

Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach – John Welch¹

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SERMON AS A TEMPLE TEXT

In the limited time Jesus spent with the Nephites, he taught them things of ultimate importance. He gave them a series of commandments, which they then agreed to obey. They were solemnly admonished to "keep these sayings" so that they would "come not under condemnation; for wo unto him whom the Father condemneth" (3 Nephi 18:33). This was serious, sacred business. Although the Savior forbade the disciples to write or speak some of the things they saw and heard (see 3 Nephi 26:18), and while a person can interpret this Christophany in many ways, the recorded material lends itself readily to a ritual understanding. The types of actions, pronouncements, instructions, roles, symbols, images, and injunctions found in the Sermon at the Temple are ritually repeatable. By considering the sequence and substance of these materials, we can visualize the outlines—sometimes faintly, other times quite distinctly—of the solemn, ceremony-like experience Jesus presented to those he met at the temple.

The temple setting of the Sermon, accordingly, invites us to examine each of its momentous elements with a temple context in mind. In the following pages, I shall explore the forty-eight elements of the Sermon that I have identified, examining in particular their possible roles in establishing a covenant relationship between God and his people and the capacity of those elements to be ritualized. For corroboration and elaboration, I draw upon various ritual aspects of early Christianity, Near Eastern temple typology, continuities between Jesus' Sermon and Israelite temple practices or cultic texts, and modern Latter-day scriptures and teachings. These supplemental points, however, are secondary. The primary objective is to move toward an understanding of the Sermon at the Temple itself.

1. A thrice-repeated announcement from above. The Sermon at the Temple begins with a soft, small, piercing voice speaking out of heaven (see 3 Nephi 11:3-5). At first the people could not understand it, but the voice repeated exactly the same announcement three times, 1 and the words were better comprehended each time they were repeated. At first, this small piercing voice may have sounded faint and broken; something like this perhaps: "Behold . . . Son, . . . well pleased, in whom I have glorified . . . hear . . ." (3 Nephi 11:7), but the words increased in clarity each time they were repeated.

2. Opening the ears and eyes. Total silence fell upon the people as they riveted their attention toward the sound. Upon the third hearing of the voice, the people are said to have opened "their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came" (3 Nephi 11:5). The opening of the ears and eyes can mark the beginning of a ritual ceremony (as it expressly does in Mosiah 2:9) and can symbolize the commencement of an opening of the mysteries and a deeper understanding of what is truly being said and done.

When the voice came the third time, "they did understand the voice" (3 Nephi 11:6). Such a call to attention, the silentium, typically opened many solemn Old World religious assemblies. 2 In opening the eyes and ears of the people, it may be compared functionally to an early Christian purificatory anointing of the eyes and ears "that you might receive hearing ears of the mysteries of God." 3 Not all people are intended to hear and know the mysteries of God; only those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. For

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this reason, Jesus spoke parables to the masses in Palestine; yet to his disciples, it was given "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; . . . blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matthew 13:11, 16). Their eyes and ears were opened.

3. Delegation of duty by the Father to the Son. The people then understood the words of the Father as he introduced the Son: "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him" (3 Nephi 11:7). The general pattern this reveals is how the Father himself does not personally minister to beings on earth, but does all things by sending the Son as his representative. The Son has the obligation to carry out his stewardship, and upon the completion of his assignment, he returns and apparently reports to the Father. Thus, at the conclusion of the Sermon at the Temple, Jesus says, "Now I go unto the Father, because it is expedient that I should go unto the Father for your sakes" (3 Nephi 18:35), whereupon Jesus "ascended into heaven," as the disciples bore record (3 Nephi 18:39).

4. Coming down. After the Father's words, Jesus then appeared, "descending out of heaven . . . clothed in a white robe" (3 Nephi 11:8). Graphically, he came down with teachings and instructions from above. He came robed in garments worthy of mention, but not receiving further description—elements rich with possible ritual implementation and significance. 4

5. Silence. While Jesus came down, the mouths of the people remained shut. "They durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant" (3 Nephi 11:8). I assume that they remained in this state of profound silence, deep respect, reverence, and awe for several hours, as the two thousand five hundred people (see 3 Nephi 17:25) present stepped forward, one at a time, to touch their Lord.

6. Identification by marks on the hand. At first the people were confused and cautious, not knowing who had appeared to them. Even though the words of the Father had proclaimed the Son, the people still "thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them" (3 Nephi 11:8). In Hebrew (*mal'ak*) and Greek (*aggelos*), the words for "angel" and "messenger" are one and the same. Apparently the people were not sure whether they had been greeted by a messenger of light, or perhaps even of darkness, or by the Lord himself.

That confusion was removed only as Jesus "stretched forth his hand" and identified himself, saying, "I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world" (3 Nephi 11:9-10). By these words and the extension of his hands, the people recognized him as the truest messenger, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as had been prophesied. Old Testament prophets had said that the Lord would be known by the marks in his hands: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced . . . and one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 12:10; 13:6). Early Christians also said, "I extended my hands and approached my Lord, for the expansion of my hands is His sign" (*Odes of Solomon* 42:1).

7. Falling down. Upon recognizing the divine visitor as the Lord who had taken upon himself the sins of the world, the multitude "fell to the earth" (3 Nephi 11:12). Bowing down—or more dramatically, full prostration—is not only an instinctive response when coming into the presence of a superior being, but it is also a common element of ritual. Prostration, particularly in a temple context, had long been a customary part of the Nephite covenant-making ceremony (see Mosiah 4:1).

8. Personally touching the wounds. The Lord then asked all the people to "arise and come forth . . . that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet" (3 Nephi 11:14). All the people then went forth and placed their hands into his side and felt the nail prints in his hands and in his feet, "and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record" (3 Nephi 11:15). Thus their knowledge was made sure that he was "the God of Israel and the God of the whole earth . . . slain for the sins of the world" (3 Nephi 11:14). They personally felt the signs of his suffering and death. Since there were two thousand five hundred souls present at this assembly, no more than a brief contact would have been possible under normal circumstances.

9. Hosanna Shout and falling down a second time. The experience continued when, in unison, the company sang out with one accord, "Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!" (3 Nephi 11:17), reminiscent of Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham, "Blessed be the most high God!" (Genesis 14:20). At this point their mouths were truly opened. 5

The Hosanna Shout, meaning "Save Now," is puzzling to scholars. It has been alternatively interpreted as an intercessory prayer addressed to God, asking that assistance be given "to his Messiah," or as a "royal supplication addressed to the Messiah," or as "a call of triumphant joy," sometimes chanted as lulav branches were waved in the air. 6 "Whatever was the original Hebrew or Aramaic word for Hosanna, it must have conveyed a particular Messianic significance," 7 associated by some with the anticipated Messianic cleansing of the temple. 8

The origins of the Hosanna Shout are traceable at least as far back as the familiar Hallel, an ancient festival hymn that was especially at home in the temple of Jerusalem: "Save now [Hosanna], I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord; we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord" (Psalm 118:25-26). This hymn was well known in Israel, being sung in post-biblical Judaism on the high holy days; it was also used as a liturgical cry in the worship of the early Christian community, particularly at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. 9 Its aptness to the occasion at the temple in Bountiful is evident. The fact that the people all cried out in unison indicates that they spontaneously broke forth with a familiar liturgical expression. They then fell down again at Jesus' feet and worshipped him (see 3 Nephi 11:17).

10. Ordination to the priesthood. Next, ordaining men to the priesthood was necessary. Jesus first ordained Nephi, giving him the authority normally associated by Latter-day Saints with the Aaronic Priesthood, namely the power to baptize the people. The Lord asked him to arise and come forth; he went forth and bowed himself before the Lord and kissed Jesus' feet, whereupon the Lord commanded him to arise. Nephi then arose and stood before Jesus, who ordained him and gave him "power that [he] shall baptize this people when [the Lord] again ascended into heaven" (3 Nephi 11:21). In addition, the Lord called eleven others and similarly ordained them (see 3 Nephi 11:22; 19:4). At the end of the day Jesus would give these twelve the "power to give the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 18:37), an authority allowing them to officiate in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

11. Baptism explained. Jesus then explained the manner of baptism, complete with the specific words of the baptismal prayer, calling the candidate by his own given name (see 3 Nephi 11:23-28). This washing and purifying ordinance stands in this sequence as a necessary first step toward the kingdom of God. These baptisms were not carried out immediately, but they were performed pursuant to these instructions at the beginning of the next day (see 3 Nephi 19:10-13). Perhaps those baptisms were

viewed, among other things, as taking the place of the washings that Israelites practiced before coming up to the temple traditionally and that are preceded as early as Exodus 19:10.

12. Assuring the absence of evil. Jesus next took steps to assure that there were no disputations, contentions, or any influences of the devil among this people (see 3 Nephi 11:28-30). The Sermon at the Temple calls these the influences "of the devil, who is the father of contention" (3 Nephi 11:29). With a simple authoritative statement, Jesus asserted that "such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:30). This declaration fills the role of warding off the presence or influence of Satan—a standard element in ritual drama—and I assume that for this reason Satan's personal presence is not indicated anywhere again in the Sermon. One of the purposes of Jesus' teaching is to give the righteous the ability to be delivered "from evil," as the Lord's Prayer requests later in the Sermon (see 3 Nephi 13:12). The Greek for this can be read, "deliver us from the Evil One" (Matthew 6:13). Another power apparently given to the righteous is the ability to "cast out devils" (3 Nephi 14:22), although the Sermon warns that some will exercise this power unrighteously.

13. Witnesses. Jesus then identified three witnesses who would bear record of his doctrine. On this unique occasion, Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Ghost bore record of the doctrine and of one another (see 3 Nephi 11:35-36). Filling a covenantal role that is familiar from several other occurrences in scripture (e.g., Genesis 18:2; Deuteronomy 4:26; 19:15; 2 Nephi 11:3), these three stand together at the commencement of this dispensation of the new law to the Nephites to witness of the gospel.

14. Teaching the gospel. Having dispelled evil, Jesus' next concern was that all be taught his true gospel. Twice he defined his doctrine in exactly the same terms. It is the gospel of repentance, baptism, and becoming as a little child, to whom Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Ghost: "Again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (3 Nephi 11:37-38). Whoever believes these things and does them, "unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 11:35). This doctrine is essential (see 3 Nephi 11:34, 40). Jesus then commanded his ordained disciples to "go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth" (3 Nephi 11:41). The clear intention is that all people should have an opportunity to receive these things, or, in other words, that the gospel be received by all of Adam's posterity.

15. Commending his disciples unto the people. Jesus then turned to the multitude and blessed them, admonishing them to give strict heed to the words of the twelve: "He stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants," and Jesus certified that he had "given [them] power" (3 Nephi 12:1). He blessed all who would believe their instruction and accept the people's words (cf. John 17), provided they entered into the covenant of baptism, received the Holy Ghost, and obtained remission of their sins (see 3 Nephi 12:2).

16. Blessings promised. Several blessings, well known as the Beatitudes, were then bestowed upon all the people (see 3 Nephi 12:3-12). The repetition of the word "all" in these Beatitudes emphasizes the fact that the blessings and promises therein were bestowed upon each individual present there. As candidates for Zion, they are typified as humble, compassionate, long-suffering peacemakers, who love righteousness, who will see God's face, and who will be his eternal children:

Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; for ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you. (3 Nephi 12:3-12).

These blessings describe and promise the ultimate benefits that the faithful will receive if they obey in righteousness the principles that Jesus is about to deliver to them. He promises them blessings in nine different respects. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, the earth, peace, comfort, mercy; they will see God, be filled with the Holy Ghost, and be called the children of God. Jesus blesses them further so they may be able to bear up under the persecutions and revilings that will be heaped upon them.

Seeing such blessings in a ritual or temple context is natural. Other texts similar in form to the Beatitudes can be found in several apocryphal, pseudepigraphic, and Greek religious texts that had cultic usages and apocalyptic significance (e.g., the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and 4 Ezra 8:46-54). In 2 Enoch 42, for example, 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: "Happy is the person who reverences the name of the Lord; . . . happy is he who carries out righteous judgment; . . . happy is he who clothes the naked with his garment, and to the hungry gives his bread; . . . happy is he in whom is the truth, so that he may speak the truth to his neighbor; . . . happy is he who has compassion on his lips and gentleness in his heart; happy is he who understands all the works of the Lord, performed by the Lord." 10

In 2 Enoch 51-53, 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: "Happy 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." 11 It appears that these and other similar texts were regularly used in ancient cultic ceremonies, and thus Hans Dieter Betz sees a close parallel between the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount and the initiation rituals of ancient mystery religions, for both "impart to their adherents, in initiations of the most various kinds, the secrets of the world beyond and their own lot at present." 12 In other words, toward the beginning of the ceremony, the people are given a glimpse of the heights to which they may rise—the kingdoms

and qualities—if they are true and faithful and become the people of Zion, the pure in heart (see Matthew 5:8; D&C 97:21).

Others have seen in the Beatitudes "entrance-requirements" for the Kingdom 13 and what Georg Strecker calls "the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to gain entrance to the holy of holies." 14 This view is supported by the fact that several of the requirements for entrance into the temple in Jerusalem are strikingly comparable to certain phrases in the Beatitudes. For example, to enter that temple one must be "pure in heart" and "seek [the Lord's] face" in order to stand in his holy place (Psalm 24:3-6). When Jesus accordingly blesses "the pure in heart" who shall "see God," he is alluding to those who are worthy to enter the temple. The "overriding meaning of seeing God and standing before him, as far as the Old Testament is concerned . . . has to do with his mercy-presence in the temple." 15 Strecker hastens to qualify this with the assertion that Jesus "teaches not cultic but eschatological virtues. They refer to entrance not into the earthly temple but into the kingdom of God," 16 but it seems to me that this assessment is too narrow. To discard the efficacy and the present significance of the temple in earliest Christianity ignores the fact that all aspects of the old were not destroyed, but they simply were fulfilled and became new in Christ.

Likewise, the thrust of the first few beatitudes is to be similarly understood: The meek and the poor and the hungry are the ones who will be "endowed with the supreme gift of divine bliss, with the Holy Spirit." 17 Such a view is also consonant with a powerful passage in the Doctrine and Covenants regarding the Kirtland Temple, which likewise employs the terminology of the sixth beatitude to promise the righteous the blessings of the temple: "Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God" (D&C 97:16; italics added).

17. The people invited to become the salt of the earth. The Lord next offers the people a special status, with a caution. He says, "I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor, . . . the salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men" (3 Nephi 12:13). This is an invitation to enter into a covenant with the Lord, carrying with it a solemn warning that those who violate the covenant will be cast out and trampled under foot (although one continues to invite them back; 3 Nephi 18:32-33). The covenant connection here, for Latter-day Saints, is found most clearly in the Doctrine and Covenants, which explains that those who enter into the everlasting covenant "are accounted as the salt of the earth" (D&C 101:39; cf. Numbers 18:19), a theme Elder Delbert L. Stapley developed in his general conference talk entitled "Salt of the Earth. 18

Among biblical commentaries, of course, a wide variety of meanings have been attributed to this particular metaphor. Wolfgang Nauch presents evidence, largely from rabbinic sources, that the reference to "salt" in Matthew 5 was "taken from a certain code of instruction for the disciples of Scribes," requiring them to be "modest and (of) humble spirit, industrious and salted, suffering insult and (they should be) liked by all men." 19 The concept of salt, according to his view, demands suffering, purification, and wisdom of the true disciple.

Implicit in Jesus' words here about salt, earth, and light may also be hints of certain creation themes: the doctrine of the Two Ways, the separation of opposites, light and dark, and heaven and earth. This principle of opposition is fundamental to the Sermon on the Mount. It surfaces again, for example, in the doctrine of the Two Ways in Matthew 7:13. Such creation themes were not confined to wisdom literature in the Bible, but were equally found in ritual. Indeed, some scholars have identified the creation account of Genesis as playing a key role in ancient Israelite temple ritual, although the details

remain obscure. In Jesus' words, however, the old symbolism has been imbued with new, additional meaning: 20 Instead of the old imperative, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), Jesus now issues the new injunction, "Let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works" (3 Nephi 12:16). Just as the Creator looked at the creation and pronounced his works to be good, Jesus now invites each disciple to become a creator of "good works," that when they are seen, men may glorify God. With this, Jesus is forming a new heaven and new earth, a new creative act and new creation.

18. A first set of laws explained. Formal instruction to the people begins in earnest as Jesus next turns to teach and explain the essence of three of the Ten Commandments and of the law of Moses, the law administered anciently by the Aaronic Priesthood. He explains that this law has not been destroyed. In its fulfilled form, it still has an essential place in the righteous life: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, one jot nor one tittle hath not passed away from the law, but in me it hath all been fulfilled" (3 Nephi 12:17-18).

19. Obedience and sacrifice. First, Jesus teaches the companion principles of obedience to the Lord and of sacrifice. He exhorts the people to obey the commandments that he issues at this time: "I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled. Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (3 Nephi 12:19-20). He requires the people to exercise faith, repentance, and obedience, which constitutes coming unto him "with a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 12:19). The offering of a broken heart and a contrite spirit is none other than the new law of sacrifice, as the voice of the Lord had explained earlier from heaven (see 3 Nephi 9:19-20). This new law of obedience and sacrifice superseded the practices of sacrifice under the law of Moses and put an end to "the shedding of blood" (3 Nephi 9:19).

20. Prohibition against anger, ill-speaking, and ridicule of brethren. Second, Jesus upgraded the old law against murder into a higher prohibition against becoming angry or speaking derisively or critically about one's brother: "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (3 Nephi 12:21-22).

In the brotherhood of a priesthood setting, I interpret this as amounting especially to a prohibition against speaking evil against any other priesthood brother, let alone against God. In effect, it prohibits all manner of evil or unholy speaking against any brother, and thus all the more so against the Lord's anointed leaders. According to the Sermon at the Temple, anyone who is angry with a brother is said to be in danger of his judgment (the implication is that the offended person is a "brother" who has power to render judgment). Anyone who calls his brother "Raca" is in danger of being brought before "the council," that is, the elders in charge of administering the kingdom. Those who persist in such misconduct are in danger of hellfire. Since the word "Raca" means "empty-head," the thrust of this injunction is that laughing at a brother's foolishness (that is, what to a lay member may seem to be foolishness) is prohibited.

Such provisions and disciplinary procedures are especially pertinent to a community of covenanters, as the evidence that Manfred Weise and others have marshalled regarding rules of discipline at Qumran and in the earliest Christian community tends to show. 21 According to one of the rules of the Dead Sea community found in the Manual of Discipline 7:8, "anger against a fellow-member of the society could not be tolerated under any circumstances," and they applied a punishment "in any case of a member harbouring angry feelings." 22 Indeed, the Manual of Discipline 1:16-2:18 concludes its covenant-making ceremony by subjecting those who enter into the covenant unworthily to judgments of the community council and to punishments similar to those mentioned in Matthew 5:21-22. Weise argues that comparable councils were also convened in the early Church, as evidenced in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 1 Timothy 1:20, and the writings of Ignatius, 23 specifically for the purpose of disciplining those who affronted Christ by insulting those people in whom Christ's spirit dwelt. Such deprecations are "not merely chidings in a banal sense, rather they insult to the core the community of God, viz., the covenant-community (Verbundenheit) of God. Therein lies their seriousness." 24

21. Reconciliation necessary before proceeding further. In 3 Nephi 12:23-24, Jesus interrupts the instruction to explain that, if anyone desires to come unto him, he or she should have no hard feelings against any brother or sister: "Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you" (3 Nephi 12:23-24). No disciple can come unto Christ until first being reconciled with his brothers and sisters. Then one can come with "full purpose of heart" to be received by Christ.

Some scholars have seen this passage as an intrusive interruption in the flow of thought in the Sermon on the Mount because it breaks up the rhythm of the antitheses between the old and the new in Matthew 5. It makes good sense, however, in the context of insuring that the listeners are in the proper state of mind to go forward ritually toward the holy altar. Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount tells the disciple to leave his sacrifice on the altar and first go and reconcile himself with his brother before proceeding (see Matthew 5:24). In order to facilitate this reconciliation, Jesus admonishes the people to settle all their controversies quickly and to avoid going to court, looking forward instead to the fact that another day of judgment will be far more important than any earthly day in court.

22. Chastity. The next subject addressed is the law of chastity: "Behold, it is written by them of old time, that thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart. Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart; for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell" (3 Nephi 12:27-30). The new law imposes a strict prohibition against sexual intercourse outside of marriage and, intensifying the rules that prevailed under the old law, requires purity of heart and denial of these things. In committing to live by this law, the righteous bear a heavy responsibility and are symbolically crucified themselves—"wherein ye will take up your cross" (3 Nephi 12:30).

Unlike the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon at the Temple mentions no penalty concerning the unchaste eye that should be cast out if it offends (see Matthew 5:29). This has been a troublesome point for many biblical commentators, for Jewish attitudes around the time of Jesus were strongly set against any punishment that took the form of bodily mutilation. 25 It is unlikely, of course, that Jesus demanded actual self-mutilation of his disciples, and the Sermon at the Temple contains no such implication, for it

does not speak in any way here of actual bodily mutilation; the mode appears to be figurative (see also JST, Matthew 5:34, "Now this I speak, a parable concerning your sins"). All references to plucking out the eye or to cutting off the hand that offends are absent in the Book of Mormon text, suggesting that this problematic verse in the Sermon on the Mount, on its face, does not fully reflect Jesus' original intent. Instead, the Sermon at the Temple speaks at this point of a total commitment—of the disciple taking up a symbolic cross, a symbol of capital punishment.

This demands that the righteous strictly exercise the virtue of self-control, and it also reflects a warning that, if a person violates the law of chastity, the penalty will involve serious consequences. In particular, the disciple must be willing to deny himself these things and, in so doing, "cross" himself (Alma 39:9) or, in Jesus' words, "take up your cross" (3 Nephi 12:30). The image this may bring to mind is that of a covenanter taking this obligation very seriously, for hanging or exposing a body on a tree or on a cross was part of the standard punishment under the law of Moses for any person who committed a sin worthy of death. This form of punishment was apparently known to the Nephites through the Brass Plates and the writings of the prophet Zenos (see 1 Nephi 19:13). Deuteronomy 21:22 speaks of exposing the body of the culprit "on a tree," a practice observed by the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 4:28), which Peter connected with the death of Jesus on the cross (see Acts 10:39). Thus, with this teaching in the Sermon at the Temple, one possibly confronts the idea that the disciple must be willing to take upon himself the very form of mortal punishment that Jesus himself suffered. As a practical matter in early Christianity, the punishment of those violating this covenant of chastity probably took the form of excommunication, understanding being "cut off" in Matthew 5:30 as "a communal parable." 26

23. Marriages of covenanters are not to be dissolved except for fornication. In connection with the law of chastity, Jesus teaches the importance of marriage by superseding the old law of divorcement with the new law of marriage: "It hath been written, that whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whoso shall marry her who is divorced committeth adultery" (3 Nephi 12:31-32). Husbands are not to put their wives away, and wives are not to remarry. For centuries, commentators have struggled to understand the intended application of this radical prohibition against divorce. The context of the Sermon at the Temple suggests that this very demanding restriction applies only to husbands and wives who are bound by the eternal covenant relationship involved here. This explains the strictness of the rule completely, for eternal marriages can be dissolved only by proper authority and on justifiable grounds. Until they are so divorced, a couple remains covenantally married.

24. Oaths sworn by saying Yes or No. Instructions are then given regarding the swearing of oaths (see 3 Nephi 12:33-37), in particular that Jesus' followers should "Let [their] communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever cometh of more than these is evil." Some biblical commentators have found this section in the Sermon on the Mount odd because it does not continue logically with the sequence of commandments in the Decalogue, as one might expect Jesus to follow if he were simply giving a commentary on the Ten Commandments. Instead, instructions are given on how religious commitments are to be made: The swearing of oaths (which often accompanied the making of covenants 27 should not be by the heavens or by the earth or by one's head, but simply by saying "yes" or "no." That is sufficient. A rabbinic aphorism suggests a similar sentiment: "Let your Yes and No both be righteous. Do not speak with your mouth what you do not mean in your heart." 28 In a ritual context, any more than this is superfluous or perhaps devious; more is not required and is to be avoided. While these words

about oaths apply in numerous life settings, they are most pertinent when people are making, or are about to make, solemn oaths to the Lord.

This interpretation holds that Jesus was not opposed to covenantal promises per se, only to oaths sworn in the wrong way. What he objects to is such casuistry that asks whether one is bound if one swears by temple gold but not if one swears by the temple, or whether one is bound on an oath by the offering but not on an oath by the altar (see Matthew 23:16-19). In Matthew 23, which seems to reflect most clearly the historical teaching of Jesus on oaths, "there is no total ban on oaths." 29 Indeed, Jesus' point is that one should look in one's oaths to the deity behind the temple, behind the altar, and in the heavens, who sanctifies them all: "Whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon" (Matthew 23:21-22; italics added). The point is that all oaths are ultimately oaths by and before God. "All oaths directly or indirectly appeal to God; all are therefore binding since they call on him to guarantee their fulfillment." 30 Thus early Christians were told that they should be different from those at Qumran who swore horrific oaths or from others who regularly swore commercial or legal oaths in the temple of Herod. They were told to avoid the forms of all such oaths—neither by the heaven, nor by the earth.

To be sure, some have read Matthew 5:33 and James 5:12 as forbidding all oaths or promises ("swear not at all," "swear no other oath"), but this does not capture what appears to be the historical intent of Jesus (as reflected explicitly in Matthew 23), 31 and these two texts can be interpreted otherwise: I read the Greek in James 5:12 as telling Christians not to swear an oath by heaven, or by earth, or by any other such thing (allon tina). 32 James admonishes his followers to let their "yes" really be a "yes" and their "no" really be a "no" and to keep their solemn promises "so that they not fall under the judgment [of the Lord]." Disciples of Jesus are not to be uncommitted, but should let their sacred "word (logos) be yes, yes, no, no" (Matthew 5:37). From a Latter-day Saint point of view, the most important commitments a person can ever say "yes" or "no" to are those made in covenants with God. 33

25. Love of enemies. The rules of loving one's neighbor, turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, giving the poor more than is asked, loving enemies, and doing good to all people are given next: "And behold, it is written, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away. And behold it is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; but behold I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good" (3 Nephi 12:38-45).

Although the law of the Gospel is never expressly defined in scripture, I understand this law to be the law of love and generosity: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-39; quoting Deuteronomy 6:5; see also D&C 59:5-6). "If any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the

law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment" (D&C 104:18; italics added).

In all dispensations, covenant people have been required to give to the poor and to lend to those who ask. This was required of the children of Israel (see Deuteronomy 15:7-11) and of the people of King Benjamin (see Mosiah 4:16-26) as a condition of their covenant. Thus Jesus' commandment that one must "give to him that asketh . . . and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matthew 5:42) not only captures the essence of the law of the gospel regarding love and generosity, but also incorporates a traditional Israelite and Nephite covenantal condition. Indeed, Jesus emphasizes that this law is old as well as new—"those things which were of old time . . . in me are all fulfilled" (3 Nephi 12:46-47)—and it can be seen that this law of the gospel is truly taught in the scriptures of all dispensations.

26. Transition into a higher order. At this point in the Sermon, the disciples have reached a plateau: "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect" (3 Nephi 12:48). The word "therefore" marks a transition in the design of the Sermon: On the one hand, it looks back over the instruction given thus far about the law of Moses, while on the other hand, it looks forward to yet a greater order to be required if the people are to become "perfect."

Although it is possible that the word "perfect" has only a straightforward ethical or religious meaning here, 34 reflecting perfect or "undivided obedience to God" and "unlimited love," 35 there is a stronger possibility that the word carries a ceremonial connotation in this particular text. It seems to me that, in this verse, Jesus is expressing his desire that the disciples now advance from one level to a next level, to go on to become "perfect," "finished," or "completed" in their instruction and endowment. In addition to the ritual context of the Sermon—the context usually determining the sense in which the intended "completeness" consists 36—several reasons support this understanding.

First, the Greek word translated into English as "perfect" in Matthew 5:48 is *teleios*. This important word is used in Greek religious literature to describe the person who has become fully initiated in the rituals of the religion. *Teleios* is "a technical term of the mystery religions, which refers to one initiated into the mystic rites, the initiate." 37 The word is used in Hebrews 5:14-6:1 to distinguish between the initial teachings and the full instruction; and in Hebrews 9:1 1 it refers to the heavenly temple. Generally in the Epistle to the Hebrews, its usage follows a "special use" from Hellenistic Judaism, where the word *teleioo* means "to put someone in the position in which he can come, or stand, before God." 38 Thus, in its ritual connotations, this word refers to preparing a person to be presented to come before God "in priestly action" 39 or "to qualify for the cultus." 40 Early Christians continued to use this word in this way in connection with their sacraments and ordinances. 41

Most intriguing in this regard is the letter of Clement of Alexandria describing the existence (c. 200 A.D.) of a second Gospel of Mark, reporting the Lord's doings as recounted by Peter and going beyond the public Gospel of Mark now found in the New Testament. 42 This so-called Secret Gospel of Mark, according to Clement, contained things "for the use of those who were being perfected (*teleiomenon*). Nevertheless, he [Mark] did not divulge the things not to be uttered, nor did he write down the hierophantic [priesthood] teaching (*hierophantiken didaskalian*) of the Lord, but . . . brought in certain sayings of which he knew the interpretation would, as a *mystagogue*, lead the hearers into the innermost sanctuary of that truth hidden by seven veils." 43 The copy was read "only to those who are being initiated (*tous muoumenous*) into the great mysteries (*ta megala mysteria*)." 44 Thus, although

almost nothing is known about these sacred and secret teachings of Jesus mentioned by Clement (who died 215 A.D.), there can be little doubt that such esoteric, orthodox teachings existed in Alexandria and that some early Christians had been "perfected" by learning those priesthood teachings. The suggestion that the words of the Sermon, explicitly inviting its followers to become "perfected," may have stood in a similar tradition is, therefore, not without precedent in early Christianity.

Moreover, the cultic use of the Hebrew term *shalom* may provide a concrete link between the Nephites and this Greek and Christian use of *teleios*. John Durham has explored in detail the fundamental meanings of *shalom*, especially in Numbers 6:26 and in certain of the Psalms, and concludes that it was used as a cultic term referring to a gift or endowment to or of God that "can be received only in his Presence," 45 "a blessing specially connected to theophany or the immanent Presence of God," 46 specifically as appearing in the Temple of Solomon and represented "within the Israelite cult" and liturgy. 47 Buruch LeVine similarly analyzes the function of the *shelamim* sacrifices as producing "complete," or perfect, "harmony with the deity . . . characteristic of the covenant relationship as well as of the ritual experience of communion." 48

Durham, along with several others, sees this Israelite concept in the word *teleios* in Matthew 5:48. 49 "Matthew does not use *teleios* in the Greek sense of the perfect ethical personality, but in the Old Testament sense of the wholeness of consecration to God." 50 It tends toward the meaning of "living up to an agreement or covenant without fault: as the Father keeps the covenants he makes with us. . . . *Teleioi* is a locus *technicus* from the Mysteries: the completely initiated who has both qualified for initiation and completed it is *teleios*, lit. 'gone all the way,' fulfilling all requirements, every last provision of God's command. The hardest rules are what will decide the *teletios*, the final test—the Law of Consecration." 51 Thus, although we do not know what word Jesus used when he spoke to the Nephites that has been translated "perfect" in 3 Nephi 12:48, there is reason to believe that they would have known from their Israelite heritage a word like *shalom* similar in cultic content to the Greek word *teleios*.

Accordingly, in commanding the people to "be perfect even as I or your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (3 Nephi 12:48), it seems that Jesus had several things in mind besides "perfection" as we usually think of it. Whatever he meant, it involved the idea of becoming like God ("even as I or your Father who is in heaven"), which occurs by seeing God (see 1 John 3:2) and knowing God (see John 17:3). These ultimate realities can be represented ceremoniously in this world, for as Joseph Smith taught, it is through his ordinances that we are "instructed more perfectly." 52

Finally, the style of the Sermon shifts into a different mode after this invitation to become perfect. The next section of the Sermon, contains no reference to the old law of Moses. If Matthew 5 (or 3 Nephi 12) is about the law (Moses), then Matthew 6 (or 3 Nephi 13) distills the prophets (represented by the spirit of Elijah; see Matthew 17:3), for the Sermon as a whole embraces both the law and the prophets (see 3 Nephi 12:17; 14:12). Stylistically there is also a sharp contrast between Matthew 5 (or 3 Nephi 12) and Matthew 6 (or 3 Nephi 13), so much so that many biblical commentators have suspected Matthew 6:1-18 of being a later intrusion into the text. That suspicion dissolves, however, if one sees that the text has simply moved on to a new stage of the experience, thus accounting for the different world to which it seems to belong. In this higher level there will be greater emphasis on secret and inward righteousness, as well as controlling the needs of the flesh and of this world. Thus the text next presents a second set of

requirements by discussing almsgiving, prayer, forgiveness, fasting, and total dedication of all that one has to God.

27. Giving to the poor. Almsgiving is the first requirement of the higher order (see 3 Nephi 13:1-4). If done in secret, it will reap open rewards. This rule is a natural conjunction of the law of the gospel (see D&C 104:18) and the law of consecration. Vermes believes that Jesus' requirement that alms must be given in secret alludes to the "Chamber of Secrets" in the Temple of Herod mentioned in the Mishnah, 53 into which "the devout used to put their gifts in secret and the poor of good family received support therefrom in secret." 54 But giving to the poor has long been a requirement placed upon the Lord's covenant people. 55

King Benjamin emphasized it as one of the main spiritual attributes of a righteous, covenant person: "Ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor" (Mosiah 4:16). Giving to the poor, he stipulated, is necessary in "retaining a remission of your sins from day to day" and is an essential prerequisite for entering into a covenant with God, having "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 4:26; 5:2, 5).

28. The order of prayer. After the instructions about praying in public and alone in private (see 3 Nephi 13:5-6), the English pronouns shift from a singular "thou" to a plural "ye." This may indicate that the Lord first taught the people how to pray individually in private ("when thou [singular] prayest, enter into thy closet"), then offered instruction in group prayer ("after this manner pray ye [plural]"). 56 He then offered the Lord's Prayer: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (3 Nephi 13:9-13).

From the earliest Christian times, the Lord's Prayer was "basically a prayer used by a group," 57 and several early Christian texts document the use of sacred group prayers, with the participants standing in a circle around Jesus at the center. 58 The Lord's Prayer was undoubtedly intended as a pattern or model for group prayers. Jesus probably taught something like it on several occasions and fluidly modified it somewhat each time, as reflected in the fact that no two texts of the prayer are quite the same (see Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4; and 3 Nephi 13:9-13; Didache 8 offers yet a fourth, apparently independent, version). The early church father Origen understood the Lord's Prayer to be only a model or outline, 59 and the rabbis similarly expressed "strong prohibitions against reciting a fixed prayer," recommending that in saying a set personal prayer one should vary it a little each time. 60

Hugh Nibley has seen in the structure of the Lord's Prayer more than a polite request or legal petition. 61 He maintains that it is rather an archetype of the "mysteries or ceremonies" that bring down to earth the pattern of heaven ("on earth exactly as it is in heaven"), "to which our present tie and password is the name" ("hallowed be thy name"). 62 Like the typical elements of the mysteries, the prayer synoptically covers an arche (beginning in heaven, father of spirits), an omphalus (history, this world, bread, debts, temptation, and cry for deliverance), and sphragis (end of the world, seal, kingdom, and glory). 63

A further connection between the Lord's Prayer and sacred ritual is evident in the description of the doxology that the children of Israel exclaimed in the temple of Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement. As Strack and Billerbeck explain, after the High Priest had transferred the sins of the people to the

scapegoat, driven it out into the wilderness, and said the words, "that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30), then the priests and the people, who were standing in the Forecourt of the Temple, when they heard the name of the Lord clearly uttered, as soon as it came out of the mouth of the High Priest, bowed their knees and threw themselves down and fell on their faces and said, "Praised be the name of his glorious kingdom forever and eternally!" In the Temple [im Heiligtum] one did not simply answer "Amen!" How did one answer? "Praised be the name of his glorious kingdom forever and eternally!". . . How do we know that people answered this way upon each benediction [in the Temple]? The scripture teaches, saying, "He is to be exalted with every praise and adulation." 64

Thus, in the temple, the faithful answered the High Priest not only with a simple "amen," but also with praises of God, his glory, power and kingdom, forever, amen. According to the rabbinic sources, this doxological acknowledgment of the kingdom and glory of God was in regular usage in the temple at the time of Jesus, and it was attributed to a much earlier time. It was traditionally believed that these words of praise were spoken by father Jacob to his sons shortly before his death. 65 Thus the extended ending of the Lord's Prayer, "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, amen," would probably have been recognized by several of Jesus' listeners as a traditional sign of great sanctity and solemnity usually associated with the holiest of temple rituals on the Day of Atonement.

The stated purpose of Jesus' instruction about prayer is to show his followers how not to be "seen of men" or "heard for their much speaking," but how to be seen and heard of God. This is the cry of ages, the prayer that God will hear the words that we speak ("Then hear thou in heaven," 1 Kings 8:32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49, from the dedicatory prayer of the Temple of Solomon).

The disciples were then invited to follow suit: "After this manner therefore pray ye" (3 Nephi 13:9-13).

The law of forgiveness is twice reiterated (see 3 Nephi 13:11, 14-15) to emphasize the fact that, under the new law, requests for forgiveness of sin and deliverance will not be granted unless the disciples forgive one another and hold no hard feelings or unforgiving attitudes toward others.

29. Fasting, washing, and anointing. A new order of fasting is then taught. In addition to requiring a secret inward righteousness in fasting, true fasting is to be accompanied with anointing the head and washing the face (see 3 Nephi 13:17). Washing the face, the head, the feet, the hands, or other parts of the body is symbolic of becoming completely clean (see John 13:9-10), "clean every whit" (John 13:10). The concept is similar to the desire to become clean from the blood and sins that one encounters in this world (cf. 2 Nephi 9:44). When a disciple seeks the Lord in true fasting and prayer in such a condition of purity, the Lord will see and reward him openly in heaven.

On three occasions in this section of the Sermon, the disciple is promised that the Lord will see him and reward him (see 3 Nephi 13:4, 6, 18). Clearly, the desire of the disciple is for God alone to hear the words of his cries and for him alone to notice and recognize his deeds. Moreover, the pattern of repeating things three times, or grouping things in clusters of three, has been identified as a dominant characteristic of the Sermon on the Mount. 66

30. A requirement of consecration. The final affirmative requirement advanced in the Sermon is that of singleness of heart in serving God and not Mammon: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through

nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. . . . No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" (3 Nephi 13:19-22, 24).

I view this instruction as tantamount to requiring one to consecrate all that one has and is to the Lord. Jesus commands the disciple, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." The hearer is also required to have an eye "single" (haplous) to the glory of God, which refers not only to "singlemindedness" and "wholehearted dedication," but also to being pure in the sense of being "ready for sacrifice" 67 and being "unbegrudgingly generous" 68 toward the kingdom. The duty is to serve a single master: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount presupposes a community that is "prepared to take responsibility for the consequences of the teaching of Jesus, even if it means their lives." 69 By total devotion to God, disciples are promised that their "whole body shall be full of light" (3 Nephi 13:22). This assumes that further light and a fullness of light is what the righteous should continually seek.

31. Care promised for the twelve disciples. At this point in the Sermon at the Temple, Jesus turns to the twelve whom he had ordained and promises them that the Lord will take care of their needs. They are promised that they shall have sufficient for their needs, just as the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount requests: "Give us this day bread 'sufficient for our needs' (*epiousion*)." 70 As the Lord's anointed, they need not worry about what they shall eat or drink, for they shall have sufficient for their needs. The promise of food and drink may also foreshadow the eucharist, another ritual aspect of the Sermon at the Temple focused on especially in the administration of the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18. 71

32. Clothing (endowing) the disciples. Emphasis in the next section of the Sermon is upon the ordained disciple's clothing. They are promised that God will newly clothe them in glorious clothing. As the lilies of the field, so the chosen disciples will be clothed by God, even more gloriously than Solomon himself, whose temple was the most splendid of all (see 3 Nephi 13:25, 29-31).

The "clothing" of which Jesus speaks is richly symbolic. The Greek word for being clothed is *enduo* (*endumatōs*, "raiment," in Matthew 6:25, 28; *endusesthe*, "put on," in Matthew 6:25). Jesus uses this word in Luke 24:49, shortly after his resurrection, when he tells his apostles, to remain in the city "until ye be endued with power from on high." It means "to endow." The Greek word *enduo* has two meanings, and both are pertinent to the endowment. First is "to dress, to clothe someone," or "to clothe oneself in, put on." The second is, figuratively, to take on "characteristics, virtues, intentions." 72 The meaning of the English word *endue* (or *indue* from the Latin) likewise "coincides nearly in signification with *endow*, that is, to put on, to furnish. . . . To put on something; to invest; to clothe," 73 and Joseph Smith's diary uses these spellings interchangeably, as for example when Joseph prayed that all the elders might "receive an endument in thy house." 74

Thus, in this section of the Sermon at the Temple, Jesus can be understood as promising more than garments that offer physical protection for the body (although garments do this, too); he speaks of garments that "endow" the disciples with powers and virtues more glorious than Solomon's. More is involved here than the promise of material well-being: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (3 Nephi 13:25).

33. Preparing for the judgment. After the promise of this glorious endowment is given, the Savior turns his attention back to the multitude and to the presentation of information about the final judgment and how all may pass through it. He first discloses the principles by which the final judgment will be administered: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother: Let me pull the mote out of thine eye—and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye" (3 Nephi 14:1-5). Essentially no mortal can stand as a judge of his brother when he himself is flawed, and all people will find themselves judged at the bar of God by the same standard that they have used in judging others.

This particular concept of justice—namely, rewarding or punishing a person in a manner that matches his own being or conduct—is mentioned several times in the scriptures as the form of God's justice at the judgment day. For example, Alma 41:13-15 says that God will restore good to the good, evil to the evil, mercy to those who have been merciful. Similarly, forgiveness only comes through the atonement of Christ to those who have forgiven (see Matthew 6:15; 3 Nephi 13:15). Therefore, a primary concern of the true Christian should be to develop one's own character: To be pure ("cast the beam out of thine own eye"), to serve ("see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye"), to avoid hypocrisy, and to think and act toward others in the way that you would have God render judgment unto you. The judgment process is more reflective than it is projective.

34. Secrecy required. Next, the Lord requires that his hearers be willing to keep these holy things secret: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (3 Nephi 14:6). "The original meaning [of this saying] is puzzling." 75 This saying seems badly out of place or hard to explain for most interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount, 76 for after demanding that the disciple should love his neighbor, even his enemy, it seems inconsistent for Jesus to call these people "dogs" and "swine" and to require his followers to withhold their pearls from them. The emphasis, however, is clearly on withholding certain things that are "holy" and protecting them as sacred. Drawing on Logion 93 in the Gospel of Thomas, Strecker identifies one possibility for "that which is holy" here as "gnostic secret knowledge." 77 The implication is that Jesus has given his hearers something more than what the recorded text reports, something they are required to keep sacred and secret—an implication consistent with some other interesting conclusions of Jeremias regarding the existence of sacred, secret teachings and practices in primitive Christianity. 78 Indeed, the Didache 9:5 associates this saying with a requirement of exclusivity, specifically the prohibition not to let anyone "eat or drink of the Eucharist with you except for those baptized in the name of the Lord" (see also Didache 14:1-2 connecting Matthew 5:23-25 and the observance of the sacrament).

This obligation of secrecy carries or implies harsh penalties and consequences. If it is violated, the pearls will be trampled, and the one who has disclosed the holy things will be torn to pieces. This reflects the method of punishment prescribed for covenant breakers in Psalm 50: "Those that have made a covenant with me, . . . consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces" (Psalm 50:5, 22). In a ritual context, a strict requirement of secrecy is most readily understandable, and of its seriousness the covenanters had been expressly forewarned when they were first charged with the prospects of becoming the salt of the earth, risking being "trodden under foot" (3 Nephi 12:13; Matthew 5:13).

Moreover, the Joseph Smith Translation confirms that Matthew 7:6 is exactly concerned with the requirement of keeping certain sacred things secret. It adds: "The mysteries of the kingdom ye shall keep within yourselves, . . . for the world cannot receive that which ye, yourselves, are not able to bear" (JST, Matthew 7:10-11). As Alma had said a century earlier, "It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant" (Alma 12:9). Such a requirement of secrecy is a common feature of ritual initiations or temple ordinances.

35. A three-fold petition. Finally, the listeners are ready to approach the Father. They are told that if they will ask, seek, and knock (in other words, when a threefold petition is made), "it shall be opened unto you" (3 Nephi 14:7). This offer is open to all people (cf. Alma 12:9-11). Everyone that asks, having been brought to this point of entry, will receive and be received (see 3 Nephi 14:8). In my mind, it makes the best sense of Matthew 7:7 to understand it in a ceremonial context. Actual experience among Christians generally shows that the promise articulated here should not be understood as an absolute one: Many people ask, and seek, and knock; yet, in fact many of them do not find. Moreover, there is reason to believe that Jesus expected his true followers to seek for something out of the ordinary: An early saying from Oxyrhynchus attributed to Jesus reads, "Let him who seeks not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be astounded, and having been astounded, he will reign, and having reigned, he will rest." 79 It is crucial that a person come to the Father correctly (see 3 Nephi 14:21), and for all who seek and ask at this point in their progression—after believing and accepting the requirements in the Sermon that precede this invitation—for them it will be opened.

36. Seeking a gift from the Father. Who, then, will be there to open "it" unto the petitioner? The Father. "Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask [for] bread, will give him a stone? Or if he ask [for] a fish, will he give him a serpent? . . . How much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (3 Nephi 14:9, 11). Asking for "bread" is the symbolic equivalent of asking for Jesus, who is the bread of life (see John 6:48). Asking for a fish, again, is figuratively asking for life through the atonement and salvation of Jesus. The promise is that those who properly ask for Jesus will not be stoned (suffer death), nor will they meet a serpent (Lucifer). Instead, the petitioner will receive good gifts from the Father (see 3 Nephi 14:11). The gift is eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7), descending below all things, rising above all heavens, and filling all things (see Ephesians 4:8-10, where *domata*, the Greek word for "gifts" in Matthew 7:11, also appears).

37. Other people. But one cannot enter into eternal life or heaven alone. In the final analysis, obedience to the law of charity is required to claim the blessings of the Lord, for without charity, the pure love of Christ, we are nothing (see 1 Corinthians 13:2). "Whoso is found possessed of [charity] at the last day, it shall be well with him" (Moroni 7:47). Thus, Jesus taught, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (3 Nephi 14:12).

Thus, all followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are responsible to see that other people are shown the way to salvation and eternal life and, where necessary, assisted in every way possible. In other words, Jesus may be commanding Christians not only to do things "to others" but "for others." The sense of the grammar can be read either way. The disciples are told that, whatever they would like others to do for them, they should do the same for others, again with reference being made to the law (of Moses) and the spirit of Elijah (the prophets). My conclusion is that Jesus intended here for his disciples to do more

than merely engage in the deeds of human kindness normally associated with the Golden Rule. He would want them, above all, to be taught the gospel and be brought to salvation. So he admonishes them to do such things for others, implicitly to teach them the gospel and to perform for them, where necessary, any vicarious ordinances. As Boyd K. Packer has said, "Is it not Christlike for us to perform in the temple ordinances for and in behalf of those who cannot do them for themselves?" 80

38. Entering through a narrow opening. The necessity of helping others through the gate arises because, as 3 Nephi 14:13-14 makes clear, there is only one gate and one narrow way that leads to life: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." As 2 Nephi 31:17 indicates, that gate is exclusively the gate of repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Signposts and markers help guide people to the narrow gate, and instruction about the doctrine of the Two Ways—the path to life or the road to destruction—serves to remind the disciples that it is an undeviating path of truth that leads to life eternal. 81

39. Bearing the fruit of the Tree of Life. Jesus next points to the imagery of the tree: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (3 Nephi 14:17). Having partaken of the Tree of Knowledge, man's life becomes a quest to find and righteously partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life and live forever. Echoes of temple and eschatological imagery are again discernible in the words of Jesus here.

These echoes come from several directions: First, these are no ordinary trees of which Jesus speaks: they are ultimate moral symbols: they either bear "evil" fruit (the Greek word is *poneros*, "sick, wicked, worthless, degenerate, malicious") and are "corrupt" (*sapron*, meaning "decayed, rotten, evil, unwholesome"); or they are "good" (*agathon*, "fit, capable, of inner worth, moral, right"). Thus, Jesus speaks of eternal trees, symbolic of the final state of one's eternal character, determining whether one will either live or "be hewn down and cast into the fire" (3 Nephi 14:19).

Second, these good trees are trees of life. One only lives forever by partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Life (see Genesis 3:22). Accordingly, the tree is an important feature in the landscape of all temple literature. 82 It is, therefore, natural and logical that Jesus' thoughts should turn to the imagery of the Tree of Life immediately after he has described the path "which leadeth unto life" (3 Nephi 14:14). In an eternal perspective that path leads directly to the Tree of Life (see 1 Nephi 8:20, "I also beheld a straight and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood.")

Third, Jesus equates individual people with the Tree, for by partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Life, or by planting the seed of life in oneself, each disciple grows up into a tree of life, as the Prophet Alma describes (see Alma 32:41-42). Each good tree of life has a place in God's paradise, growing up unto eternal life and yielding much fruit—powerful imagery also present in the Old Testament Psalms (see Psalm 1:1-3) and in the earliest Christian hymns. "Blessed, O Lord, are they who are planted in Thy land, and who have a place in Thy Paradise; and who grow in the growth of Thy trees" (Odes of Solomon 11:18-24). In other allegories, there is only one tree, Jesus being the root and righteous people becoming the branches (see John 15:1-5; Jacob 5).

Fourth, another temple echo may be heard in the possibility that the cross is also, ironically, a symbol of a Tree of Life (see 1 Peter 2:24). Each person who is raised up in the form of the tree will have eternal

life. Ritually, the early Christians prayed in the "cruciform" position, with their hands raised, "stretched out towards the Lord." This "extension," they said, "is the upright cross." 83 Originally this signified the passion of Christ and was a gesture used in confessing Christ at baptism; it imitated the cross, death, and a mystic unification and life with Christ. 84

Those who do not become such a tree and bring forth good fruit, however, will be chopped down and thrown into the fire, for by their fruits they shall be known (see 3 Nephi 14:19-20). Evil trees that bring forth bad fruit are the "false prophets" who are sure to come. The Lord assures the disciples, however, that he has given them adequate knowledge so that they can test whether these purported prophets have come with truth and goodness: "Ye shall know them" (3 Nephi 14:20).

40. Entering into the presence of the Lord. Finally, there will be an encounter with the Lord himself: Some will say to him, "Lord, Lord," and they shall be allowed to "enter into the kingdom of heaven." But many, even good people of the world who have cast out devils and done wonderful works in the name of the Lord, will be turned away, for the Lord will have to acknowledge, "I never knew you, depart from me" (3 Nephi 14:22-23).

How is it that the Lord has not known them? The Hebrew word "know" (yadac) has a broad range of meanings. One of them is covenantal:

"You only have I known of all the families on earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Amos' words [Amos 3:2] are no longer mysterious. Yahweh had recognized only Israel as his legitimate servants; only to them had he granted the covenant. 85

Clearly, more than good works alone will be required, and the old covenant with Israel (see Hosea 13:4; Jeremiah 24:7), by which God knew (or recognized) Israel and by which the Israelites knew God, has now become new through the Sermon. Knowing more than simply the just and equitable principles of the noble men of the earth is required in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Knowing the Lord through making and keeping this covenant is crucial. Only those who are wise in this sense, 86 who know, remember, and do its requirements, will be recognized by the Lord at that day, raised up to see God and to inherit celestial glory (see 3 Nephi 15:1).

41. Lecture on the portion of God's covenant with Israel yet to be fulfilled. The Sermon at the Temple continues as Jesus reviews and recapitulates things he had said about the fulfillment of the law of Moses. Some of the people had not understood that all old things "had become new," apparently wondering how this could be, since the covenant promising that the Israelites (including the Nephites) would be gathered before the end had not yet been fulfilled. Jesus explained that the old law was ended, but that did not abrogate "things which are to come," especially the parts of the covenant that were "not all fulfilled" (3 Nephi 15:3-8). He reiterated that his new instructions were given by way of commandment and now constituted the "law and the prophets" (3 Nephi 15:10). Then he spoke to the disciples about their role as a light unto the people, about their relation to the other folds of Christ's sheep, and about the gathering of Israel in complete fulfillment of God's covenants with the House of Israel (see 3 Nephi 15:11-16:20).

42. Admonition to ponder. Turning again to the multitude, who now sat or stood "round about" Jesus (3 Nephi 17:1), he told them to go home and "ponder upon the things which [he had] said" (3 Nephi 17:3), for he knew they were weak and could not yet understand the full import and meaning of what he had

said. This is such a typical reaction to the temple or other sacred teachings: They appear simple at first, and we think we understand—but we do not. Only through experience and diligent, prayerful contemplation over time are the mysteries of God unfolded to us (see Alma 12:9).

43. Healing the sick. Jesus was about to leave, but when he saw the tears in the eyes of the people looking steadfastly upon him and longing for him to tarry longer with them, Jesus invited the people to bring forward any who were sick, and he healed them (see 3 Nephi 17:5-9). They all bowed down around Jesus and worshipped him, and some went forward to wash his feet with their tears (see 3 Nephi 17:10). These reciprocal spiritual outpourings set other temple precedents: the prayer roll for the sick and the washing of feet are at home in the temple as well.

44. The parents and the children. Next, the people were all invited to bring their children forward and set them around Jesus; the multitude gave way so the children could come to the center of the throng, where they surrounded Jesus, and the parents were then told to kneel around that group of children. Jesus stood in the middle, with the children around him, and the parents kneeling around them (see 3 Nephi 17:11-13). Jesus himself then knelt and uttered a marvelous prayer. So great were the things they then both saw and heard that they cannot be written (see 3 Nephi 17:14-17). I suspect that the covenant of secrecy plays a role here, which explains in part why "no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man" what Jesus said and did.

I also imagine, although one cannot know for sure, that Jesus did more than pray, for it seems that he did things which the people saw just as he spoke words that they heard. This produced unspeakable joy. First the parents heard what Jesus prayed for them, the parents: "No one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father" (3 Nephi 17:17; italics added). The adults were overcome. Jesus asked them all to arise, and he blessed them and pronounced his joy to be full (see 3 Nephi 17:18-20). He then touched the children "one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them" (3 Nephi 17:21). This was done in the presence of God (Jesus), witnesses (the parents who "bore record of it," 3 Nephi 17:21), and angels (who came down and encircled the children with fire and ministered to them, 3 Nephi 17:24). In the end, Jesus turned to the parents and said, "Behold your little ones" (3 Nephi 17:23). It seems to me that Jesus is not just inviting the parents to look at their children and admire them. Although that simple reading is possible, I would suggest that he is saying, "Behold, your little ones"—they are yours. While it cannot be said exactly what transpired that afternoon, the children apparently now belonged to the parents in a way they had not belonged before.

45. The covenant memorialized and a new name given. Next, Jesus sent the disciples for some bread and wine, commanded the people to sit down on the ground, broke bread and blessed the wine, and gave it to his disciples and then to the multitude. 87 Jesus says that the bread is to be eaten "in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you" and as "a testimony" to remember him always; and the wine, as a "witness" of willingness to keep the commandments that he had given them that day (3 Nephi 18:1-14). The people also received a new name, the name of Christ (as in Mosiah 5:8-12), as they would be "baptized in [his] name" (3 Nephi 18:5, 11), and as they prepared to "take upon them the name of [God's] Son" (Moroni 4:3).

The covenant and ceremonial functions of the sacrament here are evident: The new words of these sacrament prayers would have sounded familiar to these people, for they strongly resemble the old words used by King Benjamin at the end of his coronation and covenant renewal speech when he put his people under covenant to obey God and their new king. 88 This is yet one more way all their old things

had become marvelously new in this day with Jesus at Bountiful. Moreover, it is known for certain that these eucharistic words of Jesus became liturgical in Nephite religion; they became their sacrament prayers, spoken verbatim "according to the commandments of Christ" (Moroni 4:1) as the people continued to renew this ordinance for the next several hundred years. Although Latter-day Saints do not usually think of the sacrament in connection with the temple, this ordinance was kept holy and secret among early Christians, and it was regularly administered in the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

46. Continued worthiness required. Jesus' last instructions in the Sermon at the Temple deal with the future. He told the people to watch and pray always in their families that they might remain blessed and faithful (see 3 Nephi 18:15-21). He also gave standards of worthiness to determine who should be allowed to participate in their covenant renewals (see 3 Nephi 18:22-33). In this way, their places of worship and their future ordinances would remain holy and be a continuing means of bringing salvation.

47. Conferring the power to give the Holy Ghost. Finally, Jesus "touched with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen, one by one" and gave them the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 18:36-37). Through the events of the day, they had progressed from the lower to the higher priesthood. The words that Jesus spoke in this connection are recorded in Moroni 2:2. With this, the day being spent, a cloud overshadowed the multitude, like the cloud that covered the tabernacle of old and gave a sure sign of God's presence at his sanctuary (e.g., Exodus 40:34-38; Leviticus 16:2, 13; Numbers 9:15-22; Deuteronomy 31:15). Whereupon, Jesus ascended into heaven.

48. From Sermon to ceremony. Thus ended the first day. The incomparable Sermon at the Temple was over. It was a manifestation of divine will and presence never to be forgotten. From this experience come many things: teachings of practical ethical value; an understanding of that which was fulfilled and that which remained yet to be fulfilled; a comprehension of the continuity and transition from the old law to the new; knowledge and testimony of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ; commandments and covenants; and also a basis for religious ritual.

Out of such an experience would naturally flow sacred ceremonies, for it was typical and usual for the temple in Israel "to routinize the momentous, thus rendering it part and parcel of the ongoing religious experience of the individual Israelite and of the people, collectively." 89 Evidently, such also occurred among the Nephites. Several texts from the Sermon at the Temple are known to have been ritually intended and oriented. From the Sermon at the Temple came the Nephite liturgical prayers for baptism (see 3 Nephi 11:23-28), for the administration of the sacrament (see 3 Nephi 18:1-14; Moroni 4-5), for the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and for the ordination of priests and teachers (see Moroni 2-3).

This gives reason to believe that more of the Sermon at the Temple, perhaps much more, was ritually understood and transmitted. The words of Jesus (as many as were permissible) were written down, apparently immediately, and checked by Jesus (see 3 Nephi 23:7-9)—further indication that the Nephite disciples gave sacred and meticulous regard to each element of the Sermon at the Temple. Not all is known to us, of course, for the people were taught secret things that were "unspeakable" and "not lawful to be written" (3 Nephi 26:18), and many things were "forbidden them that they should utter" (3 Nephi 28:14). But as much as possible, they went forth and established the Church of Jesus Christ, based upon these very "words of Jesus" (3 Nephi 28:34), words that profoundly put all things into perspective and coherence. These things point toward a view of the Sermon at the Temple as a sacred experience that was recorded, revered, repeated, and institutionalized, that could be ritually represented and

reenacted for other audiences. It seems to me that something of this sort indeed occurred, for the disciples went forward to preach abroad not only words and ideas, but also dramatic events, demonstrating "things which they had both heard and seen" (3 Nephi 27:1).

Footnotes

1. By way of interest, one may compare the research of Dale C. Allison, displaying the triadic nature of much of the Sermon on the Mount, a feature present also in the Mishnah ("[The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount](#)," 429-43).
2. Hugh Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), in CWHN, 6:300 n. 10.
3. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 280.
4. See Hugh Nibley, "Sacred Vestments," F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report, 1987.
5. For shades of the Egyptian initiatory "Opening of the Mouth" ceremony, see Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 106-13.
6. Various views are summarized in Eric Werner, "'Hosanna' in the Gospels," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65 (1946): 97-122, esp. 106-11.
7. *Ibid.*, 106.
8. J. Spencer Kennard, Jr., "'Hosanna' and the Purpose of Jesus," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 (1948): 171-76.
9. G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964), 9:683-84; hereafter cited as TDNT; Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (New York: Schocken, 1970), 267.
10. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:168.
11. *Ibid.*, 1:178-81.
12. Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 30; see, generally, 26-33. "The second line of the macarism in Matt. 5:3 is, therefore, to be regarded as an eschatological verdict reached on the basis of knowledge about the fate of humankind in the afterlife. There is thus a remarkable parallel within the phenomenology of religion between the ancient Greek mysteries of Demeter and other mysteries, and Jewish apocalyptic. . . . It is for this reason that the verdict awaited at the last judgment, both in the mysteries and in Jewish apocalyptic, can already be rendered in the earthly present." *Ibid.*, 30.
13. H. Windisch, *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1951), 26-27, 87-88. Robert A. Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 415-34, argues that both factors are present in the Beatitudes, which presuppose the creation of a new relationship between man and God, implicit to which is an eschatological dimension, especially in connection with Isaiah 61.
14. Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, 33 n. 28.

15. Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1922), 1:206.
16. Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, 33 n. 28.
17. D. Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit," *Israel Exploration Journal* 10 (1960): 6.
18. *Improvement Era* 67 (December 1964): 1069-71.
19. "Salt as a Metaphor in Instructions for Discipleship," *Studia Theologica* 6 (1953): 165-66, see 165-78.
20. Discussed in Stephen D. Ricks, "Liturgy and Cosmogony: The Ritual Use of Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East," *F.A.R.M.S. Preliminary Report*, 1981. Ricks cites Arie H. Toeg "Genesis 1 and the Sabbath [Hebrew]," *Beth Miqra* 50 (1972): 290; Moshe Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple Building, and the Enthronement of the Lord [Hebrew]," *Beth Miqra* 69 (1977): 188-89; and Peter J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25-40," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977): 375-78. These articles explore the relationships between the creation account and the temple, particularly the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25-31.
21. Manfred Weise, "Mt 5:21f-ein Zeugnis sakraler Rechtsprechung in der Urgemeinde," *Zeitschrift der neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 49 (1958): 116-23.
22. P. Wemberg-Moeller, "A Semitic Idiom in Matt. V. 22," *New Testament Studies* 3 (1956): 72.
23. Ignatius uses the word "council" (synhedrion) in reference to a "council of the apostles." See *TDNT* 7:871.
24. Weise, "Mt 5:21f-ein Zeugnis sakraler Rechtsprechung in der Urgemeinde," 123.
25. J. Schattenmann, "Jesus and Pythagoras," *Kairos* 21 (1979): 215-20.
26. Helmut Koester, "Using Quintilian to Interpret Mark," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 6 (May/June 1980): 44-45; cf. 2 Nephi 1:17; 5:20; Mosiah 5:11-12.
27. *TDNT* 5:460.
28. Paul S. Minear, "Yes or No: The Demand for Honesty in the Early Church," *Novum Testamentum* 13 (1971): 1-13.
29. *Ibid.*, 4.
30. *Ibid.*, 5.
31. Minear finds that the accent originally fell, not on the ban against oaths, but on the demand for radical honesty. *Ibid.*, 3.
32. The Greek grammar in this verse is odd. "By heaven" and "by earth" are in the accusative case, leaving it unclear how to read *allon tina orkon*, which is equally in the accusative: that is, does it mean "an oath by any other thing" or "any kind of oath"? If the sense is "neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by anything in between," the meaning of James 5:12 is essentially the same as Matthew 23.

33. The bilateral covenantal nature of early Christian ordinances such as baptism and the sacrament is not well documented in the Bible, but it is in the Book of Mormon; see Richard L. Anderson, "Religious Validity: The Sacramental Covenant in 3 Nephi," F.A.R.M.S. 1988 Book of Mormon Lecture (Provo: F.A.R.M.S., 1989), reprinted in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, ed. J. Lundquist and S. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990), 2:1-51.
34. On perfection as our eternal goal, having the flaws and errors removed, see Gerald N. Lund, "I Have a Question," *Ensign* (August 1986): 39-41. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 248 n. 5, minimalizes the concept to "Be ye relatively perfect." See also W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 816-17, hereafter GELNT, giving the meanings of *teleios* as "having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect," "full-grown, mature, adult," "complete," "fully developed in a moral sense"; E. Kenneth Lee, "Hard Sayings-I," *Theology* 66 (1963): 318-20; E. Yarnold, "Teleios in St. Matthew's Gospel," *Studia Evangelica* 4, in *Texte und Untersuchungen* 102 (1968): 269-73, identifying three meanings of *teleios* in Matthew: Pharisaically perfect in keeping the laws, lacking in nothing, and fully grown.
35. This is the preferred meaning suggested in the Protestant view; see TDNT 8:73, 75.
36. Yarnold, "Teleios in St. Matthew's Gospel," 271.
37. GELNT, 817, citing sources; referring also to Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; see also Demosthenes, *De Corona* 259, in C. A. Vince, tr., *Demosthenes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 190-91, where *telousei* is translated as "initiations" into the mystery religions; TDNT 8:69.
38. TDNT 8:82; citing Hebrews 7:19; 10:1.
39. TDNT 8:83.
40. *Ibid.*, 8:85.
41. H. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* (Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1954), 8:1961, "gradibus ad sacramentorum participationem, ton hagiastaton metochen, admittebantur."
42. Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).
43. *Ibid.*, 446 (Morton Smith's translation).
44. *Ibid.*
45. John I. Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," in *Proclamation and Presence* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox, 1970), 292.
46. *Ibid.*, 281.
47. *Ibid.*, 286-92.
48. Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 35-36.
49. Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," 293 n. 135.

50. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM, 1963), 101; see also Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament*, 1:386.
51. Hugh Nibley, unpublished notes from his Sunday School class on the New Testament, on Matthew 5:48, in the F.A.R.M.S. Hugh Nibley Archive.
52. *History of the Church*, 2:312; discussed in Truman G. Madsen, "Mormonism and the New-Making Morality," James E. Talmage Lecture Series, February 24, 1971.
53. Mishnah, Shekalim 5:6.
54. G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973), 78.
55. For a broad and sensitive treatment of this subject in the biblical period, see Leon Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM, 1986).
56. In Matthew 6:6 the Greek is also singular while in 6:7-9 it is plural, although in 6:5 the Greek is plural.
57. Gordon J. Bahr, "The Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965): 155-56.
58. See Hugh W. Nibley, "The Early Christian Prayer Circle," *BYU Studies* 19 (1978): 41-78; in *CWHN* 4:45-99.
59. Bahr, "The Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church," 153.
60. *Ibid.*, 157; see also Hans Dieter Betz, "The Lord's Prayer," presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, 1988.
61. See Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 193-217, discussing the "law court patterns" in similar prayers, where one presents a plea to the divine judge, gives the facts, defends himself, and asks for judgment in his favor.
62. Hugh Nibley, unpublished notes from his Sunday School class on the New Testament, at Matthew 6:9-13, in the F.A.R.M.S. Hugh Nibley Archive.
63. *Ibid.*; see also Raymond E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer," in *New Testament Essays* (London: 1965).
64. Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 1:423, citing Mishnah, Yoma 6:2, and others.
65. *Ibid.*
66. Dale C. Allison, Jr., "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 423-45; see also Matthew 7:2, discussed above, and the threefold ask-seek-knock discussed below.
67. TDNT 1:386; Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 1:431-32.
68. Henry J. Cadbury, "The Single Eye," *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954): 71.
69. Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 21; see Matthew 5:11-12.

70. This translation offered by R. ten Kate, "Geef ¼ns heden ons 'dagelijks' brood," *Ned. Theol. Tijd.* 32 (1978): 125-39; see also GELNT, 296-97. The meaning of this cryptic word is widely debated and is by no means certain.
71. Cf. John 4, 6. Discussed also in connection with the miraculous feeding of the multitude in the forty-day literature and in 3 Nephi 20, in Hugh Nibley, "Christ among the Ruins," in *CWHN* 8:407-34.
72. GELNT, 263.
73. Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language (1828).
74. Entry for Tuesday, 15 December 1835, in Dean Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 105.
75. Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, 146.
76. H. C. van Zyl, "'n Moontlike verklaring vir Matteus 7:6 [A Possible Explanation of Matthew 7:6]," *Theol. Evang.* 15 (1982): 67-82, collapses this saying into Matthew 7:1-5 as a possible solution to the problem.
77. Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, 147.
78. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Prayers of Jesus* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1966), 125-37. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, "Do Not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs," *Expository Times* 90 (1979): 341, argues that "dogs" has a nonliteral metaphorical sense of "those who are unbaptized and therefore impure, . . . without shame," and that "holy" might originally have meant "what is precious, what is valuable."
79. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "The Oxyrhynchus Logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel according to Thomas," in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971), 371.
80. "Covenants," *Ensign* 17 (May 1987): 24.
81. The doctrine of the Two Ways was a salient teaching of the early Christians. See, e.g., Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1987), ch. 21, in *CWHN* 3:183-86, and Nibley, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, in *CWHN* 8:462-63, 550-51.
82. John M. Lundquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East," in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. T. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984), 53-76; and "Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, ed. A. Gileadi (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1988), 293-305.
83. Odes of Solomon 27:3; 35:7; 37:1; in OTP 2:759, 765-66. "The Odist refers to the early cruciform position for praying," James H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 125 n. 10. See also 1 Timothy 2:8: "I wish that men everywhere would raise holy hands." In the Greek tragedians, *hosioi cheires* are "hands which are ritually pure." Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 44.
84. D. Plooi, "The Attitude of the Outspread Hands ('Orante') in Early Christian Literature and Art," *Expository Times* 23 (1912): 199-203, 265-69. One early art work shows the figures "with the stigmata Christi in their hands." *Ibid.*, 268.

85. Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 122. See, generally, Hillers' discussion of the use of the word know in connection with ancient Near Eastern treaty terminology, 120-24.

86. Most often in the words of Jesus, the wise man (phronimos) describes the person "who has grasped the eschatological condition of man (Mt. 7:24; 24:45; 25:2, 4, 8, 9; Lk. 12:42)," not the person who is intelligent or prudent in the practical worldly sense of the word "wise." Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, 172 n. 21.

87. For further connections between this material and the forty-day literature, see Hugh W. Nibley, "Christ among the Ruins," in *CWHN* 8:407-34.

88. For a full discussion of the relations between the texts of Mosiah 5, 3 Nephi 18, and Moroni 4-5, see my article "The Nephite Sacrament Prayers: From Benjamin's Speech to Moroni 4-5," *F.A.R.M.S. Paper*, 1986.

89. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord*, 52.