal Christianity. The American Catholic theologian Stephen Webb has said, “The next great phase of ecumenical Christian dialogue with other religions has to begin with the conversation between orthodox Christians and Latter Day Saints.”<sup>1</sup> Over the last years I have come increasingly to believe that statement to be true, because my many Mormon friends and interlocutors have helped me, often unwittingly and despite themselves, to uncover for myself and perhaps for others, the roots of Catholicism, and of Creedal Christianity in the Temple.

In other words, whereas so often dialogue between Creedal and Mormon Christians begins with us believing ourselves to be reaching out to a group with rather surprising views, cut off from “mainstream” Christian belief, in reality it is Creedal Christians who have most become cut off from the mainstream, by which I mean the very history to which I have been referring, the history of God’s unfolding self-revelation, because we have become so detached from the very means by which God unfolds himself not only *in* history, but *as* our history. There is so much I would want to say about this, but time forbids it—about the way contemporary Creedal Christians have taught ourselves to handle and read biblical texts, which Margaret has illustrated so beautifully today, without context, apart from the history of how they have appeared, with what we believe is a literalness that is in fact an interpretation that itself excludes the very possibilities of how these texts have been interpreted historically

1. Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, review of *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate*, by Stephen H. Webb, *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, vol. 15 (2008): 426–429.

or without understanding what the practice of interpretation itself is. Something I point out to my students when I am teaching is that even fundamentalism is an interpretation. There is no such thing, in my opinion, as a literal interpretation of any text. To prove that I showed them the back of a cornflake packet so that they would see that what’s going on needs to be interpreted. That data that constitute the very structure and detailing on the packet is itself situated in a complex web of political ideas, legal ideas—even legal requirements, historical ideas, ideas about self-image, advertising, and so forth. Likewise, there is no such thing as the literal reading of any text, and that means that all fundamentalisms are themselves interpretations. We have to set these things aside today for the sake of perhaps one very simple understanding that I believe has the power to open up the most fruitful possibilities of dialogue between us. That understanding is simply this: we have to understand the meaning of the presence of the temple, both historically and in the present day.

The biographer of Joseph Smith, Richard Lyman Bushman, draws our attention to something that is perhaps not well understood, I suspect, even by many contemporary Mormons, when he begins to discuss the revelation given to Smith in late 1830 in which Christ said, “I will suddenly come to my temple,” a revelation which was followed by a more specific revelation in December 1832 that the early Mormons should establish “a house of God.” While there is no amplification of this revelation in his private journals as far as I can find, the editors of *the Joseph Smith Papers* note that “in June, Joseph Smith and the presidency developed plans for temples in Kirtland and Missouri and for expanded Mormon settlement in each city.”<sup>2</sup> Bushman comments, “Temples were at first an empty form, awaiting content.”<sup>3</sup> When I said earlier that Joseph Smith and other charismatic religious founders such as

2. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin and Richard Lyman Bushman (General Editors), *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2008–), Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee and Richard L. Jensen (Editors), *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839* (2008), 11.

3. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism’s Founder* (New York City: Random House, 2005), 217.



St. Francis or St. Benedict for Catholics have an openness to God, that openness takes concrete form. An empty temple awaiting content is awaiting revelation of God. That's what we have to understand, the concreteness of the way God reveals himself. A lot of modern Christians seem to think that God "zaps" you or that they have a private telephone wire from themselves direct to heaven. This is not how God reveals himself. God reveals himself through concrete things. The temple is the focus of that concretion.

What does Temple mean in this context, in this revelation, and in the history of God's revealing himself in history? Bushman speaks of how Joseph Smith was "characteristically nonchalant about weekly congregational worship" (something other Mormons at the time were uneasy about and set about resolving. The Mormons around Joseph Smith wanted to be in church on Sunday, and my goodness, you Mormons do do church on Sunday. In the Catholic Church we can't get away with it, except in my tradition you can't be sure when you're going to get out).<sup>4</sup> And yet Bushman contrasts this with Smith's energetic determination to build temples wherever Mormons were settled. This was at the risk of the financial ruin of the Mormon Church: Bushman notes of the "disaster" of temple building in the 1830s, commenting "the economic realities gave Joseph no pause."<sup>5</sup> Bushman's account of the appearance of the temple in Mormon life makes clear what is hinted at by the editors of *the Joseph Smith Papers* (of whom Bushman is one). Bushman draws our attention to a comment of the Catholic historian Gary Wills, who, speaking of the history of the United States, says, "There is no more defining note to our history than the total absence of a sacred city in our myths" with the exception of "the Mormon's temple, fetched (like Jerusalem's) from heaven."<sup>6</sup> The Mormon temple has some connection with the American founding myth, and I think that's correct.

4. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 215.

5. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 217.

6. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 220, citing Gary Wills, *John Wayne's America: The Politics of Celebrity*, 304, 349 n. 9.

The temple as the pinnacle and sanctification of the city—of Zion and her satellites—is at the very root of Joseph Smith's foundation of Mormonism. The temple is without content because its content is not realised in human planning. Smith received revelation that said when the Kirtland Temple was complete, "a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord." A later revelation said, "My glory shall be there, and my presence shall be there."<sup>7</sup> God fills the temple. The temple is not primarily concerned with the quotidian worship and instruction of individual Christian souls; for that, a chapel suffices. The temple stands at the centre of the city, as the means by which the glory of the Lord is revealed on the face of the earth, and the means by which the work of the Lord is done. Both the objective and subjective genitives apply here: the work done is the work God does on behalf of humanity. At the same time, whatever work is done in accordance with what God lays down for the life of the temple, is a work that belongs to and is "of" God. This is what Smith called "the work," which is not a work of humanity even when it's done by human hands. It is a work of the Lord. I've written elsewhere about how in Catholic contexts Priesthood is the work of God done by human hands. I think that's a correct understanding, at least by Catholics, of what Priesthood is. It is the means by which the work of the Lord to redeem and sanctify—to renew, to restore—the face of the earth is seen, and understood, and *lived*.

Bushman notes that "only in the New World" could such a scheme have been carried out.<sup>8</sup> Too little has been written of, or made of, Joseph Smith's understanding of the New World as a place of the sanctifying and renewing work of God. This is because of all the religious groups to have set up shop in the New World—including, to a large extent, Catholicism in its public face, only Mormons in recent times have challenged the understanding of religion as a matter primarily of personal assent. In the New World, only Mormons have understood what it means for a nation to have a soul, that is, an

7. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 217; see 605 n. 11 for references.

8. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 221.

inner unity and sense of destiny whose redemption is itself necessarily, and only possible as, a work undertaken by and through the presence of God, the Lord. When commentators comment that Mormonism is a most American of religions, they often fail to understand the extent to which Mormonism, especially through the life and person of Joseph Smith, attempted to address what it meant to *build* America. It is a most American of religions in the sense that Mormonism is a profound engagement with, and expression of, the emerging American soul.

Only this understanding can explain the extraordinary history of persecution and rejection of Mormons in your own land—in a world that from the very outset was established with a founding mythic narrative of providing refuge for religious dissent. You know, that's a paradox for me, coming from Europe. The New World has been able to provide almost limitless refuge for religious belief of almost any kind, no matter how bizarre or extraordinary, solely on the basis of private belief and practice. If Richard Bushman has correctly identified the New World as a place where it was at least topologically possible for Joseph Smith's vision of Zion and of the sanctified city, historically the governing metaphysic of the New World was able only with the greatest reluctance, if at all, to yield any place for this vision within its topography.

Bushman begins his biography of Smith with a most extraordinary and prescient parallelism: that of Smith and Emerson. For Emerson's transcendentalism and deism is the inverse image of the Mormon understanding of the work of the Lord: that is, of a nation "under God," but in Emerson's case without any locus, any rite, any priesthood, to make manifest what this being under God means or how it unfolds. Such a being "under God" for Emerson becomes a contentless sense of the divine. This is the inverse of a temple. For Joseph Smith the building of a temple is something else: a temple without content that awaits the presence of the Lord. Transcendentalism claims to understand who God is and therefore declares no temple is necessary because we already know God. It's a mirror image of Joseph Smith's view. It becomes at its worst a meaningless and purely formulaic expression found on the

insignia of state and dollar bills. In contrast, and even to a non-Mormon like myself, the Mormon temple is unintelligible except as the diadem of the sanctified city. We must ask, is it for that reason that the establishment of the temples in Kirtland and Missouri was in 1833 inseparable from the plans for expanded Mormon settlement in both cities? The answer has to be yes.

If the first years of the nineteenth century marked the opening of the possibility of the establishment of a temple religion in the New World, it seems to me that they mark the end of a form of a temple religion in the Old World in a way that, again, has been too rarely understood or considered. In Europe the nineteenth century opened with events that signalled the end of one world and the dawn of another, quite different from what went before. This dawn was long in coming: it took centuries to arrive and its arrival is still being completed even now. Napoleon's concordat with Pope Pius VII of 1801 signalled, and decisively, the end of the Mediæval world, an end that had begun with the unfolding of Protestantism, which, if we wanted to date it, began perhaps in 1517, but whose roots stretch perhaps a full three centuries and more before. The significance of the concordat is this. Whereas, in times past, Catholic Christianity in the whole of Western Europe would call itself the religion of the state, from now on, and in the Napoleonic world which replaced Catholic Christianity in all the non-Reformation states of Western Europe, Catholicism could at the very best claim only to be the religion of the majority of the citizens of the state. It went from being a public religion to being a religion which had public expression but demanded only private assent. This is a fundamentally important thing to understand. Even in the reformed states which still had a state religion, the emphasis was on a *state* religion (so for instance, the state of affairs that pertains in my own country at least in theory, and pertained in much of Lutheran Scandinavia, and even "Catholic" Austria), rather than a universal form of religion to which a particular state subscribed. So for example the Anglican Church is the state religion, rather than Britain (as it was before the reformation) being a Catholic country which subscribed to

a universal understanding of Christianity. It's a fundamental shift.

This marked the end of the actuality of Christianity formally as a temple *practice* anywhere in Northern, Southern or Western Europe. If Eastern Orthodoxy and its connections with nationalism in the East retained the remnants of a temple theology, Communism finished up in those lands the process begun by the Ottoman Empire, namely the process of making impossible the practical reality of Christianity as a temple practice of the city, where the city is understood as the analogue of the New Jerusalem, the city of God.

What Napoleon's Concordat brings to the fore, and at the same time crystallises as the legal basis of the practice of religion across the whole of Europe, is what had already long been the case in the New World (if it ever had not been), from the time when European settlers first arrived on these shores—that religious belief is fundamentally an issue of the assent *and construction* of the will. My students understand believing in God as an assent of the will, but they get it wrong. If you believe in God and God doesn't exist, your assent means nothing. Or if you don't believe in God and God does exist, your assent means nothing. This notion of the assent of the will does not get us off the hook of the question of who God is. Religious people don't struggle with this as much, although increasingly the understanding of God as someone I assent to becomes an understand that there's only certain kinds of God I'm going to assent to. I give an example: a Cardinal Archbishop whom I will not name mentioned in a sermon I once heard that he did not believe hell existed. A priest seated next to me whispered, "I hope for his sake that what he says is true." The point is, it's not up to us to decide who God is going to be or what he is going to be like.

For Catholics to recover for ourselves an understanding of Christianity as a temple religion would require two things. The first is an understanding of how historically the life and practice of Catholicism was itself, and until the eclipse of the Mediaeval world, an essentially temple practice. Many of the clues to this are contained in our liturgical life, not as it now is, having undergone a century of the

most aggressive reform that has left not one aspect of it unchanged, but as it was when it formed the heart of urban and country life and when the Catholic Church herself had the power to shape and determine the very face of Europe. The second is to understand what has taken the place of the religion of the temple as the Mediaeval world gave way to the modern. In what remains of my time I want to examine both these themes in a way that will, as succinctly as I am able, explain what I mean.

To roam in England, to travel almost anywhere in Western Europe, is to come across time and again cities that have at their heart a capital church building—often built by a river and on a hill, such as Durham and York. The building on a hill represents the temple mount, and the river represents the waters that pass through the temple. (I had to learn that from Mormons and from Margaret.) When you see this, it's obvious. In Cornwall, where some of my family comes from, I see that ancient churches were always built on hills. They were symbolising the temple when they were building these churches. This church building may be an abbey, a cathedral, or what we call in England a "minster"—a principal church administered either by a group of clergy—"canons"—in a religious rule (Augustinians, Praemonstratensians, Norbertines, etc.) or in a secular rule. In the latter case the clergy were not in religious vows (the ones we classically know as poverty, chastity, and obedience), and the church may have been established by the townspeople as an offering to God. In significant cases the communities that ran them could be female rather than male, although the ordained clergy were always male. The point of these churches was that they had the material, musical, and spiritual resources to undertake—in particular, sing—the entire cursus of the sacred liturgy. In the modern Catholic Church, most people will know the Mass. A few people will know the breviary, or the liturgy of the hours, but they won't really, because it's a pale shadow of what it once was. But what went on in the cathedrals, what still goes on in abbeys and what went on in these minsters was something huge. It was a vast cycle of prayer. It began in the night with the night office, the singing of what we called Matins which went

on probably for two or three hours. It contained three separate cycles of prayer—the liturgy of the day, the “office” of Mary, the Mother of God, and the office sung for the sake of the dead. The liturgy of the day comprised eight parts: the eight sung offices, beginning with the great night office of Matins, then Lauds at daybreak, Prime, the “little hours” of terce, sext, and none, the great office at day-fall of Vespers, and the service at day-end, of Compline. In the middle of these very often would be one, or two, sung Masses. The Mass of the season, sung after terce, and the Mass of any feast, after sext. The principal offices—Matins, Lauds, and Vespers—would be preceded by the Office of Our Lady, which was always the office of the day of resurrection, because Mary sings as one always present at the right hand of her Son, and on most days followed by the office of the dead, a form of the office sung on behalf of those who have died. Mass for the dead would be offered on these days as well. They didn’t sing the liturgy of the dead on festival days because those days, celebrating the resurrection, already applied for the dead. But on other days there was a whole liturgical cycle for the dead, prayer that was offered for the souls that had gone before us, which is very recognizable to Mormons.

Contemporary public Catholic worship, except in the rarest places, is now almost entirely focused on the celebration of the Mass, most frequently in its said form rather than sung. Except in the monastic tradition, other public celebrations are only otherwise of the sacraments—baptism, marriage, confirmation. The original and underpinning cycle of Catholic worship, the singing of the sacred offices, was overwhelmingly made up of the singing of the psalms, bracketed together with explanatory texts and canticles, especially the canticles of Zachariah, Mary, and Simeon. Accounts of visits to churches at that time report the cacophony of these songs being sung all at once, showing that it was intended not for human ears but for divine. The psalms are above all temple songs, but the classical interpretation of their meaning is that they are to be understood as the eternal conversation between the Father and the Son. As temple songs, they are also priestly songs (this is why they are also understood to be the songs of the Levites), but they at the same time insert those

for whom they are sung *into* the divine life, the life shared by the Father and the Son in the Spirit. That’s why you have to be anointed in the Spirit in the Catholic tradition, to live between the Father and the Son. Many Catholics are unfamiliar with this way of thinking.

This vast cycle, requiring many trained voices, complex ritual, many hours, went by the name of the *opus Dei*, the work of God. It still goes on, in a more limited form, in contemplative Benedictine, Cistercian, and Carthusian monasteries. In our towns and cities it has fallen away, with only relics, principal among which is the practice of sung Evensong in many Anglican cathedrals. Medieval towns would have known that this work was going on. It was like their beating heart. The Dominican theologian Augustine Thompson has described how this works in some of his historical writings. A relic of it is the singing of evensong in Anglican cathedrals, which again I believe many of you many have attended. Wherever it can be found it is a pale shadow of its former self. This is temple worship, in its classical form. It existed in many places for more than a thousand years, using rites almost unchanged over the whole of that time. Relics of it also exist among the Greek, Russian, and other Orthodox churches. While the whole of the work of redemption is accomplished for us by the actions of Christ, the *cursus* which explains and unfolds the meaning of this divine plan and divine action on the earth is too vast by far, and too complex for any *other* individual than Christ ever to undertake alone, which tells you it was never about the work done by a single man or woman, *even when all was accomplished alone by Christ the Son of God*.

The restoration and redemption of the cosmos is the work of God, using the word “work” in the same sense as it is used in the revelations of Joseph Smith. You have at the heart of Mormonism something which is an image of something in mine. It has brought me so close to understanding not just what Latter-day Saints believe, but live. That assenting is a nonsense. You don’t assent to God, you live in God. That’s what I teach my students: don’t believe in God. Even the devil assents to God but he doesn’t live in God. To live in God is to become holy. That is what believing in God really means.



“Credo” means not “I believe,” but “I belong, I am confessed to.”

These huge churches which formed the centers of cities were places of pilgrimage. People went there for very specific purposes, and I think Mormons are familiar with this. The work that went on there was the song of the city, seeking to be and being sanctified. It has its roots in the temple life of Israel. It was supported and reflected in the fragments of it undertaken in satellite chapels and smaller parish churches of which the cathedral, abbey, or minster was the centre. It was never intended to be carried out in full in every place of worship—rather the other way around: whenever you had need of it, you went to where it was practised, either in pilgrimage with others, or in person. The origins of Mother’s Day, or “Mothering Sunday,” come from here. Mothering Sunday was that Sunday in Lent (the fourth, also known as *Gaudete* Sunday, from the first word of the first chant at the Mass of that day) when all went to the mother church of their area to share in the rites that were undertaken there on behalf of all, whether they were present or not.

How can we explain why this temple understanding has ceased? Catholic theologians like Henri Cardinal de Lubac, speaking from around the middle of the last century, began to speak about how Creedal Christianity has been overtaken by a kind of individualism. De Lubac drew far too much attention to what he called the sociological fact of the body of Christ—he meant the gathering, the people who got together on Sunday—as the assembled community of the worshipping community, without understanding that this body is not, strictly speaking, the Church community, so much as the holy city, the divinised *πόλις*, *polis*, which through the activity of the priesthood and the constant realisation of what it is that the temple realises—the abiding of God with the world—is held in the life of God. De Lubac was to a certain extent still enmeshed in the very rationalism that he was seeking to free himself from.

There is a modern resistance of all hierarchy because of the way in which the contemporary world is fundamentally bound to a notion of democracy: you can’t have ranks, which would imply superiority. That idea of superiority has no place in religious life. Being of a different rank in

a Christian tradition is not being better or worse. John Paul II had a profound insight when he argued that the whole structure and order of the Church was ordered to the producing of saints, not the producing of clergy. This idea ought to be familiar to Latter-day Saints.

I hope that I have been able to show that form in which the medieval minster, or major church, functioned as a mother in which the work of God was undertaken. The work was extended out to smaller churches in the parishes that were established for the quotidian, day-to-day instruction of Christian souls. For the important things, like baptisms, marriages, and burials but what you call ordinances, are very often the things that, as I understand Medieval Christianity to have functioned, took place in the minsters. It’s not an exact parallel and I don’t want to overemphasize the parallel. I give one concluding example: when my friend and I went to a confirmation in St. Louis a couple of weeks ago, there is a symbolical act where the bishop, who is Melchizedek, the ruler and the priestly figure in his diocese, comes into the church and enters the sanctuary, which is reserved for the clergy alone. He is then dressed in his formal priestly vestments, which are on the altar. The vestments are brought to him from the altar and the vestments are put on while he is seated, and that takes about twenty minutes. The vestments being brought from the altar means that they are meant to symbolize for us heavenly vestments which come to him from the body of Christ, because for us the altar symbolizes the body of Christ. It was absolutely silent in the church while he was being dressed. He then performed the ceremonies who needed to be done: the anointing of the people who were to be confirmed that day, and then he celebrated holy mass and then he was undressed and the priestly vestments were taken back to the altar. The dressing and undressing is meant to be symbolised as if performed by angels, men dressed in black and white coming down from heaven with this clothing, clothing him and then going back up. This is a temple ceremony if ever I saw one. That, I think, is the heart of medieval religion and it’s the heart of medieval urban life.

I try very hard not to challenge my Latter-day Saint friends when I speak, because you have

enough people to challenge you and I have found only friendship among you. But I will challenge you with this. My friend Bradford Houston is a member of your temple construction group in your church headquarters. He has alerted me to the fact that you are building temples all over the world. I'll phone him and he'll say, "I can't tell you where I am because if I did you might tell someone else and we haven't announced the building of a temple in that city yet." But he's clearly not in Utah. You are as Christians the only people building really major monumental churches around the world. And one thing worries me about that. What you call the London Temple, I call Gatwick Airport. You are building these monumental churches outside cities and not in cities where I believe they belong. And if I were to offer you an entirely fraternal challenge I would say remind the rest of Christianity of how religion lives and is the beating heart of urban life by moving your temples into the centre of the cities where you are building them. If you could do anything to challenge what Pope Benedict has called secularism, it would be to recognise that it is concrete symbols of Christian life and virtue and practice that affect, in my view, the modern world, not arguments. You want to see arguments? Turn on the television and watch political debates: they are horrific, and they convince almost no-one who doesn't already want to hear what they have to say. Whichever side you are on, they make you squirm. But lived virtue in its humble and simple daily practice humbles other people and makes them want to know more.

Returning to the idea of how temple theology has diminished: our modern world has created a restricted, contentless, understanding of the self as a formally and absolutely individuated ego with the potential to act, and to become, whatever it will itself to be. This stands in formal contradiction to any understanding of priestly or angelic ranking before the throne of God—to the divine city not as an aggregate of individual egos, but a structured and ordered hierarchy whose differentiated life and callings order them around the throne of God in order to manifest its glory. In Creedal Christianity, only the monastic tradition (and not even the tradition of priesthood) has been able to preserve any of this ancient sense—that the temple is an ordering of persons which

makes both the need (and so want) of God, and the presence of God, something to be made manifest both organically and in an eternal life of recapitulation that realises through worship the prime meaning and order of the entire cosmos through its motions. These motions are conditioned through the movements of the planets, the rising and passing of the seasons, of the break and fall of day, and so forth.

If the beginning of the nineteenth century saw your own nation, and the Mormon religion through the person of Joseph Smith, both take shape, and saw in the concordat of 1801 and the Napoleonisation of Europe bring to an end the Mediæval world, they also saw flourish the thought of one man who, better than any other, explains the birth of the thought not only of modern Europe, but of the New World as well. That one is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel put into words the way the whole of modernity thinks: nor have we left behind what he brought so thoroughly to description. Hegel did not invent the modern world, he explained it. That is what a phenomenology is—it explains the things that have made their appearance.

Beginning in 1805 Hegel began the lectures at Jena that were to form the basis for his subsequent master-work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. If this work is little read today, it and the ideas associated with it in Hegel's *Logic* and *Philosophy of Right* remain among the most foundational in the whole of the thinking of the West. These works above all represent the overcoming of the purely rational understanding of God, for the sake of a metaphysics that is utterly and entirely materialist in its thrust. The idea can be said to exist, and this means be understood, only in and through its concrete manifestations. There is no ideal realm wherein the idea resides, only the idea's most radical orientation towards its own futurity. Without these founding works of Hegel's thought, with their positing of the way the human being, God, and the state, are each to be thought and materialised (produced—such that they also lay down how thinking itself thinks as the ceaselessly productive activity of the concrete materialisation of *Geist* itself), neither modern liberal thinking, nor modern humanism, nor Marxism and the Marxian states in all their manifestations and with all the horrors that attended them, nor the totalitarianism of

fascism and Nazism, nor what has come after, would have taken the precise forms they did.

If no other thinker can be understood to have thought through and prepared for the end of philosophy and for how that end has been and will go on being carried out, so no other thinker has had a more decisive influence over the course of religion in the West—foremost Christianity, but to no less a degree Judaism and Islam as well. Religion itself is thought as Hegel showed it would be—as a (material) politics.

The lectures that form the foundation for Hegel's phenomenological thought open with a discussion of *Spirit*, in German the word is *Geist*. We can barely translate this word—it can mean variously spirit, mind, soul, intellect, freedom, reason, religion, and can (and is for Hegel) even (as “absolute *Geist*”) at times a synonym for God as such. We can barely hear the Old-English echo of the meaning of this word as “the ghostly,” meaning intellectual or spiritual—and so non-material—being.

In the opening of these lectures Hegel begins by positing *Geist* as “truly universal” because it contains the particular.<sup>9</sup> Spirit is *both* the universal *and* the particular. It is in this sense the *all*. The lectures proceed to oppose to this opening claim an explanation of *how* this is to be. *Geist* is animal, inasmuch as it has freedom, has time for itself, knows itself, knows *things*, and at the same time is free of the thing that it knows and is master of this freedom. *Geist* is human, inasmuch as it knows itself in this knowing: it is more than animal, it reflects on what it knows and so brings not the objects and things that it knows before itself in knowing them, but it brings itself as a spirit, *Geist* itself, before itself in reflecting back on itself *that* it knows that it knows. But it knows itself knowing in a most fundamental way: through language “as name giving power,” such that “in names alone is the intuitive, the animal, and time and place overcome.”<sup>10</sup> He adds, placing

9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III: Naturalphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1987), 171. “Das Bestehen des Geistes ist wahrhaft allgemein; es enthält das Besondere selbst; das Ding ist, es ist nicht im Sein—sondern es ist selbst.”

10. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 174, 176. “Dies ist die Sprache, als die Namengebende Kraft” . . . “In Namen ist erst

in the midst of this most philosophical of texts a surprising name, a name we might least expect to find here, a name whose origin is purely and only from a religious text. Hegel says, “Thus through the name the object as being born from the self. This is the primary creativity exercised by *Geist*. Adam gave all things a name, this is the magisterial right and primary possessive grasping of the whole of nature, or its very creation from out of *Geist*” which is *Geist*'s entitlement.<sup>11</sup>

Anyone familiar with Hegel's thought will recognise in what he describes the very movement of dialectical reason itself: through its positing as absolute *Geist*, to its antithesis, first as emptiness of time and space in which the object appears, then as what grasps the object in freedom (the animal), to what grasps itself grasping, as humanity, thence to the positing of reason as the appearance of the absolute in *Geist* in the power of language, through which self-grasping humanity takes possession of, and overcomes the whole of nature, by which humanity comes into possession of, and grasps, all there is, absolutely. It is a short step—one which Hegel takes at the end of the lectures—to claim that God is *Geist*,<sup>12</sup> but there is an intermediate step that Hegel made which has never ceased to embarrass or discomfort many of his commentators. For Hegel locates the concrete form of God in the idea of the state. In his 1805 lectures Hegel argued “so it is that the reality of the kingdom of heaven is the state”;<sup>13</sup> Eduard Gans reports Hegel as having gone much further, in saying “the state is *Geist* itself, which exists in the world and realises itself as such through *consciousness* . . . it is the path of God through the world . . . the force of reason actualising itself as will.”<sup>14</sup>

eigentlich das Anschauen, das Tierische, und Zeit und Raum überwunden.”

11. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 175. “Durch den Namen ist also der Gegensatz als seiend aus dem Ich heraus geboren. —Dies ist die erste Schöpferkraft, die der Geist ausübt: Adam gab allen Dingen einen Namen, dies ist das Majestätsrecht und erste Besitzergreifung der ganzen Natur.”

12. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 257. “Daß Gott der Geist ist.”

13. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 257. “Eben die Wirklichkeit des Himmelreichs ist der Staat.”

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1986 (1820), 403. “Der Staat ist der

The thinker who radicalised Hegel's thought to the point of penetrating through to the very end both its political and its religious implications is none less than Karl Marx, who interpreted Hegel's extreme intellectual materialism through his own work, by understanding that "in this manner the critique of heaven transforms itself into the critique of the earth, the *critique of religion* into the *critique of right*, the *critique of theology* into the *critique of politics*."<sup>15</sup> Here we concentrate not so much on the Marx of socialist revolution so much as the Marx who understands the materialism of Hegel's thought and drives to its most extreme expression as a thought which is realised through what Marx would call human society, and we would call the city, the πόλις. Not for nothing does Marx engage quite directly in his most theoretical texts with Aristotle's notion of the human being—what Marx calls the "species being" of man, not as an "essence" but as a "social being," a being realised in and through his and her social relations—as the ζῷον πολιτικόν, "political animal."<sup>16</sup>

In English as in German, the words for thinking and perceiving can be brought under the same term: to grasp, *begreifen*. What is the transformation in the understanding that Hegel's philosophy so fulfils and completes, such that this philosophy represents a metaphysical pinnacle and completion, which was amplified and explained in its consequences, and decisively, in the thought of Marx and Nietzsche, and which we are working out even today, a full two centuries later? What is it that Hegel's thought

most fundamentally grasps? Put simply and succinctly (because we do not have the time to do anything else) Hegel's thought is grounded in the most radical individualism of Descartes, of what we call Cartesian subjectivity. It is the thinking subject which is most decisively grasped through Hegel's thought, and whose thinking itself is conceived as a grasping of whatever it comes across. This thinking is not "knowing" in the classical sense of "perceiving," "taking in" (*per-cipio*, which can even mean "to eat"), but a grasping through the exercise of the will, a "productive grasping," which simultaneously posits the subject who grasps and what it is he or she grasps in the same, identical act—the act which constitutes and unveils the identity of the one grasping and the identity of the thing grasped. Hegel's thought shows how thinking and willing are accomplished as an identity.

Hegel shows how this thinking *are at one and the same time* the grasping of the very idea of the divine, but a grasping which we can call a materialisation. Inasmuch as Hegel's thought is understood to be an idealism, it is at the same time a full materialism, since the idea is only ever productively realised *in concreto*, through the concretions it at once knows and produces. First among these concrete ideations is the idea of the state, the unifying social being of man. It is through the being of the state—Adam himself—that the human being as most particular and most universal is (dialectically) realised and synthesised.

Hegel's naming of Adam in his lectures at Jena, is the naming of that Adam whose conceiving of the whole of nature is at the same time Adam's taking possession of the whole of nature. Adam stands here in the full ambiguity of the human person that marks the philosophy, the metaphysics, the history of the last two centuries. For Adam is both "man in general" and "this man here," and it is impossible to tell the difference between them. The only possible corollary from this passage, and one which explains the whole of the development of religion, and of the state, of these two centuries is that through naming and taking possession of the object, through his taking over of himself as a spiritual object (as that object which appears in the knowing of objects),

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Geist, der in der Welt steht und sich in derselben mit *Bewusstsein* realisiert . . . es ist der Gang Gottes in der Welt . . . sein Grund ist die Gewalt der sich als Wille verwirklichenden Vernunft" (Gans's reported emphasis).

15. Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* in *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 1, edited by Erich Kundel, Roland Nietzold, Richard Sperl, Hildegard Scheibler and others, 1839 bis 1844, 2006 (1981), 379. "Die Kritik des Himmels verwandelt sich damit in die Kritik der Erde, die *Kritik der Religion* in die *Kritik des Rechts*, die *Kritik der Theologie* in die *Kritik der Politik*" (Marx's emphases).

16. Aristotle: *Eudemian Ethics*, 1242 a 23; *Politics* 1253 a 3–8, 1278 b 19. The phrase was taken up by Galen (*De usu partium*, vol. 3, p. 5 and *passim*), Aspasius (*In Ethica Nicomachea commentaria*), Plotinus (*Enneads*, vol. 3, 4.2), and others.



and through this power of naming which is analogous to the creative power of God, Adam himself gives the name to God: put slightly differently, Adam gives himself the name of God.

What is the meaning of the appearance of the name of Adam in this text of Hegel's? For Adam, next to Christ is the *other* figure who is central to any understanding of the temple, precisely because Adam is the unredeemed man, the unredeemed flesh, and Christ the enfleshed God-Man, the redeemer of all flesh is, in the words of St. Paul,<sup>17</sup> the new Adam. Hegel's understanding of God and the state can in one way be understood as a temple theology *without the temple*, that is to say, a temple theology without either the action or the activity of redemption as a priestly activity. Hegel, and Marx following him, press the relentless individualism of Creedal Christianity to its final conclusions: the life of the πόλις, the life of the ordinary city, does not require any revelation of God to assemble it into the hierarchical manifestation of the divine presence because

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17. See 1 Corinthians 15: 22; 45, Romans 5: 14.

the activity of the will, what Spinoza called the *conatus*, the natural driving-forward of particular *Geist*, has replaced it. If, for Hegel, Adam is the one who names, and so produces, the being of the temple, the history of the temple tells us that Adam can only be constituted as the presence of God, the Christ, the new Adam, because the temple constitutes, and so (in Hegelian and contemporary terms) creates and produces (but we would rather say *restores and completes*) the being of Adam, and locates it not *as* but *within* the presence of God.

The history of the temple is the history of God's unfolding of his divine presence on the face of the earth. This history is constitutive for those peoples whose history it becomes, and who are brought together through God's self revelation, which comes always to ones marked out for prophecy and priesthood—who are given the task of priest and prophet. But the ongoing revelation of God is given in the being of the temple, which is the heart and focus, the nucleus, indeed the very point of the πόλις. Inasmuch as man is political animal, ζῷον πολιτικόν, he is the animal of, and on the basis of, the temple, τό τοῦ ζῷον νεῶς.



## Questions and Answers with Margaret Barker and Laurence Hemming

*Jack Welch:* Margaret, to begin, would you like to comment on anything that Laurence said?

*Margaret Barker:* The idea of the temple in the center of cities goes right back to Exodus 25: “Build me a holy place that I may be seen to be in your midst.” And I know they’re not making land in city centers anymore, so it’s rather expensive, but to be somewhere that’s central is very important.

*Welch:* Wonderful. Now a question to both of you: what kind of reception do you get for your ideas among other Christians and philosophers? How do your ideas strike people? Are you viewed as being too combative, or are people accepting what you’re saying?

*Barker:* Well, I spend a lot of my time going round to speak to groups of clergy in England—conferences, bishop study days, all that kind of thing, and they love it. There’s one or two who are not very happy and they wriggle, but by and large, I mean my schedule is full because they love it. So that’s the answer. I had a lovely compliment from a rabbi in London who said, “Thank you for giving us back our temple.” And I thought, wasn’t that lovely? People want to know about it simply because they are recognizing that this is something very important that the church has just lost touch with, and it affects every aspect of our life: the shape of church buildings, the shape of liturgies, all sorts of things. My particular interest is of course environment studies, and yes, I’m kept very busy—too busy, in fact. So yes, it’s very well received.

*Laurence Hemming:* I would say that my experiences with theologians have been somewhat different

from my experiences with philosophers. My philosophical work is connected with my work in temple studies but not in ways that would be obvious to my, let’s say, more secular readers. Nevertheless, a lot of my philosophical work centers around what it means to understand God and the gods in the historical philosophical tradition. I think that question is falling open over time. When I was an undergraduate student, aggressive atheism was the mark of the day. I don’t find that to be the case anymore. I think that among Catholics, it’s more complicated because we had the Second Vatican Council, which ushered in radical change throughout the Catholic Church, and I think that the Catholic Church is still digesting that change and still coming to terms with it. There is a fundamental shift, I think, among younger Catholics and younger clergy. As Catholics, we tend to go overboard when we do something. To some extent, we threw the baby out with the bathwater and now have to find the baby again. When you explain the meanings of some of these things, there is an absolute fascination. A lot of the initial bewilderment, rather than hostility, falls away. There’s a real thirst for what we’ve lost. I also interpret this as a divine gift because sometimes the way God reminds us—sometimes God says things to us nicely and sometimes not so. In the confirmation ceremony in the Catholic Church, in the old way it was done and the way it was done that Sunday I visited St. Louis, I was reminded that the bishop touches each person being confirmed on the cheek. It’s meant to be a slap and one interpretation of the gesture is that not everything that God will give

you will be comfortable. Sometimes we remember things by waking up to the uncomfortable realization of what we've forgotten. And I think that's where the Catholic Church is at the present time. It just makes some Catholic theologians feel a little grumpy. I can live with that.

*Welch:* I'm sure that many people do receive what you're saying with great enthusiasm and find that it has a lot of challenging, wonderful, ethical, and religious motivation and inspiration for them. Several of the questions, though, have asked more specific things, such as this one: Margaret, I know you've written a lot about Jesus Christ and Jehovah being one deity. We Latter-day Saints believe that, and we get a lot of pushback for it. Do you run into a similar thing? And Laurence, for you along the same line: we see a distinction between Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizidek Priesthood. Do other people see that distinction or do you get pushback from people when you talk about Melchizidek priesthood?

*Barker:* The position that I put out in my book *The Great Angel*, namely that Jesus was Yahweh and was recognized as such by the early Christians, this was initially received with horror: "Goodness, what else will she be saying next?" And then I said, "Well, can you find me evidence to the contrary in the first two centuries?" And then, things started to quiet down a little. It's quite interesting. I think that we have lived with assumptions—and I call that laziness—in biblical scholarship for far too long. We must ask, "Where do you get this from?" Some of the rather more violent theories of Atonement that I encounter amongst extreme evangelicals, I say, "Where is this in the Bible?" It's like dealing with journalists that tell you what the Bible says and you say, "I'm sorry, could you show me where?" and they don't come back. You have to be two hundred percent confident of what you're going to say before you say something because you're dealing with people's faith and belief. A lot of people repeat what they have been told, probably in college, and they don't ever question it. As a Protestant preacher, I would always start with the Bible;

I would never preach anything but the Bible. But the text is illuminated from other sources, and maybe these verses don't mean what we have always assumed they mean. I do a Good Friday service every year; it's one of the things you have to do. And I find it much more meaningful to do it within a temple framework, and so do the people for whom I lead this service. And I think that is the test, because Methodist tradition is well known for people who sort of grab the preacher by the collar outside afterwards and say, "What did you mean when you said that?" And you have to answer to your congregation in a big way. And the ordinary people—of course, there's no such thing as ordinary people—but you know what I mean, the people who sit in pews on Sunday, they accept this and they're very happy and they're the consumers. And I don't actually worry too much about the academics. If my congregations are happy who are living the faith, I can cope with the academics.

*Hemming:* Jack's question touches on something. There have been some references to my struggle to work out the way in which Priesthood is manifesting itself in our liturgical texts. That confirmation that I attended in St. Louis exactly explains it. In our older, unreformed ordination rites—the ordination of the deacon, a priest, or a bishop—in each case, they refer to the ordaining of a Levite. But in each case, a higher form of Levite: the deacons are the Levites, the priests are the priestly priests who are taken from the ranks of the Levites because only a priest can be ordained from someone who's already been ordained a deacon, and it's obvious from those texts that a bishop is a high priest. That bringing of the vestments down from the altar is the transformation of a Levitical priest into a Melchizidek priest for the purpose of an ordinance. The Melchizidek priesthood is an eternal priesthood, and fundamentally it is the Priesthood of Christ, which a bishop or a priest or even a deacon holds in a certain way but only exercises in certain functions. Now that's my understanding of it. I could go into a lot more detail. I know of no other Catholic theologian

who understands it in that way, and yet when I explain it, I get immediate recognition. One of my closest friends is now a significant figure in the hierarchy, and I sent him my paper because I was a bit worried. I thought maybe I'd get rapped on the knuckles for saying this. He wrote back to me and said, "We've been using your paper on the Melchizedek priesthood." Well, I talked actually in this paper about the way we make the Holy Oils. We don't make them like that anymore. I wish we did. The old ceremonies of the making of the oils were quite startling and clearly very ancient. He said, "I've been leading in my group among my staff, and we've been using this paper because we're trying to understand Priesthood." I was hugely relieved. We talked privately, and he said, "I think you're absolutely right." He said that because he's involved with many liturgical texts and so he knows them inside and out, and he knows that these words are there, that this is the authentic way to interpret those texts. What I get from people who don't want to hear it is a bewildered silence. But in key places, I get recognition of what I believe the texts point towards. I don't think I'm doing anything which is contrary to my own tradition.

*Welch:* Several questions have been asked dealing with the use of terminology, titles especially, that you seem to be using in a different way than they are usually used. For example, the word "Adam": is that a person or is it a title or both? And how does "Adam" relate to "angels"? You used the word "angel" to refer to something other than what we would normally think of. You've written a whole book on angels, *The Great Angel*, but how is the word "angel" to be understood? You've given the word "resurrection" a different range of meanings. The word "Wisdom" is not just being wise in a proverbial sense, but Wisdom as a female deity. Likewise, the word "Council," and so on. Do you want to just talk generally, about how do we know when a word is being used as a title or in some kind of nominalist way, and when it's being used in the more ordinary sense of the word?

*Barker:* I think the answer to that is by trial and error. If you start off by thinking or looking and saying, "I wonder if the places where I find "Adam" in the Hebrew scriptures—that's not just in Genesis—does it make more sense to substitute the idea of an individual or does it just represent humanity?" Ask that sort of question. And when you do this with words—I've done it with Adam, I've done it with various forms of Zadok and Zadik, the word that means "righteous one," things like that—if you try that in the text and suddenly the text is as though you switched a light on, then I think to myself that possibly this was more likely to be the way it was originally intended. So I do it simply by trial and error. Putting different English, doing different English translations of various Hebrew bits, saying, Does this actually make more sense if you put it like this? It's the same when I do my repointing exercises because of course the ancient text would not point words. Pointing means putting vowels in them. Does it make more sense if you put these vowels or these other vowels? Sometimes you get gobbledygook, and sometimes a light comes on and you say, oh my goodness, I can see why those were changed. So it is literally trial and error and collecting things that seem to work. And very often they do. And then sometimes you'll find an ancient journal article or something like that, that came to the same conclusion. It is very reassuring when that happens, but I don't actually start from that. I actually experiment with the text and the ancient versions.

*Welch:* And sometimes it can be both meanings of a word, can't it?

*Barker:* Yes, sometimes I would say it can be both because of this word play. Reading word play is something I wish I were better at, but there are many places in the Hebrew text where you could read it with its customary pointing, its Masoretic pointing, and then you could look at it again and say, well, what would happen if I put different vowels round that word? It would give different emphasis. Words sound very similar, and you get a different meaning. Hebrew prophets often



used word plays. You go to other passages of the same prophet, or looking at other Old Testament texts, you can see that there are two meanings here, the good meaning and the bad meaning. This is a long job and it's a process of trial and error. There is a lot of trial in it and a lot of error. But, eventually interesting things emerge, and then you discover the same word play popping

up elsewhere. But in translation to Greek, some word play is lost. So that's how it works.

*Welch:* Very good. I guess with the trial and error and repetition, that's why you have to keep going back to the temple.

*Barker:* Yes, you always have to go back for everything.

# Ancient Mediterranean Temple Ceremonies

## Vestiges of the Rites of Enoch and Precursors to the Hebrew Temple Ceremonial

*John F. Hall*

Today it falls to me to speak of temple traditions beyond the more familiar Judeo-Christian conventions. My remarks will be confined to a consideration of rites and patterns of temple worship found only in the ancient Mediterranean region, including Egypt and Israel. While the theme of the conference is *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining Ancient Religious Traditions*, this paper will address entirely the ancient traditions and not examine questions of Mormon temple ceremony. However, many present who do have knowledge of Mormon temples will doubtless observe similarities between temple rituals of the ancient world and those with which they possess familiarity through their own worship in temples.

### Introduction

In Italy, Greece, Anatolia, and especially in Egypt, temple ceremonial and ritual seem to preserve elements of temple rites that were claimed to stretch back in time to the ancient first fathers, to Enoch, whom pseudepigraphic tradition portrays as preserving the original religious practices given Adam.<sup>1</sup> The so-called "Building Texts" of Egyptian temples evince similarity by asserting a long line of descent from those called "the senior ones," who were identified as the founders of the temples of the primeval

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1. Enoch is said to have been given Adam's *Book of Knowledge*, and the Book of Noah claims to derive from records of both Adam and Enoch. Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, vol. 2 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 141. Instruction is received in 1 Enoch (82.1) and 2 Enoch (47.2, 48.8) for Enoch to preserve the books from the hands of his fathers.

age.<sup>2</sup> In an era rife with religious syncretism, such temple activity may have been influenced by the Hebrew temple or, as in the case of Egypt, may have influenced the Hebrew temple. Elements of the Egyptian temple ceremony are alluded to in the Pearl of Great Price and may have thus been a predicate for Joseph Smith's restoration of ancient patterns of temple worship.

What Margaret Barker has done to enlighten about the role and function of the Hebrew temple and its early Christian descendants, so Hugh Nibley did to reveal the Egyptian temple as a predecessor of the Hebrew temple,<sup>3</sup> as well as an heir to the temple ceremonial of Enoch, who was identified among the Egyptians as Thoth,<sup>4</sup> whose religious ritual the Egyptians dated back to the time of Thoth's progenitor Atum, creator god and physical father of those assigned to inhabit this sphere. In Egyptian temple ceremonial, Atum makes covenant with the head god of the gods, Amon (Amun, Ahman), to whom, in the Egyptian rite, return and ascent provided the way back into the presence of Amon. The

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2. Hugh Nibley, John Gee, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, vol. 16 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005), 258, n. 439.

3. See for example, Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*; Nibley, Gee, and Rhodes, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*; Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992); Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, vol. 14 of *Collected Works* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1981); Hugh Nibley, posthumous, with Michael D. Rhodes, *One Eternal Round*, vol. 19 of *Collected Works* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2010).

4. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 47–49.

ritual cleansing, anointing, clothing of initiates, and traversing the cosmos through ascent in the solar barque of Horus all served the ultimate purpose of returning the temple initiates to Amon where, at the end of the temple rite, they would be ceremonially seated upon Amon's throne to receive crowns of godhood.

To what extent Hebrew patriarchs such as Abraham or Joseph, and even the prophet Moses, were familiar with this ceremonial is an important consideration. The book of Abraham, as well as Genesis and the Genesis Apocryphon, place Abraham in Egypt. Professor Nibley summarized his long study of Abraham in Egypt to offer the observation, "It is in Egypt that Abraham was most at home. In his own country he was an outcast and he was pushed from place to place in Canaan; it was only in Egypt that he came into his own. He was in fact almost as thoroughly Egyptianized as his noble descendant Joseph." Joseph is, of course, also much connected to Egypt, where he is known to have become a ruler and high priest of On, married to the high lady Aseneth from a royal line of Egypt, daughter of the chief priest of On, the holiest temple city of Egypt, which was called Heliopolis by the Greeks because it was the center of the heliacal cult of Amon-Re. The temple city of On was also a place sacred to Atum, as well as the location of the sacred *ished* tree that Egyptians believed had been defended from the serpent in the Garden, and the ben-ben stone of primeval creation, the holy mount of first life.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph is said to have ruled there (Joseph and Aseneth 29.11) with attendant priestly responsibilities, thus indicating thorough familiarity with Egyptian religion and its temple rites and symbols. More than a millennium after the time of Moses, the early Christian martyr Stephen described Moses as "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). It is, no doubt, something of a risk to attempt analysis of Moses and his contributions to the ancient Hebrew temple ceremony. As Dr. Barker informed us this morning, there existed a pro-Moses party of Deuteronomists who abandoned the teachings and ceremonies of the ancient patriarchs and endeavored

to eradicate all knowledge of the ancient religion. In similar manner, Moses, six hundred years after his earthly departure, may well have been redacted by such men, just as the scriptures had been redacted, particularly the original writings of Moses, with the result that a new fabricated version of Moses may have been created for the express purpose of using that new Moses as justification for their change of the religion. As a prince of Egypt, the real, unredacted Moses would certainly have been versed in the temple rites of Thoth, and from Moses came the ceremonial of the tabernacle, precursor to later Hebrew temples. Whether the knowledge of ancient temple ritual possessed by these patriarchs was limited to knowledge acquired through Egyptian temple ritual, or whether their familiarity with temple ceremony may also be accounted for by knowledge of other records of their own ancestors, which could have preserved prediluvian temple rituals, or whether knowledge about the temple was received directly from heaven, as is suggested by accounts of the individual ascent experiences of these patriarchs, is an interesting and important topic but beyond the purview of this paper. However, their role in transmitting religious knowledge between Egyptians and Hebrews, and vice versa, is most pertinent.

Vestiges of the same antique rituals can also be found in various temple cultures throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. Archaeological evidences of Minoan and Anatolian ceremonies devoted to the mother goddess figure, information about the famed Greek *mysteria* whose secrecy is preserved to this day, or of the earliest processional rites of archaic Roman cult barely survive and are alluded to only in sources of much later date. The temple practices of the ancient Hebrews are better documented but have too often and for too long been interpreted in light of the later and different practices of the second temple period. In recent years, due to the scholarship of Dr. Barker, a more accurate understanding is forming and revealing in their true light the practices and ceremonies of temples of the first temple period. By comparison, the temple texts of ancient Egypt are extensive and extremely ancient. With some dating back as far as the fourth millennium BC, incised upon the walls of temples and funerary monuments, these

5. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 267.

very ancient documents have withstood the ravages of time and reveal a culture with temples at the center of life and a religion devoted to the individual's return to the heavens as instructed in temples. Unlike records of the Greeks and Romans, these have not been so extensively lost; nor, as in the case of the records of the Jews, these Egyptian memorials cannot be rewritten, edited, or redacted, or translated and retranslated, but remain as first chiseled in stone or inked upon papyri. Their great antiquity guards their authenticity and so perhaps provides us a window of knowledge from which to glean information of even older rites that may stretch back to the earliest times. Accordingly, the present paper will examine the possible intermediary place of the ancient Egyptian temple rite between the temple ceremonies of Enoch and the temple rites of the Mediterranean world, including those employed by the Hebrews from the time of Moses to Solomon's Temple.

### Joseph Smith and Ancient Egypt

Mormonism stands within the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially in relation to the importance it places on the temple as a place of ordinance and instruction to assist the individual in returning to the presence of a Father in Heaven. Mormon theology and its own temple ceremonial share affinities and commonalities with the temple practices of ancient Israel and the earliest Christians and also with those of ancient Egypt. Pointing out the comparative nature of these religious traditions comprised an important part of Professor Nibley's enduring scholarly contribution. Not only by means of biblical writings, Old Testament pseudographa, and New Testament apocrypha, but also by additional scripture that Mormonism accepts as restored through Joseph Smith, there is established a continuity of a temple tradition with origins in the religious practices of Adam. At least as early as 1835, Joseph Smith began to acquire ancient Egyptian papyri. He later produced a writing called the book of Abraham that he explained as translated from one of the papyri, being an ancient account of Abraham in Egypt. A passage from that text alludes to Pharaoh's descent from Noah and his resolve to imitate the ancient practices of Adam. Abraham 1:25–26 reads:

Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of Ham, which was patriarchal. Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam and also of Noah.

Joseph Smith included, along with the text of the book of Abraham, three facsimiles of Egyptian papyri, conjectured to relate to the ancient Egyptian temple ritual. Professor Nibley discusses the facsimiles in just such a temple context and characterizes the three as, first, a sacrifice upon the lion couch altar; second, from a separate papyrus, a hypocephalus serving as a cosmological map for the ascent through the heavens and passing the guardians of the gates between spheres; third, also from the first papyrus, a coronation scene, presumably upon the throne of the Most High God whom Joseph Smith named Ahman (D&C 78:20, 95:17)<sup>6</sup> and whom the Egyptians addressed first as Amon (Amun) and in later centuries as Amon (Amun) and also as Amon-Ra (Amun-Re).<sup>7</sup> Coming into the presence of God and coronation upon God's throne in the highest place similarly constituted the aftermath of the ascent, not only in Egyptian temple ritual but also sometimes in ascent experiences briefly noted in the Bible or more fully expounded in the pseudographic accounts about ascents of Enoch (Gen. 5:25), Abraham, Moses (Ex. 24:9–11), Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:1–12), Isaiah (Isa. 6:1–13), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:10), and, of course, in the familiar New Testament account of John's Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation (1–5).

6. Circa March 1832, Joseph Smith received by revelation the name in response to a question about the name of God in the pure language. See "A Sample of Pure Language Given by Joseph the Seer," in *Manuscript Revelation Books*, Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, Steven C. Harper, eds., facsimile edition, first volume of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009), 264–65.

7. A full discussion of the facsimiles and their temple significance is to be found in an occasional paper, Hugh Nibley, "Three Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1980).



As the result of years of detailed study of the words of Joseph Smith, in particular how they relate to Joseph Smith's establishment of temple ceremonies, Andrew Ehat has addressed the question of the three facsimiles and how Joseph Smith connected them to the ancient Egyptian temple ritual.

The fragments were independently captioned by Joseph Smith, and the captions are directly associated by Joseph Smith with our temple ordinances. . . . Joseph Smith, in lectures he conducted following the presentation of the ordinances of the endowment, used the facsimiles . . . for illustration purposes during his lectures. He would discuss details of what his annotations only hinted at. . . . First Joseph Smith said that some of the symbols retained in the Egyptian documents were not exactly the same as the Egyptian rituals codified in *The Book of the Dead*. The symbols were corrupted because of the distance of time between their more ancient origin than the first Egyptian recordation of their ordinances. While the Egyptians had patterned their ordinances after the ancient order, their reproductions . . . were not necessarily exactly the same as the ordinances of Adam in the Garden of Eden, or Enoch and Noah in the pre-flood era.<sup>8</sup>

From Ehat's summary of Joseph Smith's remarks, two observations are striking: first, that Joseph Smith recognized the tremendous passage of time, nearly 4,000 years, during which Egyptian religion prevailed and temple ritual was practiced, with at least some corruption during the four millennia of its long duration; second, that a purer form of ceremony was to be found among "Abraham, and all to whom priesthood was revealed, not only through ordinances, but, ideally, by ascension into God's presence."<sup>9</sup>

### **Egyptian Ritual and Return to Divine Antecedents**

Before directing attention to the temple rites of ancient Egypt and their parallels to other ancient Mediterranean temple cultures, it is important to understand what the purpose was behind the ancient rituals. Why

8. Andrew F. Ehat, in a portion of the text of an oral presentation "Joseph Smith and Our Temple Blessings," sent to the author by email, Oct. 23, 2012.

9. Ehat, "Joseph Smith and Our Temple Blessings."

did men so desire to pass through the "Great House of the Gods?" However, a few comments are first required about the use of the plural term "gods" and the underlying theology behind the Egyptian temple.

In an age when Western religious culture has been inculcated with monotheism since the time of the circa 600 BC apostasy of the Deuteronomists that Dr. Barker has written about, the time when reference to the Most High God *El Elyon* was suppressed and the Father was thus conflated with the Son, *Yahweh*, leaving but one divine figure among the Jews, mention of multiple gods evokes in many the judgment of "ignorant polytheistic pagans." I do not believe such a judgment properly extends to either the early Hebrews or to ancient Egypt, though it may have influenced the first Egyptologists who rendered the Egyptian term *neter* as "god" and its plural *neteru* as "gods." It might be preferable to think of those so designated by a new rendering such as "dwellers in the heavens." Indeed, it is well known that in ancient Hebrew religion there were many dwellers in heaven in addition to a father god: there was his wife, about whom, as "Lady in the Temple," Dr. Barker's recent book provides much information;<sup>10</sup> there were also identified as angels the many sons and daughters of El. *Yahweh* was identified as "The Great Angel";<sup>11</sup> there were also archangels and angelic heaven dwellers of all kinds, whether seraphim, cherubim, or others.

Egyptologist Eric Hornung posits as deriving from the hieroglyph for *neter*, the sign of a flag at the top of a pole, the proper translation of *neter* to be "one charged with power,"<sup>12</sup> while Dimitri Meeks suggests that the meaning relates to one who has come to be, through ritual.<sup>13</sup> The chief ritual of Egypt was, of course, the ceremony that is now the subject of our study and in which, first of anyone in this world, Osiris, the *neter* who on earth died

10. Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, vol. 1 of *The Lady in the Temple* (London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2012).

11. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel* (London: SPCK, 1992).

12. Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. John Baynes (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971), 38.

13. Dimitri Meeks, "Notion de 'dieu' et structure du pantheon dans l'Egypte ancienne," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 205 (1988): 425–46.



and was resurrected, passed upward in ascent and returned to his father and mother, thus opening the way for others to follow.<sup>14</sup> Could *neter* be considered to refer to one who has made the heavenly ascent back to Amon, the very theme of the temple ritual, and is the word *neteru* to be translated not as “gods” but more properly rendered as “ascendant ones” or “those who have completed the heavenly ascent”?

Moreover, could this language be synonymous with the Christian usage in Matthew 5:48, where Jerome translated into the Latin Vulgate the Latin word *perfectus* as a rendering for the word *teleios* in the Greek New Testament text? He was not mistaken in his translation, since the Latin verb *perficio*, of which *perfectus* is a perfect passive participle, shares meaning with the Greek verb *teleioō*, from which *teleios* derives. The actual meaning is “completed, having come to the end,” and can be employed in relation to “completing” the ascent. Might we then translate the verse not as “be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect” but rather “complete the ascent just as your Father in Heaven completed the ascent.” After all, the Sermon on the Mount is itself a temple text, and such an allusion to the ascent would not be out of place. Moreover, herein is an additional connection to Mormon tradition, since such an interpretation corresponds with Joseph Smith’s teachings of eternal progression, where man’s potential is to return to Father in Heaven and become like him. In his final conference address in April 1844, Joseph Smith exclaimed, “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!” explaining to the congregation, “You have got to learn to be Gods yourselves, the same as all gods have done before you, by going from one small degree to another . . . from exaltation to exaltation, . . . until you are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and sit in glory.”<sup>15</sup>

Ancient Egyptian temple ritual indisputably provided for theosis. Indeed, perhaps the most important

purpose of the temple ritual was to assist men in returning to and joining the company of the *neteru* in the heavens. The coronation follows the ascent, and as part of the coronation sequence, the initiate is ceremonially received back to Amon, where acceptance into the company of the *neteru* is confirmed in an inscription upon an eighteenth-dynasty temple stele on which are inscribed the words of the initiate as he declares himself a son come to claim the inheritance of eternal life from Father Amon.<sup>16</sup> The statement is evocative of Christ’s declaration to John in Revelation 3:21, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne.”

Proof that the Egyptians believed the ascent and its resultant divinization were not merely a matter of ceremony but could transpire in actuality is demonstrated by the examples of Imhotep and Amenhotep, neither of whom were pharaohs, but rather men of learning and wisdom, separated from one another in life by 1,200 years. The former, chief scribe and architect of the world’s first cut stone building, the step pyramid of Djoser of the third dynasty, and the latter, a fifteenth-century BC scribe, astronomer, mathematician, and designer of Karnak temples, both ascended through the heavens to become divinized “and though real men, historical figures beyond doubt, whose existence is attested in many monuments and documents . . . in time were hailed as gods and worshiped in their own temples, . . . examples of human beings, whose beneficent labors were held up as exemplars to be emulated . . . by their fellow mortals.”<sup>17</sup>

### Divine Dramatis Personae in Egypt and Ancient Israel

In the limited time allowed me in this presentation, there is no opportunity for the exposition of a theogony of the Egyptian gods. However, a few of the most important Egyptian divinities, those who are also inextricably connected with the temple

14. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 181–83; Hermann Kees, *Totenglauben und Jenseitvorstellungen der alten Aegypter* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1926), 353.

15. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 345–47.

16. Alan Gardiner, “The Coronation of King Haremhab,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 39 (1953): 13–31.

17. Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 286; see also Dietrich Wildung, *Egyptian Saints: Deification in Pharaonic Egypt* (New York: NYU Press, 1977).

rites, require at least brief mention. Central to the Egyptian pantheon was the divine high triad comprised of Amon; his consort Hathor, sometimes alternatively named Mut; and his son Horus, in some times and places identified as Khonsu. In the later centuries of Egyptian religion, a second triad comprised of younger gods appeared in ritual and worship. It consisted of Osiris; his wife, Isis; and their son, generally identified as Horus the younger. In the ceremonial procession of entry to the temple precinct at the great temple of Amon in Thebes, past way stations marking the pathway of eternal life, *simulacra*, or platform-mounted effigies, of Amon, Mut, and Khonsu were carried before the initiates to open the way in a fashion reminiscent of later Roman lectisternal processions. Finally, it was to the presence of this ancient familial triad, and into their ceremonial embraces, paternal, maternal, and fraternal, that the initiate returned after his ascent. The presence of a similar divine triad of father, mother, and son in early Hebrew religion and in the first temple has been established by Dr. Barker in her most recent work, where she demonstrates the identity of the Lady in the Temple to be not the consort of Yahweh, but rather the wife of El and the mother of Yahweh.<sup>18</sup>

It was to Amon's presence that initiates, as "followers of Horus,"<sup>19</sup> sought to ascend by ceremonial means in the Egyptian rites. In the Pyramid Texts, the earliest surviving religious writings of substance, Amon was described as the creator of all, the ultimate source of life force and energy. He was frequently called "the hidden one," alluding perhaps to man's search for the lost way to return to his presence in the heavens. He was generally depicted as a man in a cosmic crown of two feather plumes, perhaps representing light and truth. On hypocephali, as in Pearl of Great Price facsimile 2, Amon is symbolically represented with straight ram horns, often as having two or four faces, and holding both his rod of authority and his staff of power. Amon's syncretic influence may have been widespread among different Mediterranean religious cultures.

18. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 121–23, 197, 309–10.

19. Jane B. Sellers, *The Death of Gods in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 224.

For example, the iconography of the Roman Janus was similar. Depicted with two faces, or sometimes *quadrifons* with four faces,<sup>20</sup> and occasionally with straight ram's horns, bearing rod and staff of authority,<sup>21</sup> Janus was the chief god of very earliest archaic Roman cult,<sup>22</sup> celebrated in the *Carmen Saliare* as Father of Gods and God of Gods,<sup>23</sup> titles shared with both Amon and the Hebrew *El Elyon*, and is conjectured by some to ultimately derive from the Egyptian high god, Amon, a hypothesis lent credence by Augustus's placement in a new temple of Janus, as its cult statue, a statue of Amon that he brought back to Rome from Egypt.<sup>24</sup>

In hypocephali, including facsimile 2, Horus is represented by his familiar falcon iconography. He sits enthroned in his solar barque, the Egyptian version of the Hebrew fiery throne chariot as a means of heavenly conveyance, indicating his role in facilitating ascent into the presence of Amon. His alternate appellation of Khonsu, which signifies one who is in motion, may have similar association.<sup>25</sup> Horus was sometimes titled "the opener of the ways." It was Horus who overcame and defeated the evil Set in combat, placing his own left eye lost in battle, the *wedjat*, in the midst of undying circumpolar stars to serve as beacon for the way of the ascent. The distinction between Horus and Osiris may be similar to that between Yahweh and Christ, a mere difference of name, one heavenly, the other for use on earth. For in earthly guise Horus became Osiris, who was killed by Set, but through the assistance of his wife, Isis, was revived. These events were dramatically depicted in the triennial religious celebration known as the Set (Sed) festival, which, despite its name, commemorated the resurrection of Osiris and the triumph of Horus, as well as the restoration of the cosmic covenant with its equinoctial balance between opposing solstices, and also celebrated the procession of ascent and other temple ceremonials.<sup>26</sup> Not only documents but also

20. Statius, *Silvae*, 4.3.9–10.

21. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.9.7.

22. Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, 7.9.

23. Varro, *Lingua Latina*, 7.26–27.

24. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 34.7.

25. Sellers, *Death of Gods in Ancient Egypt*, 223.

26. Sellers, *Death of Gods in Ancient Egypt*, 219–36.

pictorial representations name Horus as Osiris Seker and depict Horus as rising from the dead body of Osiris.<sup>27</sup> It was Osiris/Horus, who, after his resurrection, is acknowledged as the first being to have lived on earth to make the ascent to the heavens, and in ritual ceremonial, the initiated follow the path set by Osiris/Horus to return to Amon.

Hathor was the Lady of the Temple in Ancient Egypt. Wearing on her head the solar disk surrounded with cow horns, Hathor symbolized the nexus between heaven and earth, just as Hathor, depicted in bovine form, is situated at the juncture of the two realms in the aforementioned facsimile 2. Accordingly, her involvement in the ritual is at several stages of the process, both those earthly and those heavenly. She presided over an assortment of goddesses in the Garden, where washing and anointing was performed. As Hathor anointed Horus with nine fiery oils to enable his ascent, so also in the ceremony in the *per-neser*, the shrine of fire, did she anoint initiates before their ascent either as Hathor, Mother of Gods, or in her syncretic guise as Sekhmet, Lady of the Lions.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps to honor Hathor as well as to imitate the skin garment of the god Atum, it was in lion skins that initiates were first clothed before entering the inner temple to later receive robes of light.<sup>29</sup> All these ceremonies were conducted in the garden, through which the earth is entered and departed. In that place, Hathor bears the title of Lady of the Ished, or Lady of the Sycamore, an epithet which acknowledged her actions protecting her sacred tree of life from the great serpent.<sup>30</sup> As noted above, when the initiate completed his ascent, Hathor, as one of the divine triad, embraced him, after which she also played a part in his theosis by seating him upon the throne, the very event represented in the aforementioned facsimile 3. Hathor's symbol, the winged sun disk, is found throughout temples where the initiation ceremony was conducted, as well as at a recently discovered Hathor temple site at Serabit in the Sinai,

where archaeological evidence locates votive offerings not only of Egyptians, but also of Hebrews.<sup>31</sup> Dr. Barker has pointed out not only the use of this symbol in Solomon's temple, but also its connections with the Lady in the Temple. Similar connections to Hathor include items removed from the Holy of Holies in the Josiah reform, such as the sacred tree and the golden calf throne of the Lady. Moreover, like Hathor, the Lady played a role in theosis, while the Lady's persona of Ariel, named by Isaiah (29:1-7) the lioness of El, was strikingly like the Sekhmet persona of Hathor;<sup>32</sup> and so also the person and symbols of the Anatolian Great Mother Goddess, later adopted as Magna Mater by the Romans, who considered themselves descendants of the Trojans of Anatolia.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the role of Thoth in the temple must be noted, for in Thoth is an important link between the temples of Egypt and the prediluvian temple of Enoch. Thoth was not only the guide to lead initiates through the ceremony but also the being to whom is attributed the inception of the ceremony. The ibis-headed god and also his consort, Maat, together played essential roles in both the judgment of the dead by Osiris in the *Duat* and also in the temple ceremonial, often referred to as the rites of Thoth. To Thoth is ascribed the authorship of The Book of Breathings, perhaps the most fruitful source for information about the Egyptian temple ritual. The functions performed by Thoth are revealed in his many titles, including Lord of the Divine Words, Keeper of the Secret Knowledge, Inventor of Writing, Keeper of the Book of Life, Scribe of the Gods, Journeyer through the Heavens in Quest of Knowledge, Founder of Temples, and Heavenly Originator of the Temple Ceremony. These titles and the functions they describe bear striking similarity to the roles reported in the books of Enoch as performed by Enoch.<sup>34</sup> Professor Nibley recognized this connection and concluded, "Thoth is thus an Enoch figure, keeper of the heavenly and earthly books of

27. Sellers, *Death of Gods in Ancient Egypt*, 100–101.

28. Alison Roberts, *Hathor Rising* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1997), 32–33, 43, 79.

29. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 86–87, 135–37.

30. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 284–98.

31. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 226–27.

32. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 157–59.

33. Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 484–89.

34. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 46–48, 64.

remembrance and teacher of heavenly wisdom to men."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, a non-temple-related connection between Enoch and Thoth furthers the possibility of their identification. They are connected in both being associated with the bringing to pass of the deluge, the great flood. The books of Enoch recount his charge to speak the word of power, shaking the earth thereby, opening the fountains of the deep (Gen. 7:17),<sup>36</sup> while Thoth is required to return the earth to the waters of Nun (Book of the Dead, 178). Entry to the sacred precincts of the temple was regulated by Thoth as the divine guide who conducted the initiate through the ceremony. Participation in the temple ceremonial was open only to those judged to be pure in heart, for the rites pointed one to the Way, made accessible by Horus as Opener of the Way, and made known by Thoth as the "One Who Reveals the Way," for Thoth, like Enoch, had seen the cosmos, knew the path of ascent and, as vizier of Horus, was permitted to reveal the "Way" back to Amon.<sup>37</sup>

### The Ascent

Perhaps the most important function of temples in Egypt was to teach that "Way" back to Amon and the *neteru*, in other words, the path of the heavenly ascent, thereby answering the question posed in early Christian times by Clement, *utrumne sit mihi aliqua vita post mortem an nihil omnino postea sim futurus*<sup>38</sup> (whether there would be for me another life after death or whether afterward I would exist not at all). Not only the answer to the question of life after death, but also information about the nature of that continuing life among the gods and how the return to the gods might be made, was demonstrably part of the rites of Thoth and is attested at least as early as the fourth millennium BC by a text dating to that period, which was later engraved on the Shabako stone.<sup>39</sup> As revealed in Salt Papyrus 825, important additional functions of the temple and

its rites were the role of maintaining the balance of the cosmic covenant and the role of serving as a scale model of the cosmos, not only enabling man to find his way back to the heavenly realm but also permitting him to survey his place in relation to the cosmos. Dr. Barker has emphasized the importance of the everlasting covenant to the ancient Hebrews, as well as to the early Christians, examining the cosmic covenant elucidated in 1 Enoch (41) whereby heavenly bodies maintain their place in proper location and in good harmony with the rest of God's creation, in accordance with the oath that binds them. Moreover, the creation story is the story of the everlasting covenant, especially as articulated among the temple hymns in psalmic praises of creation (e.g. Ps. 74, 104).<sup>40</sup> For the Egyptians, balancing the cosmic covenant signified keeping at bay what they referred to as chaos, namely, the disorganization or the entropy of existing matter, and to overcome final chaos, the ultimate entropic disorganization, was to conquer death. In Egypt chaos was disorganization of matter and energy, and creation was organization of matter and energy.<sup>41</sup>

Another purpose was to disseminate vital teachings of how to maintain a pure heart in a corrupted world and so gain access to the ascent back to heavenly spheres. These were taught in the context of the events of a premortal council of gods and the consequent dispute between Set and Osiris that brought about the death of Osiris, as well as the larger cosmic struggle between Set and Horus that entailed defense of Amon's whole creation. By choosing Osiris/Horus and becoming at one with him, the purpose of the temple was fulfilled and the initiate through at-one-ment could join the company of the *neteru* or, in the words of Mircea Eliade, bringing about a restoration "of the primordial unity, that existed before the creation . . . in order to restore the whole that preceded the creation."<sup>42</sup>

35. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 330.

36. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 197–208.

37. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 355.

38. *Clementine Recognitions*, 1.1, in *Patrologia Graeca* 1:1207. See Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 343.

39. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 169.

40. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 147, 149, 201–29; Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 77.

41. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 2–14.

42. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1954), 78.



### Scale Model of the Universe

Similarly, the initiate was taught essential perspectives through understanding the temple as a scale model of the cosmos. Professor Nibley suggests that the temple, which contained even libraries, existed for teaching purposes as well as ritual experience. Part of that teaching was to “take bearings of the universe and in the eternities, both in time and space.”<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, the Egyptian temple served as an astronomical observatory where the cycles of the sun, moon, and stars were charted and recorded, as well as the progress of equinoctial processions, surmised to indicate the coming of future events in correspondence to the sun as it followed its equinoctial path through constellations where important historical events were believed to have been prefigured by the gods. An extremely ancient passage from the Pyramid Texts (503) describes the sightings of sun, moon, and stars at the temple through established apertures that were placed in the temple structure to mark the progression of the solar year. Stars were considered not only the realm of the undying ones but also beacons marking the path back to Amon hidden in their midst. The Egyptian temple was, therefore, the center of both a heliacal star cult as well as the center of the important solar cult.

Early astronomical parallels are shared with Hebrew religion and its temple. The notion of stars as the dwelling place of heavenly beings was not unfamiliar to the early Hebrews, since the book of Numbers (24:17) identifies great angelic figures as stars. Abraham was widely known to have been skillful in celestial science and is said to have attributed to Enoch his expertise in the science of the stars, which he is also reported to have taught in Egypt.<sup>44</sup> Of course, it is Enoch to whom ancient Jewish accounts give credit for establishing the astral arts, since the secrets of the stars were first revealed to him in conjunction with the ascent experience that is chronicled in the books of Enoch. Not only comprehension of the stars but also knowledge of the sun and the solar calendar belonged to Enoch,

as Enoch’s “Book of Astronomy” (1 Enoch, 72–82) reveals by describing the sun as placed in a circuit around 182 waning thrones and 182 waxing thrones. Here is yet another link between Enoch as astronomer and Thoth, who, in his additional role of lunar deity, taught the Egyptians about sun, moon, and stars and also calendars. Just as the Egyptian temple promoted the solar cult and with it a solar calendar, Dr. Barker has collected convincing evidence that a solar cult and solar calendar were part of the temple cult of Solomon’s temple. Indeed, not only the chariot of the sun atop Solomon’s temple or the solar calendar followed in that era by the temple but also certain associations of the sun with the Lady, paralleling the sun connections of Hathor in Egypt, establish the reality of a solar cult among the Hebrews, possibly brought with them from their Egyptian sojourn.<sup>45</sup>

In the religious practices of various cultures, the heavens were marked and platted in the place where they were believed to be closest the earth, at the nexus point where intersection of heaven and earth transpired. It was for this reason that in Egypt the demarcation of the temple and its surrounding precinct had to be conducted in a manner of foundation that reflected the will of heaven. The same was true of Greek temples whose *temenos* had to be designated through mantic means, and for Roman temples that were established through augural ritual in the pattern of the Etruscans. Indeed, the English word “temple” derives from the Latin *templum* which derives from the Etruscan *templé*, a word indicating the process by which a template pattern was, through divine indication, revealed in the sky in order to find a nexus point and so permit sacred boundaries to be drawn in the indicated temple site. The *templé* was not the structure but, more properly,

43. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 15.

44. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1.7.1–2; Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel*, 9.17.

45. For the discussion of the astronomical connections here noted, see Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 47–53, 92, 152–54. See also Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 262, for Enoch’s solar calendar formulated by the sun’s circuit around 182 waning thrones and 182 waxing thrones. While the solar cult of the Solomonic temple may have been influenced by the Egyptian solar cult, it is important to note that the exchange of knowledge may have passed in both directions, particularly if Abraham played a part in teaching the Egyptians, who originally observed only an astral cult before later adding a solar cult.



the land marked out and dedicated as sacred, the temple precinct if you will. Any buildings raised on the site had to be properly oriented to the cardinal directions with the most important orientation being the east. Only through correct site selection and situation upon the site could temples tap the source of divine power that transformed them into what Nibley described as cosmic powerhouses.<sup>46</sup> In this manner, the temple was transformed into a scale model of the cosmos.

The Temple of Solomon showed a certain similarity to an Egyptian temple in that the temple precinct contained not only the temple edifice proper but other buildings or courtyards where ceremony was also conducted. That temple provided for the outdoor performance of cleansing and sacrificial ordinances. So too the temple in Egypt, where initial rites, such as sacrifice, washing, anointing, and clothing in animal skins were carried out in a garden area in a courtyard of the temple. The temple itself was entered by passing through two great pylons, similar to the Jachin and Boaz pillars of Solomon's temple. Even in the most primitive era, when Egyptian temples were *tabernacula*, tentlike structures of woven reeds, at their entrance were placed great wooden pillars. In most of the historical era, pylons or great columns and, in the later period, obelisks were erected at the entrance to the temple sanctuary and had to be passed to enter. All of these initial gates were situated so that at the winter solstice they framed the rising sun. The sun rising between the pylons formed the hieroglyph called the *ah*t (or perhaps *ahket*)—the hieroglyph for the horizon, the place where man joined God, becoming at one with him. The temple itself was intended as a place of horizon as witnessed by its great pylons.<sup>47</sup>

### Structure and Ceremony

While the actual temple buildings varied in style and structure, as might be readily supposed since their individual planning and construction spanned three millennia, there did exist, nevertheless, some

commonalities in locations where the rites of Thoth were performed. The great hall was the primary setting for the performance of the instruction phase of the ritual. One entered in turn several great halls of assembly where sequences of the temple drama may have been presented, including the Hall of Geb and Shu, the place for the presentation of what has been called the creation sequence, but it is important to note this is more properly described as the place where various heavenly beings were involved in the organization and arrangement of energy and matter to fashion the world and its surrounding heavens and to place a veil that divided that organized substance from other worlds and spheres.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, a great pillared hypostyle hall may have been associated with explanations about the eternal worlds since each column was designed to represent the support of a world or of a sphere of heaven.<sup>49</sup> A significant part of the drama occurred in the next great hall, that of the garden. When initiates were ready to depart the earthly sphere, they were required to pass through a veil to begin their ascent. Veils were also found throughout the temple, placed to close off the most sacred areas.<sup>50</sup> The path of the ascent, or the perilous passage, proceeded in turn through either seven gates or seven veils and rose through seven successive chambers. However, the gates defined the boundaries of heavenly spheres, and for an initiate to pass, the proper signs or symbols needed to be revealed under the scrutiny of vigilant guardians at the gates. The seven chambers were variously arranged in the Egyptian temples, sometimes in a straight line leading to the innermost eighth chamber, called the house of God, where Amon's throne was located. In some structures, the seven chambers surrounded the house of God while in others they proceeded toward it in an upward spiral. Finally, there was a chamber designed to give view to the temple pylons and the sun rising between them. Those familiar with the design of Solomon's temple will note several commonalities.

46. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 257, 262–64; *Temple and Cosmos*, 19.

47. Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 16–18.

48. Nibley, *Joseph Smith Papyri*, 183–86, 204–8.

49. Wilkinson, *Complete Temples of Egypt*.

50. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 436–41.

Aspects of the rituals and ceremonies performed in the Egyptian temple are mentioned in a variety of sources. They include Pyramid Texts, the Book of the Dead, Books of Breathings, Coffin Texts, the Book of Wandering through Eternity, and a host of papyri or monumental inscriptions. Professor Nibley used all of these sources in his study of the Egyptian endowment, but relied particularly on two papyri of the Book of Breathings: Papyrus Louvre N. 3284 and Papyrus Leiden T 32. The survival of so many sources from over several millennia constitutes a remarkable information pool. Nevertheless, only partial reconstruction of the ancient rites can be achieved. Furthermore, the setting of any single aspect of the ritual in any particular time or duration of time, over a three-thousand-year period, is extremely daunting. In his study of the ritual, Professor Nibley discussed the initiatory and purificatory rites of the outer garden, followed by the “creation,” the garden drama, and finally the journey of the initiation and the stages of its ritual variously identified as the long road back or the perilous passage or the ascent. He concluded, of course, with the ritual embraces and the coronation that occurred at the end of the ceremony. A full elucidation of the ancient mysteries of the Egyptian temple would take many days, and discussion of related cosmological themes would occupy many more days. For those interested in detailed information, I recommend Professor Nibley’s *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*. Many present are well informed about the Temple of Solomon. No doubt you have noticed parallels in the rites of ancient Egypt noted above and in the ceremonial of that temple. For careful study of the Hebrew ceremonial of the first temple era, I recommend in particular Dr. Barker’s *The Gate of Heaven* and, especially, her very recently completed book, *The Mother of the Lord*, volume 1 of *The Lady in the Temple*.

The entire Egyptian temple ceremony must be understood as a procession. In a sense, it represents the process of progression all must undertake. The initiates entered the temple in an entry procession in which they were accompanied by the divine triad and received by Thoth, who alone escorted them through the rites he originated, at least until

they passed through the veil and entered the phase of the ascent where Osiris/Horus became involved in ascending the way that he had opened up, with the procession coming to an end when the initiates were received back into the presence of the divine triad.

Processions also mark the religious rituals of ancient Greece and Rome. The Greeks celebrated just outside of Athens the famed Eleusinian Mysteries of the mother goddess Demeter. There were also mysteries celebrated in other locations throughout Greece, such as the very ancient mysteries of Samothrace, which may actually have been more Anatolian than Greek. The Greek word *mysteria* simply signifies secret ceremony, and the participants were very careful to keep their secrets. For that reason, both in Greece and in Egypt, the rites of eternal life are still imperfectly understood because the secrets were kept sacred. At best, only parts of the ceremonies can be reconstructed. The classical-age mysteries of Demeter and her processional with its symbolic ascent of souls in the sacred chariot<sup>51</sup> or the earlier Mycenaean-era processional rites of the mother goddess guarded by sacred lions, seated in a sacred barque crowned with Hathor-like solar disk and horns, may well have been passed to the Greeks from the Minoans, among whom existed many Egyptian influences in all areas of life, including religion.<sup>52</sup>

In the earliest days of Rome, the Amon counterpart, Janus, was the god of processions and of gates, especially the particular gates, possibly seven in number, through which the procession passed. Janus was a uranic or sky deity who guarded gates and doorways, perhaps symbols for heavenly boundaries. He also represented light, just as did Osiris after he received the *atef* crown with *shu* feathers embodying the celestial light that passes between worlds. Moreover, Janus was the god associated with the solar cult at Rome, in whose temple was preserved the solar calendar. Janus led these processions, no doubt intended as part of a salvatory

51. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250bc.

52. Martin P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion*, 2d ed. (Lund, Sweden: Biblo and Tannen, 1949), 186–87, 245, 264–72, 353.

or a cleansing ritual, with his statue carried in a boat,<sup>53</sup> much like the barque of the Egyptian gods. It was, of course, via the solar barque of Horus that the divine ascent was accomplished. In it Horus sat enthroned amidst his followers, in a fashion reminiscent of the fiery chariot of the Hebrew ascent, which was a throne chariot in which the heavenly court or various of its members were conveyed in heavenly processional.<sup>54</sup> In the Egyptian processional of ascent, in company with Horus, the initiate traveled in the solar barque up the fiery stairway of ascent to join Amon in the horizon.<sup>55</sup>

At the conclusion of this ceremonial enactment of the ascent and preparatory to his coronation and his entry to the horizon, into the brilliant rays of the rising sun, the initiate was reclothed in royal regalia as a son of Amon and was presented the crook and flail of his dominion, and also the *atef* crown of an Osiris, with the *shu* feathers that symbolized the passage of light between worlds. The initiate then declared, "I have sailed in the barque of the sun; I have come to the place of Horus' eye; I am the unbroken seal on the book of myself; my words are heartfelt, my prayers are like incense to the nostrils of the gods; my spirit flames with the fire of God; I am a shining Osiris. My face is aglow with radiating white light. Open the way to me." The gate opens and Osiris revealed himself face-to-face, declaring his identity, "I am the eldest son of the Great One who dwells in eternal burnings, son of the Burning One. I am exalted; I am renewed; I am rejuvenated; I am Osiris, and so now, thou too" (Book of the Dead, 43). As the initiate exited to view the sun rising between the two great pylons and to join Amon in the place of the horizon, he first uttered an oath of fealty to Amon, and Amon responded with words of acceptance and the promise of eternal life, "Thou art my son."<sup>56</sup>

53. Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.73–74; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.9.9; Raffaele Pettazoni, "Per l'iconografia di Giano," *Studi Etruschi* 24 (1956): 79–80; Pierre Grimal, "Le dieu Janus et les origines de Rome," *Lettres d'humanité* 4 (1945): 15–121.

54. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 85, 189–90, 203, 234.

55. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 222–25.

56. Alan Gardiner, "The Coronation of King Haremhab," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 39 (1953): 13–31.

## Conclusion

The covers of Dr. Barker's books often depict mosaics from early Christian churches in late antique Ravenna. These Ravenna mosaics represent scenes of altars surrounded by veils on which are marked *gammadia*, symbols of the ancient square instrument by means of which straight lines were drawn. This symbol was also frequently found inscribed on the ancient Egyptian temple along with the image of a compass. Prof. Nibley explained that their presence is in representation of the tools of geometry used by ancient astronomers who sought to chart the pathway back to God.<sup>57</sup> The ancient rites of Thoth endeavored, as did the ancient rites of Enoch, to reveal to men that very pathway back, at the end of which Osiris/Horus might be seen, face-to-face, and faithful children restored to the presence and embrace of their father, assuming roles to which they were heir.

In a conference with the theme of Mormonism and the Temple, it is perhaps not untoward to close with two of Joseph Smith's revelations, wherein elements of that pathway back are mentioned.

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. (D&C 93:1)

And they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things. . . . Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods. (D&C 132:19–20)

## Postscript

The period of ancient Egyptian religion and temple cult that the paper examines is that of the two and half millennia between 3500 BC and 1000 BC. While there existed in religious practice an astounding degree of stability over a vast period of time, it is impossible not to acknowledge the likelihood of change transpiring, whether outright reform or

57. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 109–14.

merely syncretism. Evidence does not exist, however, to detail that change or even offer a vague chronology for it. Accordingly, the methodology pursued in this analysis is synchronic rather than diachronic. Nevertheless, it can be noted that while certain influences from earlier times survived, by the Hellenistic era a very different belief system prevailed as the primary native Egyptian religion. Indeed, the cult of Isis and her new consort, Serapis, so widespread

among Hellenistic Greeks and later in the Roman Empire, represents significant departure from old beliefs and ways. The rivalry and clear differences between early Christianity and this, as well as other pagan cults of that later era, does not invalidate the possibility of similarity in the temple theology of Jews and Christians with the original practices of the most ancient periods of Egyptian religion.





# The Temple, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Gospel of Matthew

John W. Welch

It is good to be with you today in what we all may hope is the beginning of a new emphasis on Temple Studies in North America. Thanks to the conference organizers (especially Gary Anderson), our host Phil Barlow, and to our esteemed speakers who have come from England, from the London Temple Studies Group. We look to that group as a model of the high level of scholarship and insight that we hope to emulate and cultivate here in North America.

In this paper today, I hope to consolidate for you the several publications and presentations I have made about the Sermon on the Mount over the last twenty-five years and add some new developments to them. These range from my books, *The Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (1990) and *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (1999),<sup>1</sup> to the meeting of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics in Cambridge three years ago,<sup>2</sup> and at the meeting of the London Temple Studies Group at the Temple Church in London last June.<sup>3</sup> My work on the Sermon on the Mount in the

gospel of Matthew and its counterpart in the Book of Mormon, which has become widely known as the Sermon at the Temple, is still a work in progress, as are all good lines of enquiry, rewarding repeated examination and continuing to bear new fruit.

As we turn to the study of the Sermon on the Mount, which I propose to read as a temple text and through temple theology, I take you back to 1990 and the second edition of my book *The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple*, which you may have read. Some of you probably have not read *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*. I thank Margaret for seeing that this latter book was possible. She came here ten years ago to give a seminar at BYU, and I had the pleasure of driving her through Utah County. As we drove by Mount Timpanogos, we started talking about mountains and the mountain of the Lord, and she started making connections. Then I told her I had done a lot of work on the Sermon on the Mount as a temple text. She wouldn't let me stop talking about it. We corresponded about it, and eventually I received an invitation to present the topic at Temple Studies Group in London and elsewhere in London. The book was published by Ashgate in 2009.<sup>4</sup> You'll see that it is in the series Society for Old Testament Studies, and Margaret was the head of that series at the time. I'm grateful that she encouraged me through all of this. She had a copy of *The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple*, which is of course all based on the Book of Mormon because that where the whole idea came from. What we get

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1. John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), which is an expanded paperback of the 1990 publication *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, with additions throughout along with a chapter on ritual studies.

2. Published as John W. Welch, "Temple Themes and Ethical Formation in the Sermon on the Mount," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22, no. 2 (May 2009): 151–63. The conference of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics on the Sermon on the Mount and Christian Ethics was held September 6, 2008, at the Westcott House, Cambridge. I express appreciation to Susan Parsons, Margaret Barker, Sarah Lloyd, and Jennifer Hurlbut for their encouragement and assistance with that publication.

3. Available on the web at <http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Symposia.htm#VI>, last visited October 11, 2012.

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4. John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009). The first printing of this book has now sold out but, hopefully, it will appear before too long as a paperback second edition.

from the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi that we don't get in the Bible, at least explicitly, is the context of the sermon: where was the sermon given, to whom, what kind of people, and for what purposes? In 3 Nephi we see that the sermon is a covenant making text: the sermon was given at the temple of Bountiful, it was given to a group of righteous people, and there is a clear temple context. At the end of that day in 3 Nephi all of the people enter into a covenant to keep the commandments which they had been given that day, which he had commanded them or that he should give to them (3 Nephi 18:10, 14). These are crucial clues for reading the text at that level. Margaret came back and said, "You must do for the rest of us what you have done for the Latter-day Saints. Can you make the same case for the Sermon on the Mount as a temple text without depending upon the Book of Mormon?" I would like to suggest that we certainly can. The Ashgate book demonstrates that temple themes saturate every stage of the Sermon on the Mount, and that this consistent confluence of temple themes gives the Sermon on the Mount a unified rhetorical voice and a powerful sense of authority, which significantly explains what makes—and always has made—that text so spiritually and ethically compelling.

### What Is Temple Theology?

At the outset, I want to begin with a few comments about theology. What is theology? How many kinds of theology are there? What are their main concerns? Most commonly, people speak of what we might call philosophical theology. This involves systematically seeing God and what we know about God through such tools as deductive logic, working mainly in the media of words, concepts, ideas, systematics, and creeds, as well as the perpetual wrestling with questions regarding being, existence, timelessness, the unlimited attributes of God (the "omni"s we attribute to divinity), changelessness, eternity, infinity, unity or oneness, absolutes, as if the world existed in an idealized present. Philosophical theology thrives on questions—answers are always the death of philosophy.

Then there is natural theology, which involves seeing God and what we know about God through such tools as inductive reasoning, working

primarily from the perceived natural order of things, scientific observation, analogy, and teleology. Natural theology focuses on origins, the past, order as it has emerged, attributes consonant with natural phenomena, development, change, time, process, plurality, diversity, society, ethics, and purposefulness. Natural theology thrives on data (incomplete though it always will be).

But there's more: there is also "temple theology," and we are indebted to Margaret Barker for coining this term. I hope in the future we will come to better understand how temple theology differs from other theologies. Temple theology is related to the schools of thought that emphasize the role of ritual in the development of religious narratives and beliefs. It may draw on the study of structuralism in myths and rituals, but it seeks more fundamentally the origin and shape of beliefs about God. It celebrates what can be known or represented about God, his attributes, and his manifestations as they are embodied in the signs, symbols, and patterns (semiotics) of religious practices, especially as they occur in relationships, shared emotions and communications in places of contact, of ritual instruction, and in human responses of thanks, praise, and covenant making, all of which serve the purposes of transforming mankind, of making atonement efficacious, and of binding man to God for purposes of protection, healing, blessing, and ultimate exaltation. Temple theology is concerned with, as Margaret has concisely defined, "what the priests believed themselves to be, or what their rituals meant,"<sup>5</sup> and "with Wisdom, and with the structure and harmony of the creation, . . . the figure of Moses and the history of Israel as the chosen people."<sup>6</sup> Because it is not limited to the examination of written documents, Temple theology has the potential to recover and project the fullness of the past, and thus is well-positioned to give bearings in answering the so-called terrible questions of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going: things as they were, as they are, and as they will be. Temple theology strives to elucidate the thought patterns and spiritual experiences that come through the

5. Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology* (London: SPCK, 2004), 14.

6. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 35.

repetition of sacred ordinances in order to develop habits of body and soul that emulate and imitate the character and behavior of God. Temple theology is more interested in what God does (and what God asks us to do) than just in who God is (God's nature). It is interested as much in the God of nature as in the nature of God. Temple theology is dynamic, generative, and experiential, concerned with powers, possibilities, and emotions; with building, bridging, repairing, and preserving everlasting relationships; making one out of the many, and many out of the one. Because it focuses on God's agency, temple theology is more open to and interested in the physical representation of spiritual matters and the material reality of divine power than most other kinds of theology. Religious rituals typically enact ceremonies of transformation that take participants from one state, pass them through a liminal state, and then elevate them to a higher realm. In the temple, God appears, speaks, has a plan, loves, and wants to achieve a fullness of joy as universally as possible. Temple theology not only treats these themes with descriptive care. It also accepts and affirms ritual actions as a valid means of coming to know the divine. In other words, rituals carry real ontological and epistemological weight. In sum, temple theology thrives on principles, practices, and models. Temples themselves are templates that orient humans in relation to the cardinal directions in heaven and on earth, and thus guide us in the beginning of an eternal quest.

Thus, for Christianity, temple theology is all about contextualizing and situating concepts in a matrix of images and practices that go hand in hand with the faith, which is at home in the temple, that stands behind so many biblical texts. As Margaret Barker has said, we must not assume that New Testament texts were "being used out of context in order to dress new ideas decently in scripture. . . . Images and practice that most Christians take for granted such as priesthood, . . . sacrifice and atonement are all obviously derived from the temple."<sup>7</sup> Temple theology looks at religious experience as one great whole, with the Temple itself "as part of an organic whole," one that "cannot be studied in isolation, . . . integral

to many of the institutional pillars"<sup>8</sup> of Israelite, Jewish, and Christian faith. And for these reasons, the premises, interests, and methods of temple theology undergird my reading of the Sermon on the Mount in the light of the Temple.

### Temple Theology, Temple Studies, and the Sermon on the Mount

My interests in the dynamics of temple theology are shared by a rising number of very recent publications on temple studies, including Margaret Barker's *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* and her *Temple Theology*; Daniel Gurtner's "Matthew's Theology of the Temple and the 'Parting of the Ways,'" Alan Kerr's *The Temple of Jesus' Body: A Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*; Jonathan Klawans' *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*; and Andrew Mbuvi's *Temple, Exile, and Identity in 1 Peter*, to name only a few.<sup>9</sup> This

8. Joshua Berman, *The Temple* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1995), xx.

9. Listed alphabetically, a few of these publications in recent years include:

Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000);

Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T&T Clark International, 2007), and *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004);

G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004);

Joshua Berman, *The Temple* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1995);

George Braulik, "Psalms and Liturgy: Their Reception and Contextualization," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 24, no. 2 (2003): 309–32;

Timothy C. Gray, *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in Its Narrative Role* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Books, 2010);

Daniel M. Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple and the 'Parting of the Ways,'" in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 128–53;

William J. Hamblin and David Seely, *Solomon's Temple: Myth and History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007);

Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes, U.K.: Paternoster, 2006);

Dirk J. Human and Cas J. A. Vos, eds., *Psalms and Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2004);

Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: A Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement 220 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002);

Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006);

7. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 11.

wave of potent studies shows that much remains to be learned from the ideology of the Temple and its influence on the New Testament in many formative Christian contexts, notably the Sermon on the Mount.

Modern readers from all directions are approaching seminal texts such as the Sermon on the Mount looking for new leverage in strengthening its moral voice in today's world, whether in wrestling with deepening personal spirituality, inculcating morals in our societies, improving the station of those with disabilities, overcoming ethnocentrism and violence, working for social justice, and even in saving planet Earth. But where can faithful readers turn to reclaim and reinvigorate the power of this text, variously known by such popular labels as the Great Sermon, the Speech of Speeches, or the Magna Carta of the Kingdom of God, that has long stood at the bedrock of Christianity? My endeavor here is to suggest that the Sermon on the Mount is best understood and most powerfully implemented in a broad matrix of temple themes.

No text is more important or has had more influence on the history and character of Christianity than the Sermon on the Mount,<sup>10</sup> and yet giving a clear account of its literary nature and apparent eclecticism has remained disconcertingly elusive and paradoxically puzzling, even though, as Hans Dieter Betz has observed, during the entire history of all biblical interpretation "almost every author . . . [has] had one thing or another to say on the subject" of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>11</sup> For this, the Sermon

has come in for its share of criticism, from Martin Luther's rejection of it because of its emphasis on works (even "good works"),<sup>12</sup> to modern concerns about its excessively supererogatory demands. But seeing the Sermon on the Mount in a temple setting gives the Sermon on the Mount greater clarity, power, and vitality, helping it to be understood as it originally sounded especially to Jewish audiences, who lived in one way or another in awe or awareness of the Temple, which was far and away the dominant feature on every landscape in first-century Judaism—geographical, political, ethical or theological. Cut off from its spiritual roots in the sacred values of its traditional heritage, the legitimizing moral foundation of the Sermon on the Mount withers and shrinks in the face of modern permissive demands and secular challenges.

Indeed, some of the individual sayings of the Sermon on the Mount seem quite odd or make poor sense outside the temple context. One thinks particularly of the otherwise impossible demand to be perfect (*teleios*, Matthew 5:48) or the inexplicable instruction not to cast the holy thing (*hagion*) before the swine (Matthew 7:6), but these words make clear sense in light of their temple significance, as seen below.

Within, and perhaps only within, a temple framework does the Sermon on the Mount work as a unified whole, as a coherent and compelling text, consistently drawing on words, expressions, symbols, values, concepts, themes, covenants, remembrances, and sacred experiences that principally belonged to the Temple. While the following comments draw mainly from historical and literary observations, strong ethical and theological readings of the Sermon on the Mount can emerge still today through an effort to understand this text's original intent and to hear its messages in their initial rhetorical register. Because this foundational text is so concise and compact, yet expansive and suggestive, a reader must take particular heed to how one hears (Luke 8:18).

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John M. Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2008);

Andrew M. Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile, and Identity in 1 Peter* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007);

Joshua L. Moss, "Being the Temple: Early Jewish and Christian Interpretive Transpositions," in *Midrash and Context*, ed. Lieve M. Teugels and Lumer Rivka (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2007), 39–59;

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Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes: The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006).

10. Warren S. Kissinger, *Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library Association, 1975), xi.

11. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 3.

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12. Calling it even "the devil's masterpiece [ein Meister Stück des Teuffels]." *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar, 1906), 32:300.



## What Is a Temple Text?

The first step in interpreting any text is to determine what kind of a text it is. Much is at stake in answering this question in regard to the Sermon on the Mount: Is this text held together by logic? Is it an example of Hellenistic philosophical moralizing? Or is it a scrapbook or anthology of random sayings, growing out of peasant folk wisdom or Jewish hyperbole? Or is it something entirely different, fundamentally grounded in the faith, hopes, grace, redemption, purity, and theology of the Temple? In its temple elements we can find the answer.

Some temple texts are easier to identify than others, especially if they mention the temple explicitly or are written to serve a temple function. Thus, the dedicatory prayer offered by Solomon at the dedication of his temple in 1 Kings 8 is clearly a temple text. Other temple texts may be less obvious, yet they report sacred events, such as the appearance of Jehovah to Moses in Exodus 19, or may stipulate the terms for the making of a holy covenant between God and his people, as in Exodus 20–23, or its renewal, as in Joshua 24. Such texts become temple texts when they are used to comprise the historical, theological, or covenantal underpinnings of the ceremonies, symbols, or purposes behind the construction or liturgies of the temple. Elsewhere, even more broadly, I have defined a temple text as one that contains the most sacred teachings of the plan of salvation that are not to be shared indiscriminately, and that ordains or otherwise conveys divine powers to participants, through ceremonial or symbolic means, together with commandments received by sacred oaths, all of which allow the recipient to stand ritually in the presence of God.

Any number of clues may signal to readers that a text has temple connections. These clues might include the location of the delivery of the speech at a temple (I see Benjamin's speech in the Book of Mormon as a temple text because it happens at the temple) or revered place or holy mountain, as well as the mention of such things as preparations of purification, separation from the world, searching for atonement, and ascent. Coded vocabulary, as well as sacred teachings, revelations, or holy pronouncements belong especially to the temple. Silence, awe, and pondering are signal characteristics of temples.

One's orientation with respect to the cosmos, one's transformation from one spiritual state to another, and the bestowal of new names marking such transformations, as well as the imposition of laws, conditions, and obligations within a covenant community, all may reflect temple connections. Ritual theory people, as Phil Barlow talked about, will see temple texts involved in covenant making, a method of taking people from one state to another, and filling a social function of binding together.

Temple texts, like temples themselves, build unity and unleash spiritual power, allowing the participant to access the Divine and stand in the presence of God. Such texts would include the Mount of Transfiguration narrative in Matthew 17, Jacob's covenant and atonement speech in 2 Nephi 6–10, Benjamin's coronation speech in Mosiah 1–6, and Alma's plan of redemption speech in Alma 12–13. By these criteria, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 and the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi 11–18 are also to be understood as temple texts.

## The Sermon and the Temple Mount: A Tale of Two Mountains, or One?

For many reasons, the Sermon on the Mount should be read as a temple text. This point is made especially clear in the Book of Mormon (which is where I first observed it and began to speak of the text in 3 Nephi 12–14 as the Sermon at the Temple), precisely because that text is delivered explicitly at the temple and in a covenant making setting. But even in the New Testament, the evidence is clear enough that the Sermon on the Mountain is a text that belongs on the Holy Mount.

There is no better place to begin one's reading of the Sermon on the Mount than where Matthew sets this text. Matthew begins, "And Jesus went up into the mountain (*eis to oros*)" (Matthew 5:1). By the way, it does not say that Jesus "went out on a gentle hillside." When you visit Galilee and the guide takes you out on a gentle, rolling hill and says the Sermon occurred at a place like this, it's probably not correct. This key language in Matthew's introduction to the Sermon on the Mount is precisely the same as the language in the Septuagint text of Exodus 19:3 and 24:12, when Moses and the elders go up into the sacred mountain. Indeed, Jesus "went up (*anebe*)" just as Moses



had gone up (*anebē*, Exodus 19:3 and 24:12) “into the mountain” (*eis to oros*). One should not diminish Matthew’s allusion to Moses here. In the mountain, the seventy elders “saw God” (Exodus 24:11) and received the law (Exodus 24:12). Jesus will similarly promise his disciples, if they are pure in heart, that they too “shall see God” (Matthew 5:8), and he likewise dispensed to them the law, exemplified by three of the Ten Commandments and two other key provisions of biblical jurisprudence. W. D. Dumbrell rightly notes that while these “points of parallelism with Sinai are not to be overstressed,” the import of these connections “clearly cannot be ignored.”<sup>13</sup>

Mount Sinai, of course, is a prototype of the Temple, the natural dwelling place of the Most High God. In Israelite religion, as in ancient Near Eastern thought generally, “‘sanctuary’ and ‘mountain’ became conceptually identical.”<sup>14</sup> Thus when Psalm 24 asks, “Who shall ascend into the hill (*anabēsetai eis to oros*) of the Lord?” (which is to say, “Who is worthy to enter the Temple, the house of the Lord?”) this psalm equates the Temple in Jerusalem with the mountain of the Lord, using again the same wording which was used in the sacred ascent texts in Exodus and which Matthew also used to introduce the Sermon on the Mount.

This is only the first of many verbal links that forge a solid bond between the Sermon on the Mount and the Temple, showing that, in order to read the Sermon the Mount authentically, people must see themselves—as all temple worshippers and participants did—as being in a holy place, presenting themselves in a holy state, having clean hands and a pure heart, ready to listen in the sanctuary of silence, personally prepared to renew or accept the Lord’s covenant, promising and vowing to keep its stipulations, enabling them to receive its promised gifts and blessings but also requiring them to hear and take seriously its warnings and curses. Temple theology and this temple-mount context invites all interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple to look

further into the many relationships, as several levels, between these texts and the temple.

### **Word-level Relations with the Temple, Especially with the Psalms (Table 1)**

I begin at the word level.<sup>15</sup> Table 1 is the cumulative verbal evidence of the Sermon’s temple register. Indeed, the Sermon’s vocabulary, as shown on Table 1, is extensively temple-related, with over 120 temple elements found in the Sermon on the Mount. These can be linked readily with broadly recognized temple themes. Fully two-thirds (86) of these elements in the Greek text of the Sermon on the Mount can be strongly linked to words or concepts in the Septuagint version of the Psalms that were sung in or about the Temple.

Let me remind you of what Margaret said regarding which version of the Old Testament we should use. We can’t always rely on the Hebrew to give the earliest version of what was going on in the temple of Solomon. The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint or LXX, which was translated in the second and third centuries BC, preserves older readings which don’t always agree with the Masoretic. So again we have to look at both. But more than that, the Christians who wrote their texts used the Greek Bible as their Bible, so whatever Hebrew words they may have had in mind, they in fact used the Greek version. Bible scholars have yet to do much research on the use of the Septuagint in the New Testament.

In table 1, column 1 lists words or phrases in the Sermon on the Mount. Column 2 shows locations in Psalms that use the same words. It is immediately clear that the Sermon draws heavily from the Psalms. In fact, some phrases are immediately recognizable as verbatim quotations from the Psalms. Many examples can be given, ranging from the beginning to the end of the Sermon on the Mount:

The phrase “blessed are the pure in heart” in Matthew 5:8 draws directly on Psalms 24:4, “clean hands and a pure heart.”

13. W. D. Dumbrell, “The Logic and the Role of the Law in Matthew 5:1–20,” *Novum Testamentum* 23, no.1 (1981): 5.

14. S. Talmon, “Har,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (trans. D. Green; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:444.

15. The connections between the temple and these key words and phrases are discussed in detail in chapters 4–6 of my *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*. For sources in support and development of these temple connections, see the footnotes in that book.

Psalm 37 conjoins the words the words “meek” and “inheriting,” just as is found in Matthew 5:5.

The words “filled” and “righteousness” stand together in Ps 17:15, as in Matthew 5:6.

In Psalms 32:11, ancient Israelites sang, “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice (*agallias*the), O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!” As Betz says, in his 1995 commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, the “double call [rejoice and be exceeding glad, again *agallias*the] appeals to the hearers or readers for what amounts to a liturgical response, much like ‘hallelujah’ or similar exclamations.”<sup>16</sup> The verb *agalliaomai* (“hallelujah”), whose use is obviously temple-related, appears here in Matthew 5:12 and otherwise almost exclusively in the Psalms (53 times) and in Isaiah (11 times).

The phrase “heavenly throne” (Matthew 5:34) is in Psalms 11:4, and the companion phrase “city of the great king” (Matthew 5:35) comes directly from Psalms 48:2.

In connection with the Lord’s Prayer, calling God “Father” is in Psalms 89:26.

“Holy is [hallowed be] his name” is in Psalms 111:9.

“In heaven and on earth” is in Psalms 136:6.

Glory, kingdom, and power are all in Psalms 145:6.

A plea for forgiveness of all our trespasses is in Psalms 25:18.

The warning in Matthew 7:6, “lest they trample [your pearls] under their feet, and turn again and rend you,” echoes Psalms 50:22, “lest I rend and there be none to deliver.”

The two diverging ways in Matthew 7:13–14 (wide way *hodos* and the narrow way *hodos*) emerge right from Psalms 1:6, “the Lord knows the way (*hodos*) of righteousness, but the way (*hodos*) of the wicked will perish.”

Verse 8 of Psalm 94 contrasts the wise man and the foolish man, using the same root words, *phronimos* and *mōros*, found in Matthew 7:24–26.

Words as distinctive as “depart you workers of iniquity (*anomia*)” in Matthew 7:23 come straight from Psalms 6:8, “Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity (*anomia*).”

Dominant vocabulary words also give the Sermon on the Mount a strong ring of temple psalmody. For example, the Beatitudes begin with the word *makarioi* (blessed), which is also the very first word in Psalm 1, and that word goes on to appear twenty-five more times in the Psalms. Whereas “makarisms” are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the Enoch literature (2 Enoch 42:11), in proverbial sayings (Proverbs 8:34–36) and in the Old Testament Apocrypha (Tobit 13:14; Sirach 26:1), one may rightly suspect that the average Galilean or Judean audience would have been most familiar with this distinctive word’s prominent use in their temple Psalms, but this fact is usually completely overlooked. Other key Greek words in the Sermon on the Mount that appear multiple times in the Psalms range from mercy (171 times), enemies, righteousness, and glory, to love (even *agapaō*, 50 times), and prayer (37 times), down to meek, filled, serve, and even “trodden under foot” (*katapatein*) (6 times). This extensive and consistent use of temple vocabulary from the Psalms is most noteworthy.

The sounds of the Psalms especially would have sounded in a temple register for those with ears to hear, for there can be no doubt that the Psalms were chanted or sung in the Temple by Levitical cantors and lay worshipers, by pilgrims as they went up to make legally required appearances at the Temple, by individual worshippers in the Temple, by dispersed Jews yearning for the Temple, and by families giving thanks for the blessings of the Temple. While psalmodic poetry served several purposes in many settings, including sacral coronations, weddings of kings and priests, anointings, banishment of evil, triumphant processions, and Sabbath worship (as the Psalms of Solomon, the Dead Sea Thanksgiving Hymns and Sabbath Songs, and the Odes of Solomon, in addition to the Psalms in the Old Testament show), it is clear that the Temple is the dominate factor that unites and animates the biblical Psalms.<sup>17</sup> They all have something directly or proximately to do with the Temple, and by extension, the same is

16. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 151.

17. See the extensive discussion and demonstration of this in LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord? The Psalms in Israel’s Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2009).

**Table 1. Temple Themes and Texts in the Sermon on the Mount**

<b>Sermon on the Mount</b>	<b>Psalms</b>	<b>Other Temple Texts</b>	<b>Pertinent Temple Themes</b>
Into the mountain	24:1	Isa 2:2	Mountain of the Lord
Blessed ( <i>makarioi</i> )	1:1 (+25 more times)		Celestial beatification
Rewards	19:11		Source of heavenly rewards
Poor ( <i>ptōchoi</i> )	69:32 (+15x)		Beseeking and bowing down
Kingdom of God	145:11–13		God as eternal king
Mourning		Ezra 10:6	Sadness over covenant breaking
Comfort ( <i>paraklēsis</i> )	94:19		Comfort and joy
Meekness ( <i>praeis</i> )	76:2–9 (+8x)	Num 12:3	Like Moses, waiting on the Lord
Meek inherit the earth	37:9, 11, 18		Receiving peace and prosperity
Hungering	37:19; 107:9		Needing and seeking righteousness
Thirsting for God	42:2; 63:1; 107:9		Needing and seeking God
Righteousness	17:15 (+80x)		Divine justice
Filled ( <i>chortasthēsontai</i> )	17:15 (+8x)		Beholding God’s glory
Receiving mercy	5:7 (+171x)		Through covenantal fidelity
Pure in heart ( <i>katharoi</i> )	24:4 (+6x)	Ex 25–Lev 24 (101x)	Entrance and purity requirements
Seeing God	17:15; 24:6; 63:2		Encountering God’s glory
Peace, peacemakers	147:14 (+23x)	Isa Jer (49x)	Peace of complete atonement
Sons of God	2:7; 82:6	Job 38:7; Dt 32:8	Sonship, angels, deified beings
Persecution	7:1; 31:15; 35:3		Deliverance from persecution
Exclusion ( <i>aphorisōsin</i> )	69:28; 109:13		Blotting out the wicked
Unjustly cursed, reviled	119:86, 161		Imprecations, swearing of oaths
Rejoice, rejoice	32:11 (+60x)		Cultic joy
Hallelujah ( <i>agalliasthe</i> )	5:11; 32:11 (+51x)		Cultic exultation, singing
Salt of the earth	60:1	Lev 2:13	Salt of the covenant
Casting out ( <i>ekballein</i> )	78:55; 109:10		Excluding evil, excommunication
Trodden underfoot	7:5 (+5x)	Isa (14x)	Judgment, humiliation
Light of the earth	27:1; 104:1–2		Light to the world
City on a mountain	48:2		Holy city, temple city
Lamp ( <i>luchnos</i> )	18:28; 119:105		Word of God, God’s Torah
Lampstand ( <i>luchnia</i> )		Ex 25 (9x)	The Menorah ( <i>luchnia</i> )
Letting light shine	31:16	Gen 1:1–3	Creation, Let there be light
Decalogue	19; 50:18–20	Ex 20:13, 14, 16	Daily temple Decalogue recitation
Anger	7:6; 56:7		The anger of the Lord
Prohibition of anger	37:7–9		Vengeance is only of the Lord
Judgment	(24x)		Judgment by temple councils
Gift ( <i>dōron</i> )		Lev 1–9 (30x)	Sacrifice
Altar ( <i>thusiastērion</i> )		Ex 27–Lev 10 (125x)	Altar of the Temple
Reconciliation		Lev 6:1–7	Unity and harmony
No adultery	50:14–19	Lev 18; Ezek 23:37	No infidelity, impurity, or idolatry

Purity of heart	24:4		Complete purity
Covenant marriage		Mal 2:14; Ezek 16	The creation of man and woman
Divorce ( <i>apostasion</i> )		Hos 4; Lev 21	Requiring purity of priests
Right hand	16:7 (+38x)		Priest's use of right hand
Yes, yes		Dt 27; Num 5:22	Amen, amen
Oaths	50:5, 14	Num 30	Solemnizing obligations
God's throne in heaven	11:4 (+5x)		Throne of God, ark
In the name of the earth		Isa 66:1	Connecting heaven and earth
City of the great king	48:2		Holy city of Jerusalem
Make hair white ( <i>tricha leukē</i> )		Lev 13:2-10 (5x)	White hair of leprosy
Talion		Ex 21; Lev 24	Divine justice
Repay good for evil		Ex 23:4; 1Sam 24:17	Divine mercy
Slap on the cheek	3:7	Isa 50:6; Lam 3:30	Ritual humiliation of the king
Coat ( <i>chitōn</i> )		Ex 28-Lev 16 (12x)	Linen garments of priests
Lend and give generously	37:26; 112:5	Dt 15:7-8	Caring for the poor
Love people ( <i>agapaō</i> )	(+50x)	Lev 19:18	Love, peace, holiness
Pray for enemies	( <i>echroi</i> 108x)		Intercessory prayers
Sons of God	82:6		Fatherhood of God
God gives to all		1 Kings 8	Life-sustaining blessings
Sun over all	84:11		The Lord is a sun
Rain on all the earth	147:8		Ensuring rain
Perfect ( <i>teleios = shalom</i> )	1:3; 65:1; 119:165	Dt 18:13; 2Sm 22:26	God's nature, gift for doing his will
Perfect ( <i>teleiōsis</i> )		Ex 29-Lev 8 (11x)	The ram of "consecration"
Giving in secret			The Chamber of Secrets
Trumpets	81:3; 105:3 1	Chron 15:24	Music, heralding God
Glorify ( <i>doxazein, doxa</i> )	22:23 (+65x)		Glorifying God
Prayer in secret	55:1	1 Kings 8 (hear 12x)	Being heard of God
Prayer	(37x)	Isa 56:7	House of prayer
God as Father	89:26; 103:13		Nomina sacra
Hallowed name, make holy	72:17; 103:1; 111:9		Sanctification
Kingdom come	22:28; 45:6		Praising God
On earth as in heaven	135:6		Connecting heaven to earth
Daily bread	105:40	Ex 25:30	Manna, Bread of the Presence
Kingdom, glory, power	145:10-12	1 Chron 29:11	Doxology
Forgive	25:18; 32:1 (+6x)	Kings 8:30	Forgiveness
Fasting	35:11-14; 69:10	Lev 16	Self-abasement, humility
Anointing		Ex 40:15	Ritual anointing
Washing		2 Sam 12:20	Ritual washing
Treasures		Neh 10:37	Temple treasury, making vows
Light	27:1; 56:13		The Lord is Light
Seeing in the light	36:9; 119:130		Understanding, enlightenment
Reflecting the light	34:29	Ex 3:2	Transfiguration

Eye single ( <i>haplous</i> )		Prov 11:25	Purity
Radiating light	38:10		The Temple as a beacon, lighthouse
Full of light	139:12		Driving away darkness
Serve the Lord only	2:11; 22:30 (+6x)	Ex 20:3	Temple service
Love the Master ( <i>agapaō</i> )	(+50x)	Dt 6:4–5	Loving God
Cleave unto ( <i>antechō</i> )		Prov 3:18; Isa 56:4	Loyalty to God
Necessities of life	23:5	1 Kings 8:35–39	Providing sufficient abundance
Anxiety	38:18		Worrying about sin
Stature, life span ( <i>hēlikia</i> )		Sira 26:17	Unimprovable life, excellence
Cubit ( <i>pēchus</i> )		Ex 25-38; Ez 40–46	Temple measurements (+120x)
Spin ( <i>nēthousin</i> )		Ex 26-39 (10x)	Temple veil, garments, curtains
Clothes ( <i>endumata</i> )	93:1; 104:1	Ex 28:2; Job 40:10	Holy garments
Grass is temporary	37:2 (+3x)		Temple is eternal
Seek first, all else added	37:4		Eternal promises
Judgment	7:8; 35:24 (+22x)		Eternal judgment, the Mercy Seat
Measure ( <i>metron</i> )		Ezek 40–48 (+40x)	Divine order of creation
Measure for measure (talion)		Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20	Principle of divine justice
Speck, chip ( <i>karpos</i> )		Gen 8:11	Evidence of divine peace
Beam ( <i>dokos</i> )		1 Kings 6:15–16	Beams in the Temple
The holy ( <i>hagion</i> )	2:6 (+59x)	Ex 26–Num (300x)	Guarding sacred things
Tear in pieces	50:5, 22		Punishing covenant breakers
Seek	69:32; 105:4	Isa 2:3	Seeking the Lord in his Temple
Bread, fish	23:5; 132:15		Sacred meals
Others ( <i>plēision</i> ) as the self	15:3 (+10x)	Lev 19:18	Community, collectivity
Two ways ( <i>hodos</i> )	1:6	Dt 30:19	Separating polar opposites
Gate ( <i>pulēs</i> )	24:7-10; 118:19-20	Ex Num Ezek (38x)	Temple gates
False prophets		Jer (9x); Zech 13:2	Mismanagers of the Temple
Tree as archetype	1:1-3	Gen 3:3, 22	Tree of Life, individuals as trees
Works judged as fruits	58:11; 104:13; 128:3		God's judgment
Vine and fig		1 Kings 4:5	Blessing the righteous
Thornbushes and thistles		Gen 3:19	Cursing sinners, the fallen state
Lord, Lord	116:4		Invoking the name of the Lord
Knowing God		Amos 3:2	Covenant making
Entering	118:26	Isa 33:17	Entering into the Lord's Presence
Excluding iniquity ( <i>anomia</i> )	6:8, 141:4		Defeating evil
Wise man ( <i>phronimos</i> )	94:8	Prov, Sir (26x)	Wisdom
Upon the rock	27:5	Num 20:8; Jdg 13:19	Temple, mountain, altar
Foolish man ( <i>mōros</i> )	94:8	Sira (28x)	Lack of Wisdom
Upon the sand		Ezek 13:10–11	Chaos, false prophets
Floods	78:16; 93:3; 105:41		Cosmic floods, destruction of evil



true of the elements that comprise the Sermon on the Mount. Never before have these temple themes in the Sermon on the Mount been thoroughly catalogued and analyzed. Yes, it seems to me that no one immersed in Jewish culture could have listened carefully to Jesus and missed the connecting verbal register between these words in the Psalms and the Sermon on the Mount.

### Further Connections with Other Old Testament Temple Texts

Moreover, as shown in table 1 column 3, forty-three of the eighty-six psalmic elements are also tied to technical terminology used in other Old Testament texts that are also related to the Temple and temple settings, such as the instructions for the construction and operation of the Tabernacle or the Temple in the last dozen chapters of Exodus, as well as in the prayer dedicating the Temple of Solomon in 1 Kings 8, and the futuristic vision of the ideal temple in Ezekiel 40–48.

And in addition, another thirty-four elements appear significantly in the Old Testament in temple-related passages—and sometimes exclusively so. For example, words such as *luchnia* (lamp stand, menorah, which appears 8 concentrated times in Exodus 25) or *nēthousin* (as in “neither do they spin,” which occurs 10 times in the Septuagint, all in Exodus 26–39) would have been known to scripturally literate listeners as words that were distinctively associated with the Temple. Other key words and phrases in temple-related sections include purity, *katharos*, which appears in the important phrase “pure in heart” (101 times in Exodus–Leviticus); gift, *dōron*, meaning sacrifice (30 times in Leviticus); altar, *thusiasterion*, in bringing one’s gift to the altar (125 times between Exodus 27 and Leviticus 10); white hair of leprosy, which one cannot make white or black (5 times in Leviticus 13). The word for the garment that one gives with the cloak is the same as the word for the priest’s *chiton* (Exodus–Leviticus 12 times). Being perfect, *teleois*, recalls the technical term that describes complete initiation into the mysteries,<sup>18</sup>

18. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago:

and also *teleiōsis*, the word used for consecration in Exodus–Leviticus (11 times). The holy thing not to be cast before the swine most clearly evokes temple sanctity (appearing 300 times from Exodus 26 to Numbers). And the narrow gate in Matthew 7 is identified with the same word that describes the gates of the temple, *pulēs* (which appears thirty-eight times in the temple sections of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Ezekiel).

Other temple themes present in the Sermon on the Mount include such things as the Creation, light, salt, the altar, the Decalogue (which was recited twice each day in the Temple at the time of the Daily Whole Offering<sup>19</sup>), oaths, purity, perfection, alms, fasting, a holy thing, entering into the holy Presence, and containing the cosmic floods. All of these are temple themes—some of them decisively so.

In short, readers may well be surprised by the number of words and phrases in the Greek Sermon on the Mount that repeat or allude to temple texts in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament. I count 383 words in total vocabulary of the Sermon on the Mount; one-third of them cast a long temple shadow. These intertextual harmonies show ways in which the original listeners of the Sermon on the Mount would have heard, over and over in the Sermon on the Mount, a temple register of strong allusions and frequent quotations of temple themes and texts from the Old Testament. Diana Woodcock, who reviewed my Ashgate book in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, was not convinced by everything suggested in that book, but she sees this book as having “promoted one new, legitimate, methodology for reading the SM; and [as having]

University of Chicago Press, 1957), 817, citing sources and referring to Philippians 3:15 and Colossians 1:28. See Demosthenes, *De Corona* 259, in *Demosthenes*, trans. C. A. Vince (Cambridge, 1971), 190–91, where *telousei* is translated as “initiations” into the mystery religions. Orphic books spoke of the *teletai* (rites of initiation) which if performed prevented dire pains in the world to come; see Plato, *Republic*, 363C and 364E.

19. Moshe Weinfeld, “The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel’s Tradition,” in *Religion and Law: Biblical Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin R. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 26–7, 34 (citing Tamid 5:1), and 37.

emphasized the importance of referring to the LXX to elucidate the NT.<sup>20</sup>

While the individual effect of any single element may not be strong, the cumulative effect of these verbal echoes significantly increases the likelihood that attuned listeners would have readily sensed and deeply appreciated the temple register of the Sermon on the Mount. I do not mean to imply that this is the only way in which the Sermon on the Mount can be heard and understood, but in its temple register one finds its deepest voice. Jesus typically spoke in two registers: One at an obvious, ethical level, and the other at a more veiled, esoteric level.<sup>21</sup> Those with initiated ears would hear both, while those without would not fully understand. Thus, while the Sermon on the Mount can be read in a purely secular way, doing so is like reading the parable of the wheat and the tares as if Jesus were talking about farming.

Column 4 lists pertinent temple themes that one can relate to the specific phrases in the Sermon on the Mount and their counterparts in the Psalms and other temple texts in the Old Testament. The themes in the column are broad headlines or elements of temple practices in general, which may be found in temples throughout the ancient world and in many sacred traditions. Many of these themes populate the writings of Margaret Barker, and most of these items are explained in my discussions of these elements in the Sermon on the Mount in *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount*, or in *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*.

### **Sermon on the Mount as Preparation for a Ritual of Initiation**

By embedding its messages in a temple framework, the Sermon on the Mount forged community bonds and defined social identity. In the Temple of Jerusalem, vast numbers of people were involved in the cooperative activities of the Temple, including builders, gatekeepers, priests, chief priests, Levites, singers, worshippers, scribes, wood gatherers, and

many people in an elaborate temple infrastructure. Richard Bauckham has rightly said that the Temple was “central [to] Jewish self-identity.”<sup>22</sup> In a temple community, the collective took precedence over the individual, and duties overshadowed rights. By working within in a temple framework, the Sermon on the Mount readily communicated a firm sense of belonging, the support of healthy social pressure, and durable bonds of community relationships (see Matthew 5:21, 47; 6:2; 7:3) within the otherwise fragile new Jesus movement. In the established Christian community two thousand years later, social justice and peace can be achieved, beyond normal individual abilities, through praying for enemies, seeking and granting forgiveness, and strengthening commonalities as children of God. After all, the Temple was all about becoming sons of God, obtaining forgiveness, and praying for help in facing challenges that exceed our own abilities.

The main themes and structure of the Sermon on the Mount compare well with the Giyyur ritual required, according to the Talmud, of all persons desiring to become Jewish converts.<sup>23</sup> While it is unknown how early this particular practice was in place, it stands to reason that it (or something like it) would have been in use during the first century C.E., when proselytism was favored by certain Jewish groups. According to the Giyyur ritual, the following interrogation and instruction preceded circumcision and immersion, by which the Jewish convert became an Israelite in all respects:

First, the proselyte was told to expect to be persecuted: “Do you not know that Israel at the present time is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions?” Likewise, early in the Sermon on the Mount, Christian disciples are warned that they will be reviled, reproached, insulted, persecuted, and cursed (Matthew 5:11).

If the Jewish proselyte accepted that first burden, he or she was next “given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments.”

20. Review by Diana Woodcock, in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 5 (August 2011): 52–53.

21. Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom—Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 34.

22. Richard Bauckham, “The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why?” *Studia Theologica* 47 (1993) 141.

23. TB, *Yebamoth* 47a–b. See A. Sagi and Z. Zohar, “The Halakhic Ritual of Giyyur and Its Symbolic Meaning,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 1–13.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples are likewise next instructed in some of the rules of ordinary life as well as in major laws of highest consequence (Matthew 5:17–47).

Next, the Jewish inductee was “informed of the sin” of neglecting the poor by not observing the law of gleanings, the law of the corner, and rule of the poor man’s tithe. In the Sermon on the Mount, the subject also turns next to almsgiving, serving God and not Mammon, and understanding how the Lord cares for his children by providing them with what they need to eat, drink and wear (Matthew 6:1–4, 24–34).

The Talmudic ritual continued by telling the candidate clearly “of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments.” The person was reminded that, before conversion, he was not subject to stoning for breaking the Sabbath laws or liable to excommunication for eating the forbidden fat. Likewise, on several occasions in the Sermon on the Mount the consequences of failed discipleship are articulated in graphic imagery and with similar terminology: the salt that becomes impotent is taken out, cast away, and trampled down (Matthew 5:13); the affronting brother is subject to the council (Matthew 5:22); and the one who defiles the holy thing is trampled, torn, and cut loose (Matthew 7:6).

At the same time, the Jewish candidate was told “of the reward granted” to those who keep the commandments. In the same manner, interspersed throughout the Sermon on the Mount, great rewards are promised to the faithful (Matthew 5:12; 6:4, 6; 7:25).

Finally, the Rabbis concluded by making it clear “that the world to come was made only for the righteous,” while being careful not to persuade or dissuade too much. In a similar tone, the Sermon on the Mount states its case firmly and unequivocally but without any spirit of coercion or compulsion, concluding unambiguously that the kingdom of heaven will be open only to those who do the will of the Father who is in heaven (Matthew 7:21).

While the precise date of this Jewish ritual is uncertain, these parallels raise interesting questions about the origins of the pattern it shares with the Sermon on the Mount. Both texts yield a clear idea of the kinds of admonitions, instructions, and

stipulations that likely were typical of initiation rituals in early Jewish-Christian days. In this regard, David Daube has argued expansively that early Christian catechisms followed the same five phase structure as did the Tannaitic catechism: namely (1) testing the candidate’s commitment, (2) accepting the commandments, (3) assuming a duty of charity, (4) imposing penalties, and (5) promising future rewards.<sup>24</sup> Daube educes evidence for each of these five elements from scattered Christian sources but pays no particular attention to the Sermon on the Mount, as well one might.

### **The Sermon on the Mount as Ritual Ascent (Table 2)**

More widely known is my argument that the Sermon on the Mount may well have been used in preparation for a ritual of initiation and as a ceremony of ascent text leading the initiate, stage by stage, up a ladder of covenantal progression into the presence of God. In the end, the Sermon emphasizes that not everyone shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; only those who do the will of the Father, and who are “known” to God—to whom he need not say, “I never knew you,” or in other words who are not recognized by him as a legitimate son or daughter. As shown on Table 2 and as discussed in my books, temple theology helps in trying to reconstruct how this text may originally have been understood and employed.

In overview, the Sermon on the Mount builds step by step through its twenty-five stages in an overall crescendo. Its progression is understandable, each point leading to the next. The Sermon begins in Matthew 5 with the Beatitudes, which set forth the entrance requirements along with God’s promises if initiates obey the charge. Next, the commission to become the salt of the earth and to be a light to the world includes a warning about false teachers, which raises the question of what to teach, beginning with an explanation of the Ten

24. David Daube, “A Baptismal Catechism,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1956), 106–40, reprinted in *New Testament Judaism*, vol. 2 of the *Collected Works of David Daube* (Berkeley:Robbins Collection, University of California, 2000), 501–28.

**Table 2. The Sermon on the Mount Seen in Twenty-Five Stages of Ascent**

Jesus and his disciples go up “into the Mountain” (5:1; compare Exodus 19:20; 24:13)

- 1: A promise of ultimate heavenly blessings is given (the Beatitudes, 5:3–12)
- 2: A charge is given, with a warning, to become the salt of the earth (5:13)
- 3: A calling is given to be a light unto the world to the glory of God (5:14–16)
- 4: Obligation imposed to obey and teach the fullness of the law and prophets (5:17–20)
- 5: Anger, ill-speaking, and ridicule of brothers are prohibited (5:21–22)
- 6: All animosities are reconciled before gifts are given at the altar (5:23–26)
- 7: Sexual fidelity is required before, during, and after marriage (5:27–32)
- 8: Oaths are sworn along this path only by saying “yes, yes” or “no, no” (5:33–37)
- 9: Disciples agree to do good and to pray for all people, including enemies (5:38–47)
- 10: Gifts of sun and rain upon all are promised as blessings from heaven (5:45)
- 11: Passing from that first level into a higher order of perfection (5:48)
- 12: Donations are given voluntarily and inconspicuously to the poor (6:1–4)
- 13: Prayers are offered without fanfare, both in private and as a group (6:5–13)
- 14: Forgiveness is given and is commensurately received (6:14–15)
- 15: Fasting, washing, and anointing are done in a secret setting (6:16–18)
- 16: Treasures are consecrated with singleness of heart in loving service to God (6:19–24)
- 17: Assurances of sufficient food, drink and glorious clothing are received (6:25–34)
- 18: In preparing for the final judgment, people judge themselves, not others (7:1–5)
- 19: A curse is placed on those who inappropriately disclose that which is holy (7:6)
- 20: A threefold petition is made: asking, seeking, and knocking (7:7–8)
- 21: Good gifts are received from the Father, and gifts are given as he gives (7:9–12)
- 22: The righteous enter through a narrow opening that leads into life (7:13–14)
- 23: They enjoy and bear the fruits of the tree of life, not of corruptness (7:15–20)
- 24: Doing God’s will, they are allowed to enter into his presence and kingdom (7:21–23)
- 25: They then build upon this rock by hearing and doing these things (7:24–27)

Based on John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 41–182.



Commandments, including the need for obedience and sacrifice, for men to reconcile with each other and how to behave with chastity toward women. That leads to the need for honesty and keeping one's word, honestly swearing vows and promises; and not only doing what one promises, but then some, being dedicated to serving God and none other. In stages 5 to 9, we have what I call the Aaronic priesthood stages: Jesus explains that the heavenly law is a higher order of understanding than the law of Moses. The Decalogue was only a beginning. Then initiates should keep going and become complete. In chapter 6, they go into another order of the initiation where they are told to give of their money, lay up treasures in heaven, serve one god only, and are taught how to pray. Note that they are told "when thou prayest" (alone), go to your closet, but when ye (as a group) pray, pray in this manner. The Lord's Prayer is a ritual prayer to use in sacred contexts. Scholars believe that early Christians used the Lord's Prayer in group prayer, but we do not have the exact prayer that they used; there was apparently some latitude in the words they used to meet the group's circumstance. Then, continuing in Matthew 7, they are told how we will be judged. We must ask, seek, and knock. If we do this, we are received by the Lord (who offers bread), and not by Satan (who offers a stone). When we ask properly, we will receive. Those who have done his will, will be allowed to enter into the kingdom of God and into his presence. If not, they will be told to depart. Tightly stitched together, this sequence culminates in the final divine destination. There are many ascent rituals in the ancient world, but this one is the real path back.

A typical ancient ascent ritual begins with promises of eternal blessedness, or of beatification. For example, in 2 *Enoch* 42, one reads of an ascent into "the paradise of Edem [*sic*]," where a divine figure appears before Adam and his righteous posterity and rewards them with eternal light and life. Among the nine beatitudes he speaks to them are these:

Blessed is the person who reverences the name of the Lord; . . .

Blessed is he who carries out righteous judgment; . . .

Blessed is he who clothes the naked with his garment, and to the hungry gives his bread; . . .

Blessed is he in whom is the truth, so that he may speak the truth to his neighbor; . . .

Blessed is he who has compassion on his lips and gentleness in his heart;

Blessed is he who understands all the works of the Lord, performed by the Lord.<sup>25</sup>

This connection with the Temple becomes explicit in 2 *Enoch* 51–3, where one is further taught that "it is good to go to the Lord's temple" three times a day to praise God by speaking a matched list of seven blessings and curses, including: "Blessed is the person who opens his lips for praise of the God of Sabaoth; . . . cursed is every person who opens his heart for insulting, and insults the poor and slanders his neighbor, because that person slanders God; . . . Happy—who cultivates the love of peace; cursed—who disturbs those who are peaceful. . . . All these things [will be weighed] in the balances and exposed in the books on the great judgment day."<sup>26</sup>

In the ancient sources of this genre, the adjective *makarios* "designates a state of being that pertains to the gods and can be awarded to humans *post mortem*. Thus in Hellenistic Egyptian religion, the term plays an important role in the cult of Osiris, in which it refers to a deceased person who has been before the court of the gods of the netherworld, who has declared there his innocence, and who has been approved to enter the paradise of Osiris, even to become an Osiris himself."<sup>27</sup>

Seeing the Beatitudes "as stages in the ascent of the soul," Augustine explained, "Seven in number, then, are the things which bring perfection; and the eighth illuminates and points out what is perfect, so that through these steps others might also be made perfect, starting once more, so to speak, from the beginning."<sup>28</sup> But Augustine may have stopped too soon. The ascent presaged in the Beatitudes is

25. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:168. For consistency with the standard translations of Matthew 5, I have changed the word "happy" to "blessed" in this quote.

26. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:178–81.

27. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 93.

28. Augustine, *De serm. dom. in monte* 1.3.10, quoted in Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 107.



carried out throughout the Sermon. Temple themes provide an ultimate unity to the Sermon on the Mount by allowing readers to see it as an ascent text. More than ethical wisdom literature and more than a text centrally structured on a midpoint,<sup>29</sup> this text begins by placing its hearers in a lowly state and then, step by step, guides them to its climax at the end, entering the presence of God.

Texts and rituals of ascent were common enough throughout the ancient world, from Enoch's ascent into the tenth heaven, to Paul's or Isaiah's being taken up into the seventh heaven.<sup>30</sup> Roots of the heavenly ascent motif reach deeply into Akkadian mythology, Egyptian funerary texts, Greek processions and magical papyri, initiations into the mystery religions, and Gnostic literature.<sup>31</sup> Whether the architectural features and the progressive rituals of the temple were patterned after this basic spiritual yearning, or the cosmic journeys and the esoteric experiences described in these texts assumed the temple as the stage on which these events were orchestrated, texts of ascent are deeply intertwined with the Temple.

Moreover, Augustine's insight that the Beatitudes chart the stages of ascent for the soul<sup>32</sup> can and should be extended to the entire Sermon on the Mount. John Climacus' *Ladder of Divine Ascent* similarly guides the monk's life up thirty steps, from humbly renouncing life (step 1), mourning for sin (step 7), being meek and not angry (step 8), not judging (step 10), being totally honest (step 12), living a life of complete chastity, including no sexual thoughts (step 14), conquering avarice, not having money as an idol (step 16), seeing poverty as a life without anxiety (step 17), shunning vainglory

and being seen of men (step 22), praying devoutly (step 28), to being perfectly united with God in faith, hope, charity (step 30). Quite a number of these thirty steps correlate with the themes and instructions of the Sermon on the Mount. Interestingly, John Climacus draws rarely on the Sermon on the Mount, but he turns extensively and explicitly to the Psalms for authority and inspiration.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount builds step by step, through its twenty-five stages in an overall crescendo. Its logical and sequential progression is now better understandable, each point leading to the next. The commission to be a light to the world would naturally bring up the warning about false teachers are the least in the kingdom, which raises the question of what to teach. The answer begins with an explanation of the Ten Commandments, for men to reconcile with each other, and how to behave with chastity toward women. That leads to the need for honesty and keeping one's word, honestly swearing vows and promises; and not only doing what one promises, but then some, being dedicated to serving God and none other. However, this leads to the point those actions should be done inconspicuously, and so on. Tightly stitched together, this sequence culminates in the final divine destination.

### Themes Escalating up the Path of Ascent in the Sermon on the Mount (Table 3)

Table 3 shows the ascent in a different rubric: there are three levels, and there are common themes across each of these levels. Individual thematic escalations accentuate the overall path of ascent in the Sermon on the Mount, as concepts take on new dimensions of elevated religious and moral importance over the course of the Sermon. Often these steps build from an initial concern about one's obligations toward others, which is an Aaronic priesthood level (mainly in Matthew 5), to a second concern about personal and secret virtues

29. As others have typically viewed the Sermon on the Mount; see discussion in chapter 1 of Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount*, notes 23, 37–42 and accompanying text.

30. For example, in 1 Enoch, 2 Corinthians 12:1–4; Ascension of Isaiah. See, for example, Margaret Barker, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 18–21, 64–67; Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1991), 150–71.

31. James D. Tabor, "Heaven, Ascent to," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:91–94, citing a host of leading sources.

32. Discussed in *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 61, note 90.

33. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (London, 1982). This edition of this identifies 179 passages of scripture quoted from throughout the Bible, 96 of which (54 percent) come from the Psalms. See *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 205–6.

**Table 3. Individual Themes Escalating in the Path of Ascent in the Sermon on the Mount**

Theme	Regarding Others (Matthew 5)	Regarding One's Self (Matthew 6)	Regarding God (Matthew 7)
Kingdom	Teach others (5:19)	Help Kingdom come (6:10)	Enter the Kingdom (7:21)
Reconcile	With brother (5:24)	Remove own mote (7:4)	Not cast out by God (7:21)
Prayer	For enemies (5:44)	Seeking forgiveness (6:12)	Asking gifts from God (7:11)
Generosity	Give if asked (5:40)	Give in secret (6:3)	Give as God gives (7:12)
Punishment	Salt is useless (5:13)	Cut off hand or eye (5:29)	Trampled and torn (7:6)
Punisher	Community (5:13)	Personal protect self (5:30)	Divine instruments (7:6)
Talion	Good for evil (5:44)	Forgiven as forgive (6:14)	Judges as we judged (7:2)
Bread	Daily for all (6:11)	Life is more (6:25)	Father gives if asked (7:9)
Love	Love thy neighbor (22:39)	As thyself (22:39)	Love the Lord thy God (22:37)

See John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 205–7.

(mainly in Matthew 6), and finally culminating in qualities related to God and his holiness (mainly in chapter 7). This pattern involves others, the self, and God.<sup>34</sup>

For example, the focal theme of the Kingdom of Heaven arises several times in the Sermon on the Mount. After the promises in the Beatitudes that the righteous will obtain the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:3, 10), the initial concern is about those who might teach others to break even the least of the commandments of God; such teachers will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:19). The next mention of the kingdom comes in the Lord's Prayer, where members of the righteous community submit their individual wills to God's will (Matthew 6:10), where the focus is on personal commitment. A few sections later the emphasis shifts as the listeners are admonished to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), making the divine objective the supreme goal of their existence, and thus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, those who do the will of the Father are told

that they will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 7:21). The progression here is from community instruction, to complete individual commitment, to doing God's will and entering into the divine presence.

Similarly, prayer is featured three times in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:44, people are told to pray for other people, particularly their enemies, having love for their neighbors and doing good to all. This is an obligation of a person entering a covenant relationship and is concerned with how we deal with even the worst of our brothers and sisters. Second, in the Lord's Prayer, people are now pray for themselves, seeking forgiveness of their own transgressions (Matthew 6:12). Finally, in Matthew 7:11, prayers seek gifts from the Father in Heaven. In particular, those who ask and knock and enter in at the strait gate are promised that the divine presence will be opened to them.<sup>35</sup>

The same pattern of intensification surfaces in the admonitions about generosity. In the first instance, people are told to give generously to

34. See Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 205–7.

35. For more on this topic, see my "Temple Themes and Ethical Formation in the Sermon on the Mount."

others if they ask for clothing or assistance (Matthew 5:40–41). The obligation to give arises if someone asks. In Matthew 6:3, however, the obligation to give becomes an affirmative obligation of the righteous to give, of their own accord and in secret, for their own eternal benefit. Anonymous charity purifies the soul and allows for open rewards in heaven. Finally, in the culmination of the Sermon on the Mount, the person has reached the stage of being able to give good gifts in a divine fashion, doing all things unto others that one would have them do to him (Matthew 7:12).

Punishments are mentioned three times in the Sermon on the Mount. It is significant that punishments appear in the text. The Sermon is often read as a simple ethical, moral text, but if that's true, what are the punishments doing here? It says, If you don't live up to your commission, you will be cast out and trampled. This is evidence that the Sermon is not just a moral text. It fits in the first level of relationship to others: the salt that is cast out is trodden underfoot by men because it has become useless to other people (Matthew 5:13). The punishment concerned with living the higher law of chastity is to not commit adultery in your heart. It's better to cut something out than to jeopardizes his own eternal well-being, better for him to cut off his own hand than to lose his entire soul, thus tending to your own self (Matthew 5:30). Third, those who cast the holy thing—and note that the Greek here is singular—before the dogs and the swine—those who are not prepared to have it—will find themselves torn and trampled by instruments of divine punishment; divine retribution will work vengeance upon you (Matthew 7:6). Just as the offences here are against others, oneself, and God, the punishments are inflicted by men, oneself, and divine agents respectively.

Similarly, the law of talion progresses through three stages. Socially, one is instructed not to return to others eye for eye, or evil for evil, but good for evil (Matthew 5:44). Personally, this virtue turns inward as one must be forgiving in order to be forgiven (Matthew 6:14). Finally, in relationship to God and his divine judgment, the principle of talion emerges as the fundamental concept of divine justice by which all people will be judged according

to the same measure by which they have measured (Matthew 7:2). In this repeated pattern of progression, one encounters the two great commandments, “thou shalt love [1] thy neighbor as [2] thyself,” and “[3] the Lord with all thy heart.”

Other themes intensify as the Sermon on the Mount builds in a crescendo to its final culmination. Concerns about food move from a petition for daily bread (Matthew 6:11), to an awareness that life is more than food and drink (Matthew 6:25), to a personal delivery of bread and fish from the Father himself (Matthew 7:9–11). Reconciling with brothers at the outset (Matthew 5:24) eventually leads to being able to help the brother by removing a flaw in his eye, but only after one has removed the greater flaws from one's own eye (Matthew 7:4–5), allowing one to see clearly and judge properly, even as will the Lord.

In bringing to light the experiential nature of this ascent, temple theology exposes the fundamental unity of the Sermon. Its pieces work together and belong together. Progressively, there comes fulfillment, perfection, and completion as the culminating goal of the Sermon on the Mount is reached.

### **Ceremonial Actions That Could Have Accompanied Performances of the SM (Table 4)**

As we have learned from our British friends, it may be that Latter-day Saints understand ritual better than those who have not experienced a ritual. Latter-day Saints know what ritual elements looks like: ritual involves doing physical actions. There's a ritual drama that Nibley talked about. As it plays out, we perform in response to the narrative. We don't just sit and listen. Thinking of this aspect of ritual leads me to ask if early Christians participated in such rituals in some ways. Did they sing some of the Psalms at the appropriate point in the ritual? We know that the last thing Jesus did before going to the Garden of Gethsemane was to sing a psalm, a hymn. Singing was a standard part of the temple, so one can easily imagine that early Christians also sang these and other hymns as part of their ritual.

Then think about the words “Blessed are the poor.” The poor doesn't mean without money, but those who have debased and humbled themselves.

**Table 4. Ceremonial Actions that Could Have Accompanied Uses of the SM**

Singing pertinent psalms at certain points in the ritual
Hand gestures of blessing to accompany the pronouncing of “blessed”
Making themselves “poor” by falling prostrate before God
“Mourning” over problems, followed by embraces of “comfort”
Receiving a new name (compare Rev 2:17) as part of being “born” as “sons of God,” name transmission being frequently found as part of rituals
Responding with a shout of joy as do the sons of God (see Job 38:7); shouting “hallelujah” in the face of impending maledictions and persecutions
Pouring out salt on the ground and dramatically trampling it underfoot
Lighting lamps in a dark room and setting them on a menorah
Reciting the Ten Commandments
Pausing to reconcile with others in preparation for making some offering
Accepting the covenantal requirements by repeating back “yes, yes” or “no, no”
Slapping an initiate on one cheek (as in the ritual humiliation of the king), and having the initiate then turn the other cheek
Asking an initiate to surrender a tunic and, in response, having him give not only his undergarment but also his outer garment, thus becoming stripped of all worldly things
Offering a prayer of blessing for enemies and opponents
Anonymously collecting alms or offerings
Allowing some time for private meditation and secret prayer
Reciting a collective prayer (one recalls that the Lord’s Prayer immediately became part of early Christian liturgy)
Having come fasting, the participants are washed with water and anointed with oil
Making vows to consecrate or treasure up property to the Lord
Marking the initiates as slaves who belong completely to the true Master
Receiving a garment more glorious than Solomon’s (Mt 6:29)
Standing before a judge and confessing one’s sins (thereby removing a beam from one’s own eye)
Tearing to pieces, trampling on, and throwing out something that represents the initiate, dramatizing the fate of those who inappropriately talk about the holy thing
Making a threefold petition (knocking, asking, and seeking) requesting admission into the presence of deity
Eating food and drink, fish and bread, figs and grapes, in a sacred meal
Passing, one by one, through a narrow opening into the symbolic presence of God, and being there received and recognized by God

See John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 202–5.

Did people bow down at some point in the ritual? And did they shout hallelujah when called to rejoice?

Table 4 gives a list of possible actions that may have accompanied the ritual. The ritual may have included a person pouring out the salt. Did all trample on it? Perhaps initiates were slapped the initiate on the cheek. We're heard today about bishops doing that; new kings and priests in other societies were slapped, undergoing insult as a sign that they were ready to take that burden upon themselves. We're going to make oaths but we're only going to make them in a certain way, with a simple yes or no. Was there a ritual response? One can certainly think so.

With this ritual ascent perspective in mind, temple theologians and ritual theorists readily wonder next if this text might have had, somewhere in connection with its possible initial uses, some ceremonial application that involved, as most ritual texts do, some form of ceremonial actions.<sup>36</sup> Temples of the ancient world were intrinsically ritualistic, and thus it should not be surprising that one can easily, if creatively, imagine an array of actions that could have potentially accompanied ritual uses or ceremonial recitations of the Sermon on the Mount. Consider a few of the following actions, listed on Table 4, as possibilities:

- Singing pertinent psalms at certain points in the ritual
- Hand gestures of blessing to accompany the pronouncing of "blessed"
- Making themselves "poor" ("down-fallen") by falling prostrate before God
- "Mourning" over problems, followed by embraces of "comfort"
- Receiving a new name (compare Rev 2:17) as part of being "born" as "sons of God," name transmission being frequently found as part of rituals
- Responding with a shout of joy as do the sons of God (see Job 38:7); shouting "hallelujah" in the face of impending maledictions and persecutions
- Pouring out salt on the ground and dramatically trampling it underfoot
- Lighting lamps in a dark room and setting them on a menorah to let the light so shine
- Reciting the Ten Commandments
- Pausing to reconcile with others in preparation for making some offering
- Accepting the covenantal requirements by repeating back "yes, yes" or "no, no," as in the affirmation with everyone saying "amen" in Deuteronomy 27
- Slapping an initiate on one cheek (as in the ritual humiliation of the king), and having the initiate then turn the other cheek
- Asking an initiate to surrender a tunic and, in response, having him give not only his undergarment but also his outer garment, thus becoming stripped of all worldly things
- Offering a prayer of blessing for enemies and opponents
- Anonymously collecting alms or offerings
- Allowing some time for private meditation and secret prayer
- Reciting a collective prayer (one recalls that the Lord's Prayer immediately became part of early Christian liturgy)
- Having come fasting, the participants are washed with water and anointed with oil
- Making vows to consecrate or treasure up property to the Lord
- Marking the initiates as slaves who belong completely to and serve only the true Master
- Receiving a garment more glorious than Solomon's (Mt 6:29)
- Standing before a judge and confessing one's sins (thereby removing a beam from one's own eye)
- Tearing to pieces, trampling on, and throwing out something that represents the initiate, dramatizing the fate of those who inappropriately talk about the holy thing
- Making a threefold petition (knocking, asking, and seeking) requesting admission into the presence of deity

36. See the discussion of this subject in Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 239–50; and Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 202–5.



- Eating food and drink, fish and bread, figs and grapes, in a sacred meal
- Passing, one by one, through a narrow opening into the symbolic presence of God, and being there received and recognized by God

### Temple Floor Plan of the Sermon on the Mount (Table 5)

Temples, as we know, are physical spaces. Might there be some connection between the Sermon on the Mount and the floor plan of the temple itself? As shown on table 5, as you walk through the Sermon on the Mount, you see that almost all of its elements are locatable in the temple. When the Sermon has a person come to the altar who realizes that a brother hath aught against him, he was to leave the offering at the altar and go reconcile. A person in Jesus's world hearing that would position themselves at the entrance before the two pillars at the altar. When the Sermon talks about the bread—the “daily” of daily bread is untranslatable—it is a bread of some odd kind, *epi-ousion*, “above being.” Perhaps it is a new understanding that Jesus is the bread of the temple, a shew bread in the Hekal. The Holy of Holies is where it all ends, in perfection, the holy name being there. The doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer, “For thine is the glory and power and the kingdom forever, amen,” is used to end a prayer only in a holy place, according to the rabbis. Thus, when Luke teaches about prayer and he is out in the wilderness, not in a holy place, he just ends the prayer with “Amen,” not with a doxology. That gives us an indication of the Sermon belonging in a holy place. When you build upon the rock, this is not any old rock, it's *the rock*. We know from ancient cosmology that this is the Shetiyyah-stone, which is the plug that holds the floods back and holds the temple on a firm foundation. When you build your house on *this* rock, it will not fall. All of this is architecturally connected with the temple.

Furthermore, if the Sermon on the Mount was read in conjunction with physical actions of any kind, those actions must have taken place in some location. And, indeed, connections between the Sermon on the Mount and the Temple may be seen not only verbally but spatially. Table 5 physically

locates the main elements of the Sermon on the Mount within the architectural floor plan of the Tabernacle and Temple. It offers a new illustration of the Sermon on the Mount based on a cut-away of the Temple of Solomon.

In *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, I have shown how each element in the Sermon on the Mount can be seen to have some bearing on the Temple. But now, as I first presented at the meeting of the London Temple Studies Group in June, 2012, as one walks into the Sermon on the Mount using the lens of the layout of the Temple, one can see, even more clearly, these temple connections. For example, the Beatitudes function at the beginning as temple entrance requirements. This is most obvious in expressions such as “blessed are the *pure in heart*,” which is connected with Psalm 24, “who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, he who has clean hands and *pure heart*.” The Sermon on the Mount is weakly read by those who see it merely as an ethical text, epitome, or antinomian diatribe. Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount deals with nothing less than “*to hagion*” (i.e. with some holy thing), or with what is done in *tōi kryptōi* (in the hidden holy place).

Moving next on the diagram, approaching the Temple and its inner courts, one encounters the Decalogue, which was read daily in the Temple before the morning sacrifice, and the Decalogue figures prominently in the next part of the Sermon on the Mount. The meeting place of the Sanhedrin is also close by in the Hewn Chamber, and the council (*sunhedrion*) is mentioned in Matthew 5:22. According to Mishnah Sotah 2:2, the procedure followed for testing a suspected adulteress in Numbers 5 was posted on a metal plate in the Temple, probably (one might assume) in the court of the women. The legal topic of adultery is also here in the Sermon, and indeed insuring righteous judgment is an important theme throughout this text.

At the altar, one brings a “gift” to sacrifice (the altar is mentioned explicitly in Matt 5:23). At the altar one needs salt. This is the place of sacrifice, always connected with oaths, vows, dedications, alms, prayers, and forgiveness for sin, all of which are Sermon on the Mount elements in Matthew 5–6.

## 5. Temple of Solomon, Mountain of the Lord, and the Sermon on the Mount

### Entrance Requirements (5:3–11)

Self-effacing, mourning  
 Meek, hungering for righteousness  
 Merciful, pure in heart (cf. Ps 24)  
 Making peace, suffering  
 Fasting, washing, anointing (6:17)  
 Entrance denied to some (5:13; 7:23)

### Hidden Place

In *tōi kryptō* (6:4, 6, 18)  
*to hagion* (7:6)

### Ark of the Covenant

Law Tablets (5:18)  
 Manna (cf. 6:11)  
 Mercy-seat (5:45; 6:14, 30; 7:11)

### Ten Commandments

Read daily (5:21, 27, 33)  
 Judgment, Sanhedrin (5:22)  
 Adultery (Num 5, M Sotah 2:2)  
 Return good for evil (5:38)  
 Judge righteously, if at all (7:1–5)

### Menorahs

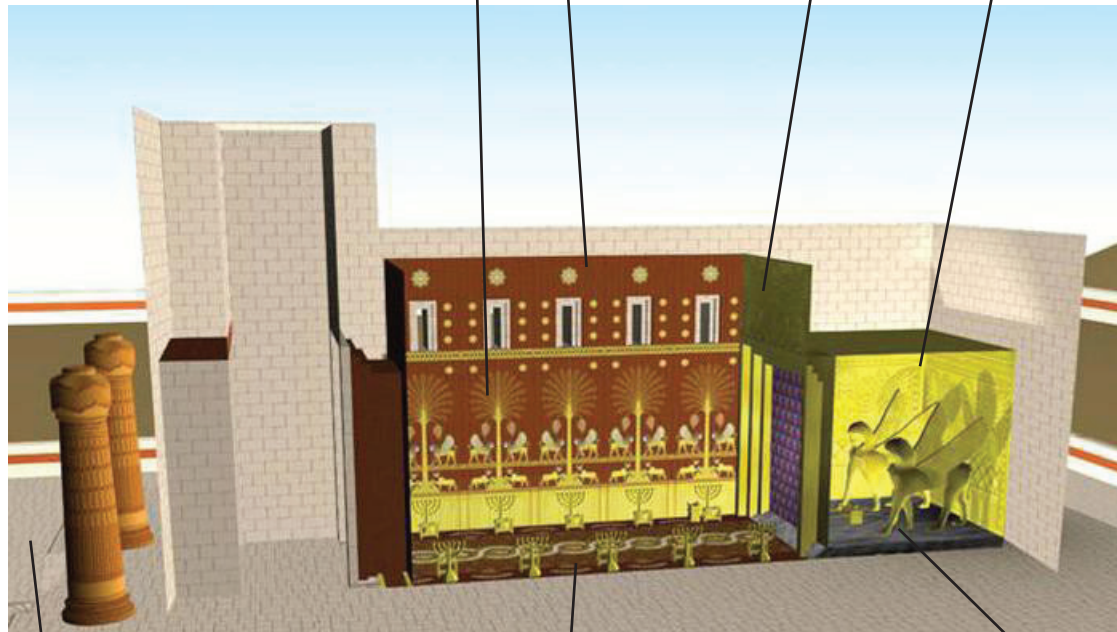
Candlestick  
*(luchnia, 5:15)*

### Veil

Entering through a narrow gate (7:13)

### Shewbread

(cf. daily bread, 6:11)



Courtesy Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University

### Altar (5:23)

Sacrifice, salt (5:13)  
 Oaths (5:37)  
 (yea, yea, Num 5:22)  
 Alms (6:3)  
 Vows, dedication  
 (treasures in heaven, 6:19)  
 Prayer (6:5–13)  
 Atonement for sin  
 (forgiveness, 6:14)

### The Hekal, Holy Place

Days 2–6 of Creation, Eden  
 Light (5:14)  
 Light and darkness (6:23)  
 Sun, rain (5:45)  
 Grass, flowers (6:28, 30)  
 Two trees (7:18)  
 Tree yielding fruit (7:17)  
 Fowls of the air (6:26)  
 Man and wife (5:27–32)  
 Garment of skin/light (6:29–30)

### The Holy of Holies

God's presence (7:21)  
 Perfection (5:48)  
 Name hallowed (6:9)  
 Will of God (6:10)  
 Doxology (6:13)  
 Purity (6:22)  
 Asking God (7:7)  
 God will give (7:11)  
 The Rock (7:25)  
 (cf. shetiyyah-stone)

Moving into the Hekal, we find in the Sermon on the Mount not only the key elements of the creation (light, darkness, sun, rain, grass, flowers, birds, man and wife, glorious garments, two trees, and good fruit), but also the implements of the menorah/candlestick (the word for the menorah in Exodus and in Matthew 5:15 in the Sermon on the Mount being *luchnia*) and also seemingly the shewbread. Might this connection shed light on the otherwise mysterious word *epiusion*, which traditionally gets translated as “daily” but would seem to point to something well beyond that, something beyond (*epi*) being (*ousion*)?

Passing through the veil of the temple, a narrow opening, as opposed to the broad way of the world that leads to death and destruction, the Sermon on the Mount finally takes us into the Holy of Holies. Here the Ark of the Covenant contains the tablets of the law (which Jesus has quoted and interpreted) and the manna; and recall that the Sermon on the Mount mentions bread twice, once in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 and then in Matthew 7 (if you ask for bread, will the Father give you a stone?), just as bread is found in two positions in the Temple, first with the showbread and then here in the Holy of Holies. Upon the Ark was the mercy-seat, mercy above all else being the attribute of God mentioned most often in the Sermon on the Mount. Finally, as in the ending of Matthew 7, it is in the Holy of Holies that one enters into God’s presence, sees God (as promised in Matthew 5:8), hallows his name (as in Matthew 6:9), and beseeches God for blessings (Matthew 7:7–9). Here one finds protection from the floods and chaos of the unruly cosmos when one builds upon this Rock and not upon the sand.

### Other Texts Based on the Temple Floor Plan (Table 6)

The suggestion that the Sermon on the Mount or, might we now say, the Sermon in the Temple (of the Temple in the Sermon), was articulated with some progression through a physical space in mind raises the question whether others have ever suggested that any other biblical texts were somehow connected with the floor plan of the temple. In this connection, the work by Mary Douglas, *Thinking in*

*Circles*,<sup>37</sup> sees the book of Leviticus as following a temple structure, shown on Table 6. Of course, the spatial importance of the Temple in general is well known. As Joshua Berman has said, “At the spiritual center of the land of Israel lies the Sanctuary. Within the Sanctuary, the most sacred place is the Holy of Holies, and within the Holy of Holies—the site endowed with the greatest *kedushah*—rests the Ark of the Covenant, bearing the tablets of the covenant.”<sup>38</sup> But, more than that, as seen on Table 6B, Douglas, who is followed in this regard by Duane Christiansen,<sup>39</sup> and who (interestingly enough) was influential on Margaret Barker as she began formulating her basic approach to temple theology, has seen the structure of entire book of Leviticus as having been based on the floor plan of the Tabernacle. As a projection of the Temple, the book of Leviticus is formed in three sections; they diminish in size as the text moves from a large block of provisions dealing with ordinances performed in the court of the altar (chapters 1–17), then moves into a smaller section of requirements dealing with holiness (the Hekal, chapters 18–24), and finally moves into the smallest section dealing with the state of complete peace and happiness idealized by the jubilee laws (the Holy of Holies, chapters 25–27). Moving between these three domains, one passes through two narrative transition veils, the only two narrative sections in the entire book, both acting as warnings, one against the improper performance of sacrifice and the other against blasphemy, the defilement of the holy name. Douglas explains this temple-related meta-structure of the book of Leviticus as follows:

In modeling the structure of a book upon the structure of a physical object, the book of Leviticus goes several steps further. This book is a projection of the tabernacle. God dictated the proportions of the desert tabernacle to Moses in the book of Exodus (ch. 25). The building consists of

37. Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). See also her *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

38. Berman, *Temple*, 12.

39. Duane L. Christensen, *The Unity of the Bible: Exploring the Beauty and Structure of the Bible* (New York: Paulist, 2003), 31–41.

three compartments separated by two screens: the first, very large, the entrance and the court where the worshippers make sacrifice; the next, smaller, the sanctuary where only the priests may enter. It contains the table for the showbread, the altar of incense, and the *menorah*, the seven-branched candelabra. Lastly, the smallest, the Holy of Holies, contains the Mercy seat and the Ark of the Covenant, a figure of a cherubim on each side. Nobody can enter it except the high priest.

The book is likewise organized in three sections of diminishing size. It consists of laws, separated by two narratives, which I take to correspond to the two screens. The sections of the book preserve the relative proportions of the sections of the tabernacle. The first large section of the book corresponds to the large court of sacrifice, and the book's contents in this section actually state the laws for sacrifice. The second section of the book is smaller; it ordains the liturgical work of the priests through the year and prescribes rules for their marriages and households. In this respect it corresponds faithfully to the holy place reserved for priests, and it describes what has to be done with the incense, oil, and bread whose furnishings are in that compartment. The third part of the book is very small indeed, like the Holy of Holies, only three chapters long: it is about the covenant that is supposed to be kept there. So the book has been carefully projected upon the architecture of the tabernacle and on the proper activities of the place.

When the book comes to the pages that correspond to the end of the building it is modeled upon, it has automatically come to an end. To go on would spoil the design. The analogy between the abstract structure of the written contents and the solid object on whose shape it has been projected gives the book a strange transparency. The reader looks through the words, or past them, and, visualizing the object, can intuit the depths of the analogy. At first Leviticus looked like a dry list of laws, but now, seeing it in three dimensions, it exemplifies the House of God. That does change the way it is read. And moreover, the tabernacle where God dwells among his people exemplifies Mount Sinai, where God originally met his people and gave his laws to Moses. Tabernacle, holy book, and holy mountain, presented so compactly, yet so vast in reference, mirroring each other in two and three dimensions, they stand for everything that is covered by God's law. . . .

Frank Kermode, on the idea of the classic, [has said that a classic is not classic] 'if we could not in some way believe it to be capable of saying more than its author meant; even, if necessary, that to say more than he meant was what he meant to do.' . . .

In the case of Leviticus the hidden analogy has expanded the meaning to encompass the Lord's ordering of his infinite universe.

Seeing the Leviticus text as a projection of the tabernacle is a revelation of the same order as produced by reading a ring [or chiasm] according to its structures. The impact of a composition would obviously be much enriched by having a meta-structure. If the verbal structure is being projected on to something else outside itself, it is making another analogy at a meta-poetic level. And this projection provides a further kind of ending or completion.<sup>40</sup>

There may be other texts in the Old Testament that are closely tied spatially to rooms or the overall floor plan of the Temple. Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 40–48 come, of course, readily to mind, and the floor plan of other temple texts may be present, though less apparent, elsewhere. As Joseph M. Spencer has discussed, John E. Levenson's book about the Jewish drama of creation and ongoing cosmology "points to the architecture of the temple as a physical embodiment of [a] dialectical theology," separating heaven (the Holy of Holies), from the earth (the Hekal), and further from conquered chaos (the Brass Laver in the court outside the temple).<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Marshall Goodrich has discerned a way to see the book of Malachi as a temple text.<sup>42</sup> Mack

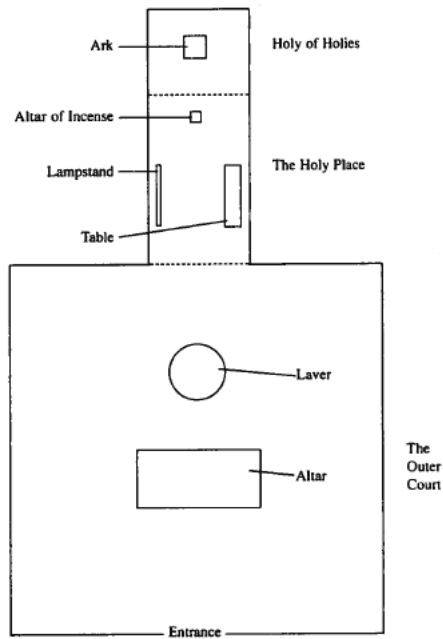
40. Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 131–134. See also her *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

41. Joseph M. Spencer, *Another Testament: On Typology* (Salem, Oregon: Salt Press, 2012), 47–49, discussing John E. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

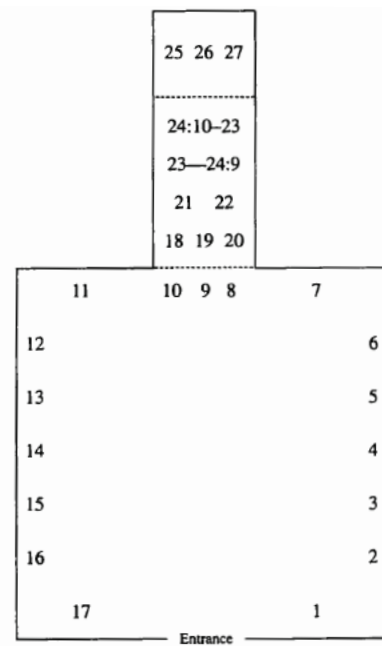
42. Temple themes dominate the book of Malachi: for example, the law of obedience (1:6); not polluting the bread on the table of the Lord (1:7); making an acceptable sacrifice and vows to God (1:8, 10, 14); not dealing treacherously with a brother or profaning the holy (2:10–11); keeping the law of chastity and fidelity to spouse and God (2:14–16); making pure consecration of tithes and offerings (3:3–10); bringing parents and children, ancestors and posterity, together (4:5–6).



### 6A. Floor Plan and Furnishings of the Tabernacle



### 6B. Leviticus 1–27 Set in the Tabernacle



Source: Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 221, 222; quoted in Duane L. Christensen, *The Unity of the Bible: Exploring the Beauty and Structure of the Bible* (New York: Paulist, 2003), 31, 32.

Sterling has recently seen the book of Job as reflecting an endowment ritual,<sup>43</sup> something that Hugh Nibley might have called a ritual drama.<sup>44</sup> The idea that the book of 3 Nephi can be seen as “the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon” adds yet another element of architectural connection to the analysis of the Sermon at the Temple.<sup>45</sup> All of which

is simply to say that the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament may not be alone as a type of temple escort text.

#### Was the Sermon on the Mount a Pre-Matthean Text?

All of the foregoing would seem to say that the Sermon on the Mount was not composed by Matthew but existed as a text before Matthew wrote his Gospel. The emphasis on the Temple in the words and organization of the Sermon on the Mount would only be relevant to a composer as well as to listeners who were intimately familiar with the Temple, which can hardly be said of Christians in Antioch in the 70s, if that is the time and place when the Gospel of Matthew was written, as many have suggested.

D. Marshall Goodrich, email to author, February 23, 2009; John W. Welch, “Seeing 3 Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon,” in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, 2012), 27–28.

43. Mack Stirling, “Job: An LDS Reading,” presented at The Temple on Mount Zion conference, Provo, Utah, September 22, 2012.

44. See, for example, Hugh W. Nibley, “Abraham’s Temple Drama,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 1–42.

45. John W. Welch, “Seeing Third Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 36–55; reprinted in

Skinner and Strathearn, *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, 1–34.



For one thing, as I pointed out in *Illuminating*, the vocabulary of the Sermon on the Mount contrasts sharply with the words used by Matthew in the rest of his gospel. Of the 383 basic vocabulary words in the Sermon, I count 73 (or 19% of the total) that appear only in the Sermon (sometimes more than once) and then never again appear elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>46</sup>

Seeing its temple character reinforces further the view that the Sermon on the Mount should be thought of as a pre-Matthean source,<sup>47</sup> written at an early time when Jesus and his followers were still hoping for a restoration, reform, and rejuvenation of the Temple, not its destruction or obsolescence. In looking for the Temple to be a house of prayer, Jesus affirmed the “legitimacy of its function” and desired “to see that function restored.”<sup>48</sup> A previous, solemn ritual use of the Sermon on the Mount among the early disciples would help to explain its respectful presentation by Matthew as a single block of text, which would strengthen several conclusions advanced by Betz and others that the Sermon on the Mount is in some ways *un-Matthean* and in most ways *pre-Matthean*,<sup>49</sup> and is in no case inconsistent with the characteristics of the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> Alfred Perry similarly finds evidence that Matthew worked from a written source that he regarded “so highly that he used

it for the foundation of his longer Sermon, even in preference to the Q discourse.”<sup>51</sup> This pre-Matthean temple understanding of the Sermon on the Mount would also explain why “the parting of the ways” between Christians and other varieties of Jews in the first century turned out to be a longer and more complicated process than one might otherwise have expected,<sup>52</sup> for a simple rejection of the Temple would have resulted in a much less problematical separation.

In particular, Betz’s position, which has much to commend it, sees the Sermon on the Mount as a composite of pre-Matthean sources, embodying a set of cultic instructions that served the earliest Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem as an epitome of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which Matthew incorporated into his gospel. Thus, for example, Betz calls Matthew 6:1–18 “the Cultic Instruction,”<sup>53</sup> i.e. a text with temple and ritual connections, authored by someone who “must have been a Jewish theological mind with some rather radical ideas,” and thus likely either “Jesus himself” or “a member of the Jesus-movement who was inspired by the teaching of the master.”<sup>54</sup> Betz uses the idea of early authorship of the Sermon on the Mount to explain otherwise obscure passages, such as “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you” (Matthew 7:6). For most commentators, “the original meaning [of this saying] is puzzling.”<sup>55</sup> This logion has been called “a riddle.”<sup>56</sup> In Betz’s view, the likelihood is that this saying was “part of the pre-Matthean SM; . . . it may have been as mysterious to [Matthew]

46. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 215.

47. Certain passages in the Sermon on the Mount may well postdate Jesus’ lifetime, such as those that reflect anti-Pauline sentiments. However, these may be later additions.

48. Gurtner, “Matthew’s Theology of the Temple,” 138.

49. Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. L. L. Welborn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 1–15, 55–76; and Hans Dieter Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 70–80. On the conjectured existence of other pre-Matthean sources, see Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O. C. Dean Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 55–6, 63, 67–8, 72.

50. Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 29–37; see John Strugnell, “‘Amen, I Say unto You’ in the Sayings of Jesus and in Early Christian Literature,” *Harvard Theological Review* 67, no. 2 (1974): 177–82. The Sermon speaks in parables, proclaims the kingdom, and uses cryptic sayings, amen, and Abba.

51. Alfred M. Perry, “The Framework of the Sermon on the Mount,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 54 (1935): 103–15, quote on 115.

52. Showing that the separation of Christianity from Judaism was a slow and complex process, with the Temple being the key issue that distinguished the various Jewish sects and movements, see Bauckham, “Parting of the Ways,” 135–51.

53. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 329.

54. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 348.

55. Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, 146; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 494–95.

56. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 418.

as it is to us.”<sup>57</sup> This view of the SM also opens the way for Betz to conclude “with confidence” that the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 “comes from the historical Jesus himself.”<sup>58</sup> Although Betz is not prepared to attribute every part of the SM in Matthew to the historical Jesus (and neither am I<sup>59</sup>), I would agree that points such as these make it possible to see much of the SM as having originated with Jesus himself. Seeing the SM through the lens of Temple Studies invites us to agree with Betz all the more.

### Quotations or Echoes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 10–25 (Table 7)

In *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, I advance several additional reasons why the Sermon should be seen as a pre-Matthean text used by Jesus in instructing initiates and guiding them through the stages of induction into the full ranks of discipleship, explaining why bits and pieces of the Sermon appear elsewhere in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as in letters of James and Paul.<sup>60</sup> Because I have found even more evidence to support this line of reasoning,<sup>61</sup> I wish to expand on those reasons at this time. On the handout, I give you a newly expanded version of Table 2 in that book. As far as I am aware no comprehensive collection of Sermon on the Mount elements reappearing elsewhere in Matthew and in the New Testament has ever been assembled, but the present Tables 7 and 8 are a start. You can see at a glance that certain words, phrases, thoughts, and sentences found

in the Sermon on the Mount appear, not only (as is well known) in Luke 6 (the Sermon on the Plain, delivered to a general audience that included Gentiles and unbelievers), but surprisingly—at least to most readers—another wide array of Sermon echoes appears in Matthew chapters 10–25. Generally, allusions to the earlier parts of the Sermon come in chapters 10–15, verbiage from the middle parts of the SM comes in chapters 18–19, and echoes of the concluding parts of the Sermon come in chapters 21–25. Although those echoes are not rigorously clustered, they follow the sequence in the Sermon closely enough to indicate that the heart of the Gospel of Matthew in chapters 10–25, for the most part, follows the order in which these ideas were presented originally in the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, Matthew chapters 10–25 take for granted, draw upon, utilize, reinforce, and build upon the foundation laid in Matthew 5–7. From the following, it is apparent that Matthew presents the disciples as knowing the Sermon; these texts presuppose that the followers of Jesus had already accepted and were bound by the Sermon, for as Jesus quotes sections from all parts of the Sermon, the disciples understand, without argument or hesitation, the correctness and authoritativeness of its rubrics.

For example, in sending out the Twelve Apostles, he told them not to fear, for not a sparrow falls upon the ground without their Father noticing and “the very hairs (*triches*) of [their] head are all numbered,” and surely they as apostles “are of more value than many sparrows” (10:29–31). That brief statement does not give much assurance (after all, the sparrow has “fallen,” presumably dead). But having already placed their lives in God’s hands, being unable to make one hair (*tricha*) white or black (5:36), and knowing that the Father has promised to clothe them (see 3 Nephi 13:25) as he “clothes the grass of the field” (6:26, 30), these assurances of the Lord would have been completely reassuring, especially when read in connection with priestly functions of verifying the absence of impurities and being clothed more gloriously than Solomon in all his royal and temple splendor.<sup>62</sup>

57. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 494.

58. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 349.

59. For example, I see the anti-pharisaical, possible anti-Gentile, and alleged anti-Pauline elements in the SM among the possible later additions to the SM, which do not appear in the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi. I would also suggest that the more explicit covenant-making setting, the emphasis on the desires of the heart, the absence of unseemly penalties, and the greater optimism of universality in the ST may also reflect the original concerns and teachings of the historical Jesus. See Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 132–44.

60. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 211–18.

61. This and the following section of this paper draw on sections in the chapter John W. Welch, “Echoes from the Sermon on the Mount,” in *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 2010), 312–40.

62. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 157–64.

The promise of receiving a great reward (*misthon*) in heaven is a dominant theme in the Sermon on the Mount (5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 5, 16). It remains a persistent precept, more so than in other gospels, in Matthew 10:41–42, which promises “a prophet’s reward” and a secure “reward,” and also in Matthew 20:8, in the parable about the laborers being paid their “reward” at the end of the day.

The idea of being “the least in the kingdom of heaven” appears first in Matthew 5:19, and then is echoed in Matthew 11:11. On the one hand, the least (*elachistos*) is he who teaches others to break the smallest of the commandments; while on the other hand, the lesser (*mikroteros*) in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist. In Matthew 18:4, completing this sequence, one learns who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, namely he who “humbles himself as this little child.”

In Matthew 12:31–37, after being accused by the Pharisees of casting out devils by the power of the Satan, Jesus explained the inner unitary nature of righteousness. “A house divided against itself is brought to desolation” (12:25); and “he that is not with me is against me” (12:30); and “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven” (12:31). Why are these things so? Because, as had already been established in Matthew 7, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, “a tree is known by its fruit” (*ek gar tou karpou to dendron ginōsketai*, 12:33), “a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things (*agatha*): and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (*ponēra*)” (12:35), and therefore “by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (12:37). Several key words here clearly echo 7:17–20, about trees being known by their fruit (*apo tōn karpōn autōn epignōsethe autous*), and then 7:1–2, about being judged by the judgment one has judged. Since the essence of one’s nature is in doing “the will of my Father which is in heaven” (*poiōn/ poiēsēi to thelēma tou patros ou tou en ouranois*, virtually identical in 7:21 and 12:50), this explains why it is ultimately impossible for Jesus and his apostles, who are in harmony with the will of the Father, to speak against the Holy Ghost or to act in concert with the devil. Otherwise, they cannot “enter into

the kingdom of heaven” (the same expression being found in both 7:21 and 18:3).

The declaration in Matthew 5:28 about committing adultery in one’s heart is expanded and elaborated seven times over in Matthew 15:18–19, “for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

The two sayings in Matthew 18:8–9, about cutting off a hand (or foot) and casting it away, or plucking out an eye and casting it away, are quoted extensively—and in the reverse order—from how they appear in 5:29–30, which speaks of plucking out thy right eye and casting it away, or cutting off thy right hand and casting it away. In both passages, it is better for a disciple to lose one member of his body than for the entire body “to be cast into hell.” In 5:29–30 this extreme measure is compared to the even more serious offense of committing adultery; in 18:8–9 this saying is invoked in connection with the solemn injunction not to offend (*skandalizēi*) or despise (*kataphronēsēte*) even the smallest child. The power of 5:29–30 provides the basis upon which 18:8–10 builds.<sup>63</sup> First the man’s sexual loyalty to his wife must be established; then, his commitment not to neglect or abuse his or other children follows *a fortiori*. The connection between these two texts says that Jesus has required his men to be completely and equally faithful both to their wives and children.

The initial theme of settling quickly with a brother in private (Matthew 5:23–25) is amplified in Matthew 18:15–19, which instructs church leaders how to resolve cases of a brother’s transgression, first in private and then before witnesses, and then through appropriate church councils. In both cases, the hope is for reconciliation and “gaining thy brother.” From the very middle of the Sermon, which explains unequivocally that “if ye forgive (*aphēte*) men their trespasses, your heavenly father

63. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 236–39, questions what the right eye and the right hand have to do with adultery, but he agrees that “the connection was made prior to Matthew. That tradition appears to be more specifically the SM itself and not Q.”

will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses" (6:14–15). For half of Matthew 18, Jesus answers the question, "how oft shall . . . I forgive?" (*aphēsō*, 18:21), by telling the painful story of the unforgiving servant, who was forgiven (*aphēken*, 18:27) by his lord, but would not forgive his fellow servant. The application of the story, as a model of the behavior of the Father in heaven set forth in 5:14, is made explicit in 18:35.

In the following chapter (Matthew 19:2–9), Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees about the topic of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1–4, which he had taken up in Matthew 5:31–32.<sup>64</sup> Although the subject of divorce is complicated,<sup>65</sup> it seems clear that Jesus understands the Pharisees as viewing marriage in temporal terms, whereas he views true marriage as something that "God hath joined together," and therefore as something that men who are not authorized to act in the name of God cannot legitimately "put asunder" (19:6). In such a celestially sanctioned marriage, Jesus' restrictive teachings about divorce, quoted from 5:32 in 19:9, make clear sense, as also does the reactions of the disciples who then in turn question Jesus in private about what this might mean for themselves. Having already taken upon themselves the sacred commitment in 5:32 not to divorce or remarry lightly, the disciples rightly understand that no one should lightly enter into or to secularly dissolve a covenantal marriage (19:10). To their astute observation, Jesus responds, "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given" (19:11). In other words, the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount about divorce and other subjects and their implied extensions were "given" by way of covenant between Jesus, who gives, and the disciple who solemnly accepts. Having previously accepted this commitment, the disciples were ready to be taught the next step.

64. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 258, discusses the relation between Matthew 19:3–12; Mark 10:2–12; and the earlier Matthew 5:31–32. The ideas of covenant marriage are as early as Genesis 1:28; 2:23–24; and Malachi 2:14, "the wife of thy covenant."

65. Discussed at some length in Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 89–98, and sources cited there.

Matthew next alludes back to Matthew 6:20, where Jesus admonished his followers to lay up "treasures in heaven" (*thēsaurous en ouranōi*). Now, in 19:21, Jesus invites the rich young ruler to "sell that thou hast, and give to the poor," in order to have "treasure in heaven" (*thēsauron en ouranois*), that he might thereby become "perfect" (*teleios*). Because helping people to become "perfect" (*teleioi*) was the objective of the Sermon as stated in Matthew 5:48,<sup>66</sup> the disciples and early Christian readers would have understood that this young man went away not only because he "had great possessions," but because he was unwilling to make the covenantal commitment that the Sermon required, even beyond the single element of consecrated generosity. The disciples, who listened in on those words to the young man (19:23), must have been struck even more clearly by the meaning of the words they had learned in 6:19–24 about loving God, by serving only one master, and by laying up treasures in heaven.

Matthew 21:22, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask (*aitēsēte*) in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" builds upon and adds escalating clarification to the simple formulation in Matthew 7:7, "ask (*aitēite*), and it shall be given you."

The characteristic summation, "for this is the law and the prophets" (7:12; see also 5:17), marks not only the culmination of the Sermon on the Mount but also the final instruction given by Jesus to his apostles in Matthew 17–22, which ends with the same words used with distinctive all-inclusiveness, "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (22:40).

Verbose prayers are condemned in Matthew 23:14, as they were in 6:7, but note that many manuscripts do not include this point in 23:14.

In Matthew 25:11–12, the five unprepared bridesmaids, who needed to run off to try to get more oil, return after the door has been closed. They give an example of those who will say, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but he answers, "I know you not." The words "*kurie kurie*" are the same as in Matthew 7:22–23, and

66. Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 116–20.



<b>Table 7.</b>	<b>Matthew Words</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>SM Source Words</b>	<b>SM</b>
10:26	<i>mē phobeisthe</i>	fear not / worry not	<i>mē merimnate</i>	6:25
10:29	<i>strouthia</i> <i>patros hymōn</i>	sparrows / fowls your father	<i>peteina</i> <i>patēr hymōn</i>	6:26
10:30	<i>triches</i>	each hair numbered	<i>tricha</i>	5:36
10:41–42 [3x]	<i>misthon</i>	reward	<i>misthos</i>	5:12, 46
11:11	<i>mikroteros</i> <i>en tēi basileiai tōn ouranōn</i>	least in the kingdom of heaven	<i>elachistos</i> <i>en tēi basileiai tōn ouranōn</i>	5:19
12:33	<i>poiēsate dendron kalon</i> <i>karpon kalon</i> <i>dendon sapron</i> <i>ex tou karpou to dendron ginōsketai</i>	make tree good X fruit good tree bad X by the fruit the tree is known	<i>dendron agathon poiei</i> <i>karpous kalous</i> <i>sapron dendron</i> <i>apo tōn karpōn autōn epignōsesthe</i>	7:17 7:16 X
12:35	<i>agathos, agatha</i> <i>ponēros ponēra</i>	good, good X evil, evil	<i>ou agathon ponērous</i> <i>ou sapron kalous</i>	7:18
12:50	<i>poiēsei to thelēma tou patros mou tou en ouranois</i>	do the will of my Father who is in heaven	<i>poiōn to thelēma tou patros mou tou en tois ouranois</i>	7:21
15:19	<i>ek tēs kardias</i>	from / in the heart	<i>en tēi kardiai</i>	5:28
15:29	<i>anabas eis to oros</i>	into the mountain	<i>anabē eis to oros</i>	5:1
18:3	<i>eiselthete eis tēn basileian</i>	enter into kingdom	<i>eiseleusetai eis tēn basileian</i>	7:21
18:4	<i>meizōn en tēi basileiai</i>	great / est in kingdom	<i>meGas en tēi basileiai</i>	5:19
18:8	<i>cheir skandalizei</i> <i>ekkopson, bale apo sou kalon soi</i>	hand / right offends cut, throw from you better for you	<i>dexia cheir skandalizei</i> <i>ekkopson, bale apo sou sympheri soi</i>	5:30
18:9	<i>ophthalmos skandalizei</i> <i>exele, bale apo sou kalon soi</i>	eye / right eye offends cut, throw from you better for you	<i>ophthalmos skandalizei</i> <i>ekkopson, bale apo sou sympheri soi</i>	5:29 X
18:21,27	<i>aphēsō, aphēken</i>	forgive	<i>aphēs, aphēkamen</i>	6:12–15
18:24,28	<i>opheiletēs, opheileis</i>	debts, owe	<i>opheiletais</i>	6:12
19:7	<i>dounai, apostasiou gamēsēi moichatai</i>	give, divorcement marries adultery	<i>dotō, apostasion gamēsēi moichatai</i>	5:31–32
19:21	<i>thēsauron en ouranōi</i> <i>teleios</i>	treasure / s in heaven perfect	<i>thēsaurus en ouranōi</i> <i>teleioi</i>	6:20 5:48
20:8	<i>misthon</i>	reward	<i>misthon</i>	6:1–2, 16
21:22	<i>aitēsēte, lēmpsesthe</i>	ask, receive / given	<i>aiteite, dothēsetai</i>	7:7
22:40	<i>nomos kai prophētai</i>	law and prophets	<i>nomos kai prophētai</i>	7:12
25:11–12	<i>kurie kurie</i>	Lord Lord	<i>kurie kurie</i>	7:22
25:??	<i>ouk oida hymas</i>	I know ye not	<i>oudepote egnōn hymas</i>	7:23
25:41	<i>poreuesthe ap’emou hoi katēranenoi</i>	depart from me ye cursed / workers	<i>apochōreite ap’emou hoi ergazomenoi</i>	7:23



his answer “I do not know you” (*ouk oida hymas*) is functionally equivalent to the even stronger rejection in 7:23, “I never knew you” (*oudepote egnōn hymas*).

Matthew presents in chapter 25 the last teachings of Jesus before the night of his arrest and trial. He ends his report where Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount. Here in 25:13–15, the Lord speaks of the rewards that will be given to those who magnify the unique talents that each has been given, rewards that will be given before all the nations (i.e. openly, as in 6:4, 6, 18) in the day of his coming in glory (25:31–32). And finally, the Lord speaks in Matthew 25:41 of those who will unfortunately have to be asked to leave: “Depart from me (*poreuesthe ap’ emou*), ye cursed” (25:41), which carries the same condemnation that concludes the Sermon on the Mount: “Depart from me (*apochōreite ap’ emou*), ye workers of iniquity” (7:23). The fact that Jesus concluded his final instructions to his disciples in Matthew 24–25 by reiterating these final words of the Sermon would not seem to be coincidental.

Thus, it is clear to me that Matthew uses the Sermon for his teaching in chapters 10–25 and not the other way around. In chapter 10–25 we see that all passages he quotes are accepted without explanation or argumentation. They are magisterial mandates. Matthew uses these references knowing that the disciples already understand them; we see Jesus using these, as the historical Jesus, because he knows that his disciples accept them.

### **Use of the Sermon on the Mount in Mark, Luke, Peter, James, and Paul (Table 8)**

Moreover, even more significant for present purposes, Sermon on the Mount elements are also found heavily in 1 Peter (by this count 7 times), in James (12 times), and Romans (11 times). On at least six of these 30 occasions, the word orders are chiasmatically inverted, which according to Seidel’s law, may indicate that these passages were consciously quoted. It seems easier to believe that the Sermon on the Mount was known to Peter, James, John, and even Paul, than to believe that all of these early New Testament writings were somehow known to the writer of the Sermon on the Mount. As mentioned above, Hans Dieter Betz has argued that parts of

the Sermon on the Mount should be seen as pre-Matthean. But going beyond Betz’s analysis, the verbiage and echoes of the Sermon on the Mount found elsewhere in the New Testament would not only mean that parts of the Sermon on the Mount were also pre-Petrine, pre-Jamesian, and even pre-Pauline, but also (because these quotations and echoes come from every part of the Sermon on the Mount) that the Sermon had become coin of the realm at a very early stage in the first few decades of Christianity. Otherwise, how can one explain the fact that all of these Sermon on the Mount phrases had become so widely known and commonly taken as magisterial? Seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a temple-related text that was used to instruct converts and perhaps specifically to prepare initiates for baptism (as I suggest) would explain this wide distribution of Sermon on the Mount elements across the full breadth shown on Table 8, a suggestion that certainly has enormous implications.

**Quotations in Mark.** In Mark, elements from the Sermon on the Mount appear much less frequently than in Matthew or Luke, but they are present nonetheless. On four occasions, Mark quotes lines found in the Sermon on the Mount.

In Mark 4, after explaining to the disciples in private the meaning of the parable of the sower—namely that all hearers of the word will be judged by the amount of good fruit they bear—Jesus told (or reminded) the Twelve that they too will be judged by what they bring forth: “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?” (Mark 4:21). This truncated statement in Mark makes full sense only if one assumes that the Twelve (and the readers) were aware of what had been said in Matthew 5:14, extending some kind of actual commission or call for action.<sup>67</sup> Otherwise the thought is left dangling about the point of this little parable. Mark 4:22 then states that all that is “hid (*krypton*)” will come abroad openly (*eis phaneron*), reflecting the clear sense, even if not the form of the earliest Greek manuscripts, of Matthew 6:4, 6, which teach that

67. The commissioning element is clearer in 3 Nephi 12:13–16, but it is amply present in Matthew 5:13–16 as well (Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 67–76).

acts of righteousness that are done in secret (*en tōi kryptōi*) will be rewarded openly (*en tōi panerōi*). Finally, after warning the disciples to have “ears to hear” and to be careful about which voices they obey, Jesus applies the rule that “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you” (Mark 4:24, quoting Matthew 7:2) and that “he that hath not, from him shall be taken” (Mark 4:25, quoting Matthew 25:29). Jesus’ words in this short passage draw again from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the Sermon on the Mount, thereby invoking it in its entirety.

In Mark 9, Jesus spoke again to the Twelve in private. In response to their dispute over who was greatest, Jesus told them to receive anyone who casts out devils in his name (Mark 9:38–40) and that, on pain of being cast into hell, they should not offend anyone who so much as gives a disciple of Christ a cup of water (Mark 9:38–48). Again, this brief instruction makes good sense if one assumes that the Twelve have already been told that some who perform miracles in Jesus’ name will be told to depart (Matthew 7:22). Those people, like children, need to grow and should not be offended. For now, they are not against God, and if they come to know the Lord, someday they will enter into his presence. But before that day, “everyone,” including the Twelve, “will be salted with fire” (Mark 9:49, their own sacrifice offered with salt<sup>68</sup>), and thus they should have salt, or peace, among themselves. The key premise that stands in Mark 9 behind Jesus’ reprimand—namely that in some way they are the salt that should not lose its savor—remains unstated, presumably because the disciples already know it.

In Mark 10, after answering in public the question raised by the Pharisees about divorcing one’s wife, Jesus again spoke to his disciples in private about this matter, explaining that the rule, which applies among them, applies to husbands as well as to wives who divorce their spouse and marry another (Mark 10:11–12). One can see how a need for clarification could logically have arisen out of

the teaching on divorce in Matthew 5, which did not mention this point in specific.

In Mark 11, after cursing the fig tree, Jesus spoke in confidence to Peter: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (11:24, echoing Matthew 7:7–8), and “when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (11:25–26, quoting Matthew 5:23; 6:14–15). Here the obligation to reconcile with “thy brother” (Matthew 5:23) is extended to forgiving anyone, even those in Jerusalem who seek to destroy Jesus (11:18) and will wither like the barren fig tree (illustrating Matthew 7:20, “By their fruits, ye shall know them”).

In all these instances in Mark, the words were spoken to disciples in private, consistent with the esoteric, covenantal nature of these teachings. It would seem that each of these reminders and clarifications assumes a previous commitment to the underlying principles involved.

**Quotations in Luke.** Numerous parallels exist between passages in the Gospel of Luke and the Sermon on the Mount, especially concentrated in the Sermon on the Plain (in Luke 6) and Jesus’ teaching to the disciples on prayer (in Luke 11). These parallels have been meticulously examined and extensively discussed for centuries,<sup>69</sup> and my intent here is not to consider each of these many points of contact between Luke and Matthew. Instead, I wish to make two arguments.

First, the Sermon on the Plain is a public text, and this accounts for which teachings it includes. In Luke 6, Jesus spoke to a large, diverse audience “from Jewish and Greek cities” (Luke 6:17). At the end of these teachings, Luke continues, “Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum” (Luke 7:1). Many in that audience were not faithful followers, let alone disciples, of Jesus; he cursed them for being rich, haughty, and socially accepted (Luke 6:24–27), and he chided them for not doing the things he said (Luke 6:46). It appears that Jesus

68. Several manuscripts, including Alexandrinus and Bezae Cantabrigiensis, add “and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt,” obviously recalling a Sermon on the Mount connection.

69. See Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 37–44, 69–88, 571–640.

**Table 8. Selected SM Verbiage and Echoes Found Elsewhere in the New Testament**

SM Matt 5–7	Mark	Luke	1 Peter	James	Romans
Blessed ( <i>makarioi</i> )		14:15		1:12	14:22
be the poor		6:20			
the hungry		6:21			
merciful/mercy ( <i>eleos</i> )				2:13	
sons of God					8:14
reviled ( <i>oneidizo</i> )		6:22–23	4:14		
persecuted ( <i>dikaiosynēn</i> )			3:14 [x]		
Reward ( <i>misthos</i> )		10:7		5:4	
Salt is good, savor	9:50	14:34–35			
Lamp under bushel	4:21	8:16			
See your <i>kala</i> works			2:12 [x]		
Glorify God ( <i>doxasōsin</i> )			2:12		
Fulfill the law					8:4
Not one tittle		16:17			
Shun anger ( <i>orgē</i> )				1:19–20	
No insulting a brother					14:10
Reconcile with brother/all	11:18				
Settle lawsuits quickly		12:58–59			
Lust ( <i>epithymia</i> ) and sin				1:14–15	
Cut off eye/hand	9:43–48 [x]				
Divorce	10:11–12	16:18			
Oath, heaven, earth, yea, nay				5:12	
Return not evil for evil					12:17 [x]
Turn the other cheek		6:29–30			
Love your enemies		6:27–28, 32–35			12:20
Overwhelm evil in good					12:21
Pray for, bless persecutors					12:14
Be perfect [be merciful] ( <i>teleioi</i> )		[6:36]		1:4; 3:2	
Not as hypocrites			2:1		
In secret	4:22				
The Lord's Prayer		11:2–4			
Father					8:15
Forgive ( <i>aphēo</i> )	11:25–26				
God temptation ( <i>peirazō</i> )				1:13	
Treasure in heaven, thief		12:33–34			
Eye single		11:34–36			
Mammon		16:13			
Worry ( <i>merimnate</i> )		12:22–34	5:7		
Judge not ( <i>krinō</i> )				4:11	2:1; 14:10
What judgment you judge	4:24	6:37–38, 41–42			
Ask and be given	11:24			1:5–6	
Knock, open		11:9–13			
Good ( <i>agatha</i> ) gifts ( <i>domata</i> )				1:17	
Golden rule		6:31			
Narrow door		13:23–24			
Tree known by its fruit		6:43–44			
figs ( <i>syka</i> ) and grapes/vine				3:12 [x]	
Lord, Lord		6:46			
Depart from me		13:25–27			
Hear and do ( <i>akouō poiēō</i> )				1:22 [x]	
Built ( <i>themelioō</i> )			5:10		
Upon the rock		6:47–49			

Note: [x] = chiasmic, Seidel's Law

limited what he said to them, following his own rule of not giving the holy thing to those who are unprepared to receive it (Matthew 7:6). While the Sermon on the Plain follows the same order as the Sermon on the Mount, it suitably contains only its more public elements.<sup>70</sup> Present in Luke 6 are the more ordinary beatitudes of blessing the poor, those who hunger, and those who are reviled (6:20–23); the more social wisdom of turning the other cheek and loving one’s enemies (6:27–35), not being judgmental (6:37–42), and following the Golden Rule (6:31); the logical truism of knowing a tree by its fruit (6:43–44); the indisputable need to do more than simply say “Lord, Lord” (6:46); and the sensibility of building one’s house on a firm foundation (6:47–49). Likewise, a practical instruction to settle quickly with any adversary (not just a brother as in Matthew 5:22, 24) is given to the people in Luke 12:54, 57–59.

Missing here—outside of the confines of the “mountain” and a covenant community of “his disciples” (as in Matthew 5:1)—are elements that one would expect to be reserved for the closer circle of righteous disciples: for example, certain beatitudes of inner discipleship, with their future blessings of seeing God, becoming children of God, and inheriting the heavenly kingdom; commissions to be salt of the earth and city on a hill; and a demand to keep every provision of the law as stipulations of the covenant (including the avoidance of anger against a brother, the instruction to reconcile with brothers in the community of faith, the higher rules of covenant marriage, the swearing of simple oaths, and giving alms in secret). The saying about becoming perfect is also absent in Luke 6:36, where the public is told instead to be merciful. Gone also are the lines about praying in secret; fasting, washing, and anointing; not casting the holy thing before the dogs; concerns about false prophets; entering through the narrow gate into life eternal; and doing the will of the Father in order to be allowed to enter into his presence.

Second, I wish to point out that elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke (as we also saw in Matthew and Mark), Jesus privately spoke to his disciples about

these more elevated topics: for example, losing one’s savor and being cast out (Luke 14:34–35, a reference to excommunication), not placing one’s lamp under a bushel (8:16, which presupposes a prior commitment to being a light unto the world), needing to pray in a prescribed way (11:1–4), knocking and being assured that the door will be opened and the Holy Spirit given (11:9–13), laying up treasures in heaven (12:33–34), having an eye single to God’s glory (11:34–36), receiving food and clothing in support of their ministry (12:22–32), keeping every jot and tittle of the law (16:16–17), avoiding remarriage after divorce (16:18), serving God and not Mammon (16:13), and entering through the narrow door (13:24) or being asked to depart from God’s presence (13:25–27). In all these cases, Jesus spoke these words to his disciples in private, consistent with a higher state of seriousness, preexisting commitment, or sanctity. On the only other such occasion in Luke, Jesus spoke to an unidentified person about entering in through the narrow gate (13:23–27), but that speaker already began by addressing Jesus as “Lord,” and they spoke together in confidence.

In sum, the Gospel of Luke adds evidence to support the idea that some portions of the Sermon on the Mount were better suited to private settings or were easily adapted for broader use in public declarations. If the Sermon on the Mount was the covenantal fountainhead of these scattered sayings in Luke, this explains why these derivatives carried such numinous power and decisive authority whenever they were used. Luke also gives the distinct impression that selected sentences from the sermon were readily on the lips of Jesus as he walked and talked in public or in private, making it highly unlikely that Jesus would have said these things only once, on some unique occasion or in one particular form.<sup>71</sup>

**Elements in 1 Peter.** Beyond the ministry of Christ, elements from the Sermon on the Mount continue to appear in the letters of Peter, James, Paul, and elsewhere, which bears out the conclusion that the Sermon on the Mount was coin of the realm for Christians in the third decade of Christianity. Since

70. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 372.

71. Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 168.

baptism was understood in 1 Peter 3:21 as necessarily involving a covenantal pledge (*eperōtēma*) to do God's will, the pervasive use of phrases from the Sermon on the Mount in the early apostolic writings strongly suggests that the sermon provided basic instructions and stipulations used in the formal process of becoming a member of the early Christian Church.<sup>72</sup> Peter himself admonished the Saints to use the very sayings (*logia*) of God: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles [*logia*] of God" (1 Peter 4:11), and indeed he follows his own advice by using the words of Jesus on several instances, ranging from the sermon's very first word and its pointed directions to the disciples, to one of its very last words. For example:

Peter's First Epistle contains several strong echoes of the Beatitudes, using the sermon's opening word "blessed (*makarioi*)" in two beatitudinal constructions. 1 Peter 3:14, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake (*dia dikaiosunēn makarioi*)" is quite similar to Matthew 5:10, although with an inversion of the Matthean word order, "*makarioi . . . heneken dikaiosunēs.*" 1 Peter 4:14 recalls the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake" (Matthew 5:11). Peter says, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy [blessed] are ye." The KJV obscures the parallelism between these passages by inconsistently translating Greek words which appear in each passage. In 1 Peter 4:14, the word *oneidizō* is rendered as "reproached," but the same word in Matthew 5:11 is translated as "reviled." The word "happy" in the KJV of 1 Peter 4:14 is *makarioi* (blessed).

The phrase "see your good works" in 1 Peter 2:12 (*ek tōn kalōn ergōn epipeuontes*) has conceptual similarities to the commission in Matthew 5:16, that people may see your good works (*idōsin hymōn ta kala erga*). Peter encourages his readers to do good works which "the Gentiles" may behold and thereby "glorify God in the day of visitation

(*doxasōsin ton theon en hēmerai episkopēs*)," restating the instruction of Jesus to let your light shine so that when "men" behold it, they may "glorify your Father which is in heaven (*doxasōsin ton patera ton hymōn en tois ouranois.*" Each of these two passages uses the same verb *doxasōsin* ("that they may glorify"). The object of this verb, whether "your Father which is in heaven" or "God in the day of visitation," is the same being. The words for "good works" (*kala erga*) in both passages are also the same and somewhat distinctive, because the word *agatha* (the more common word for "good") could have been used alternatively in either case.

In 1 Peter 2:1, when Peter instructs his followers to lay aside "hypocrisies," he picks up a theme repeated four times in the Sermon on the Mount about not being "as the hypocrites" (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5). Peter also instructs them to cast all anxiety on the Lord: "casting all your care (*merimnan*) upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7), the verbal form of this word appearing four times in the Sermon on the Mount: "take no thought (*merimnate*) for your life" (Matthew 6:25; see also vv. 27, 28, 31), for the Lord will take care of what his disciples shall eat and drink and wherewith they will be clothed.

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with the extended simile of the wise man who built his house upon the rock, the word for "built" being the pluperfect form of *themelioō* (Matthew 7:25). Peter likewise ends his first epistle with the assurance that the God of all glory will "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you," the word translated as "settle" being the same as the SM word for being built, or established (*themelioō*) on the rock, a word clearly coming, here as in the Sermon, from "the semantic field of building activity."<sup>73</sup>

**Strong Allusions in James.** Although the details are not always unambiguous, it seems quite evident that the Epistle of James also consciously draws on a known body of basic Christian teachings that was used in his community as an accepted, persuasive, binding text that governed daily life. The writer links his letter "intertextually with the authoritative

72. For a discussion of the Sermon on the Mount as part of a possible conversion ritual, comparable in some ways to the Jewish Giyyur proselyte ritual, see Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 193–97.

73. John H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 867.



scriptural writings of his day.”<sup>74</sup> In particular, the following elements support the idea that James draws on passages from the Sermon on the Mount, mainly those that have practical, ethical applications. His selection ranges again throughout the entire sermon and includes items that in his context understandably presuppose brotherly relations and obligations of righteousness that would apply more within a faithful community than to the public at large. Without belaboring the pattern seen above, one may compare many passages in James with correspondences in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>75</sup> For example, following the order in which these words appear in Matthew 5–7, compare:

- James 1:12 with the form of the Beatitudes (blessed . . . , for . . . ; *makarioi* . . . *hoti*). James uses the same expression, *makarios* . . . *hoti*, in another beatitude, this time about enduring temptation: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.”<sup>76</sup>
- James 2:13 with Matthew 5:7 (on the merciful being given mercy). Expressing the opposite regarding the unmerciful, in reverse order, James writes, “Judgment without mercy” shall be given to him “that hath shewed no mercy.” James uses the noun for “mercy” *eleos*, while the sermon uses verbal forms of *eleaō* to speak of the merciful receiving mercy.
- James 1:19–20 (telling brothers to be slow to anger) with Matthew 5:22 (telling brothers who are angry that they are in danger of judgment).

74. David R. Nienhuis, “James as a Canon-Conscious Pseudepigraph,” in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition*, ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009), 195.

75. Mentioned in John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the New Testament,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, 1981; reprinted Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 212; see also Patrick J. Hartin, “James and the Q Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 440–57; and Patrick J. Hartin, *James and the “Q” Sayings of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 140–72. However, the precise nature of the relationship between James and the sermon remains a puzzle (Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 6 n. 13).

76. Although the word “blessed” is used in many places, such as at the beginning of Psalms 1:1, the formula “blessed . . . , for . . .” is less common.

The message is the same and rather distinctive. James uses the noun form, *orgē*, while Matthew’s account uses a participial form of *orgizō*.

- James 1:14–15 (on lust bringing forth sin and death) with Matthew 5:28 (on lust leading to adultery). Here again, James uses a noun form, *epithymia*, while Matthew uses a verbal form of *epithymeō*.
- James 5:12 with Matthew 5:33–37 (both speaking of not swearing oaths by heaven or earth, but only by yes or no). Each passage uses the verb *omnyō* (to swear), the word pair *ouranos* (heaven) and *gē* (earth), and the injunction to say *nai nai* (yea yea) or *ou ou* (nay nay). These are the only two places in the New Testament where this instruction is given.
- James 1:4 (“that ye may be perfect”) and 3:2 (being “a perfect man”) with Matthew 5:48 (on becoming perfect, “be ye therefore perfect”). Both James and Matthew use the adjective *teleioi* to describe the perfect state to which the disciples ought to strive (see also Matthew 19:21).
- James 1:13 with Matthew 6:13 (on God not tempting, or being tempted by evil). Each passage uses forms of the word, *peirasmos* (temptation): Matthew uses the noun form, *peirasmos*, while James uses a verb form of *peirazō*. The assurance that God does not tempt any man (in James 1:13) seems to be an obvious correction of some misunderstanding of the prayer in Matthew 6:13 asking God to “lead us not into temptation.”
- James 4:11 (“speak not evil one of another, brethren” for he that speaks evil of a brother “judgeth his brother”) with Matthew 7:1–2 (on not judging a brother or worrying first about the mote in a brother’s eye). Each discourages disciples from judging brothers unrighteously, and each uses the verb *krinō* (judge).
- James 1:5–6 (ask of God, that giveth to all”) with Matthew 7:7 (also on asking of God). Each passage uses the verb *aiteō* in the imperative (ask), followed by the future passive form of the word *didōmi* (it shall be given).
- James 1:17 with Matthew 7:11 (both dealing with good and perfect gifts coming down from

heaven). While Matthew uses *domata agatha* (“good gifts”), and James uses *pasa dosis agathē* (“every good gift”), the phrases are synonymous. In Matthew the gifts come from the Father in Heaven, while in James from the Father of lights.

- James 3:11–12 with Matthew 7:16–22 (in both cases speaking about people not uttering both blessings or curses, as trees can produce either good or bad fruit). Though the vocabulary differs slightly here, the concept is clearly parallel. James 3:12 speaks of “figs” (*syka*) and a vine (*ampelos*); the Sermon on the Mount (7:16) uses grapes (*staphylas*) and figs (*syka*). The similar use by James of rhetorical questions and impossible botanical contrasts seems to draw very clearly on the dominical language of the Lord, as nowhere else in the New Testament.
- James 1:22–23 (“be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”) with Matthew 7:24–27 (on the urgency of both hearing and doing the word). Both passages use variations of the word *poieō* (do). Matthew uses the verb *poieō*, while James uses the noun *poiētēs* (doer); and Matthew uses the verb *akouō* (hear), while James uses the noun *akroatēs* (hearer).

Although some of these words appear elsewhere in the New Testament, the density of words, phrases, ideas, and strong teachings used by James and found in the Sermon on the Mount show that these two texts are closely associated with each other. Indeed, Jeremias has correctly noted that James and the Sermon on the Mount share the same overall character as bodies of early Christian teachings,<sup>77</sup> and in most cases it makes good sense to see James using the sermon rather than the other way around.

**Echoes from the Sermon on the Mount in Paul.** Similarly, some of Paul’s letters reflect parts of the Sermon on the Mount, although admittedly less frequently and more loosely than the letters of Peter and James. Nevertheless, these connections are close enough that one may well suspect that Paul

knew the provisions of the Sermon on the Mount. Whether Paul’s rhetoric in general reflects written or oral channels of transmission is debatable,<sup>78</sup> but in any event the importance of memory must not be discounted,<sup>79</sup> especially where foundational documents or ritual texts may have been involved.

Among notable statements in Paul’s letters that rely on language likely from the Sermon on the Mount are the following from the Epistle to the Romans:

- “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (8:4; compare fulfillment of the law in Matthew 5:17–18);
- “sons of God” and “children of God” (8:14, 17; Matthew 5:9);
- cry to God as “Father” (8:15; see Matthew 6:9);
- “bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (12:14; Matthew 5:44);
- “recompense to no man evil for evil” (12:17; Matthew 5:39), but “overcome evil with good” (12:21; Matthew 5:44);
- “if thine enemy hunger, feed him” (12:20; Matthew 5:44);
- “but why dost thou judge thy brother?” (14:10; Matthew 7:2–4); and
- “why dost thou set at nought thy brother?” (14:10; Matthew 5:22). These final two questions strongly imply that Paul’s audience in Rome already knew of their obligation to “judge not” or to call no brother a fool, stipulations of discipleship found most prominently in the Sermon on the Mount.

### Was Matthew a Levite?

Finally I want to add today an entirely new argument to this temple studies exploration of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Matthew. All of this talk about the Sermon in relation to the Temple raises several inevitable questions. How would Jesus or any of his disciples have known about the

77. Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 22. Jeremias uses here the word *didachē* to describe James, the same word used in Matthew 7:28 to describe the Sermon on the Mount.

78. Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 6 n. 12.

79. Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998); Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem? Rethinking the Literary Dependence on the First Three Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1992), 182–85.

inner workings, wordings, implements and structures of the Temple? And more particularly, how can one account for this temple interest on the part of the apostle Matthew?

These questions invite us to ask the question, Might Matthew have been a Levite? As is well known, Luke 5:27 tells the story of Jesus calling a tax-collector named Levi to come “follow me.” Mark 2:14 identifies this tax-collector Levi as the son of Alphaeus, but when Mark and Luke list Matthew as one of the twelve in Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:15, they do not associate Matthew with this Levi, although they both identify James as a son of Alphaeus.<sup>80</sup> Matthew’s own list of the Twelve identifies Matthew as a tax-collector (Matthew 10:3), but neither as surnamed Levi. Yet the calling of Matthew in Matthew 9:9 clearly parallels the calling of Levi in Luke 5:27, and one would think that Matthew would know what was going on here. Some, such as Schwartz, therefore have noted “that the combination of Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27, on the one hand, with Matthew 9:9 and 10:3, on the other, leads to the conclusion that Matthew was also known as Levi.”<sup>81</sup> Bauckham and others, however, rightly point out that the situation may be more complicated than this. Many think that Mark did not consider Matthew and Levi, the son of Alphaeus, to be the same person,<sup>82</sup> and Bauckham adds that it would be odd for Matthew to have a second Semitic personal name,<sup>83</sup> and some late Patristic sources argued that Matthew and Levi the son of Alphaeus were two different people. But perhaps there are other possibilities here.

For example, would it be possible that both Matthew and Levi the son of Alphaeus were Levites, and in that case, both could have been known as

Levi? It would seem implausible that any Jew in the first century could have been called Levi who was not a Levite. It is hard to imagine that any Jewish father or mother would name a son Levi, or that he would come to be known by his associates as Levi, if he were not a member of the tribe of Levi. This point has been further validated by recent research into first century Jewish inscriptions and epitaphs, where it has been found that no one with the name Levi was not a Levite.<sup>84</sup> Stern, Jeremias, Schwartz and Gundry all suppose that Levi was a name typical of Levites, and that a scribe known by this moniker would have been a Levite.<sup>85</sup> Gundry sees the name Levi in New Testament times as always representing tribal origin (cf. Neh 11:15–22), and entertains the possibility that a person such as Matthew Levi could have borne two Levitical, Semitic names, neither of which was a descriptive nickname.<sup>86</sup>

Of course, the name Matthew and its variants would have been a suitable name for a Levite. It derives from the Hebrew *mattan* meaning gift, with Mattaniah, Matthias, Mattenai, Mattithiah, and Matthew all meaning “gift of the Lord.” Although Matthew did not choose this name, assuming that it was his given birth name, he would have been reminded daily that he was a gift of the Lord and that he should be grateful for the many gifts given by the Lord to himself, his family, and to the entire House of Israel. Interestingly, the idea of gifts shows up twice in the Sermon on the Mount, once in bringing one’s gifts to the altar at the temple, and also seeking a gift from God knowing that the father will not give an evil gift but knows how to answer petitions

80. Some of the manuscripts for Mark say that Jesus did not see Levi but James, the son of Alphaeus, conforming the patronymic in Mark 2:14 with that in Mark 3:18, but the overwhelming consensus of the early Greek manuscripts identify the tax collector in Mark 2:14 as Levi.

81. Daniel R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 95 n. 34.

82. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 108; agreeing with E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 4* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1981), 176–77.

83. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 109.

84. Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: Part I: Palesitne 330 BCE–200CE* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2002).

85. Menahem Stern, “Aspects of Jewish Society,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, ed. Shemuel Safrai, M. Stern, D. Flusser, and W van Unnik (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 599; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 213, n. 209; Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, 95 n. 34; Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 183.

86. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982), 166. For other examples of such nomenclature, see the citations in W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 100–101 n. 29; and Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.2.2 §35; 18.4.3 §95; 20.8.11 §196.

to give good gifts, with the temple being the place par excellence where gifts from the Lord were earnestly sought and vows and pledges were made hoping to receive those gifts.

And by the same token, any disciples associated with the name of Levi should probably also be understood as coming from the tribe of Levi. Thus, Mark's Levi the son of Alphaeus would have been a Levite, and that would mean that Alphaeus himself was a Levite, which might mean that James (Jacob) the son of Alphaeus was also a Levite. And with all these Levites in the picture, it is no wonder that they needed to be known by patronymics or nicknames. Especially after Matthias takes the place of Judas among the Twelve in Acts 1:26, the need would have become even greater to differentiate him from the other apostle similarly named Matthew, who thus becomes known as the tax-collector, as he even calls himself (Matthew 10:3).<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, if Matthew was in fact a Levite, he was not alone as a convert to Christianity from the Aaronide ranks. Barnabas, who would become Paul's missionary companion, was a Levite from Cyprus (Acts 4:36). Barnabas, of course, had connections with Jerusalem; John Mark was his cousin. So, although he had an estate in Cyprus, Barnabas was apparently present in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost and became a Christian convert at a very early stage. His first given name was actually Joseph (Josés in the KJV), and he had been surnamed or given the new name (*epiklētheis*) of Barnabas, as he had sold his land and brought the money to Peter and the apostles, complying with the apostolic order that followers of Jesus should liquidate their assets and have their property in common. The name Bar-nabas in Hebrew is said by Luke to have meant "the Son of Consolation," connecting it with the Greek word for the Comforter (*húios paraklēseōs*), the name given used Christ for the Holy Ghost, the *Paraclete*, whom we can call to our side for support and encouragement.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the

name Barnabas would have indicated that he had become a son of the Holy Ghost, or had been born of the Spirit through receiving the gift and comfort of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by the apostles. It is interesting to wonder if this new name might have been given to this Joseph as a convert name, just as Saul was renamed Paul upon his conversion, and perhaps in a similar manner Levi had been renamed Matthew. Such renamings must have reflected a significant personal transformation, signaling rebirth and becoming a new person. It may also have "marked the definite admission to an office, the authoritative reception or recognition of Barnabas as a prophet or a teacher in the society."<sup>89</sup>

In addition to Barnabas, a large number of priests were among the earliest converts to Christianity who awaited especially the return of Jesus to the Temple where they had served: "And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Moreover, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, served as a priest in the temple, which means that Elizabeth was also from the priestly tribe of Levi, which further means that her cousin Mary was probably also of that tribe. If she came from a Levitical background, Mary may have sung at home the psalms, the songs of the temple, as Jesus grew up. If so, Jesus himself was raised in a home where his parents were at least familiar with, if not even fully attentive to, the full range of Levitical concerns and duties.

### The Duties of the Levites (Table 9)

And what were those Levitical concerns and duties? Even more than by the onomastic evidence, the proposition that Matthew was a Levite is strengthened a wider, functional analysis, inspired by the Temple Studies approach. By compiling a list of all of the functions known to have been served by Levites in the first half of the first century (Table 9), and then by comparing that list closely with Matthew's unique vocabulary (Table 10), one can readily see that the Gospel of Matthew shows a clear interest in

87. As Bauckham suggests, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 107.

88. The name Barnabas may also be connected with the Hebrew word for "Prophet" or with the Aramaic word for "refreshment," but Luke's interpretation of the word should not be discounted.

89. Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* in the Westminster Commentaries (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1964, reprint of 1901), 63.



**Table 9. Duties of the Levites**

Singing and providing music in the Temple in twenty-four concourses, two weeks a year (1 Chron 25; 2 Chron 5:12; 34:12).

Standing to thank and praise God every morning and evening (1 Chron 23:30)

Caring for the courts, rooms, store-houses and treasuries of the temple (1 Chron 23:28)

Cleansing everything that is holy, the sacred vestments and vessels (1 Chron 23:28)

Serving as custodians of the ark (Deut 10:8)

Transporting, maintaining, and handling of cultic items (Num 3-4; 8:5-22)

Setting out the shewbread and providing the wafers of unleavened bread (1 Chron 23:29)

Preparing the flour for the cereal offerings, the baked offering, the offering mixed with oil

Overseeing standards of measurement of number and amount (1 Chron 23:29)

Making all kinds of burnt offerings at time and in the number required (1 Chron 23:31)

Slaughtering the sacrificial victims and serving the people (Ezek 44:6-14)

Keeping charge of the sanctuary, guarding the gates, opening and closing the outer gates, guarding the doors 24 hours a day (1 Chron 26:1-19)

Teaching people in general (Deut 24:8; 33:10; 2 Chron 35:3; Neh 8:7)

Teaching the law (2 Chron 17:7-9)

Instructing the king (Deut 17:18-20)

Judging and acting as officers of the law (2 Chron 19:8, 11); and as sheriffs, police, law enforcers (1 Chron 23:4). In the time of Ezra, they were the sole members of the Sanhedrin (Deut 17:8-9; 21:5; Ezek 44:15, 24)

Collecting the annual temple tax, tithing, and donations to the temple (Neh 10:38-39)

Functioning as temple agents outside cultic sanctity (Ezek 44:11; 46:24)

Rendering medical services (Lev 13:2; 14:2; Luke 17:14)

Acting as architects and builders in repairing the Temple (2 Chron 34:8-13)

Serving as "scribal and administrative mediators between the public and the ruling Aaronides"\*

"Presiding over teaching, worship, and inquiries of the deity"†

Overseeing the temple library and interpreting scripture: "At the outset of the Hellenistic period, then, Levites remained firmly bound to the priestly faculty of the Jerusalem temple, . . . overseeing the collections of literature in the temple library, carrying out administrative duties and, most prominently, carrying scribal/exegetical authority"‡

*The Book of Jubilees* "restricts the role of legitimate scribes and exegetes of Scripture to hereditary Levites"\*\*\*

Acting as scribes and writing scripture. In the early Hellenistic era, "literacy and scribal skill are entirely restricted to those carrying Levite status. The authority to compose and interpret Scripture is an exclusive hallmark of the temple-bound priestly circles"††

\* Mark Leuchter and Jeremy M. Hutton, *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 2.

† Leuchter and Hutton, *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, 182.

‡ Leuchter and Hutton, *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, 220.

\*\*\* Leuchter and Hutton, *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, 222.

†† Leuchter and Hutton, *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, 222-23. See also 2 Chron. 34:13.



many Levitical concerns, any or all of which a Levite like Matthew would very likely have been aware of, if not personally involved with.

In general, Levites were to some extent supported by resources of the temple system, tithes, sacrifices, and the annual temple tax.<sup>90</sup> They ate the meat offered to Yahweh (Dt 18:1–5), and they shared in the tithes every third year.<sup>91</sup> They received as charitable offerings portions of the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil and wool (Deut. 18:4), and in all things, the Levites assisted and were subservient to the priests (Num 18:2,4).

More specifically, the assignments of the Levites included any of the items shown in table 9.

### Does the Gospel of Matthew Reflect Levitical Concerns? (Table 10)

Seeing that the Sermon on the Mount is saturated with temple connections and Levitical interests, what about Matthew's gospel in general? Do these Levitical concerns and connections found in the Sermon on the Mount continue to surface as linking themes that run throughout the Gospel of Matthew? By extracting from Matthew's vocabulary a list of words that he alone of the gospel writers makes use of, one can detect verbal clues of Matthew's various interests and professional expertise. Building on that verbal evidence, one can further notice that what emerges in Matthew's Gospel is an array of religious themes, temple practices, and priestly experiences that would have been especially noticeable and significantly meaningful to a Levite. Seeing Matthew as a Levite explains why he would have shown particular interest in this large body of priestly activities and concerns, which Mark (especially writing to Gentiles) and Luke (a physician by profession) would not have cared so much about.

When one looks at the list of Greek words that appear in the New Testament only in the Gospel of Matthew, some expected and other unexpected

clustering of these uniquely Matthean words emerge. As one might expect, since Matthew worked as in Capernaum, a fishing town, and would have known the fishermen there, along with their gear and tackle, he alone uses several words related to fishing, six of them, one time each: *haggos*, "container for a catch of fish"; *hagkistron*, "fish hook"; *amphiblēstron*, "casting a net for fishing"; *anabibazō*, "draw or drag nets ashore"; *sagēnē*, "dragnet," and *parathalassios*, "by the sea, or lake" (4:13). Also, as one would expect of a person involved with revenue collection and financial affairs, Matthew alone uses eight other words related to business and money, one or two times each: *nomisma*, "coin, tax money" (22:19); *didrachmon*, "didrachma, two drachma" (17:24); *statēr*, "stater, four drachmas" (17:27, 26:15); *daneion*, "debt" (18:27); *emporion*, "business" (22:5); *trapezitēs*, "banker" (25:27); *misthouthai*, "hire" (20:1); and *basanistēs*, "jailer, torturer, or possibly inspector" (18:34). Thus, it does not seem coincidental that the gospel of the tax collector Matthew takes particular note of temple matters that have to do with money. He alone reports that Jesus encouraged his disciples to pay the temple tax voluntarily and miraculously provided a coin for them to pay this offering (Matthew 17:24–27).<sup>92</sup> Those who operated the temple economy had, quite notably, violated the principle that temple offerings and transactions should be consecrated exclusively to the Lord, for which Jesus held them accountable. The story of the unforgiving steward, who himself had squandered 10,000 talents owed to his master, may well be a veiled critique of the misuse of the temple treasury, which according to Josephus amounted to the phenomenal sum of 10,000 talents.<sup>93</sup> This story appears only in Matthew 18. Furthermore, Matthew is the only one to point out that the thirty pieces of silver were returned by Judas to the temple treasury, where those coins apparently came from (Matthew 27:5). Given the importance, as temple motifs, of the law of consecration, laying up treasures in heaven,

90. Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes: The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2006), 64–81; Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), 9, 256, 380–381, 404–405.

91. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 281.

92. Hugh Montefiore, "Jesus and the Temple Tax," *New Testament Studies* 11 (1964–65): 70–71.

93. John W. Welch, "Herod's Wealth," in *Masada and the World of the New Testament*, ed. John F. Hall and John W. Welch (Provo: BYU Studies, 1997), 81–82.

and serving God and not mammon, it is not surprising that Jesus was so deeply troubled by money changing and commercial abuses in the temple.

But even more, and something I was not expecting to find, was the number of words—at least forty—in Matthew’s unique vocabulary that have something to do with the interests and duties of the Levites. This, in my mind, confirms that Matthew was indeed a Levite, as strongly as the previously two vocabulary clusters are consonant with him having been a revenue agent in Capernaum. His Levitical words and their temple-related subjects are shown in table 10.

When compared with Mark and Luke, Matthew adds several unique points of emphasis in reporting Jesus’ program of temple novation. In Matthew, in refuting those who criticized Jesus for supposedly working on the Sabbath, Jesus responded, “Have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one [intending God] greater than the temple” (Matthew 12:5–6). Similarly, when Jesus taught that swearing by the temple really means swearing by God (Matthew 23:16–17), he pointed his disciples toward the true spirit of the temple, the house of God. It is God who sanctifies all things, including the temple, not vice versa.

More work needs to be done in this regard, and so we may not yet be prepared to say definitively that Matthew was Levite and that he reflected Levitical temple interests in his composition of his New Testament Gospel, but a substantial number of significant evidences give reasons to think that this was the case.

### **But Could a Levite Have Been a Tax-collector?**

But, if Matthew were a Levite, could a Levite have been a tax-collector? In brief, I see no reason why a Levite could not have been a tax-collector. While he was probably not a publican working as a powerful money mogul or a franchiser or franchisee in the Roman tax system, he could easily have been involved in any number of other kinds of revenue collection. The word Greek *telonēs* was a generic

word for those involved in tax-farming or acting as a revenue agent. Every Greek city had its *telonai*. We think of Matthew narrowly today as a Roman “publican,” because the Vulgate translated the Greek word *telonēs* into the Latin publicanus. Perhaps Zacchaeus (Zakchaios) was one of those Roman tax lords (he is called an *architelonēs*) and he was also noted as being very rich (Luke 19:2), so there is reason to distinguish him from Matthew and the ordinary publicans and sinners with whom Jesus would have interacted on a daily basis.

The odious periodic poll taxes were direct taxes that were collected by wealthy contractors who were probably not Jews; but the customs or duties that were collected at a revenue office such as Matthew’s toll-booth could not be collected in one taxing season, because these taxes were levied on individual transactions on a day to day basis. To be sure, working in that capacity would have been seen as socially undesirable for many reasons. The general populace saw them as thieves, perhaps because they were susceptible to bribes or playing favorites or pocketing some of the money for themselves, but more than that such an agent would necessarily have had to handle Greek and Roman coins, with images of their gods, the emperor, and other secular and religious pagan symbols, all of which would have been prohibited to an orthodox Jew by the second of the Ten Commandments. Thus, it is true that tax-collectors were counted by the Pharisees and the Talmud among those who worked in “bogus trades” and were untrustworthy, making them ineligible to serve as judges or witnesses,<sup>94</sup> and that such people were also seen as being “in a special way unclean.”<sup>95</sup> But such people could always be ritually cleansed from such impurity without much difficulty. Some tax-farmers even conducted their business honestly and were highly regarded by those who knew them, as for example

94. Along with gamblers, lenders, pigeon trainers, herds-men, and thieves. See John W. Welch and John F. Hall, *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 3–10; based on table in Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 304.

95. Otto Michel, “*telonēs*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Friedrich, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972), 8:101.

**Table 10. Matthew's Levitical Vocabulary**

Tithing: *anēthon*, "dill" (23:23) (the Talmud requires that people pay tithes on the seeds, leaves, and stem of dill or anise); *kuminon*, "cummin" (23:23)

Temple treasury and the bribe by the chief priests to Judas: *korbanas*, "temple treasury" (27:6); *statēr*, "stater, four drachmas, one shekel" (26:15); *kryphaios*, "secret, hidden," chamber of secrets (6:18)

Temple layout: *exōteros*: "outer, outmost" (8:12, 22:13, 25:30) (used often in Ezekiel regarding temple areas, Ezek. 40:19, 20, 31; 41:15, 17; 42:1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14; 44:1, 19; 46:20, 21)

Purification and cleansing: *aponiptō*, "wash" (27:24); *diakatharizō*, "clean out, thresh out" (3:12); *diulizō*, "strain out, filter out" (23:24); *katamanthanō*, "consider, observe" (6:28) (inspect for purity in reporting contamination of a home, Lev 14:36)

God's presence or action: *hairtizō*: "choose, appoint" by the Spirit (12:18); *typhomai* "smolder, smoke" (12:20) (smoking flax not quenched until God appears, see Isa 42:3); *eklampō*, righteous ones "shine" as the sun (13:43); *prophthanō*, "come before, come unto" (17:25)

Pots and vessels: *paropsis*, "plate, dish" that Pharisees cleaned beyond the required pots (23:25); *aggeion*, "container, vessel" (25:4) (see Lev. 11:34, container for drink; Lev. 14:5, sacrificial vessel in cleansing of leper presided over by a priest; Num. 4:9, oil vessels in the tabernacle; Num. 5:17, vessel for holy water as part of the jealousy offering presided over by a priest; cf. Herodotus 4.2, vessel for holding money in the treasury)

Blood impurity: *haimorroēō*, "suffer a chronic bleeding" (9:20) (see Lev. 15:33)

Mixing seeds: *epispeirō*, "sow on top of" (13:25); *sunauxanomai*, "different plants growing together" (13:30)

Unclean animals: *kōnōps*, "gnat, mosquito" (23:24)

Prayer: *polulogia*, "many words, long prayer" (6:7); *battalogeō*, "babble, use many words" (6:7) (compare the Levites praying each day); *phylakterion*, "phylactery" (23:5)

Sacrificial animals: *nossion*, "young bird" (23:37) (cf. Ps. 84:3); *sitistos*, "fattened" (22:4) (suitable for sacrifice)

Forgiveness: *diallassomai*, "be reconciled to, make peace with" (5:24); *hebdomekontakis*, "seventy times" (18:22) (God's vengeance in Gen. 4:24)

Oaths or vows: *katathematizō*, "curse, place oneself under a curse" (26:74); *epiorkeō*, "break an oath, swear falsely" (5:33)

Marriage: *epigambreuō*, "to marry according to the law" (22:24)

Teaching: *phrazō*, "explain, interpret" (15:15); *syntassō*, "direct instruct, order" (21:6); *kathēgētēs*, "teacher, leader, master" (23:10)

Writing: *iota*, "the letter iota" (5:18)

Watching over: *koustōdia*, "a guard" (27:65, 66, 28:11)

Evil spirits: *daimōn*, "demon, evil spirit, god" (8:31) (cf. Isa. 65:11)

Death and burial: *teleutē*, "death" (2:14); *taphē*, "burial place" (27:7); *egresis*, "resurrection" (27:53); *Barachias*, father of one Zacharias killed in the Temple (23:35)

The temple tax: *didrachmon*, "didrachma, two drachma" (17:24); *statēr*, "stater, four drachmas" (17:27; 26:15)

the tax-collector John who tried to use his connections and reputation to settle the dispute between the Jews and Gessius Florus at the beginning of the Jewish War.<sup>96</sup>

Matthew's tax collecting activities, of course, are openly acknowledged by Mark, Luke, and Matthew himself. In Mark 2:14 Jesus sees Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the "revenue collection place" (*epi to telonion*), and said to him "follow me." Luke 5:27 reports what appears to be the same event, saying that Jesus went forth and beheld a tax collector (*telonēn*) by the name of Levi, sitting at the place of tax collection. Again, in Matthew 9:9, Jesus sees a man seated at the place of tax collection "called Matthew (*Matthaion*)" and then in Matthew 10:3 when the twelve apostles are named, Matthew is specifically identified as the tax collector (*ho telonēs*), followed by James the son of Alphaeus.

Many forms of taxation were collected within Israel, as well as by agents of the Roman overlords. Matthew could have been involved in the collection of any or all of these various taxes. One should not think of all tax collectors working in Galilee as necessarily working for the Romans. In fact, there were probably very few Romans anywhere in Galilee. Just because Capernaum was a fishing town on the North end of the Sea of Galilee where some travelers entering that region may have stopped does not mean that there would have been a toll booth or a customs office there run by the Romans. While it is unknown what kind of tax collection office Matthew may have been working at, and in fact it is not clear that Matthew's office was in Capernaum, where Peter's home was, he could just as well have been a collector of various Jewish or Herodian taxes.

Jewish or local taxes in Galilee and Judea at the time of Jesus included the annual temple tax of a half shekel per adult male (Exodus 30:11–16),<sup>97</sup> tithing of ten percent of one's increase in herds or crops

or fish or produce, tithing in the amount of one percent of food obtained by hunting and gathering, money and contributions for temple sacrifices amounting to probably around one to two percent of the goods and animals offered in kind, and on certain occasions property in any amounts connected with the making of vows, and as contributions on holy days,<sup>98</sup> such as the first dough the first fruits, first sheerings, gleanings, and alms.<sup>99</sup> At the time of Jesus, it appears that two types of tithing were collected: one tenth of a person's crops and herds went to the priests and Levites, and a second tenth went to the Temple.<sup>100</sup> As Leon Morris comments, tithes were paid to the Levites (following Numbers 18:21), who in turn paid to the priests a tithe of the tithes they received (Numbers 18:25–28).<sup>101</sup> In addition, the annual heave offering consisted of two percent of the harvest.<sup>102</sup> In total, a Jewish farmer might have to give as much as 23 percent of his produce to the Temple.<sup>103</sup> While certain exemptions were made for the poor who could not pay,<sup>104</sup> it is clear that the total regular tax burden was heavy. Somebody has to be collecting or assisting in receiving any or all of these taxes, assessments, or contributions.

In addition, the local Herodian Jewish leaders, who were client kings under the Romans, had the authority to collect sales taxes in the amount of approximately one percent of all transactions in the market place, a four percent tax on any transfer of

98. Robert Oden, "Taxation in Biblical Israel," *Journal of Religious Ethics* (Fall 1984), 169.

99. Ronald Z. Domsy, "Taxation in the Bible During the Period of the First and Second Temples," *Journal of International Law and Practice* (Summer 1998): 246–50.

100. Domsy, "Taxation in the Bible," 228; Stevens, *Temple, Tithes, and Taxes*, 93–96.

101. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 582, discussing the precision with which the rabbis computed and collected tithing even on herbs and anything defined as cultivated food.

102. John Tvedtnes, "The Priestly Tithe in the First Century A.D.," in Hall and Welch, *Masada and the World of the New Testament*, 262.

103. Michael Farris, "A Tale of Two Taxations," in *Jesus and His Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today*, ed. V. George Shillington (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 25; citing Marcus J. Borg, "Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus," *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* (New York: Edwin Mellon, 1998), 5:32.

104. Domsy, "Taxation in the Bible," 245–46.

96. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.287. See Michel, "telonēs," 8:103.

97. Cf. Nehemiah 10:33–40, which alternatively describes this tax as one third. Josephus describes the half-shekel head tax as being required of every Jew twenty years and older. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.9.1. See generally, Sara Mandell, "Who Paid the Temple Tax When the Jews Were under Roman Rule?" *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (April 1984): 223–32.



slaves, produce taxes, amounts of up to fifty percent of crops, transit tolls of two to three percent of all imported goods, variable resource use fees, and other conscriptions of property or services. These taxes were not usually collected in person by the Romans but were collected by the Herodians or their revenue agents.<sup>105</sup> The administrations of the Herodian kings were independent from Temple officials.<sup>106</sup> The taxes collected by these client kings supported the infrastructure of the Judean economy as well as the often extravagant undertakings of the kings. Produce taxes and resource use fees went to build roads and harbors.<sup>107</sup> Matthew could have been employed collecting any of these taxes.

While the Temple and Jewish taxes typically imposed tax burdens on current produce, the Romans imposed an annual poll tax, based on the most recent periodic census, of one denarius for all adult males fourteen to sixty-five years of age; property taxes of one percent of the value of land, houses, slaves, and ships; and inheritance taxes of five percent of large bequests from unrelated decedents. Roman taxes were especially resented, because they had to be paid on property and by all adult males, whether they were starving or prospering. Taxes based on produce or transactions were undoubtedly heavy, but they were only paid out of available resources. The Roman publicans came into an area for a season, collected their taxes with the assistance of hired agents, and then may well have left the area entirely. In order to obtain a franchise to collect taxes in a certain Roman district, a tax farmer had to be granted the privilege in Rome by posting guarantees that the amount of required tax would

be actually collected, which usually meant that the publicans had to have substantial capital resources and be socially networked and politically connected with high-ranking Roman officials.

In any event, the need for local daily tax collectors was obviously much greater in collecting the ordinary Jewish taxes than in collecting the periodic Roman taxes. Taxes on sales, produce, and imports were generated on a daily basis as transactions occurred in the market. Thus it is more likely than not that Matthew, stationed at his tax-collecting place, was gathering Jewish taxes, not Roman, although he could have been involved in collecting any of these taxes.

But if Matthew was a Jewish collector, there is no reason why he could not have been a Levite, and in fact the functions of being a Levite would have trained and situated him ideally to be such a tax collector. Every Levite had to serve two weeks in Jerusalem, and on such trips to Jerusalem all Levites would have purified themselves, and could have carried tax revenues or other receipts to the Temple. Levites were keepers of books and scribal records, essential tools for any accountant. They were charged with the responsibility of collecting tithing and helping people to interpret the law of tithing so that they could know how much they should pay. For example, fish were probably taxed at the one percent tithing rate along with other animals that were hunted, and not the ten percent tithing rate that was imposed on crops that were grown on your own property. But how any of these rules were applied in particular is difficult to say. Even though many of these taxes were voluntary in nature (such as the payment of tithing) payment was a prerequisite to remaining full members of the religious community. Those who did not pay tithing were ostracized from society. While several of these taxes were nominally voluntary in nature (such as tithes), the Levites reminded violators that none payment was worthy of death or retribution from God.<sup>108</sup> Steps were evidently taken in the first century to send collectors out to gather temple taxes, for on one occasion leaders had to quell a mob angered at

105. In this section, I acknowledge and draw upon the excellent paper of one of my law students, David K. Stott, "Legal Implications of Roman and Jewish Taxation Practices on Matthew's Role as Apostle and Author," Provo, Utah, J. Reuben Clark Law School, winter 2007, used with permission.

106. E.g., Herod the Great identified himself as Jewish and was considered such by his contemporaries, although according to Jewish law he would not be. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.13 ("The Jews pretended that the city was theirs, and said that he would build it was a Jew, meaning King Herod. The Syrians confessed also that its builder was a Jew."). See also Solomon Zeitlin, "Herod: A Malevolent Maniac," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 54 (July 1963): 5.

107. See generally, Welch and Hall, *Charting the New Testament*, chart 2-6.

108. Domsky, "Taxation in the Bible," 249.



such collectors;<sup>109</sup> and on other occasions, the middle class viewed the collection of temple taxes by force as blasphemy and disdained such collection efforts.<sup>110</sup>

### **A Temple Harvest: Seeing the Temple in the New Testament and the New Testament in the Temple**

In conclusion, ideas tend to survive if they are prolific. It seems to me that seeing temple themes in the New Testament, and the New Testament in the Temple is a prodigiously generative approach. In temple theology and in the New Testament, God is incarnate (meaning that he is tabernacled in a temple as much as in a body) and he is also eternal (meaning that he is in time as much as in eternity). God is physical, in contact with physical things, while at the same time he is “spiritual” (preferred by some as the reading of *pneuma ho theos* in John 4:23).<sup>111</sup> Thus, Temple theology, with its emphasis on architecture, enactments, and material symbols, offers understandings that philosophical theology does not.

The field of Temple Studies is not involved with marginal topics. Temples and temple institutions dominated every civilization in the ancient world. By taking up the task of analyzing the Sermon on the Mount and the gospel of Matthew in the light of temple themes, I argue that modern or secular literary readers are looking under the wrong bushel to find the light behind the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, Matthew 5–7 is not in any proper sense a “sermon” at all. This label fundamentally misrepresents this text. Seeing this crucial text in the light of Temple Studies sheds light on questions such as why the Sermon on the Mount was written, what purposes it served, what gives it its coherence, how

its listeners would have heard its coded allusions and systematic program, and how the Sermon on the Mount figures into the program of Jesus to cleanse the Temple of Herod and restore the Temple of Solomon, and reestablish God’s covenant with his sons and daughters.

Precisely because Sermon on the Mount is a crucial text, any new insights or interpretations will likely meet with the resistance of inertia, if not with opposition. But this is an opportunity for Temple Studies to engage other disciplines in analyzing pivotal texts. Through temple theology and the verbal, functional, and organizational data accumulated here, the Sermon on the Mount can be seen as regenerating the covenant of cosmic peace, as putting away sin and enmity, and as reintroducing mankind into the presence of God, being anointed, called the sons of the God, wearing garments more glorious than Solomon’s, taught the heavenly *didache*, and seeing now with a new eye—an eye purely single to God and his glory, his Shekinah. This argument also invites readings of the entire Gospel of Matthew, and indeed of the entire New Testament, in the light of Temple Studies and temple theology.

Temple Studies as a field is still young. It needs advocates. Scholars of other schools need to be persuaded to see the value of Temple Studies in understanding the background, context, genre, or *Gattung* of religious texts from all ancient civilizations. Publications of temple studies books offer us an opportunity to promote awareness of Temple Studies generally. My Ashgate book has been reviewed five times that I am aware of; these reviews all contain some favorable reactions,<sup>112</sup> for which I am grateful; but since most people are not very familiar with Temple Studies, some of these reviewers seem a bit mystified by this book. While the reviewers have said that the book alerts readers by a “well-presented argument to new possibilities of interpretation that seem, in some instances, to have much

109. Domsy, “Taxation in the Bible,” 250–51.

110. Domsy, “Taxation in the Bible,” 250, quoting Branfeld, *Introduction to the Holy Scriptures*, 1:304.

111. See the discussion of the “properly indefinite translation” of *pneuma ho theos* as referring to the character and quality of God in Jason David BeDuhn, *Truth in Translation: Accuracy and Bias in English Translations of the New Testament* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2003), 123–26.

112. Warren Carter at the Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, finds the emphasis “helpful and insightful” but still identifies “several problematic issues with this study.”

plausibility,"<sup>113</sup> raises "a convincing argument,"<sup>114</sup> makes "a welcome contribution,"<sup>115</sup> and advances "a profoundly erudite and deeply meditative argument for the Temple as the chief referent behind" much in the Sermon on the Mount,<sup>116</sup> some of these reviewers still raise questions, have reservations, and invite us to push further the implications of the arguments made in this book. I see this, among other things, as an open request for more information about Temple Studies and temple theology.

In sum, what more can I say about the Sermon on the Mount? It deserves every superlative accolade it has ever been given. It deserves our fullest attention and devotion. I loved memorizing the entire Sermon on the Mount in German as a missionary, and I love reading it again and again in Greek. I loved teaching it to my children as their father when they were growing up, and I love talking about it with my wife as her husband. I love plumbing its depths, which offer a treasury of sublime teachings upon which the wise will build and the foolish will stumble. I love embracing its expansive vision of

the eternal promises of the full human potential, as peacemakers, as children of God, and as those who have been invited and assured that they may become perfect like their Father who is in heaven is perfect. I love seeing all this come to life in the light of the temple, in the light of temple texts, temple theology, temple studies, and temple experiences. I love combining what we learn about the Sermon on the Mount in the Bible and also the Book of Mormon, with the biblical Greek texts revealing an array of temple themes embedded in its memorable words and phrases, and with the Book of Mormon providing a temple and covenant-making contexts for that text. I love how, in all of this, the Bible and Book of Mormon work together, so that that which is veiled in Matthew (perhaps following the Sermon on the Mount's own protective order not to cast this holy thing too blatantly before those who are not ready to hear and to do all that it says) becomes plainer and more precious in the light of its unveiling in the Nephite record, which we have long been told will reveal, indeed, the fullness of the Gospel.

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113. A. E. Harvey, review in *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS (2010), on [jts.oxfordjournals.org](http://jts.oxfordjournals.org).

114. Review in *Letter and Spirit* 5 (2009), 271–73.

115. Diana Woodcock, review in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 33 no. 5 (2011): 52–53.

116. Patrick Madigan, review in *Heythrop Journal* 53, no. 2 (2012): 336–37.



# A Divine Mother in the Book of Mormon?

*Daniel C. Peterson*

Nephi's vision of the tree of life, among the best-known passages in the Book of Mormon, expands upon the vision received earlier by his father, Lehi.

And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me: Look! And I looked and beheld a tree; and it was like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow.

And it came to pass after I had seen the tree, I said unto the Spirit: I behold thou hast shown unto me the tree which is precious above all.

And he said unto me: What desirest thou?

And I said unto him: To know the interpretation thereof. . . . (1 Nephi 11:8–11)

Since Nephi wanted to know the meaning of the tree that his father had seen and that he himself now saw, we would expect "the Spirit" to answer Nephi's question. But the response to Nephi's question is surprising:

And it came to pass that he said unto me: Look! And I looked as if to look upon him, and I saw him not; for he had gone from before my presence.

And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white.

And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou?

And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.

And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God?

And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.

And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.

And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look!

And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! (1 Nephi 11:12–21)

Then "the Spirit" asks Nephi the question that Nephi himself had posed only a few verses before: "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? (1 Nephi 11:21)."

Strikingly, though the vision of Mary seems irrelevant to Nephi's original question about the significance of the tree—for the tree is nowhere mentioned in the angelic guide's response—Nephi himself now replies that, yes, he knows the answer to his question. "And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore it is the most desirable above all things. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 11:22–23).

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This is an updated and expanded version of Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 16–25, which was, itself, a shortened version of Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo UT: FARMS, 1998), 191–243.

How has Nephi come to this understanding? Clearly, the answer to his question about the meaning of the tree lies in the virgin mother with her child. It seems, in fact, that the virgin *is* the tree in some sense. Even the language used to describe her echoes that used for the tree. Just as she was “exceedingly fair and white,” “most beautiful and fair above all other virgins,” so was the tree’s beauty “far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow.” Significantly, though, it was only when she appeared with a baby and was identified as “the mother of the Son of God” that Nephi grasped the tree’s meaning.

Why would Nephi see a connection between a tree and the virginal mother of a divine child?

Many years ago, I happened to be re-reading 1 Nephi 11 at the same time I was reading a then relatively new book by Mark S. Smith provocatively entitled *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*. In it, Professor Smith discusses ancient Israelite belief in a goddess, the consort of El, the Most High God. Suddenly, for me, a light came on.

I believe that Nephi’s vision reflects a meaning of the “sacred tree” that is unique to the ancient Near East, and that, indeed, can only be fully appreciated when the ancient Canaanite and Israelite associations of that tree are borne in mind.

### Asherah, Consort of El

The cultural and religious distance between Canaanites and Israelites was considerably smaller than Bible scholars once thought. (Michael D. Coogan says it clearly: “Israelite religion [was] a subset of Canaanite religion.”<sup>1</sup>) In their attempts to better understand the beliefs of the ancient Israelites, modern scholars have been greatly helped by extra-biblical documents and artifacts that have been recovered from the soil of the Near East. For many

1. Michael D. Coogan, “Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religion of Ancient Israel,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 115. Compare William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 121, 128, 166.

years, there had been little beyond the Bible itself for them to study. The situation changed dramatically beginning in 1929 with the discovery of the Ugaritic texts at Ras Shamra, in Syria. They revolutionized our understanding of Canaanite religion in general, and of early Hebrew religion in particular.

The god El was the patriarch of the Canaanite pantheon. One of his titles was *’el ’olam*. Frank Moore Cross Jr. noted, “We must understand it . . . as meaning originally ‘’El, lord of Eternity,’ or perhaps more properly, ‘’El, the Ancient One.’ The myths recorded on the tablets at Ugarit portray ’El as a “greybeard, father of the gods and father of man.”<sup>2</sup> However, observed Professor Cross, “no later than the fourteenth century BC in north Syria, the cult of ’El was declining, making room for the virile young god Ba’l-Haddu,”<sup>3</sup> the Baal of the Old Testament. El was probably also the original god of Israel. In the earliest Israelite conception, father El had a divine son named Jehovah or Yahweh.<sup>4</sup> Gradually, however, the Israelite conception of Yahweh absorbed the functions of El and, by the 10th century BCE, King Solomon’s day, had come to be identified with him.<sup>5</sup>

Asherah was the chief goddess of the Canaanites.<sup>6</sup> She was El’s wife and the mother and wet nurse of the other gods. Thus, the gods of Ugarit could be

2. Frank Moore Cross Jr., “Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs,” *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962): 240.

3. Cross, “Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs,” 234, 241–42.

4. See Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 7; and Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

5. See Smith, *The Early History of God*, xxiii, xxvii, 8–11, 15, 21, 22, 23, 163; Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 3rd ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 133; Cross, “Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs,” 253–57; Otto Eissfeldt, “El and Yahweh,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956): 25–37.

6. See John Day, “Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 3 (1986): 385–87, 398; Steve A. Wiggins, “The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess,” *Ugarit-Forschungen: Internationales Jahrbuch für die Altertumskunde Syrien-Palästinas* 23 (1991): 384; and Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of “Asherah”: A Study according to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia BCE* (Kevelaer, Germany: Butzon und Bercker, 1993), 192.



called “the family of [or ‘the sons of’] El,” or the “sons of Asherah.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Asherah was connected with the birth of Canaanite rulers and could be metaphorically considered to be their mother as well.<sup>8</sup>

She was strongly linked with the Canaanite coastal city of Sidon, at least in the period following Lehi and Nephi’s departure from the Old World, and probably before.<sup>9</sup> This is interesting because Lehi, whose family origins appear to lie in the north of Palestine and who may have had a trading background, “seems to have had particularly close ties with Sidon (for the name appears repeatedly in the Book of Mormon, both in its Hebrew and Egyptian forms), which at that time was one of the two harbors through which the Israelites carried on an extremely active trade with Egypt and the West.”<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Asherah seems to have been known and venerated among the Hebrews as well. At least some Israelites worshipped her over a period extending from the conquest of Canaan in the second millennium before Christ to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE—the time of Lehi’s departure with his family from the Old World.<sup>11</sup> Ancient Israelite women, for instance, were sometimes buried in “Asherah wigs,” and she may also be reflected in Israelite temple architecture. Additionally, thousands of mass-produced goddess figurines have been found at Israelite sites. Summarizing the evidence, William Dever writes of the figurines that

“most show the female form nude, with exaggerated breasts; occasionally she is depicted pregnant or nursing a child.” But there is one significant difference between the figurines from Israelite sites and those recovered from pagan Canaanite locations: The lower body of the Israelite figurines lacks the explicit detail characteristic of the Canaanite objects; indeed, the area below the waist of the Israelite figurines is typically a simple plain column. Whereas the pagan Canaanite objects depict a highly sexualized goddess of both childbearing and erotic love, in the Israelite figurines the aspect of the *dea nutrix*, the nourishing or nurturing goddess, comes to the fore. As Professor Dever writes, “The more blatantly sexual motifs give way to the nursing mother.”<sup>12</sup>

Asherah seems to have been popular among all segments of Israelite society over many years.<sup>13</sup> She was worshipped in Israel in the time of the Judges.<sup>14</sup> She was especially venerated in the countryside,<sup>15</sup> but she was important in later Hebrew cities as well.<sup>16</sup> Although 1 Kings 3:3 says that he “loved the Lord,” King Solomon brought Asherah into Jerusalem sometime after 1000 BCE. And a large-scale center of Asherah worship may have functioned at Tacanach, under at least the indirect patronage of the court of Solomon.<sup>17</sup>

After the separation of the states of Israel and Judah, King Ahab and his Phoenician-born queen, Jezebel, daughter of “Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians,” installed Asherah in Samaria, where

7. See J. C. de Moor, “’asherah,” in G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:439. On Asherah as divine wet nurse, see Wiggins, *Reassessment of “Asherah,”* 26–27, 71, 76, 89, 190; on her maternal aspect, see pp. 37, 71, 89.

8. Wiggins, *Reassessment of “Asherah,”* 27, 71, 108–10, 131, 190.

9. See John Wilson Betlyon, “The Cult of ’Ašerah/’Elat at Sidon,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44/1 (1985): 53–56; compare de Moor, “’asherah,” 1:440; and Day, “Asherah in the Hebrew Bible,” 387–88.

10. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 47.

11. See Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 34; Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, “Jahwe und seine Aschera”: *Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel: Das biblische Bilderverbot* (Münster: UGARIT-Verlag, 1992), 120; Wiggins, *Reassessment of “Asherah,”* 149.

12. See Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries*, 157–59.

13. See Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 39; and Thomas L. Thompson, “The Intellectual Matrix of Early Biblical Narrative: Inclusive Monotheism in Persian Period Palestine,” in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, ed. Diana Vikander Edelman (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 119 n. 13.

14. See Smith, *Early History of God*, 6, 145.

15. See Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 47, 52.

16. See J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 58–59; and Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Yahweh—The Patriarch: Ancient Images of God and Feminist Theology*, trans. Frederick J. Gaiser (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 66.

17. J. Glen Taylor, “The Two Earliest Known Representations of Yahweh,” in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 67 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 566.

“around 800 BCE the official cult of Yahweh included the worship of his consort Asherah.”<sup>18</sup> She seems to have been worshipped there until the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 721 BCE.

But the veneration of Asherah was hardly restricted to the often-denigrated northern kingdom.<sup>19</sup> In the south, in Judah, Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, introduced her into the temple at Jerusalem—meaning, presumably, that he erected some sort of sacred symbol (sometimes referred to in the lowercase as “an *asherah*” or “the *asherah*”) that represented her. Kings Asa and Jehoshaphat removed Asherah from the temple, but Joash restored her. The great reforming king Hezekiah removed her again, along with the so-called Nehushtan, which 2 Kings 18:4 describes as “the brasen serpent that Moses had made.” Subsequently, although he failed to restore the Nehushtan, King Manasseh reinstated Asherah in the Jerusalem temple, where she remained until the reforms of King Josiah, who reigned from roughly 639 to 609 BCE.

In the period leading up to those reforms, something changed, and changed dramatically. “The datable biblical literature of the eighth century,” says Jacob Milgrom, “accuses Israel of idolatry 15 times; that of the following century 166 times.”<sup>20</sup> Commenting on those statistics, Margaret Barker observes:

Leaving aside the thorny question of “dating” biblical literature, this simple test suggests either that there was a catastrophic apostasy during the seventh century, expressed in the condemnations found in Deuteronomy (36 times), Jeremiah (46 times) and Ezekiel (82 times); or that the definition of idolatry had changed.<sup>21</sup>

18. David Noel Freedman, “Yahweh of Samaria and His Asherah,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 50/4 (December 1987): 248; see Herbert Niehr, “The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion,” in Edelman, *Triumph of Elohim*, ed. Edelman, 57, 59.

19. See Edelman, “Introduction,” in *Triumph of Elohim*, 19; and Lowell K. Handy, “The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah,” in *Triumph of Elohim*, ed. Edelman, 27–43.

20. J. Milgrom, “The Nature and Extent of Idolatry in Eighth-Seventh Century Judah,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 69 (1998), 1. See the entire article, on pp. 1–13.

21. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 100; compare ms. 101.

Here is a description of what Josiah did to the asherah in the temple:

And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. . . .

And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. (2 Kgs. 23:4, 6; cf. 1 Kings 15:13)

So visible was Asherah still in this period just prior to the Babylonian captivity that Lehi’s contemporary, the prophet Jeremiah, felt obliged—at least in standard, pre-Margaret Barker, readings of him—to denounce her worship.<sup>22</sup> Consider, for example, this exchange between Jeremiah and a group of exiled Jews living in Egypt after the destruction of Jerusalem:

Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee.

But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

22. Switching the roles of mother and father, Jeremiah 2:27 mocks the veneration of Asherah. See Saul M. Olyan, “The Cultic Confessions of Jer 2,27a,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 254–59.

And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?

Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying,

The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and came it not into his mind?

So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.

Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. (Jeremiah 44:15–23)

The exiled prophet-priest Ezekiel may also have been dismayed at the expulsion of Asherah (or Ashratah) from the temple. He recounts a vision: “Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. . . . And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.” Ezekiel 10:18, 11:23).

What we can infer from this is that an image or symbol of Asherah stood in Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem for nearly two-thirds of its existence, certainly extending into the lifetime of Lehi and perhaps even into the lifetime of his son Nephi.<sup>23</sup> In fact, her title *Elat* (“goddess”) persists to this day in the name of a major Israeli coastal resort and in the Israeli name for the Gulf of Aqaba (which Israelis today refer to as the Gulf of Elat). Lehi and his party very likely passed through or by Elat on their journey southward from Jerusalem.

23. See Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 39, 41–42, 45–52; Wiggins, *Reassessment of “Asherah,”* 125; Smith, *Early History of God*, 80, 94; Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 19, 70–72; and many other sources.

By the time of Israel’s Babylonian exile and subsequent restoration under Ezra, however, opposition to Asherah was almost—though not quite—universal in Judaism, at least as we know it from its approved texts. Indeed, the developing Israelite conception of Yahweh seems, to a certain extent, to have absorbed her functions and epithets much as it had earlier absorbed those of Yahweh’s father, El.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Asherah was basically eliminated from the history of Israel and subsequent Judaism. In the text of the Bible as we now read it, filtered and reshaped as it appears to have been by the reforming Deuteronomist priests in the decades prior to 600 BCE, hints of the goddess remain, but little survives that gives us a detailed understanding of her character or nature.<sup>25</sup>

So what are we to make of Asherah? Does the opposition to her veneration expressed and enforced by the Deuteronomists and the reforming Israelite kings indicate that she was a foreign pollution of legitimate Hebrew religion coming from abroad? It does not look that way. Recall that Hezekiah removed both the *asherah* and the Nehushtan from the temple at Jerusalem. The Nehushtan was not a pagan intrusion, but was “the brasen serpent that Moses had made,” which had been carefully preserved by the Israelites for nearly a millennium until Hezekiah, offended by the idolatrous worship of “the children of Israel [who] did burn incense to it” (2 Kings 18:4), removed it and destroyed it. In other words, the Nehushtan had an illustrious pedigree entirely within the religious world of Israel, and there is no reason to believe that the *asherah* was any different in this respect.

What is striking in the long story of Israel’s Asherah is the identity of those who did not oppose her. No prophet appears to have denounced Asherah before the eighth century BCE. The great Yahwist prophets Amos and Hosea, vociferous in their denunciations of Baal, seem not to have denounced Asherah. The Elijah-Elisha school of Yahwist reformers do not appear to have opposed her. Although 400 prophets of Asherah ate with Jezebel along with

24. Smith, *Early History of God*, 98, 161–63; compare Gerstenberger, *Yahweh—The Patriarch*, 92, 136.

25. Wiggins, *Reassessment of “Asherah,”* 130.

the 450 prophets of Baal, Elijah's famous contest with the priests of Baal, while dramatically fatal to them, left the votaries of Asherah unmentioned and, evidently, untouched. "What happened to Asherah and her prophets?" asks David Noel Freedman. "Nothing."<sup>26</sup> In subsequent years the ruthless campaign against Baal inspired by Elijah and Elisha and led by Israel's Jehu left the *asherah* of Samaria standing. Baal was wholly eliminated, while the veneration of the goddess actually outlived the northern kingdom.<sup>27</sup>

Belief in Asherah seems, in fact, to have been a conservative position in ancient Israel; criticism of it was innovative. Saul Olyan, noting that "before the reforming kings in Judah, the *asherah* seems to have been entirely legitimate,"<sup>28</sup> argues that ancient Hebrew opposition to Asherah emanated entirely from the so-called Deuteronomistic reform party, or from those heavily influenced by them. Other factions in earliest Israel, Olyan says, probably thought that worshipping her was not wrong and may well have worshipped her themselves.<sup>29</sup> (The book of Deuteronomy is considered by most scholars to have been associated with the reforms of the Judaite king Josiah in the seventh century BCE, and a number of students of the history of Judah believe that it may actually have been written during that period.) Writing about the common goddess figurines to which we have already referred, Professor Dever remarks, "As for the notion that these figurines, whatever they signified, were uncommon in orthodox circles, the late Dame Kathleen Kenyon found a seventh-century-BCE 'cult-cache' with more than three hundred fifty of them in a cave in Jerusalem, not a hundred yards from the Temple

Mount."<sup>30</sup> (It should be kept in mind that this date for these figurines makes them at least near contemporaries of Lehi.)

What was Asherah's role in early Israelite religious belief? Given what we have already said about the history of Canaanite and Israelite religion, "Asherah may have been the consort of El, but not [of] Yahweh, at some early point in Israelite religion."<sup>31</sup> Over the generations, however, the Israelites' concept of Yahweh absorbed the attributes of Yahweh's father, El, and the people's imagination seems also to have granted to Yahweh the wife and consort of his father. "It is well-known," remarks André Lemaire,

that in Israelite religion Yahweh replaced the great god El as Israel's God. If Yahweh replaced El, it would seem logical to suppose that under Canaanite influence *asherah* [i.e., material tokens representing the goddess] replaced Athirat [the goddess Asherah], and that, at least in the popular religion of ancient Israel if not in the purer form of that religion reflected in the Bible, *asherah* functioned as the consort or wife of Yahweh.<sup>32</sup>

The view that Asherah was considered the divine wife of Yahweh seems to be gaining ground among students of ancient Israelite religion.<sup>33</sup> "That some in Judah saw his consort as Asherah is hardly any longer debatable," declares Thomas Thompson.<sup>34</sup> "Asherah was a goddess paired with El, and this pairing was bequeathed to Israelite religion by virtue of the Yahweh-El identification,"<sup>35</sup> according to Smith, while Olyan says that Asherah seems to have been regarded as Yahweh's consort in both state and public religion, in both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.<sup>36</sup>

26. Freedman, "Yahweh of Samaria and His Asherah," 248. See 1 Kings 18:1–46.

27. See 2 Kings 10:18–28; 13:6; see also Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 4; Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 43–46; and Smith, *Early History of God*, 80.

28. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 73.

29. See Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 3–4, 9, 13–14, 22, 33, 43, 73–74; Smith, *Early History of God*, 150; Olyan, "The Cultic Confessions of Jer 2,27a," 257; and Baruch Halpern, "Brisker Pipes Than Poetry": The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 83.

30. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries*, 159.

31. Smith, *Early History of God*, 89.

32. André Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10/6 (1984): 46.

33. See Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, xiv, 74; and William Dever, "Is the Bible Right After All?" interview by Hershel Shanks, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22/5 (Sept./Oct. 1996): 37.

34. Thompson, "The Intellectual Matrix of Early Biblical Narrative," 119 n. 10.

35. Smith, *Early History of God*, 19; compare 89, 92–93; and Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, xiv.

36. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 29, 33–34, 38, 74.



Important support for this contention has come from two recent and very controversial archaeological finds in Palestine. The first is Khirbet al-Qom, a site about eight miles west of Hebron and six and a half miles east-southeast of Lachish in the territory of ancient Judah. The palaeo-Hebrew inscriptions at Khirbet al-Qom can be dated to between 700 and 800 BCE.<sup>37</sup> Scholars agree that they show us at least a portion of the popular religion of their time.<sup>38</sup> The second is Kuntillet 'Ajrud, perhaps the southernmost outpost of the kingdom of Judah. This place served as either a fortress or a stopover point for caravans (or both). It is situated on the border between the southern Negev and the Sinai peninsula, not far from the road that linked Gaza and Elat. The archaeological ruins at this location reflect influences from the northern kingdom of Israel and date to the late ninth or early eighth century BCE, which would place them in the reign of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, the son and successor to the militant anti-Baalist Jehu.<sup>39</sup>

An inscription discovered at Kuntillet 'Ajrud was written in red ink on the shoulder of a large clay vessel. It seems to refer to "Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah." On the other side of the vessel is a drawing of a tree of life.<sup>40</sup> The tomb inscription at Khirbet al-Qom also appears to mention "Yahweh and his *asherah*" (where some sort of cultic object is intended) or, less likely, "Yahweh and his Asherah" (where the reference may be directly to a goddess-consort). With these finds explicitly in

mind, archaeologist William Dever has contended that "recent archeological discoveries provide both texts and pictorial representations that for the first time clearly identify 'Asherah' as the consort of Yahweh, at least in some circles in ancient Israel."<sup>41</sup> Raphael Patai declares that they indicate that "the worship of Asherah as the consort of Yahweh ('his Asherah!') was an integral element of religious life in ancient Israel prior to the reforms introduced by King Josiah [Josiah] in 621 BCE."<sup>42</sup> David Noel Freedman concurs, saying, "Our investigation suggests that the worship of a goddess, consort of Yahweh, was deeply rooted in both Israel and Judah in preexilic times."<sup>43</sup>

As among the Canaanites, furthermore, Asherah was also associated with earthly human fertility and human childbirth.<sup>44</sup> A Hebrew incantation text found in Arslan Tash in upper Syria, dating from the seventh century BCE (i.e., to the period just

37. See Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" 42, 44; André Lemaire, "Les inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qum et l'asherah de YHWH," *Revue biblique* 84 (1977): 602–03 (cf. pp. 596, 597); Ziony Zevit, "The Khirbet el-Qum Inscription Mentioning a Goddess," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 255 (1984): 39; Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 23; and Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible," 394.

38. See Lemaire, "Les inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qum et l'asherah de YHWH," 608; Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?" 44, 51; and Freedman, "Yahweh of Samaria and His Asherah," 246–49.

39. Freedman, "Yahweh of Samaria and His Asherah," 248.

40. See Ze'ev Meshel, "Did Yahweh Have a Consort?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 5/2 (1979): 31; William G. Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 255 (1984): 26–27; Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries*, 140–49, which discusses the find at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.

41. Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh?" 21; compare p. 30. See also Olyan, "Cultic Confessions of Jer 2,27a," 257, 259; Dever, "Is the Bible Right After All?" 37; Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in *Triumph of Elohim*, ed. Edelman, 75–105; and Gerstenberger, *Yahweh—The Patriarch*, 33–34.

42. Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 52–53; compare Gerstenberger, *Yahweh—The Patriarch*, 33–34.

43. Freedman, "Yahweh of Samaria and His Asherah," 249; compare Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible," 392; and Niehr, "Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion," 54–55, 59. See Proverbs 8:22–34. This image that is emerging from very recent scholarship—an enthroned God who sits with his consort in the midst of a divine council composed of his children, who are linked with the sun and moon and stars—sheds fascinating light on Lehi's vision as it is recorded in 1 Nephi 1:9–11. That account describes "One descending out of the midst of heaven," whose "luster was above that of the sun at noon-day" and who was followed by twelve others whose "brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament" and who then, together, "came down and went forth upon the face of the earth." Clearly, this refers to the Savior, Jesus Christ, and his twelve apostles. (Taylor, throughout his book *Yahweh and the Sun*, argues for an ancient link between Yahweh or Jehovah [whom Latter-day Saints identify as the premortal Jesus Christ] and the sun.) Read in light of recent biblical scholarship, however, the account of Lehi's vision also appears to imply notions of the premortal existence and the literally divine lineage of humanity that are often presumed to have arisen only in the later doctrinal development of Mormonism.

44. See Dever, "Is the Bible Right After All?" 36; and Patai, *Early History of God*, 52.



prior to Nephi's vision), appears to invoke the help of the goddess Asherah for a woman in delivery.<sup>45</sup>

Let us now focus more precisely on the nature of the veneration that was paid to the divine consort among the Israelites. What was the "asherah" that stood in the temple at Jerusalem and in Samaria? Asherah was associated with trees.<sup>46</sup> A 10th-century cultic stand from Ta'anach, near Megiddo, features two representations of Asherah, first in human form and then as a sacred tree. She is the tree.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps we should think again, here, of the Israelite goddess figurines: It will be recalled that their upper bodies are unmistakably anthropomorphic and female, but their lower bodies, in contrast to those of their pagan Canaanite counterparts, are simple columns. William Dever suggests that these columnar lower bodies represent tree trunks.<sup>48</sup> And why not? Asherah "is a tree goddess, and as such is associated with the oak, the tamarisk, the date palm, the sycamore, and many other species. This association led to her identification with sacred trees or the tree of life."<sup>49</sup> The rabbinic authors of the Jewish Mishna (second-third century CE) explain the *asherah* as a tree that was worshipped.<sup>50</sup>

The lowercase "asherah" was most commonly a carved wooden image, perhaps some kind of pole. Unfortunately, since it was wooden, direct archaeological evidence for it has not survived.<sup>51</sup> But we know from the biblical evidence that the object could be planted (Deuteronomy 16:21) so that it stood up (2 Kings 13:6), but that it could also be

pulled down (Micah 5:13), cut (Exodus 34:13), and burned (Deuteronomy 12:3). Very probably it was of wood and symbolized a tree. It may itself have been a stylized tree.<sup>52</sup> It was not uncommon in the ancient Near East for a god or goddess to be essentially equated with his or her symbol, and Asherah seems to have been no exception: Asherah was both goddess and cult symbol. She was the "tree."<sup>53</sup>

The menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum that stood for centuries in the temple of Jerusalem, supplies an interesting parallel to all of this: Leon Yarden maintains that the menorah represents a stylized almond tree. He points to the notably radiant whiteness of the almond tree at certain points in its life cycle. Yarden also argues that the archaic Greek name of the almond (*amygdale*, reflected in its contemporary botanical designation as *Amygdalis communis*), almost certainly not a native Greek word, is most likely derived from the Hebrew *em gedolah*, meaning "Great Mother."<sup>54</sup>

"The Late Bronze Age iconography of the asherah would suggest," writes Mark Smith, "that it represented maternal and nurturing dimensions of the deity."<sup>55</sup> Raphael Patai has called attention to the parallels between Jewish devotion to various female deities and quasi-deities over the centuries, commencing with Asherah, and popular Catholic veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, it appears that Asherah, "the mother goddess par excellence," may also, paradoxically, have been considered a

45. Cited in Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 39.

46. See Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 49; and Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible," 397.

47. See Taylor, "The Two Earliest Known Representations of Yahweh," 558–60, 565 n. 19; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 29; Dever, "Asherah, Consort of Yahweh?" 27; and de Moor, "'asherah," 1:441–43. Wiggins, *Reassessment of "Asherah,"* 13, thinks ancient Hebrews would have seen Asherah in the Garden of Eden's tree of life.

48. William G. Dever, lecture at Brigham Young University, 14 February 1997.

49. Steve A. Wiggins, "The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess," *Ugarit-Forschungen: Internationales Jahrbuch für die Alttertumskunde Syrien-Palästinas* 23 (1991): 383, with references.

50. See Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible," 397–98; 401–4, with references.

51. See Wiggins, *Reassessment of "Asherah,"* 92.

52. See Wiggins, *Reassessment of "Asherah,"* 94–95, 101, 109, 129 (with rabbinic references); Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 38–39, 42, 45, 48; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 81–85; and Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 1–3.

53. See Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 26, 28, 31–32; W. L. Reed, "Asherah," in George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962–), 1:250–52; de Moor, "'asherah," 1:441; Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible," 408; and Dietrich and Loretz, "*Jahwe und seine Aschera*," 82–85, 99.

54. Leon Yarden, *The Tree of Light: A Study of the Menorah, the Seven-Branched Lampstand* (Uppsala, Sweden: Skriv Service AB, 1972), 44–47, 103–6.

55. Smith, *The Early History of God*, 84; compare Wiggins, *Reassessment of "Asherah,"* 37, 71, 89; and Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 48–50, 52, 241–43.

56. Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 20, 116, 139–40, 151–52, 199, 265, 280.

virgin.<sup>57</sup> The Punic western goddess Tannit, whom Saul Olyan has identified with Israelite-Canaanite Asherah, the consort of El, the mother and wet nurse to the gods, was depicted as a virgin and symbolized by a tree.<sup>58</sup>

It should be apparent by now why Nephi, an Israelite living at the end of the seventh century and during the early sixth century before Christ, would have recognized an answer to his question about a marvelous tree in the otherwise unexplained image of a virginal mother and her divine child. Not that what he saw and how he interpreted those things were perfectly obvious. What he “read” from the symbolic vision was culturally colored. The Coptic version of the record called the *Apocalypse of Paul* shows how cultural interpretation shapes meaning. This document, which probably originated in Egypt in the mid-third century of the Christian era, relates a vision of the great apostle that, in this detail at least, strikingly resembles the vision of Nephi: “And he [the angel] showed me the Tree of Life,” Paul is reported to have said, “and by it was a revolving red-hot sword. And a Virgin appeared by the tree, and three angels who hymned her, and the angel told me that she was Mary, the Mother of Christ.”<sup>59</sup> But Nephi’s vision goes even further, *identifying* Mary with the tree. This additional element seems to derive from precisely the preexilic Palestinian culture into which, the Book of Mormon tells us, Nephi had been born.

Of course, Mary, the virgin girl of Nazareth seen by Nephi, was not literally Asherah. She was, as Nephi’s guide carefully stressed, simply “the mother of the Son of God, *after the manner of the flesh*” (1 Nephi 11:18; emphasis added). But she was the perfect mortal typification of the mother of the Son of God.

### Asherah and the Biblical Wisdom Writings

Asherah is connected with the Bible in an entirely different manner as well. We will examine a Bible

passage that seems to deal with her while also yielding several interesting parallels to the visions of Lehi and Nephi.

Biblical scholars recognize a genre of writing, found both in the standard, canonical scriptures (e.g., Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon) and outside the canon, that they term “wisdom literature.” Among the characteristics of this type of writing, not surprisingly, is frequent use of the term *wisdom*. But also common to such literature, and very striking in texts from a Hebrew cultural background, is the absence of typical Israelite or Jewish themes. We read nothing there about the promises to the patriarchs, the story of Moses and the Exodus, the covenant at Sinai, or the divine promise of kingship to David. There is, instead, a strong emphasis on the teachings of parents, and especially on instruction by fathers.<sup>60</sup> Careful readers will note that all of these characteristics are present in the accounts of the visions of Lehi and Nephi as they are treated in the Book of Mormon.

The Bible identifies two chief earthly sources of wisdom. It is said to come from “the East,” which is almost certainly to be understood as the Syro-Arabian desert, and from Egypt.<sup>61</sup> (The book of Job, for example, is set in “the East” and lacks much if any trace of peculiarly Israelite or Hebrew lore as we have traditionally conceived of it.)<sup>62</sup> This is reminiscent of the twin extra-Israelite influences—Egypt and the desert—that the Book of Mormon and Latter-day Saint scholarship have identified for the family of Lehi and Nephi.<sup>63</sup> It may be significant that a section of the book of Proverbs (31:1–9) claims to represent “the words of Lemuel”—using a name that not only occurs among the sons of Lehi but also is at home in the Arabian desert.

Certain other motifs common to wisdom literature are also typical of the Book of Mormon as a

57. Quoting Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 57 n. 82; compare Olyan, “Cultic Confessions of Jer 2,27a,” 259.

58. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 56–61, 65–67.

59. See Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Tales and Romances: Pagan, Christian and Muslim* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1935), 280.

60. See Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 1–4, 103.

61. See, for example, 1 Kings 4:29–34; Job 1:3; compare Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 23–25, 175, 195.

62. See Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 33.

63. See 1 Nephi 1:2; and Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 34–42.

whole. For example, both the canonical and extra-canonical wisdom books are much concerned with the proper or improper use of speech.<sup>64</sup> The book of Proverbs warns against the dangerous enticements of “the strange woman, even . . . the stranger which flattereth with her words,” and advises us to “meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips” (Proverbs 2:16 (compare 6:24; 7:5, 21–23); 20:19 (compare 12:6; 26:28; 29:5); see also Psalms 5:9; 12:2; 78:36). “Flattering” and “cunning words,” generally used for evil purposes and with an implication of deceit, are also a recurring concern of the Nephite record.<sup>65</sup> Another consistent theme in both the Book of Mormon and Near Eastern wisdom literature is the notion that wisdom or justice or righteousness brings prosperity, while folly or wickedness leads to suffering and destruction.<sup>66</sup> The vocabulary of Proverbs 1–6, which stresses learning, understanding, righteousness, discernment, and knowledge, is obviously related to important messages of the Book of Mormon in general, and of the visions of Lehi and Nephi in particular. Similarly, Proverbs 3:1–12 focuses on our need to “hear” inspired wisdom, as well as on the promise of “life” and our duty to trust in the Lord rather than being wise in our own eyes (compare Proverbs 26:12). Each of these admonitions can also be documented abundantly throughout the text of the Book of Mormon—notably Nephi’s repeated invitation to us to put our trust in the Lord rather than in “the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34; 28:31). In Nephi’s vision of the tree of life, the “great and spacious building” symbolizes the wisdom and pride of the world, which shall fall (see 1 Nephi 11:35–36).

But among the interesting correspondences between ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature and the Book of Mormon, one is of special interest

for the present article. Wisdom itself is represented in Proverbs 1–9 as a female person.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, here and elsewhere in ancient Hebrew and Jewish literature, Wisdom appears as the wife of God, which can hardly fail to remind us of ancient Asherah.<sup>68</sup> She may even have played a role in the creation: “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth,” says Proverbs 3:19. “Like the symbol of the asherah, Wisdom is a female figure, providing life and nurturing.”<sup>69</sup> In fact, as Steve A. Wiggins observes of Asherah herself, “She is Wisdom, the first creature of God.”<sup>70</sup> The classical text on this subject is found in Proverbs 8:22–34.

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:

When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;

Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed [*ashre*] are they that keep my ways.

64. See Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 22.

65. See, for example, 2 Nephi 28:22; Jacob 7:2, 4; Mosiah 7:21; 9:10; 10:18; 11:7; 26:6; 27:8; Alma 20:13; 30:47; 46:5, 7, 10; 50:35; 52:19; 61:4; Helaman 1:7; 2:4–5; 13:28; 3 Nephi 1:29; 7:12; Ether 8:2. Daniel 11:21 nicely summarizes a frequent effect of flattery in the Book of Mormon.

66. See Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 15, for this theme in the ancient Near East.

67. See Proverbs 1:20–21; 4:5–9, 13; 7:4; 8:1–3, 22–36; 9:1–3. The Hebrew term translated as “wisdom,” *hokmah*, is, of course, a feminine noun. Murphy, in *Tree of Life*, 133–49 and throughout, offers a useful discussion of “Lady Wisdom.”

68. Patai supplies references that I do not have space here to discuss (see his *Hebrew Goddess*, 97–98). Proverbs 7:14 advises its audience to take Wisdom as a sister or kinswoman.

69. Smith, *Early History of God*, 95.

70. Wiggins, “Myth of Asherah,” 383.

Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.  
Blessed [*ashre*] is the man that heareth me.

The use of the Hebrew word *ashre* in this connection—from the same root (*ʿshr*) that underlies the word *asherah*—is probably significant.<sup>71</sup> “Happy [*ashre*] is the man that findeth wisdom” (Proverbs 3:13). (A similar wordplay may be going on behind the word *happy* in 1 Nephi 8:10, 12, and perhaps even behind *joy* and *joyous* in 1 Nephi 8:12 and 11:23.)<sup>72</sup> Another noteworthy fact is that “the ‘tree of life,’ which recalls the *asherah*, appears in Israelite tradition as a metaphorical expression for wisdom.” Indeed, Mark Smith sees Proverbs 3:13–18 as “a conspicuous chiasm” in which the essentially equivalent “inside terms” are *hokmah* (wisdom) and *ʿes-hayim* (a tree of life).<sup>73</sup> The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, which is also known as Wisdom of Ben Sira, uses various trees to symbolize Wisdom (24:12–19). “Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord,” says Ecclesiasticus 1:20 (New English Bible), “and long life grows on her branches.” “She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy [*meʿushshar*]<sup>74</sup> is every one that retaineth her” (Proverbs 3:18).

Several parallels between the language of Proverbs 1–9 and the language of the visions in 1 Nephi will be apparent to careful readers. Note, for example, in Proverbs 3:18, quoted above, the image of “taking hold,” which recalls the iron rod of Lehi and Nephi’s visions (compare Proverbs 4:13 and 1 Nephi 8:24, 30; 15:24). The New English Bible translation of Proverbs 3:18 speaks of “grasp[ing] her” and “hold[ing] her fast”—in very much the same way that Lehi and Nephi’s visions speak of “catching hold of” and “holding fast to” the rod of iron. Proverbs 4:13 advises us to “take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.” Apocryphal Baruch 4:1 declares that “all who hold fast to [Wisdom] shall live, but those who forsake her shall

die.” Both the advice of Proverbs and the images of Lehi’s dream, furthermore, are expressly directed to youths, to sons specifically or to children (compare Proverbs 1:4, 8, 10, 15; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 3, 10, 20; 5:1, 7–8, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 7; 1 Nephi 8:12–18). (“O, remember, my son,” says Alma 37:35, echoing this theme, “and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.”) Both Proverbs and 1 Nephi constantly use the imagery of “ways,” “paths,” and “walking” and warn against “going astray,” “wandering off,” and “wandering in strange roads.”<sup>75</sup> Proverbs 3:17 declares that “her [Wisdom’s] ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” In subsequent Nephite tradition, King Benjamin speaks of “the Spirit of the Lord” that “guide[s] . . . in wisdom’s paths” (Mosiah 2:36), and Mormon laments “how slow” people are “to walk in wisdom’s paths” (Helaman 12:5).

Proverbs represents Wisdom’s words as “plain,” an attribute that is lauded repeatedly throughout 1 Nephi, notably in the narrative of Nephi’s vision, and throughout 2 Nephi (see Proverbs 8:6–9; compare 1 Nephi 13:26–29, 32, 34–40; 14:23; 2 Nephi 4:32; 9:47; 25:4; 26:33; 33:5–6). The phrase *plain and precious*, recurrent in Nephi’s account of his experience with the angelic guide (see 1 Nephi 13:26, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 40), could serve as an excellent description of biblical “Wisdom.” Even more apt is the phrase *plain and pure, and most precious* in 1 Nephi 14:23. In Proverbs 8:19 Wisdom declares, “My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold” (compare Proverbs 3:14; 8:11, 19; also 2:4; Job 28:12–28; Wisdom of Solomon 7:8; 8:5). “She is more precious than rubies,” says Proverbs 3:15, “and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.” “Wisdom,” declares Ecclesiasticus 4:11, “raises her sons to greatness.” Similarly, Lehi and Nephi’s tree was “precious above all” (1 Nephi 11:9)—“a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy” (1 Nephi

71. See Smith, *Early History of God*, 95.

72. If so, the language of the plates must be Hebrew, or something like it. Compare Genesis 30:13.

73. See Smith, *Early History of God*, 95; compare Proverbs 11:30; 15:4.

74. Again, from the root *ʿshr*.

75. See Proverbs 1:15, 19, 20; 2:1, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 18–20; 3:6, 12, 17, 23; 4:11, 12, 14, 18–19, 26–27; 5:5, 6, 8, 21, 23; 6:12, 23; 7:8, 12, 25, 27; 8:2, 13, 20, 32; 9:6. Compare the “paths” (1 Nephi 8:20–23, 28) and “ways” (1 Nephi 8:23, 30–31) and “roads” (1 Nephi 8:32) of Lehi’s vision. Compare also Psalm 1:1–6, quoted earlier.



8:10), “desirable above all other fruit” (1 Nephi 8:12, 15; compare 11:22). Accordingly, no price is too high to pay, if it will bring us to attain wisdom. “I say unto you,” Alma the Younger remarked to the poor among the Zoramites in the context of a discussion centering on a seed and on the tree of life that could be nourished out of it, “it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom” (Alma 32:12). Confident in the quality of what she has to offer, Wisdom, according to Proverbs, invites others to partake:

Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words. (Prov. 1:20–21)

Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. (Prov. 8:1–3)

She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city. (Prov. 9:3)

Yet, for all her exalted status, Wisdom must face “scorners,” which must surely remind the reader of 1 Nephi of those in “the large and spacious building” who point the finger of scorn at the saints coming forward to partake of the tree of life (as in Proverbs 1:22; 3:34; compare 9:6–8, 12; 1 Nephi 8:26–27, 33; 11:35). This building seems to represent a human alternative to the true wisdom, the divine wisdom of God: Nephi records that it symbolizes “the world and the wisdom thereof” (1 Nephi 11:35).

Wisdom represents life, while the lack of wisdom leads to death.<sup>76</sup> (Perhaps the juxtaposition of a living and nourishing tree in 1 Nephi with the inanimate structure from which the worldly lean out to express their disdain is intended to make this point.) “For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it” (Proverbs 2:21–22). “For whoso findeth

me findeth life,” Wisdom says in Proverbs 8:35–36, “and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.” The sinner, in fact, falls into the clutches of the “whorish woman,” the rival to Lady Wisdom: “For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life” (Proverbs 2:18–19). Ammon in the Book of Mormon closely echoes the warning of Proverbs: “O how marvelous are the works of the Lord, and how long doth he suffer with his people; yea, and how blind and impenetrable are the understandings of the children of men; for they will not seek wisdom, neither do they desire that she should rule over them!” (Mosiah 8:20). Ecclesiasticus 4:19 says of Wisdom and of the individual who “strays from her” that “she will desert him and abandon him to his fate.” In Lehi’s vision, those who rejected the fruit of the tree “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:28) or “were drowned in the depths of “the fountain” (1 Nephi 8:32). “Many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads” (1 Nephi 8:32). It was for fear of this possible outcome that, after partaking of the fruit of the tree, Lehi was “desirous that [his] family should partake of it also” (1 Nephi 8:12). In a parallel vein, Ecclesiasticus 4:15–16 tells us that Wisdom’s “dutiful servant . . . will possess her and bequeath her to his descendants.”

In 1 Nephi 8:13–14, Lehi’s tree is associated with a river and spring of water. “The symbols of fountain and tree of life are frequent” in wisdom literature too.<sup>77</sup> Nephi himself, in 1 Nephi 11:25, actually equates the “tree of life” with “the fountain of living waters,” “which waters,” he relates, “are a representation of the love of God.” “And I also beheld,” he continues, “that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.”

The inclusion in 1 Nephi of two authentically preexilic religious symbols (Asherah and Wisdom) that could scarcely have been derived by the New York farm boy Joseph Smith from the Bible strongly

<sup>76</sup> On wisdom equated with life, see Proverbs 3:2, 18, 22; 4:4, 10, 13, 22; 6:23–35; 8:35–36; 9:6–11. On unwisdom as the way to death, see Proverbs 2:18; 5:5; 7:22–23, 26–27; 9:18.

<sup>77</sup> Murphy, *Tree of Life*, 29 (with references). See Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life*. Proverbs 5:15–18 also mentions waters and rivers.



suggests (to me, anyway) that the Book of Mormon is, indeed, an ancient historical record in the Semitic tradition.

I would now like to extend my reflections on this topic with a few items inspired by, and pretty much slavishly derived from a too-hasty but fascinated reading of the manuscript of the first volume (“The Mother of the Lord”) of Margaret Barker’s forthcoming work, *The Lady of the Temple*. The many insights afforded by her complex work are going to require many years, I think, to evaluate and appreciate. I can’t begin to do her writing justice today.

“The real religions of ancient Judah,” William Dever observed in his book *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, “consisted largely of everything that the biblical writers condemned.”<sup>78</sup>

Among the elements of the real, older, Hebrew religion—the religion of the patriarchs and prophets—summarized by Margaret Barker are “shrines and holy places throughout the land,” asherahs, astronomical interests (as in the Book of Abraham), symbolic stones, great trees in sanctuaries, and strikingly anthropomorphic appearances of the divine. These were, she argues, suppressed by the Deuteronomists.<sup>79</sup>

“Many scholars,” writes Francesca Stavropoulou, “have sought to ‘manage’ biblical and archaeological indications of religious diversities in ancient Israel and Judah by assuming a firm distinction between ‘popular’ religion and ‘official’ religion. But this distinction is often drawn relatively uncritically on theological grounds—which risks misrepresenting or distorting the likely religious realities of ancient Israel and Judah.”<sup>80</sup>

“The ‘theological grounds’ assumed here are Protestant,” observes Margaret Barker, “which have indeed often shaped the way the Old Testament is studied, but the older churches [and she has in mind here the Catholic, Orthodox, and other Eastern traditions] would recognize much of what is now called

‘diversity’ in ancient Israel, insofar as it honoured the Lady. They have always found the Lady in their liturgical use of the Old Testament texts.”<sup>81</sup>

I’ll take an example relevant to my equation of tree and Lady:

“In Egypt,” Barker writes,

the great goddess Isis “was” the throne. The hieroglyph of her name was a throne, and she was often depicted with the throne symbol on her head. To sit on the throne was to sit on the lap of Isis. Something similar happened in Jerusalem: the Chronicler reveals that when Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord, the people “worshipped the Lord, the king” (1 Chron. 29.20, translating literally). The moment of enthronement was *theosis*, when the human king became the divine son, an image that was known to the early Christians. . . . Mary was typically shown with her Son on her lap—the ancient throne image.<sup>82</sup>

Now, think of that equation of tree with divine mother:

If the animal in the topmost panel of the Taanach stand is a calf, then the final stage of the process depicted is a calf between two branches of the tree of life, remarkably similar to a picture in the synagogue of Dura Europos over one thousand years later. The synagogue wall painting shows a figure enthroned in the branches of a tree. Lower in the tree is a lion, and standing under the tree is the table bearing the characteristically-shaped shewbreads. The tree, the lion and the shewbreads are all associated with the Lady, and in this painting they are the context for the Messiah. In the mid-3rd century CE, then, when this synagogue was completed, the Jewish community in Dura Europos still thought of the Messiah in this way.<sup>83</sup>

The Syrian Christian Jacob of Serug, who died in 521 CE, composed a homily entitled “On the Chariot that Ezekiel the prophet saw” in which he maintained that the chariot-throne was an imagine of the Virgin Mother.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, the near-contemporary Byzantine Akathist Hymn describes Mary as

78. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 291.

79. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 65-66.

80. Francesca Stavropoulou, in F. Stavropoulou and J. Barton, eds., *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 37.

81. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 100.

82. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 137.

83. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 138.

84. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 197.

the chariot-throne: "Thou art the throne of the King . . . O Lady, fiery chariot of the Word . . . all-holy chariot of Him Who sitteth upon the cherubim."<sup>85</sup> "In the early Church," Barker summarizes, "it seems that the chariot throne was a well known image of the Lady, but this is an unlikely choice unless it had been drawn from the first-temple traditions that became Christianity."<sup>86</sup>

Throne and tree and Lady are linked:

St. Justin Martyr, in his second-century debate with Trypho the Jew, quoted a longer version of Psalm 96 that included the line "The Lord reigns from the tree"—citing it, incidentally, as an example of something that had been removed from the Bible by Jewish scribes so as not to give aid and comfort to Christians.<sup>87</sup> There is no Hebrew evidence to support Justin's quotation, but the Old Latin text of the psalm, as preserved in the Verona psalter, contains it, and St. Augustine uses it around 400 CE in his commentary on the Psalms.<sup>88</sup>

Let's return now, for a moment, to "the strange woman . . . the stranger *which* flattereth with her words," as she's called in Proverbs 2:16 (compare Zechariah 5:5–11). She is a foreigner. She doesn't belong. Margaret Barker sees her as the antithesis of Lady Wisdom, and argues that Isaiah 57, though now garbled, is talking about her.<sup>89</sup> "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" says Isaiah 1:21. "It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." Barker sees the harlot of Revelation 17 as an echo of the same foreign woman:

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. (Revelation 17:1–6)<sup>90</sup>

It's striking, though, that, even if the description of this woman draws on the "foreign woman" who replaced Lady Wisdom or Asherah in Jerusalem, John seems to see her as still future to his time. The process wasn't complete, it seems, with Josiah and the Deuteronomists.

Likewise, a reader of the Book of Mormon can't possibly fail to see in such texts parallels to the part of Nephi's vision that follows his seeing of the virginal mother of the Son of God:

And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld many nations and kingdoms.

And the angel said unto me: What beholdest thou? And I said: I behold many nations and kingdoms.

And he said unto me: These are the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles.

And it came to pass that I saw among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a great church.

And the angel said unto me: Behold the formation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity.

85. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 197.

86. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 197.

87. Trypho, 71.

88. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 139.

89. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 166–168.

90. See Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 166–168, 272, 274.

And it came to pass that I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he was the founder of it.

And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots.

And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church.

And also for the praise of the world do they destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity. (1 Nephi 13:1–9)

Recall that, in the English Book of Mormon, the term *church* is used rather loosely, by our standards, for assemblies and movements and groups even in pre-Christian, indeed even in pre-exilic, times.

And I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them.

And the angel said unto me: Knowest thou the meaning of the book?

And I said unto him: I know not.

And he said: Behold it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew. And I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me: The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles.

And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.

Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God.

And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the formation of that great

and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.

And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God. (1 Nephi 13:20–28)

In this light, Margaret Barker’s discussion of the history of “those who set up the second temple and its cult”—based to a considerable degree upon the so-called “Apocalypse of Weeks” in 1 Enoch—takes on a special interest for Latter-day Saints. For, she says, “those who collected and edited the Hebrew Scriptures as we know them were described as apostates.” Here is a passage in 1 Enoch that seems pretty plainly to depict the period when the temple was destroyed and the people of Jerusalem and Judah were led into captivity and then, after that, the period of Ezra the scribe and of Nehemiah:<sup>91</sup>

And after that, in the sixth week, all who live in [the temple] shall be blinded,

And the hearts of all of them shall godlessly forsake Wisdom.

And in it a man shall ascend;

And at its close, the house of dominion shall be burned with fire,

And the whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed.

And after that, in the seventh week, shall an apostate generation arise,

And many shall be its deeds,

And all its deeds shall be apostate.<sup>92</sup>

These are the people, Barker argues, who “compiled and transmitted the texts that became the Hebrew Scriptures, and their spiritual heirs

91. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 3.

92. 1 Enoch 93:8-9.

determined the Hebrew canon after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.”<sup>93</sup>

The apocryphal book of 2 Esdras has Ezra the scribe speaking:

So during the forty days ninety-four books were written.

And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, “Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them;

but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people.

For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.”

And I did so.<sup>94</sup>

“Whoever recorded this story in this form,” comments Margaret Barker, “was saying, beyond any doubt, that the 24 books of the Hebrew canon were the less important texts, and that ‘Ezra,’ the leader of the apostates, was the reason that the more important books had been withdrawn. . . . The implications of this for reconstructing the antecedents of Christianity cannot be too strongly emphasized.”<sup>95</sup>

Nephi’s vision of the future is closely patterned, it seems, on what would happen shortly after his time but, perhaps even more importantly, on what had already been happening during his lifetime and that of his father at the hands of the Deuteronomistic reformers.

“Deuteronomy . . . suppressed traditional forms of prophecy,” Margaret Barker comments.

According to Deuteronomy, a prophet could be recognized in two ways: s/he would be like Moses, or s/he would be recognised as a genuine prophet when the prophecies had been fulfilled (Deut. 18.22). This completely changed the nature and power of prophecy: teachings either had to repeat the words of Moses, or be fulfilled before they could be recognised. There would be no more waiting for prophecy to be fulfilled, no inspired interpreters who could relate the oracles to contemporary events. This redefinition explains why the writing prophets, apart from Isaiah, are not

mentioned in the D histories. Consistent with this tightly controlled system was the centralisation of worship into just one place—Jerusalem—and the prohibition of secret knowledge. Nobody went up to heaven or crossed the sea to receive revelation; these secret things were for the Lord alone. His people had only to obey the commandments which they had already received (Deut. 9.29; 30.11–14).<sup>96</sup>

Listen to Deuteronomy itself:

If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deuteronomy 30:10–14)

Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you.

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. . . .

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations. (Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 5–6)

The Book of Mormon continually describes itself as battling with those who deny prophecy and revelation, who fight the prophets, and announces that it will come forth in a time characterized by

93. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 22.

94. 2 Esdras 14:44–48.

95. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 22; compare ms. 23.

96. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 32.



such attitudes, when prophets will be dismissed and only the authority of past, written revelation will be accepted. “Many of the Gentiles,” the Lord tells Nephi, “shall say: A aBible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.” (2 Nephi 29:3)

“The influence of the Deuteronomists,” Barker writes,

best represented by the temple purges in the time of Josiah, was far-reaching and long-lasting, changing the meanings of individual words, and changing the way of reading several texts. Insofar as this process systematically obscured and obliterated the older faith, it became the major obstruction facing later scholars who wanted to establish the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. Fortunately, memories of the older ways were preserved outside the stream of texts that became the Hebrew Scriptures, and they reappeared in Christianity in their original context. It is a great irony and a great sadness that those Christians most committed to a Bible-based tradition, *sola scriptura*, are perhaps the least likely to read the Bible in its original context.<sup>97</sup>

Incidentally, Barker repeatedly calls attention to memories of Jewish communities fleeing into Arabia at the time of Josiah’s purge. The Jerusalem Talmud gives the fantastic number of 80,000 young priests who went over to Nebuchadnezzar, probably around 597 BCE, and then to live among the Ishmaelites.<sup>98</sup> This was thought to be a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy: “The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim [Aden]. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from

the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war.” (Isaiah 21:13–14)

And, of course, Lehi and his party went, precisely, into Arabia, and at almost exactly that time.

They had with them the Urim and Thummim—something that Barker says disappeared right around the time of King Josiah—or soon created their own.<sup>99</sup> “In Enoch’s account, the judgement on sinners was based on the creation covenant, because all nature acted in accordance with the Creator’s commandments, but sinners did not.”<sup>100</sup>

And one last note: Compare Mormon’s comments, which appeal to the example of nature rather than of the Mosaic law:

O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom’s paths!

Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide.

O how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth.

For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God. (Helaman 12:4–8)

97. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 154.

98. See Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 9-10, 54-55, 56, 123, 205–206.

99. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 30-31.

100. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, ms. 188.





# A Temple Studies Bibliography

*Danel W. Bachman*

## **Background and Creation of the Bibliography**

Believe it or not, this is the fifth symposium on temple themes held in various venues around the world *this year*, and two are already scheduled for next year!<sup>1</sup> With this growing interest in temples, it is my pleasure this afternoon to announce the publication of a new online tool that it is hoped will facilitate temple studies research. A bibliography on temples containing approximately 7,000 entries is now on the website for The Academy for Temple Studies located at the following URL: <http://www.templestudies.org>. The purpose of this brief presentation is to give you some background and description of the project.

About six years ago, I began an extensive study of the temple, and one of the first things I did was begin compiling a bibliography of available information. With the help of the Internet the bibliography grew rapidly. Well into the process I discovered that Jack Welch and two BYU colleagues, Don

Parry and Steven Ricks, had published a temple bibliography in 1991. It contained approximately 2,700 entries.<sup>2</sup> Jack graciously sent me electronic versions of the book, and we discussed the possibility of putting a combined new version online. Last fall I formatted and proofread the collection as it then existed and sent it to him.

## **Extent of Temple Studies Included**

At present the bibliography is limited to the following areas of temple studies: (1) Near Eastern and Mediterranean temples in general. That includes pre-Israelite temples in the Near East, and Greek, Roman, and Egyptian temples. (2) Israelite temples in the Old and New Testament periods. (3) Mormon Temples. The bibliography includes books, articles, chapters in books, pamphlets, talks, and entries in various types of reference works. The matter of including book reviews in the bibliography is yet to be decided. Most items are in English, but there are also entries in Hebrew, German, French, and Spanish.

## **Selection of Items for the Bibliography**

The process for selecting sources for this bibliography has evolved with experience; however, throughout the work I have tried to be more inclusive than exclusive. Many factors are involved in finding suitable references. I quickly learned that certain words in titles may signal that the publication is temple related, such as: "cult," "cultus," "sanctuary," "sacred space," "ritual," and "liturgy." Doctrinal and theological matters possibly related

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1. In March 2012, sixteen individuals gave presentations at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute conference entitled "Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual, & Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World." In May the Irish Society for the Study of the Ancient Near East held its first annual symposium. Twenty-four presenters, three of which were from BYU, addressed the topic "The Other Temples." Also in May, Margaret Barker's Temple Studies Group held its annual symposium in London; papers addressed the topic "The Temple in the Johannine Writings." In September a symposium held in Provo, Utah, considered "The Temple of Mt. Zion"; and of course, this one. Symposia scheduled so far for 2013 include Mrs. Barker's Temple Studies Group, and the annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium held each fall at BYU with the topic "Temple, Worship, and Praise in the Text of the Old Testament."

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2. Donald W. Parry, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch, *A Bibliography on Temples of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), xi.

to the temple are also looked at carefully, such as publications dealing with “sacrifice,” “the presence of God,” “heavenly ascent,” “ablutions,” “anointing,” “festivals,” “purification laws,” “priesthood,” “Levites,” “high priest,” and others. In the Bible the priesthood was almost exclusively related to the temple, so materials dealing with the priesthood during Bible times are carefully considered. The names of personalities closely associated with the temple and temple themes are also important keys to potentially relevant materials, as are temple-related place names in the titles of works on history, archaeology, and architecture. Titles with references to scriptures or to passages in apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature generally have to be looked up to confirm that a source is related to the temple. Sometimes a word in Hebrew or Greek in a title is related to the temple in some way. Determining the suitability of all these materials is often labor intensive and time consuming.

### The Online Version

The entries are formatted according to the 16th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* for bibliographies. Where *Chicago* gives some latitude or options, those used in the bibliography are explained in the introductory material. The online version will be a “preliminary listing” and the software used to access it is also in its initial stage of development. If possible, we want the online version to be interactive in several ways. We encourage people who know about references which are not in the bibliography to share them with us, and when verified they will be put in proper format and included in the collection. We would like to have a drop-down menu for each entry that will take you to abstracts, reviews, and perhaps even personal summaries or notes that may be contributed. Links to online versions and reviews are difficult to maintain given the ephemeral nature of the Internet, so whether to include links has not yet been decided. In addition to normal word searches, we have included a list of key words associated with each entry to facilitate a variety of topical searches. We also hope to build in the capability to create, save, and print sub-topic bibliographies based on one or more searches.

As you use the bibliography you may find an item that is really not about the temple. That is because many references are included on the basis of *apparent* relevance based on my best judgment at the time, without reading them all. When they are brought to our attention they will be reviewed and eliminated when warranted.

### Much Left to Do

As large as the bibliography is, there is still much left to do. New sources of references continually surface. For example, in May 2012, I learned that the sanctuary (i.e., tabernacle/temple) and the Atonement are at the heart of Seventh-day Adventist theology,<sup>3</sup> and that scholars of that faith are producing a growing literature about both subjects.<sup>4</sup> Another example relates to doctoral dissertations. Some months ago I went into the ProQuest website for the University of Michigan dissertation project and was pleased to learn that they are digitizing many of the dissertations they have collected over the decades.<sup>5</sup> A search on the word “temple” brought forth over 39,000 hits! I culled out of the first 1,000 about 160 dissertations and a few theses relevant to the bibliography, complete with abstracts for most of them. A month ago I did additional searches which illustrate the growth of this one source. The word “temple” now produced 44,477 hits, and the phrase “the temple” yielded 71,095 hits. I found 9,125 hits

3. Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993).

4. I found online a 2003 bibliography thirty pages in length of about 300 entries by Gary Shearer, reference librarian for the Pacific Union College Library. I do not know what has been published since that time. From what little I have read, it appears that Seventh-day Adventist scholars competent in Hebrew, Greek, and ancient history are producing some interesting studies regarding their views of the Tabernacle, sacrifice, priesthood, atonement, and the heavenly temple, to name a few relevant topics. They also have a special interest in Daniel chapters 2, 7–9, and the books of Hebrews and Revelation, all important temple texts. See as examples the interesting collection of essays in Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington, D.C.: The Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981).

5. Of course, most recent dissertations are already in electronic format.

on the "Jerusalem Temple," 2,400 on "Mormon temple," 22,181 on "Greek temples," 22,609 on "Roman temples," and 9,212 on "Egyptian temples." The bibliography now includes 260 dissertations and a few theses. In addition to the 43,000 hits left unchecked, each dissertation has an extensive bibliography which when searched always produces new references for the project. However, I have searched the bibliographies of less than two dozen of those dissertations.

Also, much, much work needs to be done in non-English sources. As recent as Thursday of last week I learned through the Internet of a collection of Bible-related bibliographies prepared by the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. The bibliography was initially an annual part of the journal *Biblica* from 1920 until 1968, when it was then published as a separate yearly volume and since 1985 has been titled *Elenchus of Biblicus*. According to one user, this collection is "a broad, comprehensive, international, ecumenical, annual listing of books, dissertations, reviews, and articles on the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, intertestamental Judaism, the early patristic period, biblical theology, archaeology, and other related topics."<sup>6</sup> This will undoubtedly prove to be a valuable source, especially for foreign publications.<sup>7</sup>

6. William H. Shepherd, "Elenchus Explained," [http://www.pitts.emory.edu/services/tools/Shepherd\\_Elenchus\\_Explained.pdf](http://www.pitts.emory.edu/services/tools/Shepherd_Elenchus_Explained.pdf), accessed October 25, 2012.

7. Another helpful resource for foreign language references which I encountered this year is the massive three-volume work of Professor Paul-Emile Langevin, *Biblical*

One resource that is not represented in our bibliography and which we are still discussing includes a large number of items published only on the Internet. The quality of this material ranges from research found in blogs, newsletters, and collections of papers, to online books and peer-reviewed journals. I maintain a list of these resources, but they are not yet included in the general bibliography.<sup>8</sup> The Internet is a vast and ever expanding resource. In May I Googled the phrase "Jerusalem Temple," which produced 4,060,000 hits! If a person could search the Internet every day for a 70-year life of 25,550 days, he would have to look at 159 items a day to review all 4,060,000 items. One can only speculate about how many new items would come online during that life span.

I trust this brief review has given you a sense of the potential of this tool and of its strengths and weakness. I hope it has also given you an idea of how much is yet to be done. If you have suggestions or would like to help with the project, please contact me at DanBachman@comcast.net. Thank you.

*Bibliography, 1930-1970* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'universite Laval, 1972).

8. I also have lists of sources which still have to be checked because they either have incomplete reference information or I am uncertain about their relevance. I add something from those lists to the general collection only when the reference is complete or after I have read it or found additional evidence that it is likely suitable. However, there are so many items that are suitable and obvious that have not yet been discovered and/or tracked down that I devote very little time to the "uncertain" list.





# Temples—Bridges of Eternity

*LeGrande Davies*

The Temple for both Ancient Israel and Modern Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons) is the bridge between Heaven and Earth.<sup>1</sup> The Temple, for both Ancient Israel and Mormons, has always been where God meets Man and where they make covenants for both Eternity and Mortality. Temples are open to “priests,” both in Ancient Israel and to Mormons.<sup>2</sup> Temple building and temple architecture has profound import to these two cultures, so it is not surprising that the architecture of early Israelite temples and Mormon temples is strikingly similar. Analogous architectural features are present in both.

The Israelite temple, built in Jerusalem by Solomon, has long been recognized as “the crowning achievement of Israelite building in the tenth century” (Aharoni, 1982, p. 226). The Solomonic temple’s architectural design, building materials, procedures, and dedication rites are given in a general descriptive manner in 1 Kings chapters 6–9. But these descriptions were never intended to give complete and detailed information. Because they were not complete, further descriptions and detailed reconstructions have been postulated and debated literally for hundreds of years by various scholars.<sup>3</sup> Some descriptions were based in physical fact and some were very imaginative. Each “reconstruction” relies heavily on aesthetics and is based on the assumption that the architecture of the temple of Solomon was copied from temples, houses, or palaces extant in other areas of the Middle East. Not that they were not influenced by the architecture of their day, but it is not to contemporary aesthetics that one should look to see the patterns found in the temple. One should look to Mount Sinai—the literal “Mountain of the LORD.”

In the Book of Exodus, the Children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai to become a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6) unto the LORD: “And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine” (Exodus 19:3–5).<sup>4</sup>

Moses returned to the Israelite camp, set the boundaries, cleansed the people (including washing themselves and their clothes), taught them the requirements to meet their God, and designated those who would ascend up the mountain into the presence of the LORD. Chapter 20 of Exodus records the basic laws and rules for a nation to become a nation of priests or an holy nation. It records the relationship of the Israelites to God.<sup>5</sup> The LORD then showed His power, and the people were so struck with fear at the awesome experience that they plead with Moses, “Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exodus 20:19–21).

The revelatory pattern was set for Israel. Israel goes to the “Mountain of the LORD” to meet God, to receive blessings, make covenants, and be sanctified. Eventually, Moses, with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Joshua, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ascend the mountain.<sup>6</sup> Israel comes to the Holy Mountain, the Priests and Elders enter the Holy Mountain, but only the Prophet, the Great High Priest, the Son, ascends the Mountain into the Divine Presence. “And the

glory of the LORD abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD *was* like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 24:16–18).

Once Israel left the borders of Mount Sinai, they needed a way to carry the covenant and conversion narrative with them. Thus, the Tabernacle, Israel's bridge from the Mount to the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem at the time of Solomon, became a literal reflection and representation of Sinai.

As Milgrom states, "Mount Sinai is the archetype of the Tabernacle, and is similarly divided into three gradations of holiness. Its summit is the Holy of Holies; God's voice issues forth from there (Ex. 19:20) as from the inner shrine (Ex. 25:22; Num. 7:89). . . . The second division of Sinai is the equivalent of the outer shrine, marked off from the rest of the mountain by being enveloped in a cloud (Ex. 19:2; 24:15b ff. [P]; see 19:9, 16) just as the cloud overspreads the entirety of . . . [the] Tabernacle (Num. 9:15ff.). . . . Below the cloud is the third division, called 'the bottom of the mountain' (19:17; 24:4), a technical term for the lowest portion of the mountain. . . . It is the equivalent to the courtyard, the sacred enclosure of the tabernacle to which priests alone have access except for the forecourt 'entrance' where the layman brings his sacrifice, provided he is in a pure state . . . Thus the blazing summit, the cloud-covered slopes and visible bottom rim correspond to Tabernacle divisions" (Milgrom, 1970, pp. 45–46) and the architectural divisions of the "Israelite" sanctuaries or temples.<sup>7</sup>

When Israel constructed its Tabernacle, it was done by revelation from the LORD. Exodus chapters 25–40 describe the purpose, details, and construction of the Tabernacle, which was to be the sanctuary of the LORD. This "traveling" divine dwelling place had the power and glory of the original Mount Sinai, as a constant reminder of the God of Israel. Israel dwelt in tribes around it with the priestly orders in their appropriate places, and the altars, tables, and offerings showing and typifying

the principles and covenants made by the LORD and Israel. The Tabernacle was the tangible symbol in its intricate parts, form, and purpose of the covenant made on Sinai. And just like the Tabernacle, when Israel built her Sanctuaries, in Arad, Beer-Sheba, and Jerusalem, they used the pattern of the Sinai theophany and the Tabernacle to manifest the covenant.

### Arad

Between 1962 and 1967, Yohanan Aharoni and Ruth Amiran conducted excavations at Tel Arad. Seven of those strata (XII–VI) were of "Israelite" origin. The temple at Arad started in Stratum XI, dated to Solomon's time, and ended in Stratum VII, during the reign of Josiah. The temple of Arad was a king's sanctuary oriented on an east-west axis. Incorporated into the new royal fortress at Arad, which had no preceding city or sanctuary, the sanctuary is thus shown to have been an authorized "royal" sanctuary in the 10th century BCE. Though the Arad temple does not follow the exact architectural dimensions of the courtyard, the inner court (vestibule, *ulam*), sanctuary (*hekal*), and Holy of Holies (*d'bir*) of the Jerusalem temple, its structure contains each feature.<sup>8</sup>

The courtyard of the temple was quite large, with a Levitical-sized stone altar for "burnt offerings" standing in a corner. The altar measurements of a square of five cubits followed the measurements of the altar of the tabernacle, and the original altar of the Temple of Solomon. (Aharoni, 1971, p. 38). The size and shape of the Arad altar corresponds exactly to the measurements given in Exodus.<sup>9</sup>

Further, the Arad altar "was crowned with a large flint slab, surrounded by two plastered gutters, probably for the blood of the animal sacrifices. The altar was built of small unhewn stones, in contrast to the wall behind which has many dressed stones" (Aharoni, 1971, p. 35). Certainly the use of small unhewn stones followed the injunction given in Exodus 20:25 "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." After its initial construction, the altar was destroyed and repaired a number of times. It is significant that each time the altar was repaired, it retained the

same dimensions and was never resized for convenience or fashion.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the altar, in the inner court (*`ulam*) of the temple before the doorway of the vestibule (*hekal*), stood pillar bases that undoubtedly were for the *Jachin* and *Boaz* pillars. This placement varied from many of the reconstructions of the Temple of Solomon which would place them before the *`ulam* and not before the *hekal*. This placement gives an insight into the architecture of the Temple of Solomon, for it was between *Jachin* and *Boaz* that the veil of the temple hung. We see from the architecture of Arad that “priests” entering the *hekal* of the sanctuary “presented themselves in power,” so that they could enter into the presence of the LORD. For them, the “holy place” was the “second division of Sinai,” marked off by the cloud into which the Priests and the seventy elders were allowed to ascend (Milgrom, 1970, p. 45).

The *hekal* of Arad was a “broad room” instead of a “long room” as in the Solomonic Temple, but had exactly the same width as the Solomonic *hekal*, 20 cubits.<sup>11</sup> This room and the courtyard had ancillary rooms which were used to prepare for the rituals, etc. (Mazar, 1965, pp. 297–303; Aharoni, 1971, pp. 30–34, 40–42).<sup>12</sup>

Beyond that, the Holy of Holies (*d<sup>h</sup>bir*) had three steps leading up to it. Two stone carved altars, with traces of incense, were found on the second step. Two stone pillars, *mazzeboth*, were found in the Holy of Holies.<sup>13</sup> The size of the Holy of Holies never changed from the strata XI–VI. It would have served as the place of worship for the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Arad shows the patterns established by the Tabernacle.

### Beer-Sheba

In 1973, a large building constructed on an east-west axis was excavated at Tel Beersheba. This palatial building revealed four main rooms, a very large courtyard, and two basements. It was surprising in size and workmanship. The building, designated building 32, was given the final locus number 32 is described as follows: “This structure, with its two deep basements, was built in Stratum II [8th century and was destroyed by Sennacherib 701 BCE]. . . . Its builders excavated a huge pit, about 12 x

17 m., going down three meters or more to bedrock and thereby obliterating all traces of the underlying strata. There is no other instance of such a building operation anywhere else in Beer-Sheba, nor in fact in any other contemporary site” (Herzog, Rainey, and Moshkovitz, 1977, pp. 56–57).

Building 32 became the center of a debate about the location and destruction of a temple at Tel Beersheba (Yadin, 1976). However, there was little doubt that the Israelite temple of Stratum III and earlier was situated where building 32 (Stratum II) was located. First, it occupied the only space large enough to house a sanctuary and was in the most prominent location on the western part of the tel. Second, the plans of Israelite Beer-Sheba, Stratum II, reveal building 32 is the only building in Beer-Sheba on an east-west axis.<sup>14</sup>

An important find *under* the courtyard added further evidence that Building 32 was located on an earlier Israelite temple site. The courtyard of building 32 was made of dust and ashes, the typical road material used in Beer-Sheba (Itzaki and Shinar, 1973; Rainey, 1974). But something was different about “the very impressive chalk floor under the courtyard of Building 32 [which] dates to Stratum III (unlike the rooms of Building 32, the courtyard did not obliterate all traces of previous strata and enough of this chalk paving remained to enable one to observe where it was cut by the walls of the Building 32 courtyard). This white chalk floor was not utilized by the builders of Building 32” (Herzog, Rainey, and Moshkovitz, 1977, p. 58). The white chalk floor “foundations” of the courtyard, where the altar of the earlier Israelite sanctuary stood, were dated to early Solomonic time.

The Beer-Sheba sanctuary was near a ritual bath or *mikvah*, a 2.5 x 5 m stone structure, covered with plaster, having a bench along one side and in the floor a sump. There were several pottery vessels found in the pool, including two fragments of a *kernos* with decoration (Aharoni, 1974a, pp. 35, 40, plates 7, 8).

Beyond chalk floors, the pool, and pottery, 1973 produced another incredible evidence for the temple at Beer-Sheba: a Levitical-proportioned stone sacrificial altar. A wall in a Stratum II storehouse, on the east of Tel Beersheba, had reused “well-smoothed

ashlar blocks of calcareous sandstone" (Aharoni, 1974c, p. 3). The stones formed a large "Levitical" horned altar.<sup>15</sup>

One of the altar's stones had a "deeply engraved decoration of a twisting snake" (Aharoni, 1974c, p. 4). The serpent, as the symbol of YHWH and his "healing" power, was venerated in Israel from Moses' times (Numbers 21:8–9).<sup>16</sup> The stratigraphic proof for the destruction date of this large altar was confirmed when four stones of "well smoothed" calcareous sandstone were found in 1976 under the Stratum II *glacis*, "where they had been buried in the earthen rampart that had been laid down with the erection of Stratum II" (Herzog, Rainey, and Moshkovitz, 1977, p. 57–58).<sup>17</sup> These four stones helped "reconstruct" the size and purpose of the altar. These stones were top-stones, and they had burnt plant and animal material on their upper surfaces. The size, shape, engraving, and burnt material confirmed that the altar was a Levitical altar like the altar at Arad.

In addition to the altar, a "bowl" found in locus 93 (a small front room of building 76, a house in the "western living" area located across the road from building 32) also sheds light upon the "sacred building" destroyed by Hezekiah. The vessel had the word  $\text{קדש}$  *kadosh* or "Holy" incised on its side.<sup>18</sup> Aharoni concluded simply that "the meaning of the word holy, holiness, shows that the contents of the vessel were dedicated to a sanctuary" (Aharoni, 1973, p. 73, plate 42.4).

The destruction of the Beer-Sheba sanctuary by Hezekiah appears to have been politically motivated as well as for religious reasons. When Sennacherib, King of Assyria, sent his commander and two other high officials to Jerusalem, they spoke to Eliakim in Hebrew, adroitly asking whom the Judahites trust. They insist that the Judahites could not trust in the LORD, because Hezekiah had just destroyed the LORD's high places and altars.<sup>19</sup>

The Beer-Sheba excavation produced evidence for a functioning Israelite sanctuary until the time of Hezekiah's centralization of ritual in Jerusalem in 721 BCE and has given some reasons for its termination. It provided excellent information concerning altars and their use. It showed evidence of the location and necessity of water in temple ritual.

It did not give a great deal of information about the "exact" floor plans and the architecture of the temple.

### Lachish

After the excavation at Arad, Professor Aharoni excavated for two seasons at Lachish. While searching excavation records for architectural parallels to Arad, he discovered similarities between the Arad temple and the "Solar Shrine" excavated by the Wellcome-Marston Expedition in the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> The evidences used by Starkey to demonstrate the "Solar Shrine" was a religious building were "its east-west axis, its raised position, a limestone altar located in the court, the wide flight of steps, and the plastered drain in the inner room which had evidently been intended for a libation altar" (Aharoni, 1975b, p. 1). Through careful examination Aharoni was able to show that the dating of this temple to the Persian period was not likely. The temple was post-exilic and possibly dated to the first half of the 2nd century BCE. Because of this, Aharoni changed the designation from the "Solar Shrine" to Temple 106 (Aharoni, 1975b, pp. 1–11). The architecture was very reminiscent of Arad. It was not of some "intrusive cult" or foreign architectural extraction; it is of Israelite origins and is oriented identically to Arad and Beer-Sheba. "Both [Arad and Lachish] have a large courtyard [no large stone altar exists in the Temple 106 as in the Arad temple], a *cella* (Holy Place) in the form of a distinct 'broad room,' and a central rectangular *adyton* (Holy of Holies) reached by three stairs. The court and the Temple were surrounded by rooms" (Aharoni, 1975b, p. 7). Its proportions are again remarkably like the Arad Temple.

Many "cultic" objects were found at Lachish similar to those of Arad, such as bronze lamps, decorated libation altars, etc. Some incense altars were also found. One altar inscription stated that it was "the incense (altar) of Iyosh son of Mahalyah from Lachish" (Aharoni, 1975b, p. 7). Another incense altar had a bearded man with upraised arms which "connotate a general posture of prayer" (Aharoni, 1975b, p. 5; cf. Sarna, 1975). Because of this evidence, it is clear that the Hellenistic Lachish Temple gives yet another example of what should be called Israelite Temple design even though it is post-exilic.



Further evidence of Israelite sanctuary architecture at Lachish is an Israelite-dated building (Building 10), which exists under part of Temple 106. It is badly damaged, but “the two buildings at Lachish have exactly the same orientation, i.e. their axis runs east-west, with a slight deviation of 13–16 degrees. This hardly is accidental, since the orientation of a sacral building evidently is of importance” (Aharoni, 1975b, p. 11). A limestone altar was found within what was the *Holy Place*. Building 10 differs slightly from both the Arad sanctuary and the Hellenistic Lachish sanctuary, in that the Holy of Holies extends the full width of the building, rather than the cubicle at Arad and Lachish Temple 106. The Holy of Holies contains a circular raised platform opposite the door and should be considered the *bamah* of the temple. This building was replaced by Temple 106 around the end of the 3rd century BCE. Aharoni states, “Evidently the same tradition of worship was maintained in Temple 106, which replaced the earlier structure with considerably superior construction. When the contents and plans of both temples are compared with Arad, and their probable connection with the inscribed altar is considered as well, all indications point towards a tradition of Jewish, Yahwistic worship” (Aharoni, 1975b, p. 11).

Josiah’s banishment of all temples except the temple at Jerusalem did not mean that the Israelite temple tradition was lost. There is extensive evidence that Jewish communities, after the exile, continued to build legitimate “Yahwistic sanctuaries” with a continuity of architectural design from the earliest Israelite times.<sup>21</sup> The greatest was the temple at Jerusalem but it included other temples such as the Hellenistic temples at Lachish and Beersheba.

The 10th century BCE temples of Arad and Beersheba each seem to spring full blown architecturally about the same time as Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem. The Yahweh temple at Arad functioned and was apparently held in high regard until the 8th century BCE time of Josiah’s “reformation.”

The Yahweh temple at Beer-Sheba was removed in 721 BCE and a large building with a basement was built in its place. The altar was dismantled, the horns defaced, and the stone used as common building stone, but the “Levitical” altar remains could

be reconstructed and give better understanding of size, shape, and use of altars in Israelite tradition. The location of the “Pool” at Beersheba corresponds with the water source at Arad, shedding light on the use of water in all the sanctuaries and temples of ancient and post-exilic Israel.

All of these architectural features and accoutrements show that these sanctuaries are bridges to the “Mount Sinai” theophany. The great theophany at Sinai became the focus for Israel thereafter. It set the pattern that all revelation and covenant making in Israel followed, “the experiences of the fathers foreshadow[ing] those of the descendants” (Cassuto, 1967, p. 14). Israel took “Mount Sinai,” in the form of the tabernacle, through the rest of their wanderings and into the Land of Promise, the covenant land. They made more permanent “Mount Sinais” by creating temples and sanctuaries of stone. They did not stray from the form. Each temple had an Holy of Holies, an Holy Place, and a courtyard. Each contained a source of water for ritual purposes, vestment areas, and places for worshipers and priests to prepare to meet God. They built with great care their “sacred mountain.”

LDS people feel they are “Modern Israel” and are fulfilling Isaiah’s famous words that “it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3; cf. Micah 4:1–4). This “mountain” imagery links the architecture of Ancient Israel and Modern Israel.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had its “Mount Sinai” at Kirtland, Ohio. The “Saints” built a Temple in the manner of the ancient temples because of divine revelation to their prophet, Joseph Smith Jr. There they had angelic, prophetic, and divine revelations as Moses, the seventy elders of Israel, and the congregation did at Mount Sinai.<sup>22</sup> When they left Kirtland, they built a second temple at Nauvoo, where that prophetic pattern continued.



Early Latter-day Saints considered themselves as “Modern Israel,” a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6) with a royal priesthood in a new dispensation. They are worshippers of Jesus Christ led by prophets building and receiving revelation on their “Mount Sinai.” As Modern Israel set out for their wilderness journey which led to Utah, their prophet, Brigham Young, gave instruction to them, as Moses gave to Ancient Israel. They were to remember their God, their covenants, and their duties that they had received in their “Mount Sinai” at Kirtland and in their Nauvoo temple. Mormons were the “Camp of Israel” and as Moses led Ancient Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, so a living prophet led this “Modern Israel” out of bondage by the hand of their God: “I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and my arm is stretched out in the last days, to save my people Israel” (D & C 136:22).

Mormons reached a promised land and built their “Mountain of the LORD.” They continue to build sanctuaries to the LORD their God and remember their ties to Ancient Israel. A key to understanding their temples can be found in the culture of the ancient temple, including three ancient temple sites: Arad, Beer-Sheba, and Lachish.

## Notes

1. “The nexus between Israel and the Tabernacle is a perpetual extension of the bond that was forged at Sinai between the people and their God” (Cassuto, 1967, p. 319).

2. “This is not a house of prayer where the public was allowed to enter but rather a structure conceived as the house of the deity where the sacred presence might dwell. The public was not allowed to go into the temple building at all, but only the priests appointed for its service, so the building did not need to have large dimensions. The crowd assembled in the large open courtyard in front of the temple, where the great sacrificial altar for the burning of offerings was also stationed” (Aharoni, 1982, p. 226; cf. Milgrom, 1970, p. 45).

3. One of the most comprehensive is the multivolume work by Th. A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem: von Salomo bis Herodes* (1970).

4. “And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day” (Exodus 19:14–15). Moses and the Elders of Israel set boundaries for the people, warning them not to encroach upon or even touch the Mountain. When the third day arrived, “there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the

mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled (Exodus 19:16).

“And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses *up* to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them. So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them” (Exodus 19:17–25).

5. Exodus chapter 20 does not deal with how people are to deal with each other but with their moral behavior toward God. Two things are important to remember: 1) the people are preparing to meet with the LORD in three days, so chapter 20 emphasizes how one becomes fit to be with God; 2) each of these commandments are focused on the LORD/man relationship, consider for example Exodus 20:15 “Thou shalt not steal.” This verse is most often interpreted as stealing from one’s neighbor, but the book of Malachi suggests otherwise, “Will a man rob God? Yet, ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? **In tithes and offerings.** Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*” (Malachi 3:8–10, bold emphasis added). It appears that Israel was to make sure it had paid its tithes and offerings before approaching God on Mount Sinai to receive an endowment. Each commandment shows a similar paradigm.

6. “*And seventy of the elders of Israel*, a perfect representation of the people by a number that symbolizes perfection” (Cassuto, 1967, p. 310). “Seventy – commonly indicates the perfection of a family blessed with offspring, both in the pre-Israelitic and in the Israelitic traditions” (Cassuto, 1967, p. 8).

7. This is the complete quote from Milgrom. It is extraordinary in its scope: “Mount Sinai is the archetype of the Tabernacle, and is similarly divided into three gradations of holiness. Its summit is the Holy of Holies; God’s voice issues forth from there (Ex. 19:20) as from the inner shrine (Ex. 25:22; Num. 7:89); the mountain top is off limits to priest and layman alike (Ex. 19:24*b*) and its very sight is punishable by death (Ex. 19:21*b*), and so with its Tabernacle counterpart (cf. Lev. 16:2 and Num. 4:20); finally, Moses alone is privileged to

ascend to the top (Ex. 19:20b; see 34:2b) just as later, the high priest is permitted entry to the inner shrine under special safeguards (Lev. 16:2ff.).

"The second division of Sinai is the equivalent of the outer shrine, marked off from the rest of the mountain by being enveloped in a cloud (Ex. 19:21; 24:15bff. [P]; see 19:9, 16) just as the cloud overspreads the entirety of P's Tabernacle (Num. 9:15ff.). However, the entire mountain is not covered. Moses is able to ascend some distance with the priests and elders (24:1) and separately with Joshua (24:13) until the cloud perimeter, at which he probably leaves Joshua (see 32:17) when God calls him to enter the cloud. Thus, below the cloud is the third division, called 'the bottom of the mountain' (19:17; 24:4), a technical term for the lowest portion of the mountain. . . . It is the equivalent to the courtyard, the sacred enclosure of the Tabernacle to which priests alone have access except for the forecourt 'entrance' where the layman brings his sacrifice, provided he is in a pure state. Here too is where the people have the theophanies of the Tabernacle and Temple at their respective consecrations (Lev. 9:4f., 24 and 2 Chron. 7:3). Similarly, at Sinai: the nation is first purified (19:10f., 14f.) and then brought out of the camp to the viewing stand at the foot of the mountain.

"Thus the blazing summit, the cloud-covered slopes and visible bottom rim correspond to Tabernacle divisions, and the analogous tripartite holiness of Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle is confirmed" (Milgrom, 1970, pp. 45–46).

8. Professor Aharoni uncovered a total of XII strata on the upper mound dating from 12th century BCE to 6th century BCE. "From the tenth century BCE, to about the destruction of the First Temple, i.e. during a period of about 350 years, we found six citadels built, destroyed, and built again and destroyed again. Such a large number of destruction levels fulfill the dream of any archaeologist. We were able to open room after room full of vessels, most of course broken, but some intact, buried under debris of the fallen roofs and burned levels of all six strata. It is hardly astonishing that a fortress guarding the border was always one of the first places to suffer in any period of political or military weakness of the kingdom. Thus, it is not our doing that these six clearly defined strata, with hundreds and hundreds of complete vessels (after their reconstruction) provide a dependable stratification. We can't be very inaccurate in dating these various strata between the periods of Solomon in the middle of the tenth century BCE and about the end of the first Temple period, a little after 600 BCE" (Aharoni, 1971, p. 29; cf. Aharoni, 1975a). Six of those strata (XI–VI) had a citadel dating to the Iron or Israelite age. Clearly defined, the six strata produced an abundance of datable architecture, vessels, ostraca, seals, etc. (Aharoni, 1971, pp. 28–44). The royal fortress also contained a temple or sanctuary, which was used in each successive stratum until the time of Josiah when he built a casemate wall through the middle of the main room of the sanctuary, the *hekal* (2 Kings 22–23; Aharoni 1971, p. 36). "Only toward the end of the seventh century was the building put out of commission. This event is surely associated with the cultic reform of Josiah, who concentrated the ritual in Jerusalem, bringing there the priests from the outlying towns" (Aharoni, 1982, p. 229).

9. "Thou shalt make an altar . . . five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof *shall be* three cubits" (Exodus 27:1). The size and shape of the Arad altar also confirms the Chronicles account of Solomon's altar: "And he [Solomon] stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands: For Solomon had made a brass scaffold, of **five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high**, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven" (2 Chronicles 6:12–13, bold emphasis added).

10. When each successive stratum of altars was excavated, it was thought that the dimensions of the first altar were different from the later altars. "The first altar was about one foot shorter than the later altars" (Aharoni, 1971, p. 35). This discrepancy was finally solved when it was discovered that a deliberate change occurred in Israel between the 10th and the 9th centuries BCE. The use of the "short cubit" (45 cm) gave way to the use of the "royal cubit" (52.5 cm). The actual measurements changed but the dimensions stayed the same.

11. The 10th century BCE *hekal*, like the altar, followed the "short cubit" measurement but, in the 9th century, was expanded to 20 cubits measured by the royal cubit.

12. Mazar and Aharoni make some very interesting proposals regarding the use of Arad as a temple controlled by Kenites, who were the descendants of Moses' father-in-law Hobab. They suggest that Reuel the Midianite, a priest of the Midianites, and Hobab would have had great influence upon the priestly ritual, including the use of *mazzeboth* in the Holy of Holies and vestment rooms. Certainly the inscriptions found in the temple at Arad lend credibility to this Kenite influence (see Aharoni, 1968; Mazar, 1965; cf. Cross, 1979).

13. The placing or raising of "stone pillars" or *masseboth* to Yahweh in sanctuaries occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible. Just a few citations are noted. Jacob establishes a House of God by anointing and setting up a *massebah*: "And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Genesis 28:22; cf. Genesis 35:1–15). The LORD prepared Moses to be in his presence by having him establish a rock to stand on. "And the LORD said, Behold, *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cliff of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by" (Exodus 33:21–22). Deuteronomy chapter 32 shows that the God of Israel is their rock, "*He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). Joshua set up a *massebah* at what became the sanctuary of Shechem as recorded in Joshua 24:22–27. Psalms 91 and 118 also portray the God of ancient Israel as a sacred stone. The sanctuary at Arad had a stone "remembrance" of the God of Israel in its Holy of Holies.

14. Israelite "Cultic buildings . . . were oriented towards the sunrise . . . such as the biblical tabernacle and the temples of Solomon and Ezekiel as well as the Israelite cult building at Arad, and the Hellenistic cult buildings at Lachish and Beer-Sheba" (Herzog, Rainey, and Moshkovitz, 1977, p. 53).

15. "The four altar horns were found arranged one beside the other in the wall, three intact and the fourth with its top knocked off" (Aharoni, 1974c, p. 3). Only about half of the altar's stones, with the exception of the four horns, were recovered. When the altar was reassembled there was a problem getting the exact width and depth dimensions, "but we were able to reconstruct its height with certainty" (Aharoni, 1974c, p. 3). The altar's height was "157 cm. (ca. 63 inches), measuring to the top of the horns. This is the measurement of exactly three large (royal) cubits, similar to the height of the altars at Arad, the Tabernacle (Exod. 27:1) and probably the original altar of the Solomonic temple (2 Chron. 6:13)" (Aharoni, 1974c, p.3).

16. The bronze serpent (נחש נחשת) held a prominent position in the Jerusalem temple until the days of Hezekiah, when he destroyed it and called it *Nahustan* (נחשתן) (2 Kings 18:4; Davies, 1986, pp. 74, 199–204).

17. "Obviously, it is impossible that the altar existed during the life of Stratum II when some of its stones were already embedded in the rampart of that stratum and sealed by the covering glasis" (Herzog, Rainey, and Moshkovitz, 1977, p. 58).

18. Two other archaeological sites, Arad and Hazor, besides Beersheba, have produced "sacred" Israelite period vessels incised with either קדש (*kadosh*) or the word קרבן (*korban*). Arad produced two vessels found by its altar with ק (*qof*) incised on them; it has not been determined whether *qof* was to represent קדש (*kadosh*) or the word קרבן (*korban*), but in either case the bowls were to be used for ritualistic purposes. The Hazor excavations also produced a bowl incised twice, once on the side and once on the rim, with קדש. Its location and the location of the Arad bowls indicate ritualistic use (Aharoni, 1973, p. 73).

"The script of the graffito [on the bowl from Tel Beersheba] is rather archaic," and dates earlier than the first half of the eighth century. The bowls from Arad and Hazor are "roughly contemporaneous" with the bowl of Beer-Sheba but no chronological conclusions are definite (Aharoni, 1973, p. 73).

The Beer-Sheba bowl did not occupy a position in any "House of God." It was found in a Stratum II "house." Did priests use the Beer-Sheba bowl as part of their inheritance or did they save it from the destruction? Whatever the reason for its appearance in a Stratum II "house" and not an earlier Israelite shrine, the Beer-Sheba קדש bowl indicates a sanctuary existed at Beer-Sheba. Priestly personal household use of "sacred" vessels dates to the earliest times of Israelite religion when Levitical families' "inheritance was the LORD" (Numbers 18:20–32; Joshua 13:33).

19. "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him. But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?" (2 Kings 18:21–22).

Eliakim never denied that Hezekiah destroyed the high places and altars; he only asked that Rabshakeh address the people in Aramaic and not in the common language of Judah.

He did not want the people to understand the discussion. Eliakim's reticence to have the common people hear some of the discussion would surely show that Hezekiah's motivation had a component which he had not discussed with the people. It was common for countries to view their "God" as supreme in all ways. Israel and Judah originally placed sanctuaries at all of their borders, e.g. Dan, Bethel, Arad, Beer-Sheba, etc., so that all entering their countries would recognize the preeminent god of that country.

When it became obvious that Judah could be overrun and outlying districts conquered by invading forces, from either Egypt or Assyria who could convert all offerings or tithes into ready cash, food, or other supplies, Hezekiah successfully centralized the worship, rituals, and priestly powers in Jerusalem. The centralization of Priestly powers in Jerusalem removed the Judaic priests from serving the invading forces and compromising religious rituals. Hezekiah focused Judah's worship and allegiance upon an unseen God who could not be captured by outside "enemies" and would thus remain in the heart of Judah, even if the land was occupied by outside enemies. He insured the continuance of the Kingdom of Judah and her restoration, even if Judah was defeated in the upcoming battle with outside forces. He guaranteed obeisance to the LORD and made it impossible for a foreign King to put the God of Israel in bondage (Davies, 1986, pp. 202–204).

20. The information concerning the "Solar Temple" can be found in Olga Tufnell, *Lachish III, The Iron Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).

21. "There are two later parallels to the Arad temple, one from Lachish and the other from Beer-sheba. At both places, temples were discovered from the Hellenistic period, resembling in their plans the temple at Arad. Both sites had been royal border centers like Arad, and at both of them there were found evidences of an earlier cultic tradition. . . . The Hellenistic temples at Lachish and Beer-sheba preserved the ancient Israelite cultic tradition on the spot while these two places were still outside the kingdom of Judah during the Second Temple period until the Hasmonaean conquest. Hence, there is further support for the conclusion that the Arad temple was not an isolated phenomenon but represents the Israelite royal border temple, reflecting in its plan an earlier building tradition" (Aharoni, 1982, pp. 233–234; cf. Aharoni, 1974b, pp. 270–271, plate 59; Aharoni, 1975c; Derfler, 1981; Derfler, 1993).

22. The Holy of Holies in the Kirtland Temple was constructed in much the same way as the Holy of Holies was in the Tabernacle, by lowering curtains to separate the altars from the "priests and elders" and congregation so that the Prophet or High Priest could approach the LORD and his throne or altar to receive revelation. "Verily I say unto you, it is expedient in me that the first elders of my church should receive their endowment from on high in my house, which I have commanded to be built unto my name in the land of Kirtland" (Doctrine and Covenants 105:33).

"That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house;



“And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.

“And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said;

“And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;

“And that this house may be a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, even thy house;

“That all the incomings of thy people, into this house, may be in the name of the Lord;

“That all their outgoings from this house may be in the name of the Lord;

“And that all their salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with holy hands, uplifted to the Most High;

“And that no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into thy house to pollute it;

“And when thy people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto thee, and find favor in thy sight, and be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house.” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:12–21)

Compare: “The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

“We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; 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 white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of 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 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 been 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.

“After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of

the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

“After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.

“After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

“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.” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:1–16)

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# The Temple, the Book of Revelation, and Joseph Smith

*John L. Fowles*

## Apocalyptic Literature and Joseph Smith

The Book of Revelation has drawn the interest of scholars and students of the Bible for hundreds of years. Our distinguished guest, Margaret Barker, has written a 453-page commentary entitled *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. In her own words, “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* is the culmination of many years’ work; all my publications have been leading in this direction and their conclusions form the foundation of this book.”<sup>1</sup>

ἀποκάλυψις is a Greek word meaning “revelation” or “an unveiling.” As a genre, apocalyptic literature usually details the authors’ visions of the *eschatological* or end times as revealed by a heavenly messenger or angel. Traditionally, biblical scholars believe that apocalyptic literature of Judaism and Christianity embraces a considerable period, from the centuries following the exile down to the close of the middle ages. These revelations may come from angels or other figures who have been taken up to heaven and then return to earth with messages regarding past and present events, which often are recorded in highly symbolic language.

However, Margaret Barker’s thesis is:

The apocalyptic texts were not the original product of a Hellenizing, oppressed minority group late in the second temple period, but the repository of Israel’s oldest traditions.<sup>2</sup>

In my judgment, the Book of Mormon, as well as the teachings of Joseph Smith, concurs with Barker’s analysis of these apocalyptic texts.

Visions of God’s throne (Isaiah 6:1–4; Ezekiel 1:26–28; 1 Nephi 1:8) and angelic tours of the heavens, which include seeing God’s own temple in heaven (Revelation 1:1–3; 1 Nephi 14:21–27), are all recorded in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 7:15; 11:19; 14:17; 15:5,6; 21:22) and in other non-canonical literature such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pseudepigrapha (1 Enoch 14: 18–24) and the Nag Hammadi writings found in Egypt. In her first work, Dr. Barker labeled these writings as the “Older Testament” because they represent an earlier time than our present Old Testament—which was compiled, redacted, and produced after the Babylonian captivity. The Book of Revelation contains memories of the first temple and this “older tradition.” It is among the earliest Christian writings and worthy of our study and inquiry into the early Christian worldview of the temple.

The Book of Revelation was also important to Joseph Smith and early Mormonism. My purpose in the short time I have today is to demonstrate that some of Joseph Smith’s revelations, translations, and teachings parallel with the Book of Revelation and other apocalyptic literature. For example, the Book of Mormon records Lehi experiencing a “throne theophany” or what scholars have also named “the prophetic motif” within the first eight verses of the book’s opening chapter. Nephi records that his father was “overcome with the Spirit, and carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels

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1. Margaret Barker. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: T&T Clark, 2000), xiii.

2. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 201.

in the attitude of singing and praising their God" (1 Nephi 1:8).<sup>3</sup> Following Lehi's testament, Nephi, the son of Lehi, is shown the same revelation John saw in Patmos. Toward the end of Nephi's apocalyptic vision, the angelic guide specifically tells Nephi: "And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write are many things which thou hast seen; and behold, the remainder shalt thou see. But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them. . . . And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John, according to the word of the angel" (1 Nephi 14:24, 25, 27).

These early translated chapters (1829) in the Book of Mormon appear to be apocalyptic in nature. Joseph Smith's interest in the Book of Revelation must have been generated by his translation of the Book of Mormon, where he would have learned about this important and intriguing connection between the roots of early apocalyptic in pre-exilic Israel and the culminating full disclosure of the apocalyptic vision found in the Book of Revelation. In addition, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, while translating the Book of Mormon in April of 1829, had a question as to whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried in the flesh or had died. The revelation they received was a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, Joseph Smith's early experiences while translating the Book of Mormon and this 1829 revelation regarding John's status demonstrates Smith's initial interest in the Book of Revelation, which continued until the end of his life.

### The Sealed Book

In 1843, Joseph Smith preached a sermon interpreting the wild beasts<sup>5</sup> (Revelation 4) and the es-

teric seals<sup>6</sup> (Revelation 6). On that occasion Smith boldly declared, "The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written."<sup>7</sup> Latter-day Saints somewhat teasingly say, well, it is fine for Joseph Smith to make such a statement because he claimed to have seen the vision,<sup>8</sup> whereas we are left with a bizarre esoteric book of first-century symbolism!

Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith's major scribe for the translation of the Book of Mormon, recorded a statement which once again associates the Book of Mormon and the Book of Revelation. According to Cowdery, Joseph Smith said, "A part of the book (Book of Mormon) was sealed, and was not to be opened yet. The sealed part, said he (Moroni), contains the same revelation which was given to John upon the isle of Patmos, and when the people of the Lord are prepared, and found worthy, then it will be unfolded unto them."<sup>9</sup> Toward the end of

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Center, BYU, 1980), 182–190. The Greek word for "Beast" in this verse is ζῷον *Zoan*, which is a tame animal, contrasted with the "Beast" of Revelation 13, which is θηρίον *Therion*, meaning vicious or wild animal. Of course our word Zodiac comes from ζῷον. John then is probably seeing the constellations in the heaven as Jesus did see in Mark 1:13. Dr. Barker says, "The Gospels encode this information in the account of the temptations in the wilderness. Jesus was 'with the creatures and the angels served him', immediately recognizable as a Merkavah experience." Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 211.

6. The opening of the seals of Revelation is another question to be studied by Mormon scholars. D&C 77 records Joseph Smith's initial work on the his translation of the Bible with fourteen questions and answers regarding the Book of Revelation. In Joseph Smith's later sermon (1843) on the seals, he appears to teach them in a futuristic mode: "The things which John saw had no allusion to the scenes of the days of Adam, Enoch, Abraham or Jesus, only so far as is plainly represented by John, and clearly set forth by him. John saw that only which was lying in futurity and which was shortly to come to pass." *History of the Church* 5:340–345.

7. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 290.

8. Similarly, Joseph Smith said, "Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject." Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 324.

9. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989), 1:53–54; see also 2 Nephi 27:7–10 and Ether 4:4–7. Like John, Enoch had a similar vision of the end of times. (See 1 Enoch 14–19) as edited by James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 20–23. An interesting parallel to the visions of Enoch occur in Joseph Smith's Moses 7–8, which is an expanded

3. Compare John's Throne-Room vision in Revelation 4–5 as well as Ezekiel's vision recorded in Ezekiel 1.

4. See Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*. ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–1951), 1:35–36 (D&C 7).

5. Joseph Fielding Smith, ed. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970), 290. See *History of the Church* 5:339–345; and Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo: Religious Studies

the Book of Mormon record, Moroni inscribed on the gold plates the very things which the Brother of Jared, like Nephi, saw in vision. This vision in part is the “sealed portion” of the Book of Mormon. Moroni specifically records, “Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared. . . . And he commanded me that I should seal them up” (Ether 4:4–7).<sup>10</sup> John received a similar command to “seal up his sayings” regarding the seven thunders and write them not (Revelation 10:4).

In review, the vision or unveiling of the revelation of God and future events in earth’s history as partly represented in “apocalyptic writings” such as the John’s Book of Revelation was also delivered to the brother of Jared and Enoch.<sup>11</sup> As previously quoted, Joseph Smith indicated the clarity of the Book of Revelation penned by John. These teachings of Joseph Smith reflect his awareness as well as understanding of these apocalyptic visions. The importance of revelation or inspiration from heaven in interpreting scripture was paramount for Joseph Smith. According to Joseph Smith, “John had the curtains of heaven withdrawn, and by vision looked through the dark vista of future ages, and contemplated events that should transpire throughout every subsequent period of time, until the final winding up scene.”<sup>12</sup>

### An LDS Temple Tradition

Following the ancient prophetic tradition, Joseph Smith, during his short ministry, introduced and

restored a temple tradition to his people. Like Margaret Barker, Hugh Nibley wrote extensively on this “hidden or temple tradition,” published in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*.<sup>13</sup> The Book of Revelation is, as Mrs. Barker might say, a “temple text.” Joseph Smith thought it was just that. Mrs. Barker posits, “Scholars sometimes wonder how Christianity developed so quickly into such a sophisticated theological system, especially as the first disciples are often portrayed as uneducated fishermen from Galilee. The answer to that question is very clear in the New Testament, if it is read with eyes accustomed to the world of the original temple.”<sup>14</sup> By my count, there are 88 verses out of 404 in the Book of Revelation that have some type of wording or phraseology that alludes to the temple or “hidden tradition.” Examples are numerous throughout the Book of Revelation text such as “washed,” “not defiled their garments,” “the name of my God,” and “kings and priests.” While looking at the white limestone temple on the brow of the hill, the foreman for all of the framework on the Nauvoo Temple said as he was leaving the city, “Farewell to the temple upon which I have labored with so much pleasure, the second temple erected to the only true and living God . . . The order of architecture was unlike anything in existence; it was purely original, being a representation of the Church, the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. . . . This is portrayed in the beautifully cut stone of this grand temple.”<sup>15</sup>

We should note here that when Joseph Smith retranslated the Bible, he changed Revelation 12:1 to read, “And there appeared a great sign [instead of the King James Version’s *wonder*<sup>16</sup>] in heaven, in the

account of Enoch’s story sketchily recorded in the Bible (Genesis 4–5).

10. This statement by Moroni echoes Nephi’s earlier record wherein he stated that the sealed book contained “a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof” (2 Nephi 27:7).

11. See the section on Joseph Smith and the Latter-Day Zion, a New Jerusalem, herein, for a discussion of the vision of Enoch.

12. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 247. Clement of Alexandria said true teachers enter the tradition of the Lord by “drawing aside the curtain”: “Drawing aside the curtain implies entering the holy of holies, the presence of God.” Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 4.

13. Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1987), 10–44, 391–434.

14. Margaret Barker, “Our Great High Priest, The Church as the New Temple,” address given at Father Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture, St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary, New York, January 29, 2012, 3.

15. Wandle Mace (1809–1890), *Autobiography, 1809–1846*, as told to his wife, Rebecca E. Howell Mace, typescript, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; also at <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/WMace.html>.

16. The Greek word is *σαμεινο* *sameino*, which carries the basic meaning of a sign or distinguishing mark by which something is known. In this context the meaning is “terrifying appearances in the heavens, never before seen as portents of the last days.” Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*

likeness of things on the earth; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." This is instructive as we explore how the earthly temple ritual was mirroring its heavenly counterpart. When Joseph Smith revised the Bible, he interpreted the woman of Revelation 12 to be symbolic of the church. The Joseph Smith Translation reads, "And the dragon prevailed not against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ" (JST Revelation 12:7).

To the Mormon prophet, the Nauvoo Temple symbolized in part the church coming out of the wilderness in the early nineteenth century. In an earlier revelation, Smith declared, "This the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 5:14).<sup>17</sup> At the dedication of the Kirtland temple, Joseph Smith prayed, "That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 109:73). The idea of an "army with banners" suggests a spiritual war. Paul spoke of fighting not against "flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians

6: 12). The Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the war between the sons of light and the children of darkness. We now know that these scrolls were part of the scriptures of the early Christians. Mrs. Barker's research on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the apocalypse suggests:

The warrior who rode out from heaven with the armies of heaven had the same sharp sword in his mouth. The beast and his prophet, who helped Satan in the work of deception, were destroyed, and finally, Satan himself was sealed in a great pit, so that he should not deceive the nations for a thousand years. The struggle was truth against falsehood, and for all the imagery of battle, it was describing a war of words and teaching. When the Lord rode out from heaven, his robe was sprinkled with blood (Rev. 19:13). He was the high priest emerging from the holy of holies after sprinkling the blood, and the battle that followed completed the atonement. Evil was removed from the creation and Satan banished. The Kingdom was established just as the heavenly host had proclaimed in their song: the saints were rewarded and the destroyers of the earth were destroyed (Rev. 11:18).<sup>18</sup>

Mormons commonly interpret the events in chapter 12 of Revelation as the premortal battle which was fought in heaven between Satan and Christ. This war of ideology continues on the earth where the dragon was cast out, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12: 4, 17). Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon described a vision wherein they said, "We beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about" (D&C 76: 28–29).

### **Joseph Smith and the Latter-Day Zion, a New Jerusalem**

Joseph Smith also learned from translating the Book of Mormon that there was to be a New Jerusalem

*of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. William F. Arndt and others, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 747–748.

17. This kingdom is destined to fill up the earth (see D&C 65). Margaret Barker suggests, "In the Book of Revelation John saw the ark restored to the holy of holies (Rev. 11:19), he saw four horses ride out from the temple (Rev. 6:1–8), he saw the Man in the midst of the seven lamps, the menorah (Rev. 1:12), he heard the Spirit promising the faithful that they would receive the hidden manna (Rev. 2:17). John was describing the restoration of the first temple. He also saw the Queen of Heaven in the temple, even though she is not named as the Queen. 'A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (Rev. 12:1). . . The woman's son was taken up to the throne of God. These few verses in the Book of Revelation show the importance of the Lost Lady and the cult of the first temple for understanding Christian origins." Margaret Barker, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?" <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/11/1/7.aspx>.

18. Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (Great Britain: Ashford Colour Press, 2007), 99–100.



built upon the land. Moroni speaking of Ether's prophecy stated, "And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven" (Ether 13:3–4). This Book of Mormon prophecy certainly reminds us of John's vision of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2).

In November 1835, Joseph Smith quoted from one of his own revelations known as the prophecy given to Enoch regarding the New Jerusalem. Joseph said, "First, I shall begin by quoting from the prophecy of Enoch, speaking of the last days: . . . 'I shall prepare, a holy city, . . . for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem [Moses 7:62].'" Interpreting this Enoch prophecy not found in the Bible, Smith connected Enoch's vision to John's Apocalypse: "Now Enoch was in good company in his views upon this subject: 'And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God' (Revelation 21:3). I discover by this quotation, that John upon the isle of Patmos, saw the same things concerning the last days, which Enoch saw."<sup>19</sup> Thus Joseph Smith associated the visions of John and Enoch as being the same in content and language, including that these visions of the last days are the same as the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon previously mentioned.

Joseph Smith's vision of the latter-day Zion included a temple complex of twenty four buildings in Jackson County Missouri: "When this [city] is thus laid off and supplied, lay off another in the same way and so fill up the world in these last days and let every man live in the City of Zion." The City of Zion plat that was to be replicated wherever Church members settled was possibly inspired in part by descriptions of the New Jerusalem in Ezekiel 48 and Revelation 21. At the center of the mile-square city, he envisioned two large blocks containing 24 sacred "temples." These were to be assigned to the various priesthood quorums and were to serve a variety of functions. The Prophet anticipated that the city would have a population

of from 15,000 to 20,000 so that these 24 buildings would be needed as "houses of worship, schools, etc."<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that even earlier, in the first LDS temple at Kirtland, Ohio, there were twenty-four pulpits with Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood purposes.<sup>21</sup> In John's vision the heavenly throne of God was served by twenty-four elders who surrounded it. Margaret Barker says that "the

20. *History of the Church* 1:358–59. See Frederick G. Williams, *The Life of Dr. Frederick G. Williams, Counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2012), 393–396; and Richard Cowen, "The Great Temple of the New Jerusalem," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Missouri*, ed. Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, BYU, 1994), 139.

21. See Lauritz G. Petersen, "The Kirtland Temple," *BYU Studies* 12, no. 4 (1972). The Nauvoo Temple also had a series of pulpits. At the east and west ends of the hall were two sets of similar pulpits. Resembling the pulpits used in the Kirtland Temple and repeated in later temples, they were arranged with four levels, the top three consisting of a group of three semi-circular stands. "The lower level was a drop-table, which could be raised and used for the Sacrament. The pulpits on the east stood between the windows and they were reserved for the Melchizedek Priesthood. Accordingly each pulpit had initials identifying the priesthood officers who occupied that stand: Each of the highest three pulpits bore the initials P.H.P. (President of the High Priesthood); the next lower had P.S.Q. (President of the Seventy Quorums); the next lower had P.H.Q. (President of the High priests Quorum) and table at the bottom P.E.Q. (President of the Elders Quorum). On the wall over the eastern pulpits, in line with the curve of the arched ceiling, the following was painted in beautiful, gilded letters: "The Lord Has Seen Our Sacrifice—Come After Us." The pulpits on the west end were reserved for the Aaronic Priesthood. Each pulpit also had initials identifying the priesthood officers who occupied that stand: Each of the highest three pulpits bore the initials P.A.P. (President of the Aaronic Priesthood); the next lower had P.P.Q. (President of the Priests Quorum); the next lower had P.T.Q. (President of the Teachers Quorum); and the table at the bottom P.D.Q. (President of the Deacons Quorum). Lisle Brown, "Interior Description of the Nauvoo Temple," <http://users.marshall.edu/~brown/nauvoo/nt-parent.html>. Brigham Young, Joseph Smith's successor, commented about the building of the Kirtland Temple, in a sermon given April 6, 1855: "Soon after, the Church, through our beloved Prophet Joseph, was commanded to build a Temple to the most High, in Kirtland, Ohio, and this was the next House of the Lord we hear of on the earth, since the days of Solomon's Temple. Joseph not only received a Revelation and commandment to build a Temple, but he received a pattern also, as did Moses for the Tabernacle, and Solomon for his Temple; for without a pattern, he could not know what was wanting, having never seen one, and not having experienced its use." *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, 6.

19. *History of the Church* 2:260–261.



twenty four elders with their white robes and golden crowns, seated on chariot thrones around the great throne, are probably the angel counterparts of the heads of twenty-four courses of priests." David and Solomon are said to have chosen "twenty-four chief men from the sons of Aaron (1 Chr 24:1–6), and their descendants became the twenty-four courses of priests who took turns to serve in the temple."<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly enough, Joseph Smith designated the names of the twenty-four temples to be laid out in the latter-day New Jerusalem:

The names of the Temples to be built on the painted squares as represented on the plot of the City of Zion which is now about to be forwarded thither. Nos 10, 11, & 12, are to be called, House of the Lord for the presidency of the High and most holy priesthood after the order of Melchizadeck which was after the order of the son of God upon Mount Zion City of the New Jerusalem. Nos. 7, 8, & 9 The Sacred Apostolic Repository for the use of the Bishops. Nos, 4, 5, & 6 The holy evangelical House for the High Priesthood of the holy order of God. Nos 1, 2, & 3 The house of the Lord for the Elders of Zion, an ensign to the nations. Nos 22, 23 & 24 House of the Lord for the presidency of the high Priesthood after the order of Aaaron, a Standard for the people. Nos 19, 20, 21 House of the Lord for the high Priesthood after the order of Aaron, the Law of the Kingdom of heaven, Messenger to the people. Nos. 16, 17, & 18 House of the Lord for the Teachers in Zion, messenger to the Church. Nos 13, 14, & 15 House of the Lord for the Deacons in Zion, helps in government. Underneath must be written on each House— Holiness To the Lord 24 June 1833—<sup>23</sup>

These names certainly bring to mind the names of what could be called "courses of Priests" or "orders of Priesthood." In short, it seems to me that there are strong links between the temple and its imagery in the Book of Revelation and the temple tradition brought forth in the early nineteenth century by Joseph Smith.

22. Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 123.

23. Names of the Temples in Zion, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/names-of-the-temples-in-zion-24-june-1833>.

## Joseph Smith and the Angel of the Restoration

On May 12, 1844, just a few weeks before Joseph Smith's death, he spoke to his followers as well as his detractors concerning his calling, which he felt was from God. He began by saying, "I shall read the 24th chapter of Matthew, and give it a literal rendering and reading; and when it is rightly understood, it will be edifying. I thought the *very oddity of its rendering* would be edifying anyhow—'And it will be preached, the Gospel of the kingdom, in the whole world, *to a witness* <sup>24</sup> over all people: and then will the end come.' . . . The Savior said when these tribulations should take place, it should be committed *to a man* who should be *a witness over the whole world*. . . . John the Revelator saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth. *The scripture is ready to be fulfilled* when great wars, famines, pestilence, great distress, judgments, &c., are ready to be poured out on the inhabitants of the earth."<sup>25</sup>

William Weeks, the architect of the Nauvoo temple, designed a horizontal angel to surmount the temple. The angel was a prone figure with a trumpet to his lips and holding a book in his right hand. Perrigrine Sessions, who witnessed the fixture being set in

24. Joseph Smith changed the preposition in Matthew 24:14 "for" a witness," to "to" a witness during this address. The Greek is εις μαρτύριον. Smith was partial to the German reading of this passage during this address including saying the German Bible was the most honest of all the translations. Joseph Smith was a "witness" in the full sense of the word. He boldly declared what he had seen or received from the Lord. Margaret Barker suggests, "Jesus is also described as 'the faithful witness in the clouds' (as in the Hebrew of Psalm 89) or 'in heaven' (as in the Greek of Ps. 89). There may be interpretation here too, since Jesus the faithful witness in heaven would originally have meant Jesus the faithful reporter of what he had seen and heard in heaven, as can be seen in 1.2, 'the witness of Jesus Christ, all that he saw', but it also meant 'martyr' since Jesus was one of the two martyrs described in 11.3–13. 'Witness' came to have the meaning 'martyr' rather than simply 'witness' as can be seen in 2.13, where Antipas, who has died for his faith, is also described as 'my faithful witness'. In his use of Psalm 89, John is paraphrasing, alluding to the Scriptures and interpreting for the new situation: the firstborn 'from the dead', the faithful 'martyr' (see also on 3.14)." Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 94.

25. *History of the Church*, 6:363–367, italics added.

place on January 30, 1846, described it as “an angel in his priestly robes with a Book of Mormon in one hand and a trumpet in the other which is over laid with gold leaf.”<sup>26</sup>

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26. Perrigrine Sessions Journal, 30 Jan 1846, Church Archives. The angel, flying in an horizontal position, represented the “angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel” (D&C 133:36; cf. Revelation 14:6). Traditionally, Latter-day Saints have identified this angel as Moroni. This identification is further strengthened because the angel was holding a book (apparently the Book of Mormon) in his hand. Moroni held the keys for revealing the Book of Mormon (D&C 27:5), which has the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The figure wore “priestly robes,” including a round bonnet (its feet are bare without slippers), all similar to the attire worn by the priests in ancient Israel who served in Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem (Exodus 28:40). One source indicated that when Joseph Smith saw Moroni he was wearing temple robes. Matthew B. Brown and Paul Thomas Smith, *Symbols in Stone* (Salt Lake City: Covenant Communications, 1997), 114. The robes suggest the sacral nature of the priestly functions carried on in the Nauvoo Temple.

The trumpet in the angel’s hand symbolizes that the gospel shall be declared “as with the voice of a trumpet, both day and night” (D&C 24:12), and that the Lord has commanded his servants “to declare [his] gospel with the sound of a trumpet . . . unto a crooked and perverse generation” (D&C 33:2).

There exists no account for reason of the placement of the square and compass on the weather vane. One scholar has suggested that since the compass, which is used to draw circles, points towards the bowl of the sky, and that the square, which is used to draw squares, points towards the earth, that the combination of the two symbols represent the powers of God in creating the bowl of the starry heavens and the four corners of the earth (Brown and Smith, *Symbols in Stone*, 105). Since the symbol is associated with “the angel flying through the midst of heaven” (D&C 133:36), it may suggest that the gospel will be “declared by holy angels” (Moses 5:58) from above to the four corners of the earth, even “unto every nation, and kindred, tongue and people” (D&C 133:37). Atop the pole supporting the weather vane is a stylized flame of fire. Tongues of fire are a symbol of the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:3–4)—a fitting symbol resting atop the highest pinnacle of the Nauvoo Temple, where the Spirit of the Lord, even the Holy Ghost, rests down upon those assembled. One account even reported that “a flame of fire” was seen “to rest upon the temple.” Brown and Smith, *Symbols in Stone*, 107.

Bruce R. McConkie interpreted the angel as follows: “Just as many of the Messianic prophecies deal with both comings of the Lord, so this proclamation relative to an angel committing the everlasting gospel speaks of two widely separated occurrences. One is past, the other is future. The gospel has been restored both in word and in power. And yet there is a future day when the angel of the restoration shall fly again.” Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*

Even though we do not have any contemporary explanation of the exact intended symbolism of the weather vane angel of the restoration from William Weeks or Joseph Smith,<sup>27</sup> it has become the symbol of Moroni to all in Mormondom. This is especially true considering the August 1830 Joseph Smith revelation which states, “Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim” (D&C 27:5).<sup>28</sup> It is also highly probable that the Nauvoo Temple angel was representative of all of the angels of the restoration. Reflecting upon his history to the saints in a general epistle, Joseph Smith on September 6, 1842, said,

And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfillment of the prophets. . . The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, . . . declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times! . . . And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys. (D&C 128:20–21)

## Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate that there are parallels between the Book of Revelation and the revelations, translations, and teachings of Joseph Smith. The apocalyptic early Christian worldview of the first temple including visions, angels, messengers,

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(Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 3: 528–531. Compare D&C 88:103; 133:36–37; 128.

27. Personal conversation with Glen Leonard, October 25, 2012.

28. John Taylor recorded Joseph Smith saying, “Michael=Adam. Noah. I am Gabriel—Well says I. Who are you? I am Peter, the angel flying through the midst of heaven Moroni Delivered the Book of Mormon.” A footnote adds: “Revelation 14:6–7 apparently refers to several angels conferring their keys and knowledge of the gospel to Joseph Smith.” Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 13, 25.

thrones, sealed books, and a coming of a New Jerusalem was familiar as well as important to the Mormon prophet. The Book of Mormon prophets Lehi, Nephi, and the brother of Jared had apocalyptic visions like John and Enoch of the Bible. To Joseph Smith, the apocalypse John wrote and the temple rites of the early Christians were closely associated. As Margaret Barker states, the priestly writings of the first temple were to replicate heaven on earth. The Mormon prophet tried to build a heaven—a New Jerusalem—on the earth. Joseph Smith's

pattern for the building of the New Jerusalem mirrors the description made by John the Revelator (see Revelation 21). Joseph Smith's own calling began with his announcement of a vision regarding the Father and the Son (Joseph Smith—History). Similarly, John in Revelation 4–5 describes his vision of God and the Lamb. In conclusion, the Book of Revelation's language and theology permeated Joseph Smith's own revelations, experiences, and temple ideas that he introduced to his followers in the early nineteenth century.

## Closing Comments

*Jack Welch:* We are at the “end times,” aren’t we! I want to discharge my duties as moderator by telling Margaret and Laurence to be moderate in their comments. Thank you all for being here. It’s been a wonderful day. We’ll hear from Laurence first—any comments you might have on things that have happened this afternoon and any advice you would give to anyone here about what you’d recommend for the future.

*Laurence Hemming:* There’s very little I want to add. It’s been a marvelous day—certainly for me, coming from London, where Margaret and I have worked hard to get the Temple Studies Group going and to create a forum for the discussion all facets of temple theology. Today has been very much a day showing the connection between temple theology and the beliefs and practices of Latter-day Saints. And it has been a privilege for me to learn more from you and to see that unfold. I want to make one point: those first years of the Early Church are the ground on which Latter-day Saints can meet with people like myself as Catholics, with the work that Margaret’s done, and so on, to open up again the question of what the Christian revelation is, in its many different forms. The goal of this study is not to come to decisions nor to draw inappropriate parallels where those parallels shouldn’t be, but rather to show how the revelation of God unfolds, rather than a more rationalistic understanding of God which seems to prevail in many places at the present time. And today’s been a great witness to that, that there is a great deal of work to be done and a great deal of dialogue to

be done, not just with those that we’ve already brought together, but with many others who are yet to be involved with what Margaret and I and you have now learned is temple theology.

*Welch:* Thank you, Laurence. Margaret, chiastically, the first shall be last.

*Margaret Barker:* Thanks, Jack. I found this a fascinating day. I hope, like it says in a song in your great American songbook, “This could be start of something big.” Well, let’s hope this is right. There are a huge number of aspects to this temple theology. I mean, Dan’s bibliography would terrify anybody! In fact, that’s only the beginning. And if we are not to lose this in our generation—and I speak as someone who knows the British scene quite well, where this sort of expertise is hanging by a thread—if we don’t recapture it in our generation and pass it on—and in the case of the Latter-day Saints not so much recapture it as develop what you’ve got—we could lose it. And that would be very, very sad, because this is the heart of what the Bible is all about. Now, there was a great pile of questions collected, which I haven’t had a chance to answer today. When I am back to England I will answer them. It’s been super to be here, and I do hope you will start a temple studies group in whatever form you do it. Believe me, you won’t regret it.

*Welch:* One last thought as you go home. I hope the things you have learned will stay with you and you’ll remember and ponder on these things for a long time. We want to thank our guests, speakers, organizers, and all of you. In Greek, the word for “thank” and the word for “praise” can be the

same word. Sometimes when we say thank you, we are just saying, "I am really glad that I had a wonderful day today." But at the same time, when we thank, we praise the people who have been with us for the goodness that they have done, and we praise the Lord. We thank you; we praise you all. Go in peace, God bless.