On the Sacred and the Symbolic

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The "Terrible Questions"

What are the "terrible questions"? When Clement, the earliest authentic Christian writer after the New Testament, was a student in Rome, he nearly went crazy trying to find the answers to the terrible questions. Not a professor in Rome could help him as he pestered them by asking "Do I have a life after death? Won't I exist at all? Couldn't I have existed before I was born? Won't we remember anything after this life, or is the whole vast stretch of time simply to be oblivion and silence, in which we would not only not be there, but there would be no memory of our ever having been?" Such thoughts led naturally to others: "When was the world made, what was there before it was made, or was it always there? It seemed clear to me that if it was created, it would have to pass away [dissolve], and if it passed away, what then? Would it be a matter of total oblivion and silence, or something else that we can't even imagine?"

It was not until he met Peter at a general conference in Caesarea that Clement could get some straight answers, as Peter began telling him about the premortal existence and the Council in Heaven, telling of the fall and redemption and other things related to the gospel plan. When Clement, thinking of his dead father and mother, asks, "Will those be
excluded from Christ’s kingdom who died before his min-
istry?” Peter answers: “Now, Clement, you are pressing me
to talk about some things that cannot be openly discussed,
but I will tell you as much as I am allowed to.” He then
assures Clement that his parents are not in hell, although
they never were baptized, and that ample provisions have
been made for their salvation, which Clement may be qual-
ified to learn of later.3 Plainly, the early Christians had some-
thing close to what we would call an endowment, that is, a
confidential discipline which dealt head-on with those ter-
rrible questions.

Has modern science put the questions to rest or come
up with satisfying answers? Consider the conclusion of a
recent book entitled *Black Holes* by an eminent nuclear
physicist:

> We have come to the end of our story about the uni-
> verse. It is full of violent actions and grim forebodings, of
> horrors unfolded and mysteries still to be explored. . . .
The natural reaction to such a tale is that . . . each of us
can continue to live our lives untouched by these immen-
sities and by the catastrophes to come. The satisfaction
gained from the simple round of life need be unaltered
even when seen against this vast backdrop of the uni-
verse. We may live and die without raising up our eyes
to the heavens, secure in the safety of our cotton-wool
globe. Yet that is false. We cannot divorce our lives from . . . the basic problems . . . of the universe. It is the
answers, or lack of them, which determine our actions,
even from day to day. For whatever we do, we must
somehow come to terms with the infinite before we can act [one act has another for a goal, but the highest-level
goals are always there]. . . . The highest-level goals . . . are
based on the wish to survive and for loved ones to sur-
vive. This is the highest-level goal of all. . . . The wish for
survival, in one form or another, is absolutely essential
for our continued existence.4
The conclusion then is that we, for all our modern sophistry, cannot escape the terrible questions. But “survival in one form or another,” leaving everything up in the air, is hardly a scientific solution. That carries us only as far as the cemetery at best, and C. P. Snow reflects pointedly on the plight of the greatest scientists of his generation: “Does anyone really imagine that Bertrand Russell, G. H. Hardy, Rutherford, Blackett, and the rest were bemused by cheerfulness as they faced their own individual state? In the crowd, they were the leaders; they were worshipped. But, by themselves, they believed with the same certainty that they believed in Rutherford’s atom that they were going after this life into annihilation. Against this, they only had to offer the nature of scientific activity; its complete success on its own terms. But it is whistling in the dark when they are all alone.”

The word *endowment* is well chosen in both its forms—*endowment* and *en duro*—which Joseph Smith uses interchangeably. To endow is to bestow a gift on one, to furnish or enrich with something in the nature of a gift; it is to enrich, clothe, invest, furnish. The last named is nearer to *endue*, suggesting the Greek *endyo*, “take upon oneself, clothe, to put on.” The Latter-day Saints’ endowment is in the nature of endowment insurance, in which the policy provides for the payment of an endowment at the expiration of a fixed term of years, and only when the recipient has fulfilled certain stipulations. Such ideas were new to many of the Saints. “Be assured, brethren,” said Brigham Young, there are but few, *very few* of the Elders of Israel . . . who know the *meaning* of the word *endowment*. To know, they must experience; and to experience, a temple must be built. Let me give you the definition in brief. Your
endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell."

“We come into this world weak and frail mortals,” as Charles C. Rich explained it. “We have an agency given us, with an opportunity of doing good and evil. We are invited to obey the gospel, which embraces principles that will endow the willing and obedient with exaltation and eternal life.” It is that opportunity to direct our actions toward the eternities that makes this “a glorious world, for it is here we are enabled to obtain our blessings and endowments.”

The endowment was not only necessary to the exaltation of the individual, but to the spreading of the gospel in its fullness, a spreading of light to the nations. Joseph Smith said, “A man of God should be endowed with all wisdom knowledge & understanding to teach & lead people,” and that not only in the Church, but throughout the world: they were first “to be endued” in Kirtland, “and then the Elders would go forth and each must stand for himself,” that individually and collectively the Saints might have the satisfaction of “seeing the blessings of the endowment rolling on and the kingdom increasing and spreading from sea to sea.” In order to spread the light and knowledge effectively, God has gathered “the people of God in any age of the world . . . to build unto the Lord an house” in which to receive the ordinances. “This was purposed in the mind of God before the world was, . . . to prepare them for the ordinances & endowment, washings & anointings, . . .
administered in a house prepared for the purpose” in every dispensation of the gospel.  

Something of the richness and scope of the endowment is indicated in Joseph Smith’s record of the first time it was “administered in its fullness” on May 4, 1842:

I spent the day . . . instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn, and come up and abide in the presence of Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days, . . . things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritual[ly] minded.  

Naturally, great knowledge can only be received by degrees; it is not all a single package. “Abraham’s endowment . . . was greater than that which his descendants Aaron and Levi would be allowed,” for “Abraham’s patriarchal power . . . [was] the greatest yet experienced in [the] church.” The Prophet gave the nine Brethren “the Endowment ordinances in their fullness for the first time” on the above date.  

The endowment itself is eternal and essentially unchanging, and hence there is only one: “God purposed . . . that there should not be an eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one . . . unto the same fullness and eternal glory; . . . therefore He set the ordinances to be the same forever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from heaven to man, or to send angels to reveal them.” It is an “ancient order of things” restored “for the first time in these
last days,"17 "after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, it being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, . . . but of God."18 "The gospel has always been the same; . . . Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He must have been baptized and ordained to the priesthood by the laying on of hands, etc."19 The mysteries of godliness are "the ordinances of the temple preparing us for life in the eternities," and the whole thing is endless (see D&C 19:10–12), prepared from the foundations of the world (see D&C 128:5). "It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times . . . that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories . . . be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time" (D&C 128:18). "Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized by God, there is the kingdom of God."20 To be endless is to be divine, "then shall they be gods, because they have no end, . . . because they continue" (D&C 132:20).

The Temple

The Prophet insisted emphatically that there could be no proper endowments until a house was built for them: "Finish that temple and God will fill it with power."21 The idea of the temple is a compelling one, not just spiritual, but supremely practical. If people are to come together and act in union, a specific time and place must be stipulated with the proper appointments for the planned activities. A recent collection of studies, The Temple in Antiquity, notes that all temples have in common a specific "place, cult, and personnel."22 At all times, the temple was, as it was for ancient Israel, "the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his
habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come” (Deuteronomy 12:5). It is still the place where all things are gathered in one, “appointed by the finger of the Lord, . . . even the place of the temple” (D&C 84:3–4).

The mystique of the temple lies in its extension to other worlds; it is the reflection on earth of the heavenly order, and the power that fills it comes from above. That is why all the middot, or sacred measurements, of the building have to be so carefully observed (see 1 Kings 6:2–36). So in modern times, all is “according to the pattern . . . given . . . hereafter” (D&C 94:5). How the temple is put into phase with the cosmos itself appears in the dedication. The description of the surveying of the foundation of the great temple at Edfu, still preserved on the walls there, vividly recalls a like event in St. George: “Precisely at 12 m., President Brigham Young, at whose side stood Presidents John W. Young and Daniel H. Wells, broke ground at the south-east corner, and, kneeling on that particular spot, he offered the dedicatory prayer.”23 The southeast corner, Brigham Young explained, because that is where the light comes from. Coordination of time and place by the stars and the compass set the earthly temple into the framework of the cosmos. The word temple itself expresses the idea most clearly.24

The temple is a multipurpose structure with but one object, just as the endowment is a series of ordinances all having the same end. For the Jews, there and there only “you shall bring your sacrifices. . . . And there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand to, ye and your households”; all great public events and celebrations were centered there (Deuteronomy 12:6–7). For the Latter-day Saint, it was to be a house of prayer, of fasting, of faith, of learning, of glory, of order (see D&C 88:119; 109:8). It is a school, “that all those who shall
worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith” (D&C 109:14). The Saints are to “prepare . . . for that which is to come” (D&C 1:12), “that they may be perfected in the understanding of their ministry, in theory, in principle, and in doctrine” (D&C 97:14). It is a place of refuge in a hostile world (see D&C 97:27–28), and the center from which the Brethren go forth into that world to “proclaim thy word[,] . . . seal up the law, and prepare the hearts of thy saints for all those judgments thou art about to send, in thy wrath, . . . that thy people may not faint in the day of trouble . . . that they may gather out . . . [and] come forth to Zion” (D&C 109:38–39).

Concerning the temple in the last times: “And for the fulness of times . . . I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; and also with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world” (D&C 27:13–14). The messengers came in quick succession: Moroni, Elias, John, Elijah, who bring all generations together; the patriarchs, who bring the covenants together; and finally Adam, or Michael, who brings all things together as “the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days” (D&C 27:11; cf. 27:5–14). Surprisingly, Peter, James, and John come next as we go back in time, for it was they who brought the gospel to Adam in the first place, “By whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles” (D&C 27:12). Thus the endowment, including the offices of Peter, James, and John, is already anticipated in August of the year 1830.

The Great Gap

The first step in preparing “a more gifted people” is to set them apart, to get them out of an environment in which
everything exercises a downward drag in the relentless manner of gravitation. "This world is a very wicked world," said the Prophet Joseph, "... The world grows more wicked and corrupt. In the earlier ages of the world a righteous man ... had a better chance to do good, to be believed, ... than at the present day." In our world, says the Lord, "all flesh is corrupted before me, and the powers of darkness prevail upon the earth" (D&C 38:11). This is no place to realize the blessings of one whose "design ... in making man ... was to exalt him to be as God ... The mystery, power and glory of the priesthood is so great and glorious that the angels desired to understand it and cannot." Those who wish to "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all" (D&C 76:66), must be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," as "all holy men" have been (D&C 45:12–13).

The first order God gave to his people was to remove themselves utterly from the world, to be completely different, holy, set apart, chosen, special, peculiar ('am sōgullāh—sealed), not like any other people on the face of the earth (see Deuteronomy 7:6). If "glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers" are to be theirs (D&C 128:23), they must be sanctified, con-sacr-ated, hagios, qadōšh, all of which mean set off or cut off by a fence, an insurmountable wall, an unbridgeable gap. "Assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, ... sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean" (D&C 88:74). The almost fanatical insistence of the Jewish laws on distinction between the clean and the unclean in all things has the purpose of keeping Israel from backsliding into the ways of the world. Nay, the earth itself must "be sanctified from all
unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory,” which was meant to be its permanent and proper condition (D&C 88:18, 20). Any who are not sanctified must needs “inherit another kingdom” (D&C 88:21). When “Moses . . . sought diligently to sanctify his people,” he first had to lead them into the wilderness, completely apart and by themselves (D&C 84:23). The Passover was their escape from the fleshpots of Egypt and the corruption of a world that would destroy them; it was to be eaten even with your loins girt, shoes on your feet, staves in your hands, in a hurry; and after it was finished with not a scrap left behind, the people were to hit the road and never look back (see Exodus 12:10–11). As soon as they were clear of their enemies, Moses was commanded, “Go unto the people and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes” (Exodus 19:10). In a like circumstance, the Nephites were all to be rebaptized (see 3 Nephi 11:21; 19:10–13). The exercises of the priesthood cannot begin until the whole operation is removed from ordinary things by making the sharpest possible distinction (lōhabdīl) between two worlds. The elaborate instructions of Leviticus (chapters 10 and 11), telling what the people may eat and not eat, wear and not wear, who is clean and who is not, etc., are no mere priestly officiousness, but the strenuous insistence on the difference between being in the covenant and out—there is no middle ground; nothing is more important than preserving the sanitary gap between what is holy and what is hilal in every aspect of life (see Leviticus 20, 24, 26).

The proximity of a world in which we do not belong is a constant threat; and, preceding the endowment, Adam receives the garment that is to protect him as he goes forth into the world, not only against it, but against himself, i.e., from the temptations and enticements in which he will find
himself. It is a strict arrangement, but could one ask less of a race of priests and kings (see Exodus 19:6; Revelation 1:6), "Priests and Kings, who have received . . . fulness and . . . glory, . . . after the order of Melchizedek, . . . Enoch, . . . [and the] Son" (D&C 76:56–57)?

The Creation Drama

The great epics of literature begin with the poet asking the Muse the epic questions—How did it all begin? and What is it all about? The answer here takes us back to the story of the creation, beginning with the Council in Heaven. Throughout the world, the creation story has been traditionally presented in dramatic form, beginning with the Prologue in Heaven and the triumphant Hymn of the Creation. Ever since the "indescribable, . . . unimaginable" conditions of the "'zeroth' moment," according to a recent study from the Harvard Observatory, the whole life of the universe has been one continual evocation of "Order from Chaos," in which the less organized matter takes the form of ever more organized particles and forces: from chaos, to hadrons, to photons, to leptons, to atoms and on to galaxies, stars, and, finally, to living organisms and intelligent life; how it all happened is a complete and total mystery.

The Creation is not the "instantaneous and simultaneous" appearance of everything ex nihilo, to use Aquinas’s expression, nor is it an infinitely long but random series of mindless accidents: it is both a process and a planned and directed operation. The prologue is timeless; in fact, our time was not measured unto man until Adam left the garden and started counting the hours in this dreary world (cf. Abraham 5:13). For the rest, "all things . . . are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord" (D&C 130:7). This world is to have its own time for
its inhabitants, but that is all—"Is not the reckoning of God's time, angel's time, prophet's time, and man's time, according to the planet on which they reside?" (D&C 130:4). Time has been a great stumbling block in imagining these things, but the important thing is to recognize that the whole drama of the universe is a single epic, yet it is divided, as all great sagas are (for example, the Greek dramas), into distinct episodes such as a trilogy of plays, each of them consisting of three acts, each act divided into scenes. Any one of these segments could be presented as a play in itself, yet each one is tied to all the others; and from beginning to end, they are all just parts of one story. So we must understand that a creation drama is not the absolute beginning of all things; rather we break into the action which has been going on for ages, all as part of the same mighty cycle.

Thus we need not begin the story of the earth in the era of radiation or with the first atoms or molecules; neither do we begin with creatures of the primordial ooze. What concerns us is what concerns our parent, Adam. His world begins to take form when the waters which cover the earth are divided and the dry land appears (see Genesis 1:9–10; Abraham 4:9–10). The process continues, forming mountains and hills on which the forces of erosion go to work as torrential rains, making great rivers and their tributaries. So between them, mountain building and erosion are basically responsible for that variety which gives beauty to an otherwise flat and uninteresting terrain. Then comes the breakup of the cloud-cover as first the sun and then the moon appear, miraculously occupying exactly the same amount of space in the sky as seen from the earth—a phenomenon which astronomers show to be inconceivable by mere laws of probability.
Since our focus is on the story of man, we skip over ages belonging to lower orders of things which have, in fact, according to the latest report, been almost totally exterminated, as one general ambience upon the earth has given way to another one. We come in on the show just as the great plant revolution takes place, when the angiosperms appear on the earth with revolutionary suddenness, a violent explosion of new life, as grass, flowers, shrubs, and trees appear, in that order. This new type of plant life, appearing so suddenly, made it possible for new types of animals to appear, beginning with the elephant and followed by the great grazing and browsing herds feeding upon the new cereals. These, in turn, gave rise to a thriving population of great carnivores, which preyed upon and depended upon the herds for their existence. Today, we are told that a layer of iridium deposited around the world, perhaps by meteors, marks the abrupt extinction of almost every life form at the end of the age of dinosaurs and the equally sudden appearance of totally new life forms in the tertiary, which is actually labeled the "new world," in which man last appears.\(^3\)

It would seem that man at first was something of a primitive, like a small child, living happily with the animals in a timeless world, which only receives passing notice, since his real career does not begin until he marries into the covenant (see Moses 3:21–24).\(^2\) Having been properly wed to Eve, with her he takes the great step forward by accepting God’s law, after which they enter another world, the Garden of Eden.

**Most Glorious and Beautiful**

At a very early time, mountains, hills, rivers, and streams were expressly intended to provide variety and
beauty to the scene. When the earth was finally in a proper state to receive man, the makers agreed that it was good and beautiful (see Genesis 1:25, Moses 2:25). It was meant to remain so. When Adam entered the garden, it was like receiving a marvelous Christmas or birthday present: an earth provided with all sorts of vegetable and animal life—everything that Adam could possibly need in it. He was invited to enjoy an unlimited variety of exquisite fruits, to have a good time dressing the garden and taking good care of it; he was to be happy, and along with him all the other creatures as well: “And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Moses 2:28; cf. 22). Adam, now knowing what the Lord’s purpose is toward all his creatures, is put in charge of the whole project: “Have dominion . . . over every living thing that moveth upon the [face of the] earth” (Moses 2:28). This is seen throughout the ancient literature to be a charge of grave responsibility for Adam, to supervise the increase and prosperity of all creatures (though many Latter-day Saints have treated it as a license to exterminate!). When the time comes to restore that blessed state of the earth which the gospel anticipates, then “Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; . . . Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments” (D&C 82:14).

The commandment to have joy in the garden was carried over into the world that followed, for when Adam grasped the situation, he said: “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy. . . . And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad” (Moses 5:10–11). Likewise, when the Israelites were driven out of the lush valley of the Nile, which was “like the garden of the Lord” (Isaiah 51:3), into the dry hill country, as Adam was from the garden, God
reassured them that it would still be a beautiful world if they would listen to him: "I will give you the rain . . . in his due season. . . . And I will send grass," that is, as long as you "take heed to yourselves" (Deuteronomy 11:14-16). They are to have joy and revel in the two great commandments upon which "hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40)—since, if they are fully observed, none of the other commandments are necessary: "and now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him . . . with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 10:12; italics added). The second commandment is like unto it. Since God loves all his creatures, you must do the same—you must love the stranger, the widow and the orphan, because he loves them; you must be concerned for them, because he is concerned for them (see Deuteronomy 10:18-19). Whether in Eden or out of it, everything he has given you is his (see Deuteronomy 10:14); therefore, you should give it to all in the same spirit he does, imparting freely of your substance in joy and happiness (see Deuteronomy 15:8, 18).

Abiding by the commandments should fill us with the love of giving: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments, . . . that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). So the first commandment given is "Thou shalt love . . . with all thine heart, . . . soul, and . . . might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" (Deuteronomy 6:6), failing which nothing but destruction awaits Israel, "because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things" (Deuteronomy 28:47).
When the Prophet Joseph feels to exult, he breaks into a hymn on the beauties of the natural world (see D&C 128:23). How was he brought to the sacred grove for the opening of this dispensation?

I looked upon the sun the glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their majesty through the heavens and also the stars shining in their courses and the earth also upon which I stood and the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the strength of beauty whose power and intligence in governing the things . . . are so exceeding great and marvilous even in the likeness of him who created <them> [sic].

What set him to thinking was, by contrast, the world of early nineteenth-century rural America, the world that men had made, which to us seems like an Age of Innocence: "I pondered many things in my heart concerning the sittuation of the world of mankind the contentions and divi[s]ions the wicke[d]ness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind [sic]." At the site of this tragic discrepancy, he reports, "my mind became exceedingly distressed"—it raised one of the terrible questions: "Therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go." 

The World

From his happy situation, Adam was cast out into the world. Sacrifice became the order of the day. Adam built an altar and sacrificed. The very essence of the temple in Israel was sacrifice; every major ordinance performed there was accompanied with sacrifice, and the altar was the center of every sacred activity. This is recounted in Moses 5:5–7, where we find Adam offering sacrifice in obedience to
God’s command “that they should worship the Lord their God.” He explained to the angel that his only reason for making the sacrifice was to obey the Lord’s command; and then it was explained to him that this was “a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten,” whose sacrifice had redeemed him on condition that he “repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore” (Moses 5:5–8). Repentance and sacrifice are the plan of life while we are on this earth: “the sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things.”

The Israelites were aware of this: “As Jehovah thy God has redeemed thee: therefore, I command thee this thing today” (Deuteronomy 15:15; author’s translation). The first thing Moses taught the Israelites when they were alone in the desert was that each one must give something up, a freewill offering, every individual as his heart moves him. The freewill offering is absolutely required, it cannot be evaded; what makes it free is that the individual, though he must make the sacrifice, may decide for himself how much he will give, for the purpose of the sacrifice is to test him as it did Abraham (see Exodus 25:1–2; Deuteronomy 12:6–7).

The Gospel Law

The gospel was given to Adam and Eve when, “after many days” of sacrificing, “an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam” and taught him the plan of salvation (Moses 5:6–9). Adam and Eve joyfully embraced it and taught it to their children (see Moses 5:10–12). But “Satan came among them, saying, . . . Believe it not; . . . and men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish” (Moses 5:13). The gospel entails a definite pattern or style of life best defined as the opposite of “carnal, sensual, and devilish.”
One of the charges or responsibilities connected with adherence to the gospel is reiterated in the "Olive Leaf" revelation: "Organize yourselves; ... establish a house, even a house of prayer. ... Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings" (D&C 88:119, 121).

As to light-mindedness, humor is not light-minded; it is insight into human foibles. There is nothing light-minded about the incisive use of satire often delivered with an undertone of sorrow for the foolishness of men and the absurdity of their pretenses. Such was the cutting humor of Abinadi addressing the priests of King Noah—there was nothing light-minded about it, though it might raise a chuckle. What is light-minded is kitsch, delight in shallow trivia; and the viewing of serious or tragic events with complacency or indifference. It is light-minded, as Brigham Young often observed, to take seriously and devote one's interest to modes, styles, fads, and manners of speech and deportment that are passing and trivial, without solid worth or intellectual appeal. There are times when nonsense is not light-minded, but insightful. Horace is the classic example: his good-natured and funny satire is a sad exposure of the evils and corruption of his times, so disturbingly like our own.

As to laughter, Joseph Smith had a hearty laugh that shook his whole frame; but it was a meaningful laugh, a good-humored laugh. Loud laughter is the hollow laugh, the bray, the meaningless laugh of the soundtrack or the audience responding to prompting cards, or routinely laughing at every remark made, no matter how banal, in a situation comedy. Note that "idle thoughts and ... excess of laughter" go together in D&C 88:69.
As to light speech and speaking evil, my policy is to criticize only when asked to: nothing can be gained otherwise. But politicians are fair game—the Prophet Nathan soundly denounced David though he was “the Lord’s anointed,” but it was for his private and military hanky-panky, thinking only of his own appetites and interests. Since nearly all gossip is outside the constructive frame, it qualifies as speaking evil.

As to lustful desires and unholy practices, such need no definition, one would think. Yet historically, the issue is a real one that arises from aberrations and perversions of the endowment among various “Hermetic” societies which, professing higher knowledge from above, resort to witchcraft, necromancy, and divination, with a strong leaning toward sexual license, as sanctioned and ever required by their distorted mysteries. It is surprising to find such goings-on even in sober communities such as the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies, and in the lives of some of the greatest figures of the Renaissance and Reformation. It was part of the mystique to be riotously over-sexed, and Joseph Smith has been so accused without a shadow of justification.

The scriptural injunction to secrecy (see Psalm 25:14; Amos 3:7; Proverbs 3:32) follows from the stringent necessity of keeping a discrete distance from the world. “Pearls before swine” is not an expression of contempt, but a commentary on the uselessness of giving things to people who place no value on them, have no use for them, and could only spoil them. The guarding of their secrets got the early Christians into a great deal of trouble. But if there is one thing all the “mysteries” have in common, it is the insistence on secrecy. In many cases, the only capital some secret societies have is the capacity to mystify and excite
curiosity in others—the classic instance being the Shrine of the Bottle in Rabelais’s *Pantagruel.* But for us, there is no appeal whatever in secrecy as such. Sacred things, if freely discussed in public, would invariably be distorted, vulgarized, misinterpreted beyond recognition, and so lost. “Remember that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit,” without which spirit it is a great “condemnation” (D&C 63:64). Why should not these things become the subject of frank discussion among the Saints? Because that would make them a subject of contention, and one of the first words of the Lord to the Nephites was that there should be no contention among the people (see 3 Nephi 11:29–30). Historically, religious issues becoming the subject of contention have brought endless misery and suffering; long, horrendous wars have been fought over the issues of ordinances—baptism, chrism, sacraments, consecration, tonsure, vestments; over doctrines of salvation, atonement, original sin, and so forth; and over the dates of sacred observances.

**The Ritual Enactment of Curses**

The ritual performance of a curse was anciently an imitation sacrifice. The priest shed his own blood either for the king, whom he originally represented, or for the people, whom the king also represented (see 1 Samuel 13:8–14). But as he can represent them by proxy, so he too may shed his blood by proxy by the sacrificial beast. All of this, of course, is “a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten” (Moses 5:7), which atoned for the sins of all, and thus redeems or saves from death.

In the old covenant, when the leper is declared clean and his life restored, two birds are taken: one is killed and
the other is drenched with its blood (see Leviticus 14:1–6), and then allowed to fly away free, taking the leper’s sins with it, while the patient is sprinkled with the same blood (see Leviticus 14:7). Being thus delivered from death, he washes his clothes, shaves his hair, and bathes. Then he brings two lambs, one for trespass, the price of sin (see Leviticus 14:8–12); its blood is placed upon the right ear of the one to be cleansed and upon the thumb of his right hand (see Leviticus 14:14). Then the priest takes the oil held in his left hand (see Leviticus 14:15), and after sprinkling it puts it on the right ear and right thumb of the healed person, where the blood had been, pouring the rest of the oil on his head (see Leviticus 14:17–18)—it is the oil of healing.41 This is a private version of the public rite in which Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the head of a ram, transferring their guilt to it, slay it, and then put the blood on their own thumbs and ears (see Leviticus 8:22–24). The ram is burnt for a sin-offering as an atonement (see Leviticus 9:2–7). It is clear when one thinks back to the ram that was sacrificed in the place of Isaac, Abraham’s offering of his only son, that this all looks forward to the great atoning sacrifice, the whole idea being to celebrate our redemption from death (see Exodus 13:8–10). We are told that a covenant must be made by the shedding of one’s own blood unless a substitute can be found to redeem one (see Numbers 8:13–15). In ancient times, all the sacrifices were symbolic (see Leviticus 5), and Maimonides says that in the entire history of Israel only nine heifers were really sacrificed. Certainly one of the striking things about the newly discovered Temple Scroll is the avoidance of bloody sacrifice, which takes place only at a discrete distance from the temple.

The ear has a significance in ancient Israel. When a
servant in Israel, out of pure love, wished to be sealed to a master for the rest of his life, even though free to go his own way, his bond was made sure by fixing his ear to the door with a nail driven through it (see Deuteronomy 15:16–17). It was a relatively painless operation, since there are only three nerves in the lobe of the ear. But it would be hard to find a more convincing symbol of anything fixed in a sure place (Isaiah 22:23).

One penalty is particularly interesting, because of a very early Christian writing known as the Discourse on Abbatōn, which goes back to Apostolic times in Jerusalem. It was discovered in a chest preserved from the earliest days of the Church in the house of John Mark’s mother. Timothy, the Bishop of Alexandria, while attending a conference at Jerusalem, persuaded the aged keeper of the old Church archives to show him the book. It tells how, when the council was held at the foundation of the world and Adam was chosen to preside over the project, Satan refused to recognize him, saying, “It is meet that this man Adam should come and worship me, for I existed before he came into being. And when my father [it is the Lord speaking to the apostles] saw his great pride and that his wickedness and evil doing had reached a fullness, he commanded the armies of heaven, saying remove the token [mark, document, authorization] which is in his right hand, remove his panoply [protective armor] and cast him down to earth, for his time has come.” With him go all his followers, for “he is the head over them and their names are written in his hand.” The angels were reluctant to demote so great a one “and they did not wish to remove the writing from his hand. And my father commanded them to bring a sharp sickle and cut him at breast level from shoulder to shoulder, on this side and on that, right through his body to the ver-
tbra of his shoulders." This cost him a third of his strength and rendered him forever incapable of prevailing by force. Henceforth, he gains his ends by deception and trickery, which makes him all the more dangerous.43

Names, Signs, and Seals

A token, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is "something given as the symbol and evidence of a right or privilege, upon the presentation of which the right or privilege may be exercised."44 To be more specific, a sign (signum) was both a pointing (related to zeigen, teach, didactic, etc.) and a touching (touch, take, tactile, dactyl). In particular, it was the dexter, the right hand or taking hand, and as such is universal in the dexiosis of the mysteries. For the Manichaeans, the right hand was used for bidding farewell to our heavenly parents upon leaving our primeval home and the greeting with which we shall be received when we return to it.45 Tokens were used extensively in regulating ancient social and religious gatherings; they are all means of identification, whose main purpose is security.46

The free interchange of terms, each denoting items that may be themselves interchanged, is apparent in the law of Moses: "And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign (lōdōt) unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial (lōzikkarōn) between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. . . . And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:8-9, 16).

As one approaches the camp of Israel, carefully guarded
Figure 43. As illustrated on this brass coin (A) of Domitian (c. A.D. 100), the clasped hands have always represented the recognition and acceptance of those who were once apart, as well as the giving and receiving of knowledge. On the coin, the staff of Hermes and wheat stalks held between the palms represent initiation into the mysteries. The exterior of the Salt Lake Temple displays this symbol (B) under the all-seeing eye of God on its east and west center towers.

in a dangerous environment, one first gives a sign to be seen from afar. Then, being recognized, one approaches and at closer range gives his name. This establishes closer identity. *Nomen est omen*: every name is an epithet indicating exactly in the manner of a token above a distinguishing mark, indication, or characteristic trait, which distinguishes one from all other members of the society. To receive a new name (cf. Revelation 2:17) is to receive a new role or persona, to be identified with a particular situation or association, as is indicated by surname, family name, or nickname, each placing one in a particular relationship to society. Of great importance in the earliest tradition of the human race
is the secret name by which the hero is known only to his parents; when the *femme fatale* wheedles the secret of this name from him, terrible things ensue (Re of the Sun’s Eye, Lohengrin, the Fisherman). After the sign and the name comes the closest approach, an actual handclasp or embrace.

The word *seal*, which is so important, is simply the diminutive of *sign*, *sigillum* from *signum*. It is a word rendered *peculiar* in Deuteronomy. Like the other tokens, it can represent the individual who bears the king’s seal, who bears the authority. Its particular value, however, is as a time-binder. The seal secures the right of a person to the possession of something from which he or she may be separated by space and time; it guarantees that he shall not be deprived of his claim on an object by long or distant separation. The mark on the seal is the same as that which he carries with him. And when the two are compared, his claim is established, but only if neither of the tokens has been altered. This is the control anciently exercised by tallysticks, such as the Stick of Joseph and the Stick of Judah.

Let us recall again that a servant was forever bound to his master in love and devotion by his own free will when his ear was nailed to a doorpost—signifying that he would never walk out on his lord; he was now bound by a sure sign. The nail as a sure fixing of contracts is one of the most ancient of symbols. At the center of the Germanic world was the shrine of the *Irminsul*, the central column or tent pole around which the universe revolved. Into this at a great gathering of the new year, the “year nail” was driven to secure the order of the cosmos for another age. The *Irminsul* identifies *Weltnagel* with the cosmic tent pole of the the tabernacle—the “center stake” (*yatad*) that holds all in place with the aid of the stakes driven like nails around it.
Figure 44. Symbolic clay nails inscribed with expressions of gratitude to the gods were set into the temple walls of Lagash in ornamental patterns (A) as well as in Egypt (B). The ancient god Sopdu is shown as a crowned falcon preceded by the pivot in the Pyramid Texts of Unas (C). On the Senmut astronomical ceiling (D), c. 1500 B.C., the nail symbol marks the still center around which the Bull, or Big Dipper, is fastened and revolves. Magical figures adorn this bronze nail (E) from Pergamum (c. A.D. 200).
Figure 45. To celebrate the mystery of the world pillar, the ancient Egyptians erected a pole (A) crowned with a miniature temple of the god Min. The Irminsul (B) was a stylized tree pillar worshiped by the Saxons at Marsberg. It was cut down by Charlemagne in A.D. 772. The Totonac Indians of Mexico still perform a ceremony (C) in which the voladores, revolving dancers hanging from ropes, symbolize the four seasons of the circling year. In Japan, villagers still erect ōtaimatsu of reed and bamboo (D) on their temple grounds. After the festival, these symbolic pillars are burned, thus completing the cycle of creation to dissolution.
The earliest temples of Mesopotamia have huge clay nails placed into their walls to ensure stability both architecturally and symbolically. In Egyptian, the archaic nail symbol stands for Sirius and the Sothic Cycle as well as Sopdu, the turning point of the cosmic cycle, the moment of the revival of life in the universe. In the royal tent or temple or Tabernacle of the camp of Israel, the central pole of the tent was commonly identified with the pole of the heavens, and the tent itself with the Weltenmantel or expanse of the firmament. What kept the central stake or pole of Zion in place were the pegs, stakes, or nails driven around it to hold the ropes firmly in place.

The Law of Consecration

One important covenant that will someday govern life on earth is the law of consecration. “No covenant was ever given more easy to understand,” said Brigham Young, so when the Saints ignore it, they do it consciously. Yet it is this law to which the related steps—the law of God, the law of sacrifice, and the law of the gospel—are meant to lead us. Reluctance to fulfill this promise, the hardest of all to observe, was foreseen from the first: “If you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you” (D&C 78:7). And that for the purpose and intent “that you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things” (D&C 78:5–6).

The extreme importance of this law must be stressed, the more so since it is not well received: “And let every man deal honestly, and be alike among this people, and receive
alike, that ye may be one, even as I have commanded you” 
(D&C 51:9). In return for this, the Lord guarantees the pros­
perity of the land in ancient as in modern times. And the 
command is to “organize my kingdom upon the conse­
crated land” (D&C 103:35). The land itself is consecrated for 
“an everlasting order for the benefit of my church, and for 
the salvation of men until I come” (D&C 104:1). The law 
will be an economic arrangement to tide us through—“in 
your temporal things you shall be equal” (D&C 70:14); it 
will be a perfectly safe undertaking, since it will have the 
Lord’s guarantee that those who will be observing it 
“should be blessed with a multiplicity of blessings,” even 
as in ancient Israel (D&C 104:2). One day we will be 
required to live the law: “It is contrary to the will and com­
mmandment of God that those who receive not their inheri­
tance by consecration ... should have their names enrolled 
with the people of God” (D&C 85:3). According to the 
Prophet Joseph: “When we consecrate our property to the 
Lord it is to administer to the wants of the poor and needy, 
for this is the law of God.”

The basic principles set forth are (1) insistence on 
absolute equality, and (2) the importance of receiving it by 
covenant, not as a suggestion or proposition, but as a bind­
ing contract that cannot be broken. As in Israel, when “a 
tribute of a freewill offering” was required of every man “as 
he is able” (Deuteronomy 16:10, 17), it was in recognition of 
blessings received. The spirit of the thing is all-important; 
in doing this, you and every single member of the commu­
nity, including strangers, must join together and be happy 
as one big happy family (see Deuteronomy 16:10–11). 
Remembering Abraham, all are to “rejoice in every good 
thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and 
unto thine house . . . and [to] the Levite, and the stranger
that is among you . . . [that] the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow . . . may eat within thy gates, and be filled” (Deuteronomy 26:11–12). At that time you will say, “I have brought away the things of my house which have been sanctified (consecrated), and also have given them to the Levite, stranger, fatherless, widow, according to all thy commandments” (cf. Deuteronomy 26:13). All must share and share equally, and if they do this not grudgingly but “with all your heart and soul, . . . as you have promised and covenanted this day, you will be his peculiar [sealed] people, set apart, the wonder of other nations, that you may be a holy people, as he has said” (cf. Deuteronomy 26:16–19; 28:46). To preserve the spirit and letter of consecration at all times, no Israelite might charge interest on a loan, and all were bound by “the Lord’s release” to cancel all debts every seven years (Deuteronomy 15:1–3). And don’t worry about losing your capital, because God will guarantee it, “for the Lord shall greatly bless thee” if you do it (Deuteronomy 15:4).

The Saints were “bound together by a bond and covenant that cannot be broken by transgression “ (D&C 82:11). “And it shall be done according to the laws of the Lord”; it is “for your good” whatever you may think about it (D&C 82:15–16), the basic rule will be that “you are to be equal . . . to have equal claims on the properties, . . . every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just” (D&C 82:17; cf. 2 Timothy 5:6). No one can deny the tenor and meaning of D&C 38: “The poor have complained before me. . . . I am no respecter of persons. And I have made the earth rich . . . and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey” (vv. 16–18). “Wherefore, hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye
shall have no laws but my laws, . . . and let every man esteem his brother as himself” (D&C 38:22, 24). “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). D&C 42:31–32 is even stronger than this.

Following the great endowment bestowed by Christ himself on the Nephites (cf. 3 Nephi), the people enjoyed almost four generations of life on earth as it was meant to be: “And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:3). So it was with the Saints in the days of the Apostles who had been instructed to ask God outright, “give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11), and rejoiced in having “all things common” (Acts 4:32).

Equality and humility are what the law of consecration requires and what it begets. “In order to receive the Endowment,” said the Prophet in 1835, the brethren should “prepare the[i]r hearts in all humility for an endowment with power from on high.” Indeed, what later held up the giving of the endowment “concerning the Twelve” was that “they are under condemnation, because they have not been sufficiently humble in my sight, and in consequence of their covetous desires, in that they have not dealt equally with each other in the division of the moneys which came into their hands.” It had been a “grievous sin” that they should consider themselves unequal, and they were told that there would be no endowment for those who make invidious comparison or “watch for iniquity.”

Jewish authorities, contemplating today the return of a temple to Jerusalem, are particularly worried that the old elitism of the priesthood will cause mischief and jealousy. But under the present order, there is no rank whatever in the temple. “Under the Levitical order,” Joseph Smith
explained, "only the High Priest can enter the veil, but through the Melchizedek order, all men who prove worthy may be admitted into the presence of the Lord." The difference is an enormous one; it is the magnanimous principle behind our work for the dead: "In my Father's kingdom are many kingdoms in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint heirs with me. I do not believe the Methodist doctrine of sending honest men, and noble minded men to hell, . . . but I have an order of things to save the poor fellows at any rate, and get them saved for I will send men to preach to them in prison and save them if I can." It is all in the spirit of God's own work; his infinite work and glory is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man," to share everything he can with others (Moses 1:39).

"For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in these things" (D&C 104:6)

The children of Israel were told that if they kept the law of consecration, they would be a sign and a wonder to the nations (see Deuteronomy 26:18–19; 28:1–14); but if they did not keep it, they would be another kind of sign and wonder: "They shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things" (Deuteronomy 28:46–47). Never forget, they are warned, that all they have comes from one source—they are never to get the idea that they have earned it, "lest when thou hast eaten and art full, . . . and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, . . . and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:12–13, 17). And no one is to think, "for my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; . . . not for thy righteousness" (Deuteronomy
9:4–5, 13). When the Nephites fell from grace, they kept right on building and adorning their churches and prospering greatly, "and from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them" (4 Nephi 1:25). Though one may prosper under other schools of economy, that is not the way the Lord wants it, and the Nephites were preparing themselves for the wars of extinction that lay ahead.

One may refuse to accept the law of consecration without offense, but having once accepted it, one must follow its principles or fall under the condemnation of God. "Inasmuch as some of my servants have not kept the commandment, but have broken the covenant, . . . I have cursed them with a very sore and grievous curse" (D&C 104:4). Their acceptance of the covenant was only with feigned words, while they followed the way of covetousness. It is vain to rationalize and make special cases, for "none are exempt from this law who belong to the church" (D&C 70:10). Much economic sophistry has gone into evading the terms of this agreement, and it was on this point that the Prophet said, "Those who limit the designs of God as concerted by the grand council [of heaven] cannot obtain the Knowledge of God & I do not know but I may say they will drink in the Damnation of their souls." Satan concentrates his efforts on this particular objective, using covetousness as his infallible weapon. Sex runs a very poor second in the race with greed when it comes to corrupting the hearts of men and turning them away from God, as we learn in the Enoch literature. When the Saints were told "to prepare and organize [themselves] by a bond or everlasting covenant that cannot be broken," they were also told that "otherwise Satan seeketh to turn their hearts away from the truth, that they become blinded and understand not the things which are
prepared for them” (D&C 78:10–11). And when the Brethren engaged in what they considered shrewd financial practices, the Lord spoke, “Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, . . . for what is property unto me? saith the Lord” (D&C 117:4). As to the properties in Kirtland—let them go! “Have I not made the earth? Do I not hold the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth? Therefore, will I not make solitary places . . . to bring forth in abundance? . . . Is there not room enough on the mountains . . . or the land where Adam dwelt, that you should covet that which is but the drop?” (D&C 117:6–8). The Lord ends this admonition with a stinging rebuke: Let them “be ashamed of . . . all their secret abominations, and of all [their] littleness of soul before me” (D&C 117:11).

Prayer

Prayer is designed to bring about a perfect union of minds and concentration of intelligence on a single object. In the direst straits, the Saints are told they can overcome if they “remain steadfast in [their] minds in solemnity and [in] the spirit of prayer” (D&C 84:61). This steadfastness requires that intense concentration and unity of thought on which the Egyptians placed such store in their temples; indeed, they felt that the continued existence of the universe itself somehow depended on unflagging mental effort on the part of those whose awareness made it a reality.

Everyone is aware that the power of thought is important on solemn occasions; but it is also demanding and exhausting, and most of the cults have traditionally taken an easier way, urging the mind to go all out by mind-altering drugs—by peyote, mushrooms, opium, marijuana, etc.; by tantric spells, yoga, drums, incense, dancing, chanting to the heavy beat; and by even more dignified
procedures like pageantry, lights, vestments, temple bells, incense, litanies, spectacles, and pomp and circumstance. These have, as John Chrysostom pointed out long ago, a definite narcotic effect, no matter how mild. He warns against even statuary and paintings in the churches as at best distractions. Edward Lytton's once-famous novel Zanoni gives a vivid picture of the extremes to which such shenanigans can be carried—he is writing particularly of the Masons. But the spirit of the gospel is intelligence, and nothing is more important than the preservation of perfect sobriety throughout, so that any manifestations that should occur may not be attributed to tricks or narcotics.

There have been many manifestations in the temples, but one does not expect them as the order of the day. Heavenly visitors have always been few and far between, for the purpose of our being here is to test us when we are left on our own. The founders of the dispensations have a virtual monopoly on the major visitations. And that is as it should be. One comet in a hundred years is quite adequate to prove beyond a doubt that comets really exist; it is not necessary to repeat their visitations every month. So the Prophet can tell the people, "I testify that no man has power to reveal it, but myself, things in heaven, in earth and in hell—and all shut their mouths for the future." Do we need more? Yes, the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is available to everyone on demand.

The Sanctity of Sacred Things

To reveal sacred things is to hold their true value in contempt, to despise and throw away the endowment, the only plan ever offered mankind for eternal happiness. "There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the Gospel . . . which, if sinned against, the apostate is left
naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing." They who turn away from the covenants "become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth." "He that will not receive the greater light, must have taken away from him all the light which he hath; and if the light which is in you become darkness, behold, how great is that darkness!"

This was exactly the situation of the infamous "Watchers" in the time of Enoch. When "the works of darkness began to prevail among all the sons of men," a sort of crash-program was undertaken to stem the tide of apostasy, as "the Gospel began to be preached . . . by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God," as well as earthly ministers (Moses 5:55, 58). According to the very ancient, firmly established, and widely documented tradition, some of those angels who came down to call men to repentance as "Watchers"—to oversee and report conditions on earth—allowed themselves to be seduced by the daughters of men, forgot their calling, and fell from grace. Their unspeakable sin was to use the sacred in an unhallowed connection, even as Cain did, claiming that since they had all the ordinances, their activities were authorized of heaven. A general principle is stated in the Zohar, and with equal clarity by Joseph Smith, that "whenever the Holy One . . . allowed the deep mysteries of wisdom to be brought down into the world, mankind were corrupted by them and attempted to declare war on God." Thus the Watchers "used the great knowledge entrusted to them to establish an order of things on earth in direct contradiction of what was intended by God: 'There will be false priesthoods in the days of Seth,' Adam prophesied, and 'God will be angry with their attempts to surpass his power.'"
angels and all the race of men will use His name falsely, for
decreation.” “Woe unto you who . . . pervert the eternal
covenant, and reckon yourselves sinless!” was said of
them. 67 “Their ruin is accomplished because they have
learnt all the secrets of the angels”; 68 “they have received the
ordinances, but have removed themselves from the way of
life.” “In the days of my fathers,” says Enoch, “they trans­
gressed . . . from the Covenant of Heaven, . . . sinned and
betrayed the ethos [law of the gospel]; . . . they also married
and bore children, not according to the spiritual order, but
by the carnal order only.” 69 “Woe unto you who . . . lead
many astray by [your] lies, . . . who twist the true accounts
and wrest the eternal covenant, and rationalize that you are
without sin.” 70 The punishment of the watchers, like that of
Cain, was to be rejected by both heaven and earth, and
there are many accounts of how their great leaders
remained suspended, hanging between heaven and earth
(in the Book of Mormon fashion; cf. Alma 1:15) until the day
of judgment.

The endowment is either the real thing or it is nothing,
and if it is real or if I accept the probability that it is, I cannot
compromise in the least degree. Inter finitum et infinitum non
est proportio—eternal life is an all-or-nothing proposition;
one does not arrange to enjoy a brief stay in eternity or to
bask in the transient glory of a special-effects heaven.

It has been a subject of wonder to students of ancient
religion how well the secrets of the old mysteries were kept,
though they were the heart of the religious experience and
dominated thought and action, and though every important
person in late antiquity was initiated into the mysteries, yet
to this day the literature has given no certain account of
what went on. There is constant reference to them in the
drama, both tragic and comic, and in poetry (Pindar) and
especially in Plato. But it is always discreetly veiled: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” In the celebrated cases when the doings of the mysteries were exposed in tipsy or playful carouse, as in the case of Alcibiades, the outcome was disastrous and the guilty parties discredited for life. Actually, in revealing sacred things one gives away nothing but one’s own integrity, though that is everything. It is significant that none of the “frightful disclosures” of the temple ordinances made in the sensational literature of the nineteenth century had the expected impact—they all fizzled, as indeed they must, since to one who does not understand their significance, these sacred things have no interest at all.

In those cases where secrecy and mystification are almost the whole stock and trade of a secret society or lodge, it is understandable that much should be made of it. In the Old Kingdom of Egypt during a revolution, “the King’s Secret,” which gave him his authority and power, was exposed to common view, whereupon the kingdom collapsed. For it turned out that the awesome king’s secret was that there was no secret! It had been lost.

The Veil of the Temple

Throughout the ancient world, the veil of the temple is the barrier between ourselves and both the hidden mysteries of the temple and the boundless expanses of cosmic space beyond. An example of the former is “the veil of Isis,” which no man has lifted, and of the latter is the veil that hangs across the back of the last chamber in the Egyptian temple, beyond which lie eternity and the worlds beyond. The Jewish literature often mentions the veils between the worlds, and the book of Moses clearly recalls the tradition of the book of Enoch: “Millions of earths like this . . . would
Figure 46. Deep under his southern tomb, Djoser had his artists create a replica of a rolled reed mat (A) used as a door covering in imperishable stone and glazed tile. This “spirit door” served as a symbolic entrance into the next world, such as this doubled version in the temple Seti I built for Osiris at Abydos (B). The most sacred of the temple ceremonies were performed in front of this so-called “spirit door,” the rolled-up veil dividing this world from the next.
not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still” (Moses 7:30).

In the ancient temples, the partition is a veil rather than a wall, to show that it is not absolutely impenetrable and that messengers can pass through it, that dim sights and distant sounds might be detected, that we are not wholly cut off from our heavenly home unless we choose to be. The idea is set forth in a passage well known to Latter-day Saints: “The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened” (D&C 110:1), and this while standing before the real veil. It is the place of signum et responsum to establish the identity and bona fides of one who wishes to pass. We find it in the oldest Egyptian and Babylonian texts, and it plays an important part in the Egyptian funerary literature and especially in Facsimile 2 to the book of Abraham. In the Shabako text, the oldest of all religious writings, the hero in the first step of his progress passes through the veil after answering the questions and goes on to be received into the arms of his father and mount his throne.

Early in this century, Sir Aurel Stein discovered some graves in a seventh-century cemetery. In one of the tomb chambers, two veils were found, one still hanging suspended from wooden pegs; they were near life size and showed the king and queen in a formal embrace at the veil, the king holding up the square on the right side and the queen holding the compass on the left. Located at the navel was the sun as the center of the system, from which twelve spokes extended to the white dots in the circle, indicating the twelve-month course of the year, or the life cycle. At the side of the two intertwined figures appears the Big Dipper. It was at once recognized that the scene represents the sacred marriage of the king and queen at the New Year, celebrating the new age and inaugurating the new life cycle.
ON THE SACRED AND THE SYMBOLIC

Figure 47. Though Fan Yen-Shih accepted a Buddhist name and was praised as a good Confucian bureaucrat, he also included Taoist paintings of the First Ancestors. Fu Hsi on the right holds a square, and his sister/wife Nü-wa holds up a compass. The encircling constellations place them at the time of creation when she drew the circle of Heaven and he ruled the four-cornered earth.

with the drama of creation. The compass and square are viewed as the instruments marking out both the pattern of the universe and the foundations of the earth.\textsuperscript{76}

The Archaic Order

One can easily detect familiar echoes of the endowment in religious institutions and practices throughout the world. The phenomenon is readily explained by Joseph Smith; and students of comparative religion have now come around to the same conclusion, namely, that the real endowment has
been on earth from time to time and has also been spread abroad in corrupted forms so that fragments from all parts of the world can be traced back to common beginnings. "It is reasonable to suppose," wrote Joseph Smith, "that man departed from the first teachings, or instructions which he received from heaven in the first age, and refused by his disobedience to be governed by them." But . . . man was not able himself to erect a system or plan with power sufficient to free him from a destruction which awaited him; hence it was necessary to put him on the track again, as "from time to time these glad tidings were sounded in the ears of men in different ages of the world." Certainly God spoke to [Abel]: . . . and if He did, would He not . . . deliver to him the whole plan of the Gospel? . . . And if Abel was taught of the coming of the Son of God, was he not taught also of His ordinances? The cosmic connection is never missing from this archaic knowledge, as is well known today, and the Prophet wrote, "For our own part we cannot believe that the ancients in all ages were so ignorant of the system of heaven as many suppose." He then went on to show how Abraham too had the endowment. For the Prophet Joseph, the patriarchal priesthood was "this 'holy order' of parents and children back to Adam." "The endowment you are so anxious about you cannot comprehend now, nor could Gabriel explain it to the understanding of your dark minds."

Because of the inevitable tendency of men to stray "as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7), the tradition has been contaminated. Thus, according to Joseph Smith, "Free Masonry, as at present, [is] the apostate endowments, as sectarian religion [is] the apostate religion." Some surviving institutions, including the "old Catholic Church," are deserving of respect, though without authority. "Bro Joseph ses
Masonry was taken from the Priesthood, but has become
degenerated, but many things are perfect [sic]." 

In view of all this, it is instructive to view particular cases in which the most impressive survivals of the old endowment shine through clearly; usually it is those things which appear to conventional religion and scholarship incongruous, meaningless, or absurd. The Old Testament itself is full of such things.

Traces in the Old Testament

There is no need to look hard in Genesis, for the story of Adam is the endowment. However, in recent years, a large corpus of early Adam texts has come forth in which the endowment theme is paramount. A better example to illustrate the pervasive nature of the theme is the case of Noah, which parallels that of Adam in a remarkable way.

The Case of Noah

In Genesis 7:7–9, Noah registered the animals two by two, even as Adam named them. From then on, like Adam (see Moses 3:19–20), Noah lived intimately with the animals (Genesis 7:16; 8:1). After the Flood, Noah found himself in a new world (see Genesis 7:23–8:19), even as Adam did before and after the Fall. In this new world, God commanded every form of life to “be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth,” just as in Eden (Genesis 8:17). After the Flood, Noah found himself in a lone and desolate world (Genesis 7:23), and, like Adam, proceeded to build an altar, sacrificing every clean beast and fowl (see Genesis 8:20). God accepted the sacrifice and promised that the perennial cycle of life, like the course of the spheres, would continue henceforward (see Genesis 8:21–22). Like Adam’s offspring, Noah’s promptly departed from righteousness, “for the
imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite . . . every thing living" (Genesis 8:21).

After having commanded the creatures to multiply, God gave the same order to Noah that he gave to Adam—to have dominion and be responsible for the felicity of those creatures (see Genesis 9:1–2). Meat was added to Noah's diet, as grain was to Adam's (who had been a fruit gatherer in the garden), but only to be used sparingly (see Genesis 9:3–4). There is to be no enmity between man and beast, or between man and man. For just as surely as one man sheds the blood of another, another man will shed his blood (cf. Genesis 9:6). This is not a commandment to avenge blood, but a warning against the cycle of blood and horror, the eternal vendetta with which Satan rules the world. The law of Moses sought to check it by cities of refuge and mandatory cooling-off periods (see Numbers 35:11). The shedding of blood is a mortal offense to the earth itself (see Genesis 9:4–5), for her purpose is to "bring forth abundantly"; and to take life is to reverse the order for which the earth was created (see Genesis 9:7; Moses 7:48). In making this covenant with Noah and his posterity (see Genesis 9:11), God set up a sign (oath), a sign visible in the distance (see Genesis 9:12–17), visible to both parties in the covenant and for the benefit of "every living creature" (Adam's "every form of life"; Genesis 9:15). For God is considerate of every living creature and of all living flesh that is upon the earth (see Genesis 9:13–17).

Even as Adam's "sons and daughters . . . began to divide two and two in the land" (Moses 5:3), so the sons of Noah spread across the earth to populate it while Noah, exactly like Adam, takes to gardening (see Genesis 9:20). He celebrated the most ancient of all recorded festivals, the wine feast of intoxication that celebrates the ending of the
Flood. Noah, like Adam, enters his new world clothed with a special garment, which garment enjoys a conspicuous place in the ancient literature. Genesis 9:23 tells us that Shem and Japheth took the garment and both tried it on; then they returned and put it back on Noah, being careful to look away. In a wealth of very old texts, this is identified both as the garment of skins given to Adam upon leaving the garden and the garment which gave him priesthood and kingship over all creatures. When Ham wore the garment, the animals, seeing it, did obeisance to him, thinking that his was the same priesthood and kingship as Adam. And thus he deceived them and introduced the false priesthood into the world.

**The Case of Jacob**

It was at Beth-el, the house of God, that Jacob had his vision, set up his stone circle and altar, and received the promise of progeny that was given to Abraham as well as a title to the promised land; he declared the place to be very special, “none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:17). There he made the covenant that his children thereafter made at the temple, that he would pay a tithe if God would give him this life’s necessities and grant that he return again to the presence of his Father (see Genesis 28:20–22). According to the Zohar, Abraham had been through all this before at the same place, where later Jacob made a covenant with Laban in the same manner: Let us make a covenant between us, properly recorded and notarized (cf. Genesis 31:44). So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar, while his brethren made a stone circle there and had a feast (cf. Genesis 31:45–46). The covenants and bonds were completed: This stone witnesses in the middle between you and me today, says Laban (cf.
Genesis 31:48), the middle being that of the circle in which each party claimed a half (see 2 Samuel 2:13–15). "Therefore was the name of it called Galeed" (Gal-ed, the circle of the sign or token—Genesis 31:48). Then Jacob made a sacrifice and held a feast on the mountain, and they spent all night in the camp (see Genesis 31:54)—anticipating Sinai. The next morning Laban went his way, but Jacob had a strange experience—his covenant was no longer to be with a man: Angels were in the place, and when he saw them he said, God's camp must be here (cf. Genesis 32:1–2). Next comes his wrestling with the Lord, which so perplexed the Doctors that they changed the Lord to an angel, but "when one considers that the word conventionally translated by 'wrestled' (yeaveq) can just as well mean 'embrace,' and that it was in this ritual embrace that Jacob received a new name and the bestowal of priestly and kingly power at sunrise"" (cf. Genesis 32:24–30), the dawn of a new day, there is plainly more here than the Doctors perceived.

Jacob represents here the figure of Adam, the primordial man, and "the place where the dream of Jacob occurred is the place where Adam was created, namely, the place of the future Temple and the centre of the earth." "And Jacob called the place Peniel, because I have seen Eloheim face to face and my spirit [nefesh, soul] has been saved [survived]." At that moment, the sun rose as he crossed the water Penuel, limping on his thigh (cf. Genesis 32:30–31).

Later Jacob was instructed to resume operations on the site of the temple (Beth-el), settling there and making an altar to the God who had appeared to him and delivered him from the hand of Esau (see Genesis 35:1). He was to establish a holy society, a little Zion on the spot, instructing all his people to renounce the alien gods, wash themselves and change their garments (see Genesis 35:2). Then they
were ready: “Let us arise and go up to the house of the Lord, and there I will make a sacrifice to the God who answered me in the day of my distress” (cf. Genesis 35:3). There seemed to be repetitions of this altar building and sacrificing, always for the same reason—at a place where God had appeared and saved Jacob; the same commandments are given to him as were to Adam and Abraham on like occasions (see Genesis 35:7, 9–12).

According to a study of Altmann, Jacob actually repeats the entire experience of Adam, being visited by heavenly messengers who instruct him in the ordinances. The sleeping Jacob is “Adam who has forgot his image,” for “in his earthly existence, Jacob, who stands for Man, is sunk into sleep, which means he has become forgetful of his image and counterpart upon the Divine Throne.” The visitation repeats the awakening of the preexistent Adam, “as it were, pushed out from the Chariot of the King. He is asleep here below.” 91 This is the “Sem-sleep” of the Egyptian temple rites, 92 being pushed from the chariot and being thrust forth from the Merkavah, the presence of God or one’s heavenly home.

**The Case of Adam**

In the noncanonical sources, Adam appears in a very different light from the one who ate the fruit—“whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe.” 93 A few passages from a large literature must suffice. A reluctant awakening came in our own generation with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, whose purpose is to prepare a community of pious sectaries for the return of “a true temple to Judah and Israel,” and setting forth the nature of that temple and the ordinances and covenants that should go with it. The scrolls show us that the scribes and Pharisees
had indeed taken over and changed things at Jerusalem. A new Adam emerges in the much older text, leading the Saints to the desert: “For unto you is the wisdom of the Sons of Heaven, to give the perfect way of understanding. For God has chosen them for the eternal covenant, so theirs is all the glory of Adam.”94 “As Adam brought his sacrifice,” according to this tradition, “he put on the vestments of the high priest. . . . In the Holy Writ, it is said, ‘God created man in his image,’ it means [that very] Adam, who was anointed as a high priest, and designated to serve his Maker.”95 “When he [the High Priest, Simeon] put on his glorious robes and clothed himself in perfect splendor,” says Ben Sirach, “(then) all flesh hastened together and fell upon their faces to the earth, to worship before the Most High, . . . for his was the glory of Adam.”96 The rabbis, on the other hand, insist that the glorification of Adam was “a tragic mistake,” in spite of such passages as Psalms 8:6 and Ezekiel 28:12–14, which probably arose from Christian “deification of man.”97 It was this Adam of the Jews which appealed to the Christians, who got rid of it when their leaders got the Alexandrian fever. This we see in such transitional works as 2 Enoch, which tells us that when Satan saw Adam in the Garden, “He understood that I was going to create another world, because Adam was the Lord of the earth to rule and control it; . . . so he attacked him through Eve and seduced her without further trying to tempt Adam.”98 “On the day that Adam went forth from the Garden, he made an offering to the Lord at sunrise, and from that day forth he covered his shame”—this from Jubilees, a book claimed by both Jews and Christians.99

In the earliest Christian writings, Peter discusses the case of Adam with Clement. “You said the first man was a prophet,” says Clement, “but you didn’t say that he was
anointed. But if he was not anointed a prophet, he could not have been a prophet, could he?" To this Peter answered, smiling, "If the first man prophesied, it is certain that he was anointed, . . . though the scripture does not tell us about that; . . . what you should have asked is how, being the first man, he could have been anointed with the anointing of Aaron, who in this world was the first to receive the anointing of the special priesthood of Aaron after the pattern of the other anointing. . . . He was a leader of the people and as such a priest and a king \textit{[rex primitiarum]}. This was a type of other things." Clement: "Don't try to fool me, Peter, for, of course, Adam was not anointed with real oil, but with some pure and eternal oil made by God," etc. Here he falls into the trap that caught all the Christians and Jews thereafter, the obsession with a purely "spiritual" temple. But Peter is not trying to fool him (this is in the playful style of a Platonic dialogue). "And Peter at this appeared indignant: Do you think, Clement, that we can know everything before the time? . . . I can give you the answer, but I shall tell you about these things only when you are ready to hear them!" Among the questions thus postponed was how Clement's dead father and mother were to be saved without having embraced the gospel.

\textit{The Case of Enoch}

Nothing better illustrates the hostility of the Doctors—Jewish and Christian—to the temple and the endowment than the case of Enoch, whose great prominence in the early scriptures was all but effaced by their efforts. The Enoch literature has been discovered since the middle of the nineteenth century. A consideration of the name and office of Enoch should suffice to show his intimate ties with the endowment.
It is usual to derive the name of Enoch from the root *HNK, meaning basically to taste, hence to test, "to give attention to"; from this is derived, in turn, the idea of teaching or training, designating Enoch as "the first vehicle of . . . the genuine gnosis." A related meaning is "to consecrate," making Enoch "the consecrated one, from whom authentic solutions [are] to be expected touching the secrets of this world and the world beyond." This puts the figure of Enoch, A. Caquot avers, in the center of a study of matters dealing with initiation in the literature of Israel, notably the Dead Sea Scrolls. Enoch is a great Initiate who becomes the great Initiator. He is on another level of existence, and his work is to conduct others there. A recent study which declares the Hebrew meaning of the root "unknown" suggests the Canaanitish khanaku, "Follower" (Gefolgsmann), i.e., in the way of the initiate. The idea was strengthened by "the great role which Enoch plays in Qumran," with its impressive "prophetic initiation." The old Hebrew book of Enoch bore the title of Hekhalot, referring to the various chambers or stages of initiation in the temple. Enoch, having reached the final stage, becomes the Metatron to initiate and guide others. "I will not say but what Enoch had Temples and officiated therein," said Brigham Young, "but we have no account of it." Today we have many such accounts.

The Case of Abraham

Today Abraham is recognized as a pivotal figure in the ordinances of the temple. The theme of Abraham's life is sacrifice (see D&C 132:49–50), and the motive and reward of the endowment is movingly set forth at the beginning of the book of Abraham, in which the desire of his life is to bestow blessings upon his fellowmen, even as God bestows
them (see Abraham 1:2; Moses 1:39). Some Jewish scholars today attribute to Abraham rather than to Moses the founding of the ordinances of atonement in the temple.

Apostasy and Restoration

The book of 1 Samuel opens with a temple operating on a full schedule, but soon the indolent and corrupt priests cause a falling off and people stop coming to the temple. Through direct revelation to Samuel, the endowment is restored, but tension between priest and king continues. Another restoration was in order in the time of Josiah. It began with a great purging from the land of all the alien elements that had filtered into the religion of Israel (see 2 Chronicles 34:3). In the process of renovating the temple, the original book of the law was discovered by the High Priest Hilkiah, and from that it was possible to restore the ordinances in their purity, for the record made it clear that Israel had strayed alarmingly from the path (see 2 Chronicles 34:21). Even so, Abraham, after the falling away of his fathers, was able to make a new beginning, "but the records of the fathers . . . God preserved in mine own hands" (Abraham 1:31). It was not Hilkiah, but Josiah, the king, who took complete charge of the operation, as Saul had attempted, thereby incurring the rebuke of Samuel. But Josiah's complete command takes us by remarkable transition into a field of study which has proven most fruitful during the past fifty years, a study in which temple rites are central. The subject is "patternism," and the transition is provided by the Book of Mormon.

Josiah's name marks him as a sponsor of the "Yahwist" reform of the temple. As the Lachish Letters show, there was much opposition to the movement. Josiah was a contemporary of Lehi, who was also on the side of Yahvists at
the time when there were "many prophets" in the land (1 Nephi 1:4), meeting with stiff opposition, as did Lehi himself when he took up the cause. When the Nephites went astray as the Jews had, they were fortunate in having a king who was an ardent student of the scriptures—the brass plates—as was Josiah, and who was determined to maintain the observances of the temple. He named his son and successor Mos-iah, thus neatly combining the memory of Josiah with that of the great model he followed, Moses. Lehi followed the Rekhabite example, now so vividly illustrated in the Dead Sea Scrolls, by going out into the desert to preserve the ancient faith and await further revelation; and, shortly after arriving in the new world, Nephi followed the same course, leading his own people away from his apostate brethren into the wilderness, there to build a modest replica of the temple at Jerusalem (see 2 Nephi 5:16). The Rekhabites, as a reward for their faithfulness, were put in charge of the ordinances of the temple (see Jeremiah 35).

King Benjamin not only gathered all the people at the temple for a full-fledged qāhal (assembly) in the ancient manner, but also to celebrate the great event in the history in any ancient state—a coronation—when the new king would be acclaimed, and the drama of the creation rehearsed to mark the beginning of a new age of the world and a new life cycle of vegetable life; the contest with the powers of darkness would establish the king as the victorious one worthy to rule the New Age. There are some thirty-six points in which Mosiah's coronation followed the pattern of the ancient year rite or coronation ceremony.¹⁰⁵

The remarkable uniformity of the great panegyris (general or national assembly), as celebrated at many ceremonial complexes throughout the world and throughout history,¹⁰⁶ suggested a probable single point of origin for the
institution. The word patternism, emerging in the 1930s, calls attention to the remarkable uniformity of the institution and has led to various theories explaining it. A common background is now universally conceded; however, many theories are put forth to explain how and where it originated and how it spread.

One of the striking confirmations of Mosiah’s account which was overlooked in the list noted above was the erection of a special wooden tower from which the king addressed the people on the subject of divine kingship. Just such a tower and address are described in Nathan the Babylonian’s eyewitness account from the ninth century of the installation of the Exilarch, or ruler of the Jews of the Captivity. Benjamin’s great farewell address and the covenanting and feasting that go with it are a clear anticipation of the greatest celebration of all, when the Nephites met at the temple after the great destruction, there to be instructed and endowed by the Lord in person (see 3 Nephi 11–18). An unfailing episode of the year rite everywhere was the combat of the king or hero, representing him with the powers of death and darkness, a theme touched on in the Psalms of David. This combat recalls the Lamech story of bloody rivalry for the kingship and dire betrayals, and also supplies the clue to its universality; for with this ritual extravaganza, “their works were abominations, and began to spread among all the sons of men” (Moses 5:52); “and thus the works of darkness began to prevail among all the sons of men” (Moses 5:55). These are the very rites in which Abraham is entangled at the beginning of the book of Abraham, his own fathers having embraced that perverted version of the endowments. But as if that were not enough, the Prophet Joseph Smith has provided the most enlightening presentation of the drama to be found in literature, and
that as early as 1830. Never has man’s condition been set forth with greater economy and power than in the primal drama of “everyman” in the first chapter of the book of Moses.

After a magnificent prologue in heaven (see Moses 1:1–8), Moses is left on earth to his own resources; and, just as Satan finds Adam cast out of the garden and desperately calling upon God in a dark world, Satan seizes his foul advantage and strikes again when he finds Moses flat on his back in the dark. He introduces himself as the Only Begotten, the rightful ruler; and when Moses challenges and mocks him, a lively *stichomythia* (“conversation in alternate lines”) ensues, ending when Satan drops all virtuous pretense and launches a frontal attack of such ferocity that Moses is quite overwhelmed and cast down; he knows the bitterness of hell (as the king always does in the year drama); crying from the depths with his last ounce of strength, he is delivered. Satan is cast out and Moses is again in the presence of God, who formally declares him the victor over many waters (a stock theme in the year rites), and appoints him the divine king: “For they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God, . . . for thou shalt deliver my people” (Moses 1:25–26).

**The Egyptian Heritage**

The Egyptian rites in which Abraham found himself involved are richly documented, but no other writing can compare in importance with the oldest known book in the world, a text prepared for the presentation of the endowment on the occasion of the founding of the First Dynasty in Egypt, that of Menes, a drama, staged in the temple of Memphis for its dedication and the king’s coronation more
than five thousand years ago. "The impact of the Memphite theology was so fundamental," writes Louis V. Žabkar, that its effect and influence on Egyptian religious thought remained constant until the end of the Egyptian religion. Unparalleled in the history of the ancient Orient as far as its cosmogonic signification is concerned, it traveled from century to century, from one theological system to another; its theme resounds from the first line of Genesis, and from there on through the Old Testament and to the latest period of Hebrew literature, it reaches the pages of the New Testament, witnessing to what extent this conception of the creative power of the Word of God persisted in the ancient Orient, becoming a universal theological theme.

It begins (cols. 3–4) with the Council in Heaven at the foundation of the world and proceeds to tell of the choosing of the Only Begotten to inherit and preside; of the rejection of the counterclaims of Seth, who argues priority in age; and of the establishing of the ordinances of the temple, central to which is a baptism representing death and resurrection (cols. 7–19). The center part of the text has been destroyed, but the extensive latter part is a doctrinal treatment of the plan of creation and salvation. All hail the plan of the Most High God presented to the Council; he plans and executes as he conceives in his heart and utters with his tongue his plan to be approved by the assembled hosts of the gods and preexistent spirits (cols. 53–54, 57). Every living thing is invested with his divine power, shared by "gods, mortals, beasts, all creeping things and other forms of life" (col. 54). Man is spiritually begotten and physically formed, the future ruler of the earth, endowed with eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, etc. (col. 56). The earth being prepared with all good things to receive him, a law is given to implement and explain the purpose of the earth as
a place of probation: “All who do good will be for eternal life, and all those who do evil for eternal bondage. This law is to be the measure of all things”—it is the purpose of all man’s actions of earth (col. 57). “And God finished his work . . . and was pleased with it” (col. 59). The heavenly plan was then implemented and carried out on earth as messengers came down and men were instructed to build temples where they could rehearse this same creation story at the beginning of each year, and as fields and cities sprang up around these holy centers (cols. 59–61). Then comes the episode of Osiris, who nearly dies but is rescued from the depths at the last moment and revived as the resurrected one. Emerging (like Moses) triumphant over the waters, he proceeds to the veil and beyond “in the footsteps of his father, the Lord of Eternity, to the great throne,” where he is received with happy homecoming and is embraced by the heavenly family; the Ancient of Days takes him into his embrace and conducts him to his throne (cols. 62–64).

One neglected source that richly deserves study and has been widely hailed as the greatest of all dramas is the two Oedipus plays of Sophocles, which the scholars also denounce as amoral and nonsensical, since they simply can’t see the point of any of it. The second play, Oedipus at Colonus, is nothing less than an introduction to the mysteries to which the preceding play is a preparation. On request we would gladly pursue this noble work, but time and place will not allow it here.¹⁰⁸

**Loss of the Endowment**

Man, forever falling short of the fullness of his promise, never completely lives up to the blessings of the endowment. Adam blessed his posterity, said Joseph Smith, because “he wanted to bring them into the presence of
God”; likewise “Moses sought to bring the children of Is­
raeil into the presence of God, through the power of the
Priesthood, but he could not. In the first ages of the world
they tried to establish the same thing; and there were
Elias raised up who tried to restore these very glories, but
did not obtain them.” For this glory is to be revealed only
in “the dispensation of the fullness of times.” Apparently
the endowment has been more than humanity can handle:
“If the Church knew all the commandments, one-half they
would condemn through prejudice and ignorance.”

The Perplexity of the Jews

The rabbis, who hold no priesthood but only certificates
of learning, have always had an ambivalent attitude to­
wards the temple. They cannot but echo the reverence and
yearning of the prophets for it, yet the idea of the return of
a real temple repels them as both dangerous and naive.
E. Goodenough has found that among the Jews of the
Graeco-Roman world “have survived a great number of
archaeological remains covered with pagan symbols which
quite amaze one familiar with the accepted traditions of
Judaism.” The rabbis like that as little as they do the disclo­
sures of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and “no attempt has yet been
made to analyze the material to see what sort of Judaism
could have produced them.” Jacob Neusner has expressed
the embarrassment of the rabbis in a recent study in which
he reports that “in the case of early Rabbinic Judaism, . . . we
have a considerable corpus of laws which prescribe the way
things are done but make no effort to interpret what is done.
These constitute ritual entirely lacking in mythic, let alone
theological, explanation.” That is, no explanation whatever
is offered for the ancient temple ordinances.

Though fully one-third of the Mishnah is taken up with
temple ordinances, none of the rabbis who wrote it (third century B.C. to third century A.D.) ever participated in such a ritual. For them the acts performed in the temple “bore no more concrete relevance to everyday life than did the cultic laws”; they spent their days in a “most serious effort . . . to create a corpus of laws to describe a ritual life which did not exist.”113 “The ritual [itself] is myth,” Neusner insists, “in the sense that it was not real, was not carried out”; therefore “the explanation of the ritual . . . is skipped. . . . We deal with laws made by people who never saw or performed the ritual described by those laws.”114 Neusner gives as an example the imitation killing of the red cow as if it were in the Temple; in this ordinance, “the effort is [made] to replicate the Temple’s cult in every possible regard.”115 It is performed on the Mount of Olives facing the temple, so that everything that is done is a mirror image of the real thing with the right and left hands
reversed. In the real temple, the priest, gird up with his robe, "slaughtered with his right hand, and received the blood in his left." 116 "The sprinkling of the blood . . . [thus] accomplishes atonement, or kapporah." 117 The hand is held in such a manner as to hold the blood, as it holds the oil in the anointing.

While everything is thought of as "converging upon, and emanating from, the Temple," it is now only "metaphysical reality; . . . the rabbis think about transcendent issues primarily through rite and form." 118 Likewise, "what people are told to do is what they are supposed to think"—think of themselves as performing the rite, but never trying to interpret it. 119 The teachers of an early day explained that in the temple, "attentiveness leads to ritual cleaning," which leads in turn to washing and anointing, which leads to holiness, hence to humility, hence to fear of sin, hence to piety, hence to the Holy Spirit, and finally to the resurrection of the dead, which culminates in the figure of Elijah. What does all this pointing to the resurrection and to Elijah have to do with the temple? Nothing at all, says Neusner, but such a sequence may suggest significant connections to a Latter-day Saint.

The Temple Scroll

The newly discovered Temple Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, has focused the attention of the Jews on the temple from new and unfamiliar angles. Jacob Milgrom, who like Neusner has visited Brigham Young University from time to time, has studied this scroll exhaustively. He informs us that, according to its authors, "the entire Scroll was the speech of God." 120 It begins with the covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai, which is where the children of Israel are introduced to the endowment; "the Scroll affirms that a
Temple must exist in the land (Exodus 25:8–9) and that its blueprint . . . was known to David.” Understandably, this is an embarrassment to the Jews of present-day Israel—what about the temple now? The Temple Scroll points out that the temple is placed on earth at various levels of perfection: The First House was not the Second House or, of course, “the messianic Temple which God Himself will build on ‘the Day of Blessing.’” But in all temples at all times, the ordinances remain ever the same, though with the growing perfection of the Saints, features may be added, such as “the cherubim-kapporet, the Urim and Thummim, and the participation of the twelve tribes” in the temple of the last days. Another change in the temple of the last days is the tendency to extend the priestly regimen to the entire people, so that they too become holy, each a priest (cf. Exodus 19:6). Naturally, the rabbis regard the shedding of blood as permanently done away with and attribute the lack of blood sacrifice in Christianity to the following of the Jewish tradition.

The Christian Endowment and Its Loss

The restoration of the gospel in the meridian of times centered wholly around the temple and endowment. As reported in the Gospel of Luke 1:5–6, it begins with a righteous priest and his wife, both direct descendants of Aaron, “walking scrupulously (amemptoi) in all the commandments and fulfillment of the covenants (dikaiomasis) of the Lord” (author’s translation). The language is right out of the Dead Sea Scrolls, where we also find righteous priestly families living the law in its purity and awaiting further revelation. An angel from on high breaks the long, long silence of four hundred years when he appears to the priest while he is ministering at the altar before the Holy of Holies, and tells
him that he has come in answer to prayer—just as the angel appeared to Adam at the altar—and that his message is all one of joy and rejoicing. The priest’s son will be filled with the Holy Ghost and turn much of Israel back again “to the Lord their God” (Luke 1:16)—it was a restoration of the gospel. The child is coming in the spirit of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, “and the minds of those who did not believe to righteousness,” and in so doing, “prepare for the Lord a people properly endowed (supplied, equipped)” (Luke 1:17; author’s translation). But the fathers and those who did not believe (note the significant use of the past tense), the disobedient spirits of old, are all dead. How can the expected prophet bring a great light “to those who sit in darkness?” How indeed! His office is to baptize, from which certain conclusions are obvious. Zacharias, the priest, was baffled and asked for a sign in the nature of a challenge: “Whereby shall I know this?” (Luke 1:18). In answer to this, the angel identifies himself by name and explains his mission: “I have come to preach the gospel to you” (cf. Luke 1:19). He gives him a sign—to be struck dumb until a certain time, because he did not take the words of the angel seriously.

Today, Roman Catholic scholars see in Matthew 16:18–19 a reference to the temple. It would appear now that the gates of “hell prevailing” has nothing to do with the forces of evil attacking the Church; the express statement is that “the gates of hades will not hold back those who belong to it,” for the object [autes] is in the genitive and the antecedent is the Church. Those who belong to the Church cannot be held back. Why so? Because Peter has the keys to the work that will release them—he is authorized to open the gate (see Matthew 16:19). That this deals, as is now recognized, with the mysteries is clear from the next verse, in
which the disciples are commanded not to make a word of this known to the world, while from that time on, Jesus Christ [the name appeared in the preceding verse in full for the first time] began to show his disciples how he would be totally rejected by the temple authorities—elders, high priests, and scribes—and be put to death (see Matthew 16:21). When Peter protests and says this is going too far, the Lord rebukes him sharply for taking seriously the things of men rather than the things of God. We are now on a wholly different level.

A theme that runs all through the Gospel of John is the absolute refusal of the Jewish people and their leaders to take literally what Jesus tells them. It is customary to view John as the most “spiritual,” philosophical, allegorical, and mystical book of the New Testament. Yet allegory and abstraction were the breath of life to the schools of the day; if Christ’s teachings were of that nature, no one would have been in the least offended, yet in no other gospel are the Lord’s hearers so puzzled, baffled, offended and angered as in the Gospel of John. What kind of a “Great Teacher” is this, who constantly perplexes and enrages his students?: “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:66). For neither did his brethren believe in him (see John 7:5). “Then said the Jews among themselves, . . . what manner of saying is this that he said?” (John 7:35–36). “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” (John 7:48). “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:43–44). “This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them” (John 10:6). “And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?” (John 10:20). Plainly, he was speaking of
things which neither the schoolmen of the times, nor the later schoolmen who produced conventional Christian theology, wanted to understand. In his last days with the disciples and his appearances after the resurrection, he taught them the mysteries of the endowment. The Last Supper was at the Passover, and Jesus associated his doings there with the rites of the temple. “Since I am going to prepare a place for you,” he told the disciples, “it is proper for me to tell you about it. In my Father’s house [the temple] are many monai [places where one stops on passing through, the hekhalot of the temple or chambers of the temple]. And having prepared a place for you, I will come back and be your paralemptor [the technical term for one who guides one through the mysteries], so that you can be where I am, you know the path I am taking” (cf. John 14:2-4). To this Thomas said, “No, we don’t know!” (cf. John 14:5). “I am the way, the truth, and the life. You will not get to the Father any other way” (cf. John 14:6)—i.e., other than through the Son.

A large literature, beginning with Acts and including the many Coptic and Hebrew discoveries of recent years, reports that the Lord did return and for forty days instructed the disciples in the doctrine and in the ordinances, conspicuous among which was baptism for the dead.123 Though the death of Jesus Christ ended sacrifice by the shedding of blood, the Christians were, if anything, more attached to the temple than the Jews.124 What kind of a temple was it without a shedding of blood? The epistle to the Hebrews explains that Christ became a “merciful and faithful high priest . . . to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). He was “faithful . . . as also Moses was faithful” (Hebrews 3:2). “Seeing then that we have as great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,
Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the things we have agreed to [or covenants we have taken—*homologias*]” (Hebrews 4:14; author’s translation). Every high priest offers sacrifices for sins, and no man taketh this honor upon himself save he were called of God, as was Aaron (see Hebrews 5:1, 4), but Christ is “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 5:6). For as the Son learned obedience, he *is* to be obeyed (see Hebrews 5:8–9). Paul recognizes that these things are “very hard to teach because you are dull of hearing” (cf. Hebrews 5:11). He mentions baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and judgment, which are initiatory rites (see Hebrews 6:2). He mentions the supreme penalty: “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,” referring to the public divulgence of sacred things (Hebrews 6:6). Armed with hope, the soul is that “which entereth into that [which is] within the veil,” where Jesus, “an high priest after the order of Melchizedek” is our *prodromos* (Hebrews 6:19–20). Paul is particularly concerned with making clear to the Jewish converts that there is no real conflict between the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods. The lower priesthood is naturally succeeded by the higher one, the important difference being that the priest himself enters no *horkomosia* (“covenant”), while the higher priesthood is “with a making of covenants” to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek; this was “a [diathēkē, covenant]” (see Hebrews 7:20–22). This is a high priest “made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26). Though the “carnal ordinances” lasted only until the time of reformation (see Hebrews 9:10–13), yet the New Testament also requires the shedding of blood, “but where there is a testament, the one making it must necessarily be responsible unto death” (Hebrews 9:16; author’s translation). “Almost all things are
ON THE SACRED AND THE SYMBOLIC

by the law purged [cleansed] with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). "Having . . . [the] boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19), we pass "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; . . . having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:20, 22). Naturally the theologians have said that this is a passage from a carnal to a purely spiritual order of things, but nothing in Christian tradition nor, in fact, down to the present time is more indisputable than that it was real blood and real water that were required for sanctification by the new covenant, just as the old was real blood and real water. This has always been an embarrassment to the churchmen.

The Gnostics

Because of the endowment, the Latter-day Saints have been labeled Gnostics by ministers who have little knowledge of the term. The so-called "Gnostics" are always distinguished in the early days from those possessing the real gnosis—mentioned twenty-seven times in the New Testament. The gnosis was that special "knowledge" which the Lord imparted to the disciples in their secret session. With the death of the last apostle, according to the earliest church historian, Hegesippus, when no one was left who could call them to account, a swarm of pretenders suddenly appeared on the scene, each claiming that he had the true gnosis, especially the ordinances, imparted by the Lord to his disciples after the resurrection.

The Gnostics could get away with that because the church no longer had knowledge of those things. In his great work the First Principles, Origen confesses that the church no longer has answers to the terrible questions, nor can one find in the scriptures any account of how such
ordinances as baptism, sacrament, and marriage should be performed. Irenaeus, Augustine, and a host of others confirm his admission. The Gnostics enjoyed a brief but sensational advantage until the obvious inadequacy of their claims became apparent. Valentinius, one of the first and most important, got a huge following because he claimed that he could tell “what we were, what we became; where we were, whither we have been cast; whither we hasten, whence we are delivered; what birth is, what rebirth is.”

But the Gnostics could only answer the great questions by dematerializing everything, as is clear from *Papyrus Bodmer* LX. Geo Widengren says that the prime teaching of Gnosticism was that “the origin of the material world . . . [was] a result of activity of the evil power,” and “that matter is evil in and of itself; . . . the spiritual, . . . as such is divine.” This is exactly what the later church taught. The appeal of the Gnostics lay in their exploitation of traditions and rumors from the Early Church dealing with ordinances. Those teachings and practices which the many Gnostic sects (Epiphanius lists eighty-eight of them) had in common can reasonably be taken as copies of a true original. Just so, the Egyptian ordinances of Pharaoh (which were in fact the main inspiration of the Gnostics) were earnest imitations of the real thing and may give us a very good idea of what the original was like. So the main practices of the Gnostics retain clear echoes of the endowment.

These, according to Widengren, are the soul’s progress toward a heavenly home in which it must pass gates and challenges, but enjoys the help of a holy guide. The spirit is going back to his home where his throne, garment, crown (or wreath), and court all await him. To all this light and glory is placed the opposition of Ahriman, of darkness and death, for an evil power created this physical
world. There is one sent from heaven to rescue us from the prison of the world, the Savior, often identified with the Primal Man. The poem "The Pearl" brings these ideas together. Typical is the Coptic Apocryphon of John: "Through the establishment of the perfect Temple [what the Qumran people were also looking for] Adam can return to God"; also, we learn that Jesus Christ brought all the signs which he taught the Apostles "from the Father out of the House of the Living." Coptic writings such as 1 Jeu and 2 Jeu are particularly concerned with signs revealed in the temple in the process of preparing one for the next world. In the Gospel of Philip, the three levels of the temple represent three degrees of holiness. Baptism is the holy place, but the Holy of Holies is higher; the former signifies resurrection, but the latter is the marriage covenant, which goes beyond. A time will come when the temple work will be universal; meantime, the rending of the veil signified that the ordinances were now open to all and that no worthy one would be held back.

There are two main centers of Gnostic teaching, the Iranian and the Syro-Egyptian, but in the end it all goes back to the popular traditions of Iran, Widengren concludes, and from it we get the Buddha, Mani, the Imam, the Manichaeans, Bogomils, Cathari, Baptists, Rosicrucians, Bohemists, Masons, Swedenborgians, and others. It is plain that the Gnostic impostors picked up much of their material from the mysteries, and though the subject has been endlessly debated, the question "How do the mystery cults relate to the Gnostics?" remains to this day unanswered, "because there is no generally accepted concept of the Gnosis, while the fundamental features of the Mysteries are also debated." M. P. Nilsson thought that Orphism was about as far back as one could trace the mysteries:
Orphism is the combination and the crown of the manifold religious movements of the archaic period. The development of the cosmogony in a speculative direction, with the addition of an anthropogony which laid the principal emphasis on the explanation of the mixture of good and evil in human nature; the legalism of ritual and life; the mysticism of cult and doctrine; the development of the other life into concrete visibility, and the transformation of the lower world into a place of punishment by the adaptation of the demand for retribution to the old idea that the hereafter is repetition of the present; the belief in the happier lot of the purified and initiated;—for all these things parallels, or at least suggestions, can be found in other quarters. The greatness of Orphism lies in having combined all this into a system, and in the incontestable originality which made the individual in his relationship to guilt and retribution the centre of its teaching.\(^{136}\)

**Hermeticism**

Hermeticism was the doctrine that all the wisdom in the world was originally put into the thirty-six books of Thoth or Hermes.\(^{137}\) The rites were based on these books, and the priest who conducted the Egyptian endowment had to know at least six books of Thoth by heart, those explaining the seals and the sacrifices.\(^{138}\) Clement of Alexandria, in the most instructive work on the mysteries, calls the well-known Egyptian *Book of the Dead* "hermetic," and attributes it to Thoth.\(^{139}\)

The idea of an "archaic wisdom," *prisca arcana*, or "primeval revelation," a knowledge of the ancients far in advance of later times, has always intrigued philosophers and theologians. But today it is the scientists who are taking it seriously. Joseph Smith was well acquainted with the idea: "From time to time these glad tidings were sounded in the ears of men in different ages; . . . certainly God spoke to
Figure 49. The ibis-headed Thoth, as god of writing, records the passage of years on the notched palm rib, the hieroglyph for a year, as also shown three times above him in the upper right corner. The palm rib rests on a young tailed frog, which crouches on the *shen* sign of eternity. These three symbols together refer to vast numbers of years—like the seemingly innumerable tadpoles in a pool of water.

[Abel], ... and if He did, would He not ... deliver to him the whole plan of the Gospel? ... And ... was he not taught also of His ordinances? ... For our own part we cannot believe that the ancients in all ages were so ignorant of the system of heaven as many suppose."¹⁴⁰ It is interesting that, at the very time Joseph Smith was preparing the things of the endowment, he was most deeply interested in his Egyptian studies.¹⁴¹ The field of hermetic writings is
immense, and the instructions to which it has given rise are almost without number.

**Asking Too Much?**

The endowment, charged with meaning at every step, demands the closest attention and a brain and intellect that are clear and active. How easily it overloads the circuits as the tired mind takes refuge in dreamland! A School of the Prophets was necessary to prepare the Brethren for their endowments in the first place, and the leaders began to understand only when the veil was taken from their minds. The eyes of their understandings were opened. Brain, intellect, mind, eyes, understanding—it is a strenuous intellectual exercise from first to last. “I advise all,” said the Prophet, “to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness.” As for himself, “It has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries, new things, for my hearers.” How much easier to relax and fall into a routine increasingly geared to efficiency and the reduction of time and effort.

When we enter the temple, we leave one world and step into another. Conversely, when we leave the temple, we leave one world, sometimes with a sigh of relief, and return to the other. If the Latter-day Saints are going to continue building temples, they must make up their minds as to which world they are going to live in. It should not be hard to decide if only we are willing.

**Which Is the Real World?**

We are about to learn that we have had it backwards. We do not need the temple experience to tell us what all sages, poets, saints, and everybody else have always known, namely that this world is “weary, stale, flat, and
unprofitable,” a vale of tears, etc.; and all because everything in it is irrevocably headed for oblivion, as everyone finds out sooner or later. It is an outrage, but everybody accepts it because they have no other choice; but the Latter-day Saints do have another choice, and they may not evade it. Our present version of “the World” is particularly unreal. At present, the most discussed book on the condition of America today is Robert Bellah’s *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life.* Bellah and his wife gave some enlightening talks at Brigham Young University some years ago and appreciate our position better than most. Bellah’s book has a number of contributors and is based on interviews with hundreds of Americans. It shows an almost complete absence of “transcendent purpose” in their lives: the enlightened minority differ from the bemused majority only in that “all of them would like to find some meaning to life beyond the next promotion or home improvement.” The Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell concludes in the book that only religion can relieve the devastation of this “hedonistic consumerist civilization.” “From the boardroom to the bedroom, strategy, technique, self-seeking and the notion of strict contractual obligation have supplanted decency and intimacy, respectively.” The most admired writer of our time, Raymond Carver, “distills a bleak vacuity, . . . a sense of something—structure, meaning, purpose—missing.” The contributors find only “deepening circles of desolation inscribed by our individualism, . . . our incorrigible self-centeredness.” “We have lost our balance,” writes one reviewer, “scuttled our cultural traditions that used to offset our individualism; community has atrophied among us and the self grown cancerous.” “We do not argue with one another, we do not even share a discourse.”
And that is the real world? Historically, a strong dose of temple work is the only thing to cure that myopia. Joseph Smith understood perfectly and described vividly the situation in his day in the great epistle to the Elders in Kirtland, emphasizing the immense gap between the two orders of existence:

Consider for a moment, brethren, the fulfillment of the words of the prophet; for we behold that darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the inhabitants thereof—that crimes of every description are increasing among men—vices of great enormity are practiced—the rising generation growing up in the fullness of pride and arrogance—the aged losing every sense of conviction, and seemingly banishing every thought of a day of retribution—the intemperance, immorality, extravagance, pride, blindness of heart, idolatry, the loss of natural affection; the love of this world, and indifference toward the things of eternity increasing among those who profess a belief in the religion of heaven, and infidelity spreading itself in consequence of the same—men giving themselves up to commit acts of the foulest kind, and deeds of the blackest dye, blaspheming, defrauding, blasting the reputation of neighbors, stealing, robbing, murdering; advocating error and opposing the truth, forsaking the covenant of heaven, and denying the faith of Jesus—and in the midst of all this, the day of the Lord fast approaching when none except those who have won the wedding garment will be permitted to eat and drink in the presence of the Bridegroom, the Prince of Peace!147

What a picture he gives of those idyllic far-away times of our national innocence! "The inhumanity and murderous disposition of this people! It shocks all nature; it beggars and defies all description; . . . too much for human beings; it cannot be found among the heathens. . . . It cannot be found among the savages of the wilderness."148
What is more, he knows that things are only going to get worse; back in 1835, he announced that “the Lord declared to His servants, some eighteen months since, that He was then withdrawing His Spirit from the earth; and we can see that such is the fact. . . . The governments of the earth are thrown into confusion and division; and Destruction, to the eye of the spiritual beholder, seems to be written by the finger of an invisible hand, in large capitals, upon almost every thing we behold.” The extremists take over and the ambitious corporations prevail—for even they are not forgotten in the prophecies. When “the whole earth groans,” who is to be trusted in such a world? “The world always mistook false prophets for true ones,” said Joseph; and he noted that loyalty oaths and protestations are actually signals of desperation and mistrust. There is no help in politics: “My feelings revolt at . . . having anything to do with politics.” In the end, any solution given “without revelation, without commandment, . . . would prove a curse.”

“A man’s character is his fate,” said Heraclitus—the tragedy is not what becomes of us, but what we become. Four major steps to success in public life today are things which Joseph Smith insists no one should ever indulge in under any circumstances, namely to (1) aspire, (2) accuse, (3) contend, and (4) coerce. It is striking how these very operations are brought into perspective in the person of Satan, who aspires (that was his undoing, according to Joseph Smith), who accuses (devil; Greek diabolus and Hebrew satan both mean “accuser”)—he becomes an “accuser of his brethren” as he charges his heavenly visitors with trying to rob him of his kingdom and greatness. He contends even with the Lord, and even in the garden; indeed, “the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the
devil" (3 Nephi 11:29). As to coercion, his trump card is to buy up military might and rule the earth with shocking violence.

An Urgent Call

The Prophet foresees the total collapse of world order, with a sore vexing of the nations, as "the adversary spreadeth his dominions, and darkness reigneth; and the anger of God kindleth against the inhabitants of the earth; and none doeth good, for all have gone out of the way" (D&C 82:5–6). The Old Testament ends with the best-known passage of scripture about the endowment (Malachi 4:5–6) and on a note of grim foreboding: "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments" (i.e., covenants, terms of endowment—Malachi 4:4). These are to be revived at a time of great crises: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6). By the report that Elijah has already come, we now "may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors." Therein is also hope, for Elijah's coming makes it possible to forestall the curse: How shall God rescue you in this generation? By sending the Prophet Elijah. To those who received their endowments to go forth from Kirtland into the world he said, "The destroying angel will follow close at your heels and . . . destroy the works of iniquity, while the saints will be gathered." "The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors" (D&C 110:16).
Is the presence of the temple in our midst a guarantee of safety? How often have the Jews made that mistake! For the greater the blessing promised, the greater the penalty and the risk. It was expressly of the endowment that the Lord said, “Of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation. Ye call upon my name for revelations,” but in not heeding them “ye become transgressors; and justice and judgment are the penalty . . . unto my law. . . . When ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:3–4, 10). God was not pleased with the many Latter-day Saints who had “treated lightly His commands.” The discernment of spirits was of primary importance among the gifts and powers of the priesthood precisely because false spirits have been frequently found among the Latter-day Saints. It was failure to live up to covenants made in the temple that got the Saints driven from Kirtland, Missouri, and Nauvoo, as Brigham Young pointedly observed. A week before the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, Brigham wrote, “I preached in the Temple [Kirtland] in the morning, and brother F. D. Richards in the afternoon. . . . The Saints were dead and cold to the things of God.”

What is the result of failing to live up to our covenants? It is to be under Satan’s influence; there is no other alternative, for you cannot “serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). With the first slip, the sinner begins to put distance between himself and God. Satan instantly took advantage of Adam and Eve’s delinquency to alienate them from God. It was he who excitedly called attention to their guilt and urged them to make coverings of fig leaves and to hide themselves. It was not to stir them to repentance, but to urge them to try a cover-up, hiding from God and thereby estranging
themselves from him. It was the Lord who sought them out and spoiled Satan's game by offering and commanding perpetual repentance. Even so, one who fails to live up to his covenants tries to hide first by looking for loopholes in the language of the endowment. Brigham Young has commented on the futility and hypocrisy of this procedure; there is no way, he observes, by which one can possibly misunderstand or wrest the language of the covenants, no matter how determined one is to do it. We can rationalize with great zeal—and that is the next step—but never escape from our defensive position. Many have noted the strong tendency of Latter-day Saints to avoid making waves. They seem strangely touchy on controversial issues. This begets an extreme lack of candor among the Saints, which in turn is supported by a new doctrine, according to which we have a Prophet at our head who relieves us of all responsibility for seeking knowledge beyond a certain point, making decisions, or taking action on our own.

Adam did well to obey, but he was not to be guided through obedience alone, and heavenly teachers came to explain things to him and to discuss them with him, even as all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and people of Israel are invited by the Lord to come and reason with him. One way of seeking immunity from guilty feelings is to take the offensive behind the sanction in extreme conservatism, which is supposed to place one's loyalty beyond suspicion, while one piously denounces others.

Back to the Present World

Those who would discover "what has made this country great" must necessarily appeal to history. But even in the most extensive studies, such as Bellah's, the history examined is both brief and local, all too short and limited to get
to the root of the problem. The one solid core of American culture is the Bible, and the theme there is "What will make Israel Great?" The answer is written in every chapter of the Old Testament. The Israelites were to understand that this was not to be viewed as mere tradition or custom. You and each of you are entering upon a solemn covenant this day, here and now: "The Lord made not [only] this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:3). Merely to acknowledge and agree to it is not enough. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, with their children for ever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). Every hour of the day, the covenant (endowment) makes demands upon the individual; it is never out of his mind, especially the first great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5–6). And there is to be no cheating; you may not deviate to the right or left (see Deuteronomy 28:14). To hedge, however slightly, in fulfilling obligations under the covenant is an abomination—the one crime God will not tolerate is meanness of spirit (see Deuteronomy 17:1).

But it is worth it. If the people "observe . . . to do all his commandments, . . . the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth"; his people will be overwhelmed with blessings in every possible aspect of life (Deuteronomy 28:1–6). "Your enemies that rise up against you shall be smitten and scattered" (cf. Deuteronomy 28:7), "and your prosperity will be boundless" (cf. Deuteronomy 28:11). But "if thou wilt not hearken," curses await you exactly matching the blessings, all in reverse (Deuteronomy 28:15); and these curses will dog you in all your undertakings
“until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly” (Deuteronomy 28:20).

As Moses presents the propositions to them one by one to be received by covenant, after each one is given, “All the people shall say, Amen!” (Deuteronomy 27:14–26). And what will they be cursed for? Graven images, holding parents in contempt, removing a neighbor’s landmark, taking advantage of a blind person or of strangers, orphans, or widows in court; incest and sexual perversions; striking a neighbor off guard; taking or giving a fee for killing; and finally, “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen” (Deuteronomy 27:26).

President Kimball, on a great and solemn occasion (the United States Bicentennial), declared himself “appalled and frightened” by the delinquency of the people in keeping just such laws of fairness and justness. He pointed to three grave derelictions: (1) the contempt for the environment, (2) the rule of money, and (3) trust in military might. And here is another list to match these pervasive evils. Both the older and the younger Nephi list four things that will bring a church or civilization to destruction: “All churches which are built up [1] to get gain, . . . [2] to get power over the flesh, . . . [3] to become popular in the eyes of the world, . . . [4] who seek the lusts of the flesh, . . . must be consumed as stubble” (1 Nephi 22:23). The younger Nephi is just as explicit: “Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this—Satan had great power, . . . tempting them to seek for [1] power, and [2] authority, and [3] riches, and [4] the vain things of the world” (3 Nephi 6:15). Note that authority and popularity are interchangeable in the two lists, as they should be, for in our world in which the image is all, they are virtually indistinguishable. Need we note
that these four vices are the things that spell success today, making "lives of the rich and famous" increasingly the envy and ideal of young and old?

**Consecration, the Great Stumbling Block**

It will be noted that almost all the crimes listed in Moses' catalogue are those of a mean-spirited nature, and this brings us to the acid test of the law of consecration. This embodies the one quality devoid of all meanness, the only thing, Moroni tells us, which can save a people from destruction by making them worthy of saving, and that is *charity* (see Ether 12:33–37). The gifts and promises dealing with the law of consecration are the center of world history. It is the "hierocentric principle." As far back as the record goes, the temple has been the center of world history, the heart and soul of every great nation and civilization, for good or evil. Ours is for good: "We have the revelation of Jesus, and the knowledge within us is sufficient to organize a righteous government upon the earth, and to give universal peace to all mankind." But nowhere else will you find it. What could demand a greatness of soul, a generous hand, and a magnanimous heart more than this one instrument of salvation? Today, many declare with the poet Yeats, "Things fall apart, the center cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." That center, the only one of proven permanence, is the Covenant of Israel, to which our ancestors looked for strength before its restoration in its fullness.

It was when the Saints balked at keeping the law of consecration that the Lord said, "I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in these things... Organize yourselves and appoint every man his stewardship... over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures [that means they must be shared!]" (D&C 104:6, 11, 13).
"And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in my own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low" (D&C 104:15–16). Can there be any doubt that that last was meant to be jarring? It would be hard to find a declaration less calculated to soothe and delight the success-oriented person of today. Admittedly, one living by the law of consecration would be hopelessly out of place in our competitive and acquisitive society. But in the same way that a healthy person would be out of place in an isolation ward or asylum, an honest person would be out of place in a casino or jail, or a chaste person out of place at a sex orgy or porno festival. Should we recommend that they all adjust to their surroundings and not make waves?

"The ordinances must be kept in the very way God has appointed; otherwise their Priesthood will prove a curse instead of a blessing." 167 There is no margin for rationalization or manipulation: "The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God the Devil takes power." 168 One who wants it both ways, as Brigham Young said, must suffer the most excruciating torture on this earth. 169 Because of the basic contradiction, his plans go constantly awry, his projects fizzle, his big idea leads nowhere; no longer does his confidence wax strong in the presence of God.

But can one expect the impossible of ordinary people—to deny the world they live in? We do it every time we proclaim the truth of the First Vision. We used to sing a sentimental song about the First Vision, and then go home to Sunday dinner, back to the comfortable real world. But as Brigham Young kept reminding the Saints, the real world is Zion, the only enduring order of things, the Order of Enoch. 170 The Saints
stubbornly refused to see it.\textsuperscript{171} For that they were driven from Missouri, where they were to build the great temple of the last days,\textsuperscript{172} and continued to be driven from Nauvoo; the Elders did not want to hear of it.\textsuperscript{173} Today, as in Brigham's day, we focus our attention on the overthrow of the wicked rather than the sanctification of ourselves: "Do not be too anxious for the Lord to hasten his work. Let our anxiety be centered upon one thing, the sanctification of our own hearts, the purifying of our own affections."\textsuperscript{174}

Notes
8. \textit{PWJS}, 71, 82.
15. \textit{WJS}, 304.
17. Ibid., 237.
20. Ibid., 274.
25. TPJS, 196.
33. PWJS, 5.
34. Ibid.
37. TPJS, 322.
41. See Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 110.


50. *TPJS*, 127.

51. *PWJS*, 61.

52. Ibid., 71.

53. Ibid., 72.

54. Ibid., 82.

55. Ibid., 205.

56. *WJS*, 368.

57. Ibid., 245–46.


60. *WJS*, 369.


62. Ibid.; italics added.

63. Ibid., 95.


67. 1 Enoch 99:2.

68. 1 Enoch 65:6.

69. 1 Enoch 106:13–17a.

70. 1 Enoch 98:15; 99:2.

72. Plutarch, de Osiride et Iside, 9.

73. See Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 245–51.

74. See PWJS, 186.


77. TPJS, 57
78. Ibid., 58.
79. Ibid., 59.
80. Ibid., 59.
81. See ibid., 60–61.
82. WJS, 304; TPJS, 237.
83. PWJS, 82.

85. WJS, 381–82.
86. Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, 17 June 1842, Church Archives.


89. Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 243.
91. Ibid.

94. IQS 4:22–23.


103. See the references in Hugh Nibley, "The Enoch Figure," in *Enoch the Prophet*, in *CWHN*, 2:19–20, 56.


110. Ibid., 112.


113. Ibid.

114. Ibid., 91–92.

115. Ibid., 95.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid., 100.

119. Ibid.


121. Ibid.

122. See ibid., 120.

123. See Nibley, "Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,"


127. Ibid., 18.

128. See ibid., 6, 8.

129. This is included in Appendix III of Nibley, Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 267–72.

130. Carl Schmidt, ed. and tr., Kephalaia (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1940), 41.

131. See Gospel of Philip 69 (117).

132. Ibid., 85 (133).

133. Ibid., 70 (118).


137. See Plutarch, De Iside et Osiride, 3.


140. TPJS, 58–59.

141. See PWJS, 60, 104.

142. See PWJS, 72.

143. WJS, 366.

144. Ibid.


147. TPJS, 47.

148. Ibid., 131.
149. See ibid., 135.
150. Ibid., 16.
151. See ibid., 136.
152. See ibid., 144; cf. Ether 8:18–20.
153. TPJS, 206.
154. See ibid., 146.
155. Ibid., 275.
156. Ibid., 256.
158. See ibid., 252–53.
160. See WJS, 318.
161. PWJS, 83.
162. TPJS, 253.
163. See ibid., 204; cf. 213.
164. Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 9 June 1844, compiled by Elden Jay Watson (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 169
166. TPJS, 392.
167. Ibid., 169.
168. WJS, 60.
169. See JD, 16:123.
171. Ibid., 15:3.
173. Ibid., 18:244.
174. Ibid., 9:3.