Introduction

The Meaning of the Temple

The Saints have always been a temple-building people (see D&C 124:39). From the Kirtland Temple to the sacred structures of today, the Latter-day Saints have built temples wherever they have been. This great concern for sacred houses of the Lord has been shared by the people of God in past dispensations as well. "What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world?" Joseph Smith asked. "The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby he could reveal unto his people the ordinances of his house and the glories of his kingdom."

The temple was so important to the ancient Israelites and the other people of the ancient Near East that it played a prominent role not only in their religion, but also in their government, economy, art, and social structure. The Tabernacle of Moses was important to the Israelites, to the point that it served as a mobile sanctuary, carried about in their wanderings. The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem became a political and religious focal point for the kingdom of Israel under the reigns of the early Israelite kings. The temple of Herod held significance for Jesus during his mortal ministry—it was a place where he both learned and taught. Herod’s temple was also a place known to the early apostles and Christians (see Acts 2:46). The Nephites built a
temple patterned after the Temple of Solomon soon after their arrival in the New World, and it was at the temple in Bountiful that the resurrected Lord visited and taught the Nephite faithful.

The recent popularity of Hugh Nibley's *Temple and Cosmos* indicates that LDS readers today are vitally interested in temples and information related to temples. The information in this volume builds on and goes beyond the discussions in *Temple and Cosmos* by dealing with temple ritual, symbolism, sacred versus profane space, temple architecture, sacral time, temple vestments, temple building motifs, and the setting of the temple in the ancient state. In addition, this volume presents new and significant material pertaining to the temple in the Book of Mormon and temple imagery in the Revelation of John, the book of Hebrews, and the epistles of Peter.

**Definition of Temple**

Many of the chapters in this volume examine the temple from an ancient Near Eastern—and particularly Israelite—perspective. In the Old Testament the principal root from which the English word *temple* originates is *QDS*, which denotes the "separation" or "withdrawal" of sacred entities from profane things. The root *QDS* is used with reference to God (Exodus 15:11; Leviticus 20:3); God's temples (Exodus 38:24; 40:9; 2 Chronicles 29:5; Ezekiel 42:14); persons directly associated with temples, such as the priests (Leviticus 21:6) and the people of Israel (Jeremiah 2:3; Psalm 114:2); temple furniture (Exodus 30:29; 2 Chronicles 35:3); altars (Exodus 29:37; Deuteronomy 9:24); anointing oil (Exodus 30:25); incense (Exodus 30:35); priestly vestments (Leviticus 16:4); bread of the presence (1 Samuel 21:5); Jerusalem, the city of one of God's temples (Isaiah 48:2); and
holy days and festivals connected to the temple (Isaiah 58:13; Exodus 35:2).  

A second Hebrew word commonly translated as “temple” is the term bayit, “house,” which may be expressed simply as bayit, or in the explicative formula bet Elohim, “the house of God” (Judges 17:5), or bet YHWH, “the house of Yahweh” (Deuteronomy 23:19). The term “house” refers in more than one hundred instances to the Temple of Solomon and in some fifty-three instances to Ezekiel’s temple. The expression “house of the temple” (2 Chronicles 36:17) appears once in the Bible. During the late Second Temple Period the temple was often called “house of the temple” and “temple,” but more often “the house,” the “second house” (i.e., the second temple), and the “mountain of the house” (i.e., mountain of the temple).  

An early mention of the Latin word templum (from which the English temple is derived) is found in the classical literature, where Varro notes the cosmic associations of the word. The word templum signifies a “space marked out by an augur for taking observations.” Originally, an augur was a priest who participated in religious rites of fertility. The cutting of the ground by the augur consisted of an intersection of two lines at right angles. The two intersecting lines were called the cardo and decumanus, and the exact point where the lines intersected oftentimes represented the center point of the templum, known in various religious traditions as the navel of the earth, the omphalos, the cosmic mountain, the sacred tree, and the holy of holies. The two intersecting lines divided the space or area into four equal regions. Corresponding to this is the popular temple-related concept of Himmelsrichtung, the four corners of the earth, or the four cardinal directions.
Templum then dissects the land, divides it into portions or zones, and creates disjunctions and partitions between sacred space and profane space. Israel was commanded to "distinguish (lahadîl) between the holy and the profane, and between the impure and the pure" (Leviticus 10:10, translation by the author)—the temple aided them in that process.

Standing in antithesis to temple is the concept of the profane. The Latin word profanum (English "profane") literally means "before" or "outside" of the temple, formed from pro (meaning "outside") and fanum (meaning "temple"). The equivalent Hebrew word is ḥod, which, according to Jastrow, has the meaning of "outside of the sanctuary, foreign, profane, common." If the temple is the consecrated place created "by marking it out, by cutting it off from the profane space around it," then the profane space represents unconsecrated space, the area which remains after the sacred has been removed. By the time of the Second Temple period the Jews were well aware of the rigid lines that separated the sacred from the profane.

To sum up, then, the idea of the temple, as it took shape throughout its long history, accepted the express characteristics of the root *QDS and the terms bayit and templum. The temple as bayit first and foremost became a "house" where Deity "tented" or "tabernacled" among the people. It became the "House of Yahweh," where the symbols of Israelite religion—the ark of the covenant, the great altar, the lampstand, the tables of shewbread, and other sacred appurtenances and vessels—were established. The temple (*QDS) had etiological origins, a set of sacred stories that made a particular well-defined area "separate" or "withdrawn" from the surrounding profane and chaotic space. At some point in the history of the Israelite temples all things
that were directly associated with the temple—space, persons, vestments, utensils, furniture, other appurtenances, and time—became “separate” or “withdrawn” from the profane. The Israelite temples conjoined with various cosmological elements possessing four corners and a well-defined center.

The Temple—A System of Rituals and Symbols

In a number of studies, Hugh Nibley, John M. Lundquist, Mircea Eliade, Geo Widengren, and others have examined closely temple rituals and symbols. Lundquist, for instance, outlined the typological patterns extant among ancient Near Eastern temples by listing eighteen typological points. Later George E. Mendenhall suggested that Lundquist add a nineteenth type to his list. The following statement, adapted from the writings of Lundquist, presents a summary of his nineteen typological points while at the same time setting forth the rituals and symbols of the temple.

The temple is an association of symbols and practices that are connected in the ancient world with natural mountains/elevated places (the temple par excellence), edifices, and other sacral, set-apart places dedicated for the worship of God. The set of symbols and practices include, but are not exhausted by, the following: the cosmic mountain, the primordial mound, priestly officiants and their vestments, the waters of life, the tree of life, sacred architecture, and the celestial prototype of the earthly temple. These emphasize spatial orientation and the ritual calendar; the height of the mountain/building; revelation of the divine prototype to the king or prophet by Deity; the concept of ‘center,’ according to which the temple is the ideological, and in many cases the physical, center of the community; the dependency of the well-being of society on the proper attention to the temple and
to its rituals; initiation, including dramatic portrayal of
the cosmogonic myth and sacred marriage; extensive
concern for death and the afterlife; sacral (covenant­
associated) meals; revelation in the holy of holies, includ­
ing the use of the tablets of destiny; formal covenant
ceremonies in connection with the promulgation of law;
animal sacrifice; secrecy; and the extensive economic and
political impact of the temple in society. 22

Temple—Placing God and Righteous
Individuals in the Center

The temple is a sacred place that emphasizes God’s
great plan of salvation (see D&C 109:4) and Jesus Christ’s
divine atoning sacrifice, both of which were given for the
benefit and blessing of humanity. God and Jesus are the
spiritual focus of the temple—it is the place where God’s
 glory (see D&C 84:5; 109:12; Ezekiel 43:4) and Divine
Presence (see D&C 97:16–17; Habakkuk 2:20) exist. It is the
place where God dwells (see 2 Samuel 7:5; D&C 124:27).
The temple is connected with the divine name of God, for it
is called after God’s name (see Jeremiah 7:11). His name will
be there (see 1 Kings 8:29), the sacred work accomplished
there is performed in his name (see D&C 109:9, 17–19), and
the temple is built in his name (see D&C 97:15; 124:24, 40).
The temple is the “house of God” (D&C 88:119, 130), the
“house of glory” (D&C 88:119), and the “house of order”
(D&C 88:119) that is hallowed (see 1 Kings 9:3), consecrated
(see D&C 58:57; 124:44), and dedicated as a place of holiness
by God (see D&C 109:13, 20; 84:3; 109).

One chief purpose of the temple is to permit qualified
individuals, after participating in certain rituals called ges­
tures of approach23 (also called threshold rituals), to
approach the temple’s most sacred spot and there receive
great blessings from God. The temple is designed for the
benefit of mankind, for it is a “house of prayer” (D&C 88:119; Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13), a “house of fasting” (D&C 88:119), a “house of faith” (D&C 88:119), a place of revelation (see D&C 124:39), and a “house of learning” (D&C 88:119; 109:14; Jacob 1:17; cf. Luke 2:46; Matthew 12:4–8). It is a place where families are welded together by keys of authority (see D&C 128:17–18), where the Holy Ghost is manifest with great power (see D&C 109:15), and where the gifts of the Spirit can be received in great abundance (see D&C 109:36–37). It is the holy house where the pure in heart may visit (see D&C 97:15; Psalms 15, 24) and receive visitations from Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 11:1; 24:1; D&C 36:1, 8; 97:16; 110:7; Malachi 3:1).

The Saints receive power in the temple (see D&C 109:13, 22, 35). The expressions “power from on high” and “endowed with power” (see D&C 38:32, 38; 43:16; 95:8; Luke 24:49) are common scriptural formulas dealing with power and the temple, and the temple is the place where the “fulness of the priesthood” may be received (D&C 124:28).

Sacred ordinances aid individuals in the process of gaining eternal blessings from God (see D&C 124:29–31, 40). The ordinances include work for the dead (see D&C 128:28, 54), endowments (see D&C 105:33, 11–12), and others listed in Doctrine and Covenants 124:39:

your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house.
Contents of This Volume

The majority of the chapters of this volume have never been published before, and never has one book contained so many original contributions by Mormon scholars to our understanding of ancient temples. Approximately one-half of the chapters were presented at a conference sponsored by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) held in February 1993 at Brigham Young University.

The chapters in this volume have been arranged into eight sections dealing with temple systems from a variety of geographic locations, gospel dispensations, and socio-religious cultures. The first part, entitled "Reflections of the Modern Temple," features four chapters that examine aspects of the temple of the present era. Elder Marion D. Hanks, General Authority Emeritus and former president of the Salt Lake Temple, sets the tone for the entire volume as he shares his vast experience with the temples of this dispensation. He describes in precise terms the many blessings that can come from temple attendance and its import to the Latter-day community. Other chapters of this section examine Doctrine and Covenants 109 as a temple document par excellence, ask the question "who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" (and answer this question by discussing the manner in which present-day temple visitors should make significant preparations before temple participation), and show connections between the temple and the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Part 2 examines a number of temple-related concepts from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the ancient Near East. Many such temples were known to Adam, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other Old Testament prophets and the communities with which they associated.
Essays of the section present a definition of what a temple is in terms of what is shared by or is common to all temples in the ancient Near East, provide insights into how the creation story was used in the ritual setting of ancient temples in that region, point out a number of temple symbols that existed in the Garden of Eden, and compare the temple-building motifs of the ancient world that coincide to some extent with the building patterns of the Kirtland Temple.

Temple, covenant, law, and kingship are four themes found in Part 3. Chapters there show that the establishment of a temple aided the legitimization process of a newly created state in the ancient Near East; that the temple was connected to divine kingship, including coronation and enthronement ceremonies; and that the concepts of temple, covenant making, and the creation of laws in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East are intimately related.

The fourth part of the book examines the temple in the setting of the Book of Mormon and ancient America. Many authors of the Book of Mormon make both explicit and implicit references to the temple. One chapter in this section examines the religious place of the three major temples of the Book of Mormon—the temple of Nephi, the temple of Zarahemla, and the temple of Bountiful; a second discusses the temple experience of Jared as recorded in the book of Ether; and a third sets forth the significance of temples of ancient America.

Part 5 investigates the Temple of Herod from the Jewish perspective, or according to Judaism during the late Second Temple Period. This is the temple known to Jesus, John the Baptist, the twelve Apostles, and the early Saints. Sacred and profane space is compared and contrasted, and various grades of holiness, as established by the rabbis, are examined. Additionally, strands of the practices and beliefs
attached to the Second Temple system remained with Judaism throughout the centuries and were woven into the theology of early medieval Jewish mystics.

As Part 6 sets forth, the New Testament contains numerous references to both the earthly and the heavenly temples, which are mentioned on numerous occasions by the writers of the Gospels, Paul, Peter, and other New Testament writers. In addition, temple esoterica, imagery, and symbolism are hidden from many in the New Testament texts. For instance, Peter’s epistles describe a number of aspects of the temple and create inspired images of the temple scene. The book of Hebrews contains a number of teachings that are relevant to the Latter-day Saints and their understanding of the temples in this dispensation. Further, the Revelator describes the structure of the temple in heaven and explains its significance for those who accept Christ.

The part titled “The Real and the Symbolic” features three chapters. The first chapter examines a host of symbolic elements from the temple in both its ancient Near Eastern and restored settings, including, among many others, the “terrible questions” that the temple endowment answers; the great gap intended to separate temple participants from the world; the creation drama; names, signs, and seals; laws and covenants; and the veil. The second chapter asks the question “what is reality?” and answers the question by providing a complete definition of reality and its connections to the temple and to God. The final chapter of this section also investigates symbolic aspects of the ancient temple, including an examination of the concept of sacral time in light of the temple systems of the ancient Near East.

Part 8 presents two chapters that provide a word picture of sacral vestments of antiquity and their direct connection to the temple. The usage and symbolism of priestly cloth-
ing in the Hebrew Bible and other religious literature is the concern of one author; a second author examines the history, symbolism, and significance of the garment of Adam, especially in light of Jewish and Islamic traditions.

I wish to thank the dedicated and faithful LDS scholars who devoted so much time, energy, and insight into the research, writing, and public presentation of the papers that form this volume. Special thanks are also due to Michael Lyon, whose love of the temple and diligent study of its ancient forms are reflected in the illustrations that he gathered and created. Together we hope that from the contents of this volume, LDS readers will gain a greater appreciation for the temples of old and, at the same time, come to more fully understand the temples of the present era as revealed through Joseph Smith, the first Prophet of the Restoration.

DONALD W. PARRY

Notes


7. Ibid., 168.


9. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, ed. T. F. Hoad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 485. Corbin defines *templum* in similar terms: “It is significant that the Latin word *templum* originally meant a vast space, open on all sides, from which one could survey the whole surrounding landscape as far as the horizon. This is what it means to contemplate; to ‘set one’s sights on’ Heaven from the temple that defines the field of vision” (Henry Corbin, *Temple and Contemplation*, tr. Philip Sherrard [London: Islamic, 1986], 386, first published in 1980 under the title *Temple et contemplation*). See also the linguistic approach to the word *tempus* by Palmira Cipriano, *Templum* (Roma: Prima Cattedra di Glottologia Università, 1983). Further, on the etymological relationship between the words *tempus* and *templum* see Hermann Usener, *Goettername* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1929), 191–93.

10. See Albrecht Blumenthal, “Templum,” *Klio* 27 (1934): 1–13, admits that there is little known about the Roman augur. The Varronic formula on the temple may have been influenced in part by Cicero, who was an augur. Blumenthal adds that the expression “templa tescaque” denotes the observing of space. See also the comments in Kurt Latte, “Augur und Templum in der Varronischen Augurformel,” *Philologus, Zeitschrift für das Klassische Altertum* 97 (1948): 143–59.


12. William Kroll’s statement in “Mundus” in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1893), 16:1.563, demonstrates the connection between the four cardinal directions and the temple, “hence where the four regions come together.”


16. The profane consisted of unclean persons (lepers, menstruants, those with a flux), unclean places (graveyards and Gentile lands), things (vessels, animals), and time (weekdays versus Sabbath or Festivals); or to sum up, the profane consisted of things that were unrelated or unassociated with the greater temple area.

17. “Thus sacralized, the word *templum* finally came to mean the sanctuary, the sacred building known as temple, the place of a divine Presence and of the contemplation of this Presence. Thus, the Latin templum became the appropriate word with which to translate the Hebrew and Arabic expressions that we met with at the start, *Beth hamiqdash, Bayt al-Maqdis*” (Corbin, *Temple and Contemplation*, 386).

18. The Hebrew verb *šăkan*, derived from the root *ŠKN*, from which also come the related words *miškăn* ("tent," "tabernacle") and *šōkināh* ("Divine Presence"), signifies, according to Davies, to "tabernacle, dwell among" (Davies, G. Henton, *Exodus* [London: SCM Press, 1967], 197); and according to Cross, "to tent," or "to encamp" (Frank M. Cross, "The Tabernacle," *Biblical Archaeologist* 10 [Sept. 1947]: 66). The word is used with reference to Mount Sinai (see Exodus 24:16), the tabernacle (see Numbers 5:3), the Solomonic temple (see Joel 3:17, 21; Isaiah 8:18), and the temple of Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 43:9).


21. The nineteenth type, a contribution made by Mendenhall, is summarized as follows: “The temple plays a legitimizing political role in the ancient Near East” (Lundquist, “What Is a Temple?” 188), or, “The ideology of kingship in the archaic state is indelibly and incontrovertibly connected with temple building and with temple ideology” (Lundquist, “The Legitimizing Role of the Temple,” in this volume, *Temples of the Ancient World*, 274–75).

22. The definition of temple is adapted from Lundquist, “The Legitimizing Role of the Temple” and “What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology.”

23. For a treatment of gestures of approach, see Donald W. Parry, “Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil,” 275–78.