



4-1-1999

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Recommended Citation

Welch, John W. (1999) "The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 38 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol38/iss2/4>

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A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. But a certain samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.

FIG. 1. Christ, the Good Samaritan. Illustration from a deluxe edition of the Bible, published in Philadelphia by Holman and Company in 1900, depicting the Good Samaritan as a figure of Christ.

The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation

John W. Welch

Before modernity, Christians read this parable allegorically, with the Samaritan, for example, aptly typifying Christ. Such a reading becomes even stronger when enriched by the full plan of salvation.

One of the most influential stories told by Jesus is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–35). As a result of this scripture, people all over the world, whether Christians or not, speak of being a Good Samaritan, of doing good for people who are in peril or need. Modern-day Good Samaritans stop to help stranded travelers fix flat tires or find shelter, come to the rescue of people in distress, or serve spontaneously as benevolent volunteers. They even receive legal immunity in many states should they happen to make matters worse while trying to be of help.¹ Most people in modern society know the main details of the story of the Good Samaritan, and this memorable story inspires benevolent daily decisions, both socially and religiously.² Because we all have serious needs, this parable speaks deeply to every human soul.

As important and dramatic as its ethical content obviously is, Jesus' story may harbor far more meaning than most people ever imagine. An ancient but now almost forgotten tradition, extending back to the earliest days of Christian interpretation, sees this tale as much more than a story and as far more than a parable. According to this early Christian view, the narrative is to be read as an impressive allegory of the fall and redemption of mankind. In LDS terms, it may be seen even more expansively as a type and shadow of the eternal plan of salvation. This article explores and embraces the allegorical layer of signification and shows how a deeper level of meaning does not detract from the conventional understanding of the parable but adds rich, epic dimensions to the typical understanding of this classic vignette.

READING THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Jesus told this story to a lawyer, or a Pharisee, who began his exchange with Jesus by asking, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus

responded at first simply by saying, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” The man answered by quoting two scriptures, the first from Deuteronomy 6:5, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,” and the second from Leviticus 19:18, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” When Jesus promised the man, “This do, and thou shalt live,” the man retorted, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:25–29).

In answer to the man’s two questions, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. People usually think of it as answering only the second, technical question, “Who is my neighbour?” But this story also addresses, even more deeply, the first and more important inquiry, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The Prophet Joseph Smith once taught, “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?”³ Using the Pharisee’s primary question as such a key, with the second question being “like unto it” (Matt. 22:39), shows that the story speaks of eternal life and the plan of salvation in ways that few modern readers have ever paused to notice.

From Parable to Allegory and Typology

The story of the Good Samaritan is usually understood as a straightforward parable. A parable is a short account that parallels or exemplifies some particular religious value, causing introspection and self-reflection that leads to a specific moral outlook or imperative. David Seely offers a convenient definition: “A parable is a narrative containing an extended simile or metaphor intending to convey a single thought or message.”⁴

Jesus told many stories that can be viewed as parables. In each of them, he prompted his listeners to act in a single, specific Christlike way. His various parables teach people to be forgiving, as in the story of the forgiven steward who unmercifully refuses to forgive his debtors (Matt. 18:21–35); to be prepared for the coming of the kingdom, as with the watchful householder (Matt. 24:42–44) or the ten bridesmaids (Matt. 25:1–13); to spread the seeds of the gospel, as does the sower whose seeds land on four different soils (Matt. 13:1–9; Mark 4:1–9; Luke 8:4–8); to be persistent, as is the importuning widow who pesters a judge until he helps her (Luke 18:1–8); and to develop the gifts or responsibilities over which one has been given stewardship, represented by talents of gold or silver (Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27). Seen simply as a parable, the story of the Good Samaritan encourages people to help anyone in need by answering a single, pointed question: “Who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29), or asked in modern terms, “Will I be one who sees, who hears, who pauses, and who helps? Will you?”⁵

The word *parable*, however, does not fully describe the story of the Good Samaritan. Moreover, the story is more than a drama or a “pattern story” that illustrates a single point of doctrine or presents one model of “moral life to be imitated.”⁶ Does it have only a single message? If so, why did Jesus tell the story in such detail when a much simpler version of the story could have just as well made the moral point of being kind to anyone in need?

Because of its complexity, the story of the Good Samaritan is better described as an allegory, which is a more complicated configuration than a parable. An allegory portrays a larger picture, puts numerous pieces of an intricate structure into place, and helps to define relationships between various parties or human affairs. In an allegory, “each metaphorical element of the narrative is meant to correspond to a specific counterpart”⁷ or to function organically within a conceptual structure.

Moreover, a typology prefigures or is a shadow of a deeper reality that stands behind the verbal construct. Typological allegories in the gospel help listeners understand the ultimate truths of life, history, and reality, not only by depicting a set of relationships, but also by pointing to a more profound meaning beyond. Such allegories “play the role of enshrouding the subject matter in a mysterious (*geheimnisvollen*), protective-revealing (*verhüllend-offenbarenden*) guise, through which the words and various parts of the text are to be substituted more or less for concepts”⁸ or for other beings. Several of the parables of Jesus, such as the Wicked Husbandmen (Mark 12:1–11; Matt. 21:33–44; Luke 20:9–18), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), and the Good Shepherd (John 10:1–18), are complicated enough that they are probably better described as allegories than as parables, and often they are typological as well.⁹

The story of the Good Samaritan can be understood particularly well as a typological allegory, specifically as a presentation of the plan of salvation. Especially from a Latter-day Saint perspective, each element in the story serves an important purpose in representing a corresponding counterpart and in conveying a symbolic or emblematic depiction. As I show below, each point included by Jesus in the story helps to place the Samaritan’s act of saving mercy in the broader context of the plan of salvation that was established from the foundation of the world and made possible through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The story is not simply a moralistic fable or a generic ethical hypothetical, but a thoroughly Christian contextualization of the perils of mortality and the deeds of saving goodness in an eternal setting of God’s redeeming love and compassion.

Early Christian Allegorization

In recent years, only a few people who have studied the New Testament in terms of early Christian literature have been aware that this story was originally read as much more than a simple parable.¹⁰ In 1967, for example, Hugh Nibley briefly observed:

To an outsider this is a story of the loftiest humanitarian and moral purpose, completely satisfying in itself. Yet it would now appear that no early Christian could possibly have missed the real significance of the wine and the oil that heal the wounded man as standing for the sacrament and the anointing that restore the ailing human soul to a healthy state, thanks to the intervention of the Lord, who is the Good Samaritan.¹¹

Indeed, Nibley's point can be extended much further. The overwhelmingly dominant tradition among the early Christian Fathers read this story as an impressive and expansive allegory.

I first became aware of the extensive history of the allegorical interpretation behind the story of the Good Samaritan while my wife and I were standing inside the famous twelfth-century cathedral in Chartres, France. One of the beautiful tall panels of stained glass on the south side of the cathedral's nave depicts, with vibrant green accents that symbolize life, the story of the Good Samaritan together with the fall of Adam and Eve (see figs. 2, 3, 8). As is the case with many medieval stained-glass windows, this panel was meant to be read as if it were a text. Reading the scenes in this window, I realized that the layout was designed to depict the story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden in tandem with the familiar New Testament parable.¹² The lower part of the window tells the story of the Good Samaritan in nine scenes, while the top half uses twelve scenes to relate the account of Adam and Eve's creation, expulsion, and redemption, "thereby illustrating a symbolic interpretation of Christ's parable that was popular in the Middle Ages."¹³

Another medieval window in the Bourges Cathedral, south of Paris near Orleans, further develops this schematic in a manner inspired by the widely circulating vulgate commentary, *Glossa ordinaria* (see figs. 4, 5, 9). Another gothic window in the Sens Cathedral, in eastern France, even more skillfully depicts this relationship by surrounding each of three scenes depicting the main elements of the parable of the Good Samaritan with four vignettes from the Creation and Fall, the life of Moses, and the passion of Jesus¹⁴ (see figs. 6, 7, 10). I became intrigued with these associations. What does the parable of the Good Samaritan have to do with the fall of Adam and Eve, the life of Moses, or the suffering of Jesus? Where did these identifications come from? Research soon disclosed a surprisingly rich interpretive history. There is indeed more here than normally meets the eye.

The roots of this allegorical interpretation reach deeply into the earliest Christian literature.¹⁵ Writing in the second century A.D., Irenaeus¹⁶ and Clement of Alexandria¹⁷ both saw the Good Samaritan as symbolizing Christ himself saving the fallen victim from the wounds of sin. Origen, only a few years later, stated that this interpretation came down to him from “one of the elders,” who read the elements of this story allegorically as follows:

The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the Law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord’s body, the *pandochium* (that is, the stable), which accepts all [pan-] who wish to enter, is the Church. And further, the two *denarii* mean the Father and the Son. The manager of the stable is the head of the Church, to whom its care has been entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior’s second coming.¹⁸

While we cannot be sure exactly how far back into early church circles this fascinating interpretation can be traced,¹⁹ it is obviously very old.

Moreover, writers in all parts of the early Christian world fundamentally maintained this allegorical interpretation. With Irenaeus in southern France, Clement in Alexandria, Origen in Judea,²⁰ Chrysostom in Constantinople,²¹ Ambrose in Milan,²² Augustine in Africa,²³ Isidore in Spain,²⁴ and Eligius in northern France,²⁵ these prominent theologians or influential spokesmen covered the corners of the Christian world of their day. Each writer who made use of the Samaritan story adapted its core elements somewhat to suit his individual needs or interests. Some people may feel that this malleability proves that an allegorical reading of this text is a subjective fabrication and therefore should not be taken seriously. But, on the contrary, the varied nuances given to this parable all presuppose an essential, common understanding of the story in a specific allegorical sense to which those subtle modifications were then added.

Into late antiquity and the Middle Ages, other clerics²⁶ continued to expound on the meaning of the Good Samaritan. Although in some ways they deviated further from the original sense of the allegory, all of them still essentially accepted the outlines of the standard allegorization presented by the earliest writers.²⁷ From these early Christian writings, it is clear that the dominant if not exclusive understanding of the story of the Good Samaritan in early times was allegorical. (See also plates 1–8.) The story was basically understood from the beginning as a type and shadow of Christ saving mankind from the fall of Adam. In its broad outlines and in its earliest, straightforward rendition, the allegorical reading has much to commend it.

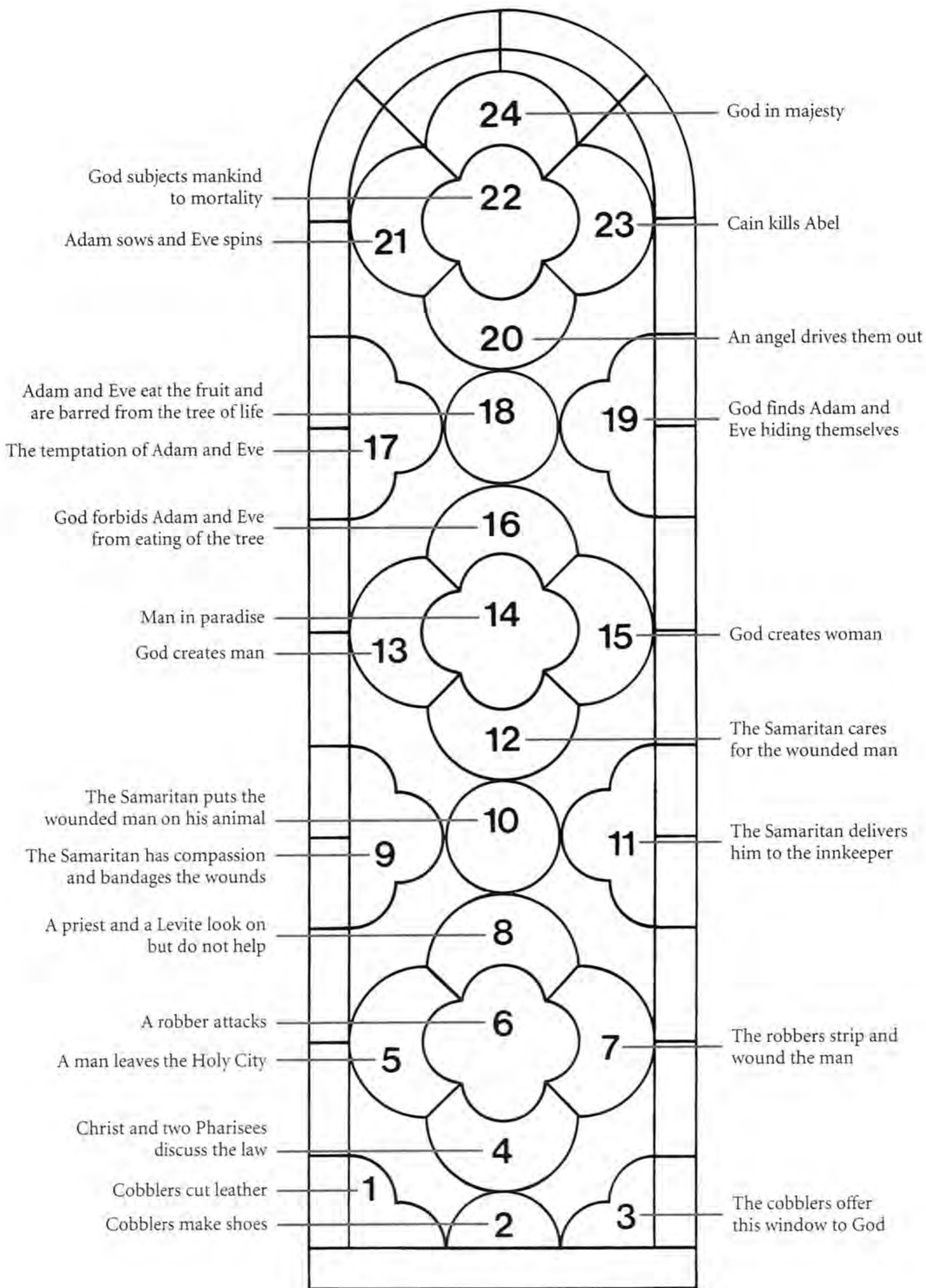


FIG. 2. Key to Chartres Cathedral Window



FIG. 3. Chartres Cathedral Window. A famous stained-glass window in the Chartres Cathedral depicts the parable of the Good Samaritan in tandem with the story of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve. The bottom half (scenes 4–12) tells how a man went down from the Holy City (4), fell among robbers (6–7), and was rescued by the Samaritan (9–12). The top half shows Adam and Eve in Paradise (13–16), their fall and expulsion into the world (17–21, 23), and God in his majesty (22, 24). Christians in the Middle Ages regularly understood Jesus' parable to refer to the fall of Adam and Eve and the redemption of mankind. Read in an ascending pattern of alternating horizontal and diagonal moves, the window emphasizes this one typology.

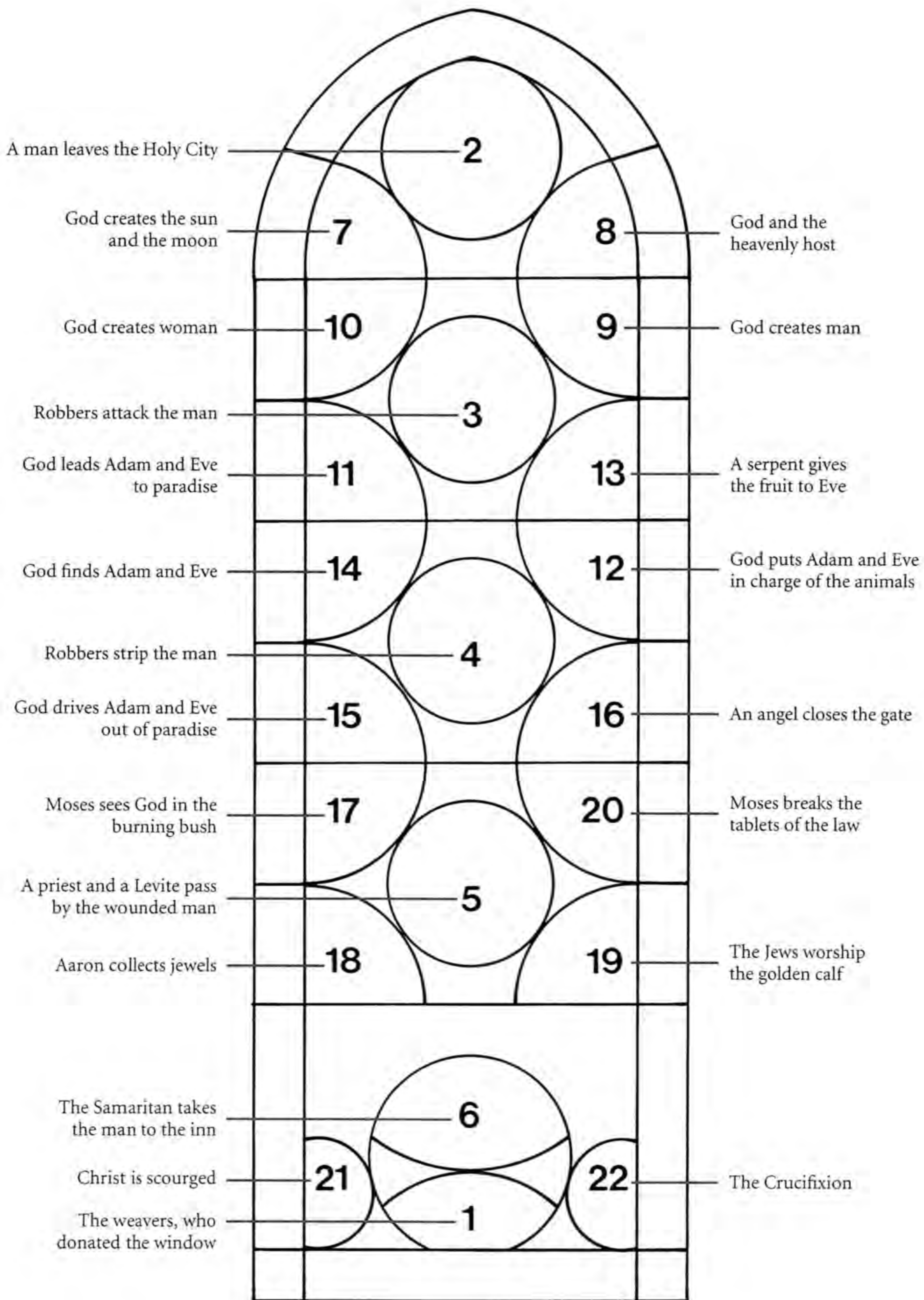


FIG. 4. Key to Bourges Cathedral Window

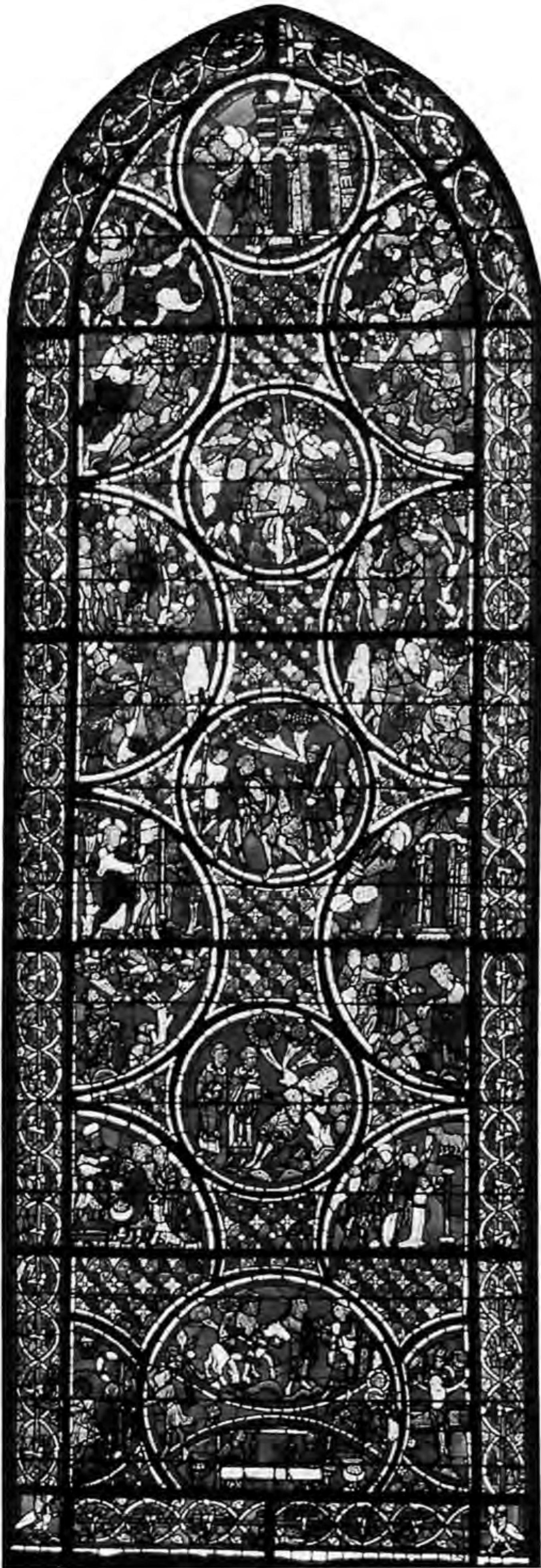


FIG. 5. Bourges Cathedral Window. The Good Samaritan window in the cathedral at Bourges, read from the top down, relates the parable in its central circles (2–6). In the semi-circles on the sides are ten scenes from the creation and fall of Adam and Eve (7–16), four scenes from the life of Moses (17–20), and two small medallions concerning the death of Christ (21–22). While this window places its greatest emphasis on the Fall, with two main scenes showing the attack of the robbers and the victim being stripped (3–4), this window also surrounds the scene of the priest and Levite (5) with four vignettes from the Exodus, especially showing Israel's rejection of Jehovah (18–20). The window thus features two significant typologies, while briefly introducing the third in its last two scenes (21–22).

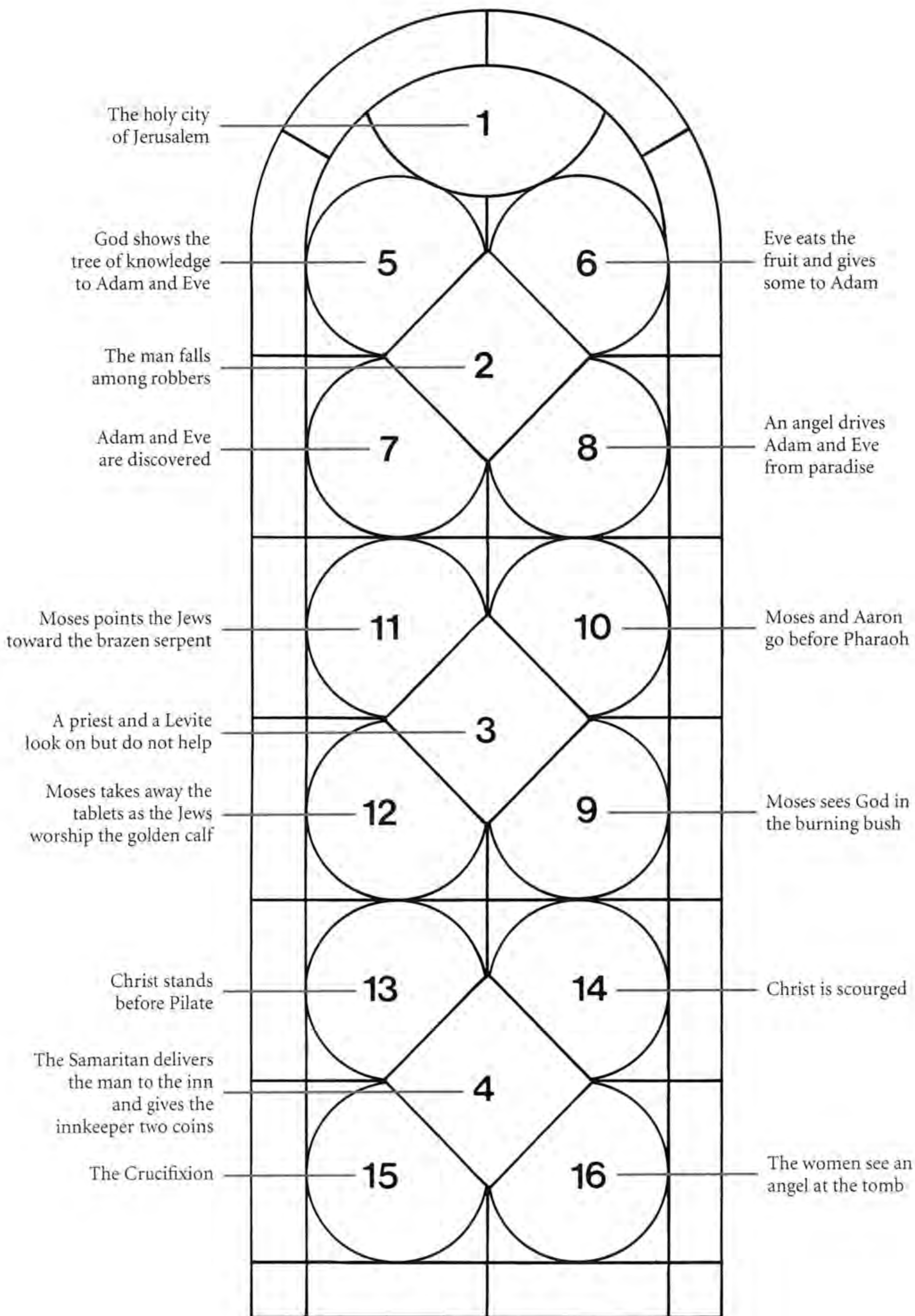


FIG. 6. Key to Sens Cathedral Window

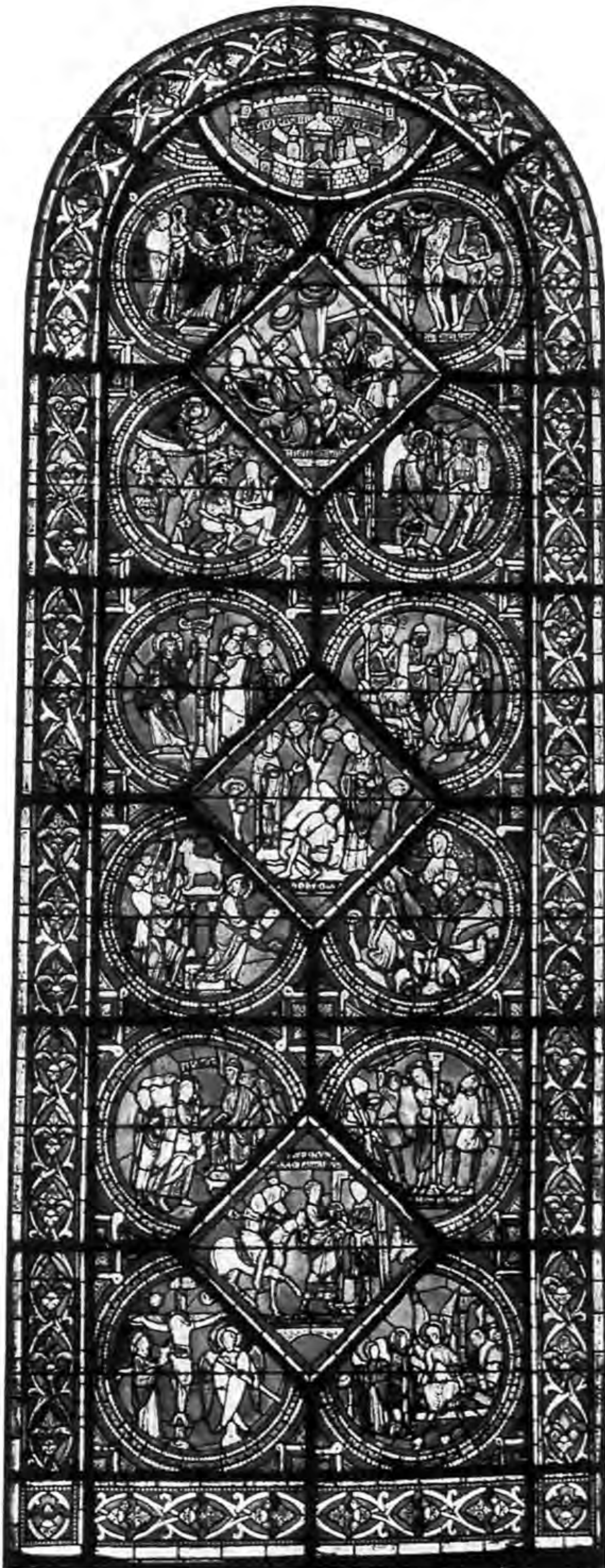


FIG. 7. Sens Cathedral Window. The window in the Sens Cathedral is the most systematic of these three Good Samaritan windows. It too is read from the top down (1–4), with its three main scenes being diamond shaped. These three receive equal treatment. Around the attack of the robbers are four scenes focusing only on the transgression of Adam and Eve (5–8) and not on the creation. Around the priest and Levite are four scenes showing not so much the apostasy of the Israelites (12) as Moses' faith (9–11). Around the delivery of the victim to the inn and the Samaritan's payment of two coins are four scenes from the suffering and resurrection of Christ (13–16), as he paid for the sins of mankind and promised to come again.

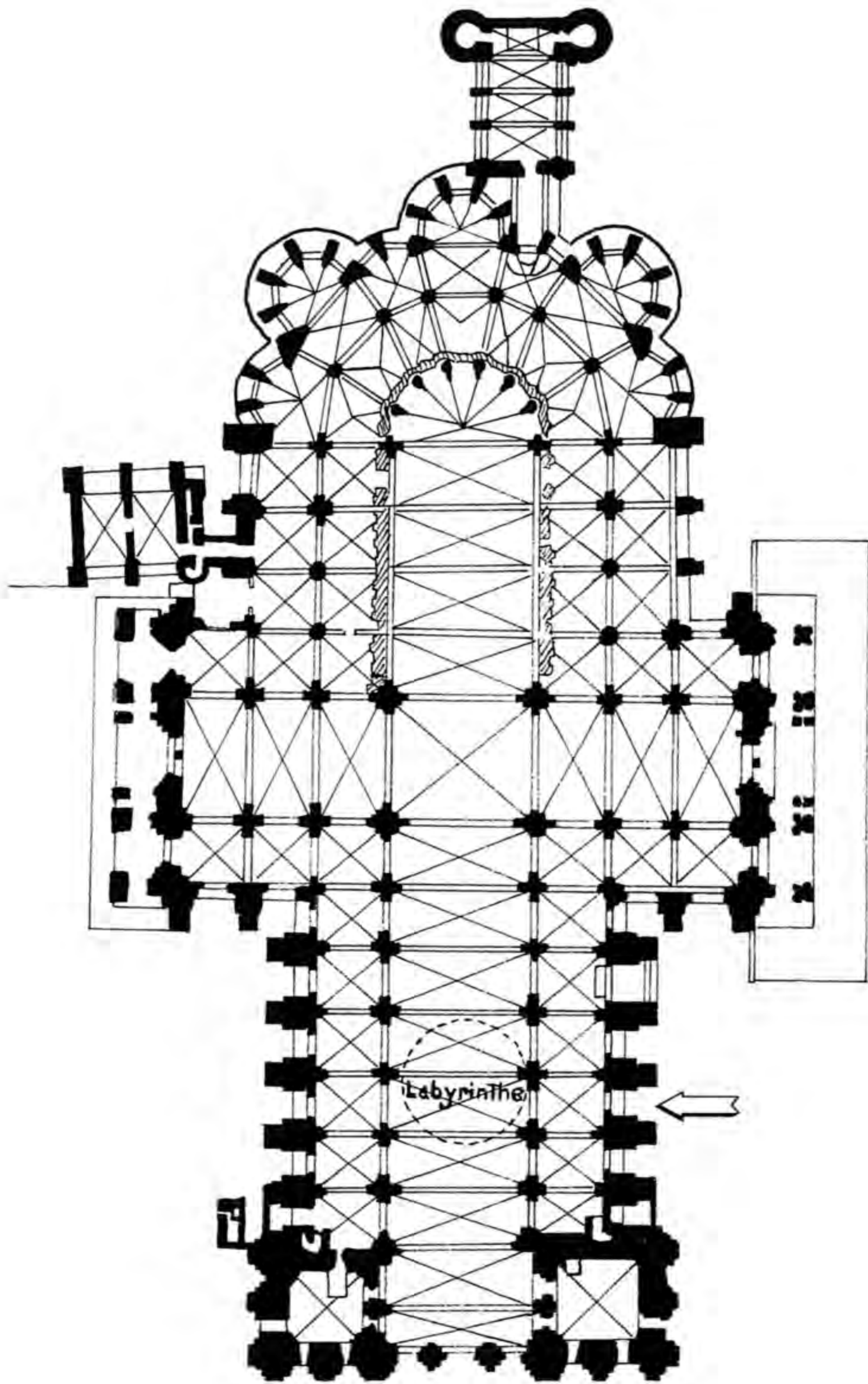


FIG. 8. Location of Chartres Cathedral Good Samaritan Window

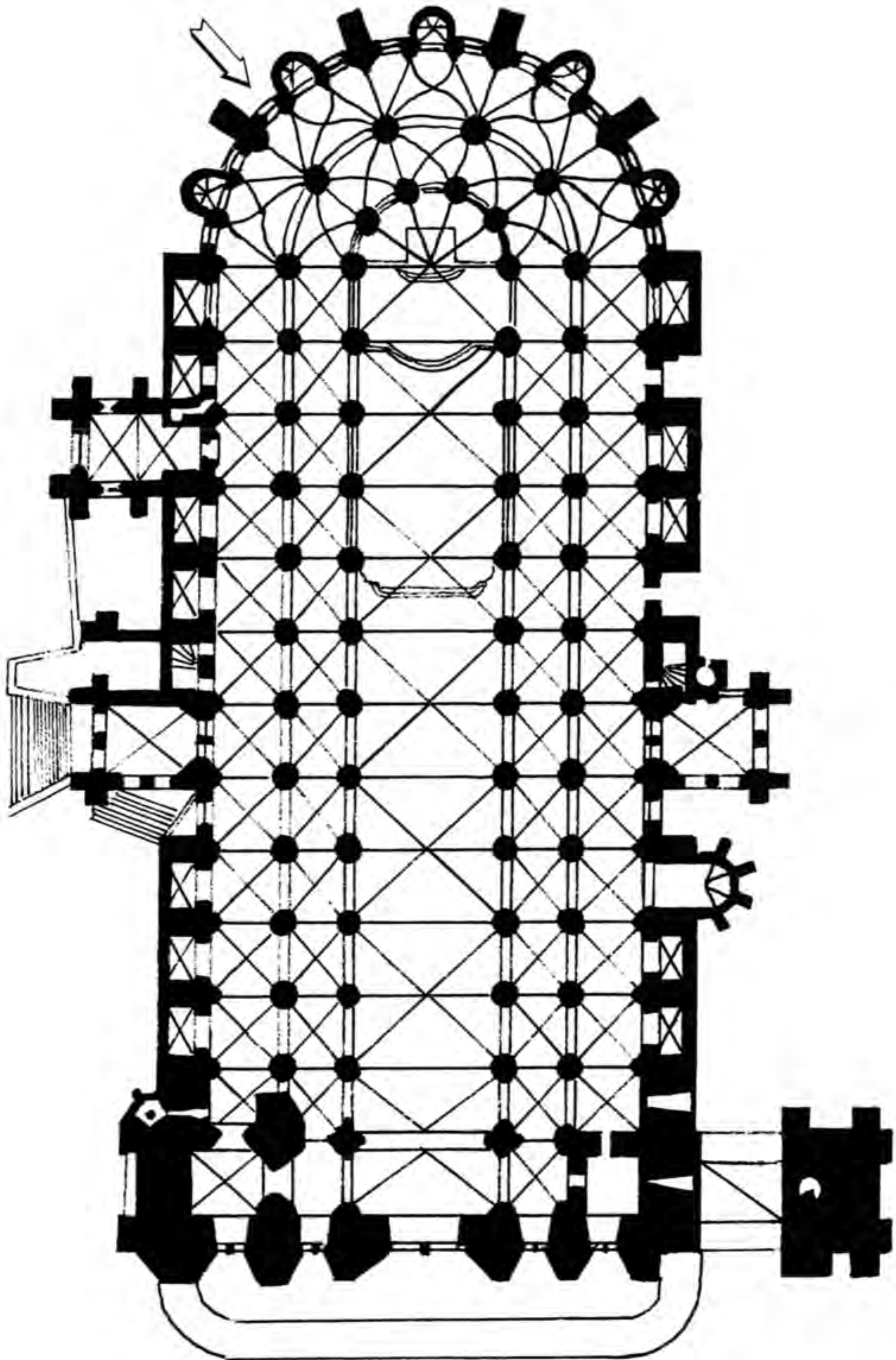


FIG. 9. Location of Bourges Cathedral Good Samaritan Window

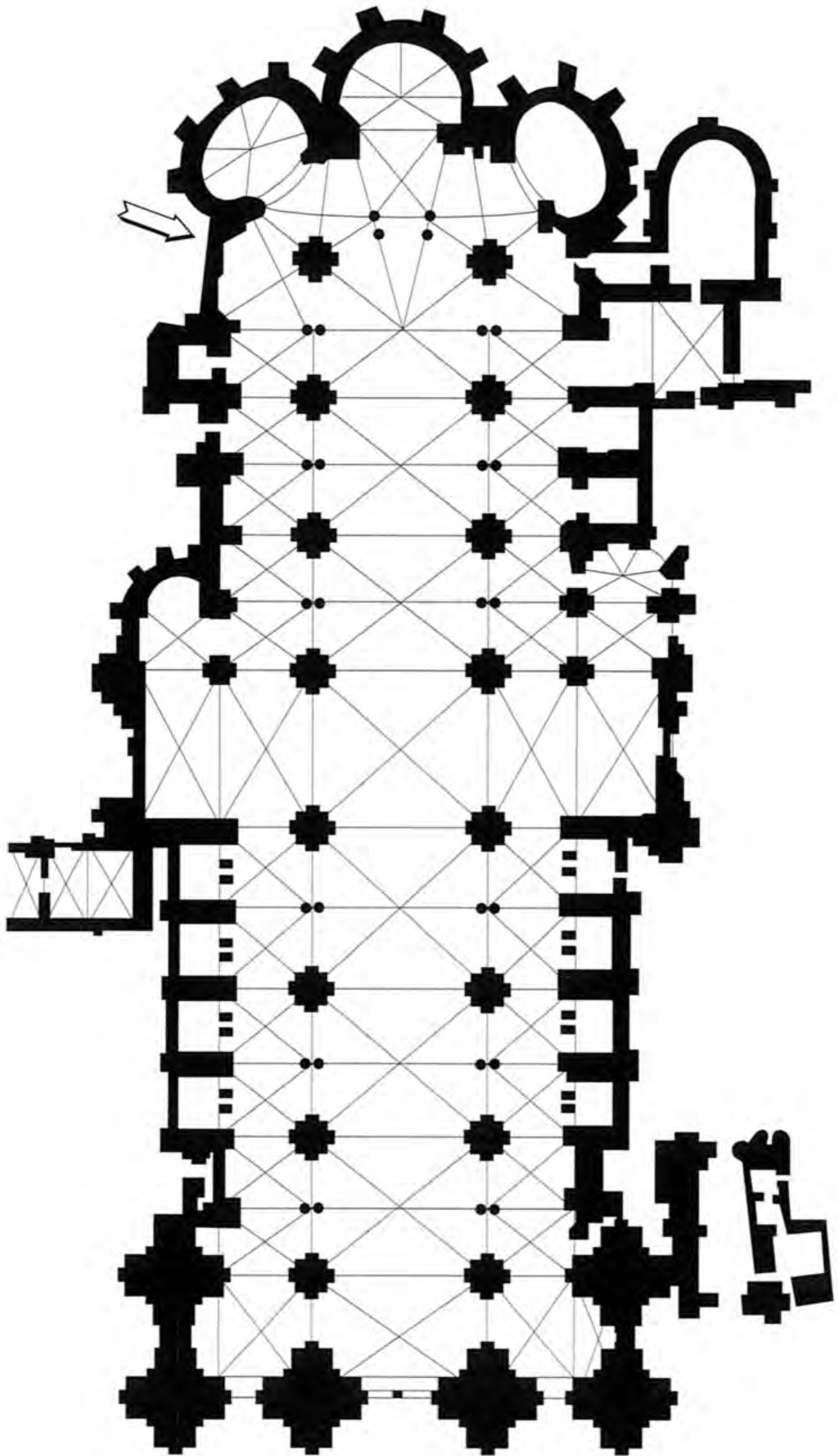


FIG. 10. Location of Sens
Cathedral Good Samaritan Window



PLATE 1. *Top*: Sens, scene 1. The man began his journey in Jerusalem, the temple city of God. *Bottom*: Chartres, scene 14. Man began in the presence of God. Adam is shown here in paradise.



PLATE 2. *Top*: Bourges, scene 2. The man separates from the city of God on his way out into the world. *Bottom*: Chartres, scene 16. Adam and Eve are instructed not to partake of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.



PLATE 3. *Top*: Sens, scenes 2 and 5–8. The man falls among robbers. The surrounding scenes concern the transgression first of Eve and then of Adam: God shows Adam and Eve the tree of knowledge, Eve eats the fruit and gives some to Adam, Adam and Eve are discovered, and an angel drives them from paradise. *Bottom*: Chartres, scene 20. An angel drives Adam and Eve from the Garden, stripping them of their pre-mortal glory.



PLATE 4. *Top:* Sens, scenes 3 and 9–12. The priest and Levite, holding their books, look on but do not or cannot help the fallen man. The surrounding scenes are Moses sees the burning bush, Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh, Moses raises the brazen serpent, and the Israelites worship the golden calf. *Bottom:* Bourges, scenes 18 and 20. Aaron collects gold for the calf, and Moses breaks the tablets of the law.



PLATE 5. *Top:* Chartres, scene 8. For the early Christians, the priest and Levite symbolized the Old Testament law and the prophets. *Left:* Chartres, scene 9. The Samaritan tilts his head in compassion and binds a bandage around the head of the wounded traveler.



PLATE 6. *Top*: Sens, scenes 4 and 13–16. The wounded man rides on the beast of the Samaritan, who pays the innkeeper two denaria. In the surrounding scenes, Christ stands before Pilate, Christ is scourged, he is crucified, and the women see an angel at the tomb. *Bottom*: Chartres, scene 4. Christ and two Pharisees discuss the law.



PLATE 7. *Top:* Chartres, scene 10. The Samaritan brings the wounded man to the inn, representing the church. *Right:* Chartres, scene 11. The innkeeper welcomes them. *Bottom:* Chartres, scene 12. The Samaritan cares for the man throughout the night.





PLATE 8. Bourges, lower half of window. Scene 6 depicts the compassion of the Samaritan, which represents the pure love of Christ. Flanking that scene are scenes 21 and 22, showing the scourging and crucifixion of Jesus. Courtesy George S. Tate.

An Allegorical Typology Enriched by LDS Insights

Originally, the elements of the Good Samaritan story appear to have expressed to readers many plain and precious things, all of which are held together and become even richer when understood in terms of restored Latter-day Saint doctrines of God's plan of salvation. As the following step-by-step analysis shows, each element in this allegory corresponds significantly with an important step in the journey of all of mankind toward eternal life. In other words, the parable of the Good Samaritan is not only a story about a man who goes down to Jericho, but also about every person who comes down to walk upon this earth. Simply stated, the man who "went down" from Jerusalem can be seen as representing Adam or all mankind. Jerusalem is the Garden of Eden or a premortal paradise, and Jericho is the world. The man's descent is the Fall or our own entry into mortality. The robbers are the forces of evil that wound the man and leave him half dead and stripped of his garment. The priest and Levite represent the law of Moses, who are thus unable (not just unwilling) to save mankind, while the Samaritan, who comes to the aid and rescue of the victim, represents Christ himself. He has divine compassion on the man, washes him with wine, and anoints him with oil. The Samaritan then takes the man to a public inn, representing the Church, which is open to all. Entrusting the victim to the care of the innkeeper, the Samaritan promises he will come again, at which time he will recompense or reward the faithful innkeeper.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.

A certain man. The early Christian Fathers mainly identified this man specifically as Adam. Indeed, the Aramaic word for *man* (*adam*) may have stood behind the Greek "a certain man" (*anthrōpos tis*), suggesting that this story alluded to Adam much more obviously in the ordinary Jewish language of Jesus' day than it does in modern languages.²⁸ The Hebrew *adam*, however, also means "man, mankind," "men," as well as "Adam" as a proper name.²⁹ Similarly, the Greek word appearing in Luke 10:30, *anthrōpos* (man, person), encompasses each human being in general, both men and women. The more specific Greek word for man (*anēr*) is generally used to designate males only.

Consistent with the broader meanings of *man*, it is noteworthy that Clement of Alexandria, one of the earliest of the Christian Fathers, saw the victim in this allegory as referring to "all of us." Likewise, the idea that the plan of salvation and gospel of Jesus Christ apply universally to each of God's children is fundamental LDS doctrine. We are indeed all travelers, subject to the risks and vicissitudes of mortality.

Went down. Chrysostom saw this part of the story as representing the descent of Adam from paradise, the Garden of Eden, into this world—from glory to a loss of glory, from life to death. The Greek is *katebainen*, and the Latin is *descendebat*, both indicating an actual descent. Origen saw here an intentional transgression or falling into individual sinfulness; Ambrose saw this as the fall of mankind under the sinful shadow of original sin.

In light of the second Article of Faith, Latter-day Saints would tend to agree with the intentionality highlighted by Origen, although not with his negativism, and much less with the inherited sinful nature emphasized by Ambrose. If the man who goes down represents all of humanity, then the narrative is not a tale of sin; it is a depiction of the beneficial “coming down” of all spirits from the premortal realm, as all men and women voluntarily and purposefully come down into the world through birth. Following the same steps, even Christ’s birth, baptism, and mortality are described in scripture as a beneficial descent, a coming down, a “condescension,” or coming down to be with us (1 Ne. 11:26; 2 Ne. 4:26).

Indeed, the language in Luke 10 implies that the man goes down intentionally, through his own volition, knowing the risks involved in the journey. In the tale, no one forces the man to go down to Jericho; and for whatever reason, the person apparently feels that the journey is worth the obvious risks of such travel, which were well known to all people in Jesus’ day.³⁰ When the lone traveler then falls among the robbers, it is an expected part of the mortal experience.

On the one hand, in the typical modern or secular interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, people usually assume that the victim has suffered his great misfortune due to absolutely no fault of his own. On the other extreme, in the early Christian interpretation, people assumed that the victim had somehow wickedly sinned. The LDS framework of the plan of salvation offers a felicitous middle ground, allowing one to see the plight of the victim when he falls among the robbers as an expected, necessary, and valuable part of the fallen experiences of mortality without overemphasizing the negative aspects of entering into the mortal condition and becoming vulnerable to sin.

From Jerusalem. The story depicts the man going down from Jerusalem, not from any ordinary city or place. Because of the sanctity of the Holy City, early Christian interpreters readily sought and found significance in this element of the allegory. For Chrysostom, Jerusalem represented paradise or heavenly living and thoughts. For Augustine, it represented “that heavenly city of peace.” For Isidore, it was not the paradise of the Garden of Eden on earth, but “the paradise of heaven,” and for Eligius it represented “man’s high state of immortality,” perhaps even implying man’s premortal existence.

Latter-day Saints may see in this element all of this significance and more, for the person who descends in the story can represent all mankind coming down from the premortal realms above. Moreover, that person comes down from Jerusalem, the holy temple city, and hence from the ritual presence of God. Presumably, as a person comes down into the world, he or she comes endowed with the blessings and promises obtained from God or conferred upon people in that holy temple city or setting. One of those assurances would have been the knowledge that God would provide a Samaritan necessary to save that person when he or she should encounter grave difficulty along the path of life.

To Jericho. The person in the story is on the road that leads down to Jericho, which the Christian interpreters readily identified as this world or, as Eligius said, “this miserable life.” The symbolism is fitting, for at 825 feet below sea level, Jericho and the other settlements near the Dead Sea are the lowest cities on the earth. Jericho’s mild winter climate made it a popular resort area where Herod the Great built his most splendid, luxurious vacation palace.

From a Latter-day Saint point of view, however, it is important to notice that the person has not yet arrived in Jericho when the robbers attack. The person is on the steep way down to Jericho, but may not yet have gone very far and certainly has not yet reached bottom. As a person begins to fall or descend farther and farther from the heavenly state, troubles will undoubtedly become more and more intense. Latter-day Saints might not see Jericho as representing this world, but rather as pointing toward the telestial or lowest degree of glory (or perhaps even outer darkness) in an ultimate sense, looking to some future final judgment or doom from which all mankind can be saved. The attack of the robbers and the intervention of the Samaritan stem that course and take the traveler in a more wholesome direction.³¹

Fell. This may, of course, refer to the fall of Adam, but Ambrose and Eligius saw it also as individual human failing. Ambrose blamed this fall on “straying from the heavenly mandate,” and Eligius preached that if the person “had not been puffed up inside, he would not have fallen so easily when tempted on the outside.” The Greek word here, *periptō*, means more than simply *piptō*, to “fall down [or] fall to pieces,” but to “encounter,” “fall in with,” or “fall into [certain circumstances], especially misfortunes.”³² Thus, it is easy to see here an allusion to the fallen mortal state, the general circumstances of the human condition, or the natural man, as well as the plight of individual sinfulness or the results of falling in with the wrong company.

Among thieves. The early Christian writers saw here a reference to “the devil” (Irenaeus, Chrysostom), “the rulers of darkness” (Clement), “hostile

powers” (Origen’s elder), “opposing forces or evil spirits or false teachers” (Origen), “angels of night and darkness” (Ambrose), “the devil and his angels” (Augustine), “angels of darkness” (Isidore), or “evil spirits” (Eligius).

Latter-day Saints may want to add a further dimension to this discussion, for these thieves (or rather bandits or robbers, such as the Gadianton robbers) are not casual operators but organized outlaws acting as a band of robbers (*lēistai*). The traveler is assailed not only by random devils or various wicked spirits, but by a band of highwaymen, a pernicious society that acts with deliberate and concerted intent.³³

Which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Stripped of his raiment. The early Christians sensed that Jesus spoke of something important here. Origen and Augustine saw here a symbol for mankind’s loss of immortality and incorruptibility. Chrysostom similarly expressed this in terms of a physical loss of “his robe of immortality,” but also as a moral loss of the “robe of obedience.” Ambrose spoke theologically of being “stripped of the covering of spiritual grace which we received [from God],” and Eligius saw this psychologically as the loss of a “robe of innocence.”

Latter-day Saints may find even further significance in the fact that the attackers apparently want the person’s clothing. They undress (*ekdusantes*) the victim.³⁴ Oddly, they are not interested in the traveler’s wealth or any commodities he or she might be carrying. Nothing in the story indicates that the person is carrying anything at all (although one may assume that the person has sufficient for his needs). For some undisclosed reason, however, the attackers seem to be particularly interested in the garment worn by the person. At least the stripping receives special mention. Perhaps they want this clothing not only for its inherent use as fabric (just as the soldiers divided the garments of Jesus at Golgotha, Matt. 27:35), but also to claim its social status or privileges or powers, especially if it represents a temple or holy garment; or maybe they want to deny the person the privilege of wearing something distinctive or sacred, somewhat reminiscent of the story of Joseph’s coat taken by his brothers³⁵ or the young men or soldiers who confronted Elisha near Jericho after he received the priesthood garment or mantle of Elijah.³⁶ In any case, according to Origen’s Fragment 71, the robes are not only taken off, but also “taken away” (*aphairesis*).

Wounded. The early Christian Fathers consistently mentioned here references to the pains of life, the travails of the soul, the afflictions due to diverse sins and acts of disobedience, or the sins and vices of this mortal condition in general. Latter-day Saints would agree: sin and the enemies of the soul do indeed wound the spirit, whether those blows of mortality

involve willful rebellion or inadvertent transgression. Furthermore, it may be significant that the robbers do not kill the victim. Perhaps this is to say that they do not have the power to tempt or torment the man beyond his ability to resist (1 Cor. 10:13) or beyond the Lord's power to redeem.

Departed. They simply go away. The Christian Fathers offered no thoughts about why or how they go away. Latter-day Saints might infer that they are somehow commanded to depart or that the robbers are at least afraid that someone with greater power will find them and catch them in their treachery, and so they quickly run to hide. Chrysostom came the closest to this idea, suggesting that the robbers do not kill the victim because God does not allow it.

Half dead. The robbers depart, leaving the person exactly half dead (*hemithanatos*). In this, Chrysostom saw a faint indication of God's protection, and he oddly assumed that the robbers do want to kill the traveler. Eligius found in the depiction of the human condition as being "half-dead" the idea that the devil may "deprive us of the happiness of immortal life but not of our sense of reason."

Latter-day Saints may find in this detail, however, a much more likely, specific reference to the first and second deaths (compare Alma 12:31–32). The person had fallen, had become subject to sin, and thus had suffered the first death, becoming subject to mortality. But the traveler is only half dead; the second death (permanent separation from God) can still be averted. The early Fragment 71 left by Origen contains a similar idea: this represents "the death of half of our nature, for the soul is immortal"; but then this notion drops out of later commentary.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

By chance. In other words, the arrival of the Jewish priest is not the result of a conscious search on his part. This priest is not out looking for people who are in need of his help. Stated even more strongly, neither is the priest there by any eternal plan or by divine intervention. He is simply there "by chance" (*kata synkurian*).³⁷

A certain priest. The early Christian commentators saw this as a reference to the law of Moses (Origen) or to Moses himself (Chrysostom) or to the priesthood of the Old Testament (Augustine), which did not have the power to lead to salvation. In New Testament times, the priests in Jerusalem were aristocratic clergy who administered the affairs of the temple. Many of the ruling priests were Sadducees, who were largely sympathetic with Hellenism and the Roman authorities. The story of Jesus does not specify whether the priest (*iereus*) is a high-ranking priest or one

of the 7,200 ordinary priests who took their weekly and daily turns serving in the temple.³⁸ Because this character is left somewhat indefinite, he may point to any high-ranking priest or religious leader, including those of pagan temples or gentile churches, who might use any ordinances or teach people any doctrines of men that do not have the power to bring people into life eternal.

A Levite. Origen and Chrysostom consistently say that the Levite represents “prophetic discourse” or the “body of prophets after Moses.” In other words, for these early commentators, the priest and the Levite represented the law and the prophets of the Old Testament, which Jesus came to fulfill (Matt. 5:17). This idea fits the ethical message of the Good Samaritan, for doing unto others as you would have them do unto you “is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12).

But associating the Levites exclusively with the prophets seems an unlikely connection for Jesus’ audience. The Levites were a lower class of priest, relegated to menial chores and duties within the temple. If they were lucky, they served as singers and musicians; otherwise they “swept the porches and those parts of the Temple area open to the sky” or served as police “to prevent any unlawful person [such as a Gentile] from setting foot [in the Temple], either intentionally or unintentionally.”³⁹ Interestingly, although the Levites did not have access to the altar, one of their auxiliary assignments was “to help the priest on and off with his vestments. . . . ‘These stripped them of their raiment,’”⁴⁰ the latter conduct being ascribed by Jesus to the robbers.

Nevertheless, in Jesus’ story, at least this lower Levitical priest does more than the aristocratic priest who comes first. The ordinary Levite “came” and saw, whereas the priest only looks from a distance or considers the problem briefly. Perhaps the Levite wants to help, but views himself as too lowly; and even more than the priest, this Aaronic functionary also lacks the full power or authority to save the dying person. But at least this ordinary servant in the House of Israel comes closer than does the aristocratic priest. In the end, however, the lowly Levite also looks away and passes by on the other side.

Saw him. Significantly, the priest remains at a distance, and the Levite, who seems to come closer, immediately withdraws. They are apparently unable to help in their present condition, perhaps for several reasons. The point may be that they are unable or unprepared to help, as much as that they are unwilling to do so. The parable gives no reason why they do not help. They “saw” but did not act, perhaps an allusion to the fact that some of the Jews were blinded by “looking beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14), foreseeing and watching for the coming of the Messiah, but then not receiving him or acting as he would act.

Passed by on the other side. Chrysostom suggested that the priest and Levite cannot help because they share in the fallen state, but there may be more. The priest and Levite will not cross over to the side of this traveler but stay on the opposite side (*antiparêlthen*). This element emphasizes the fact that they will not switch over or convert to the gospel but stay on their previous Mosaic course.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine.

Samaritan. In all cases, the early Christians saw the Good Samaritan as Christ himself (Irenaeus), “the keeper of our souls” (Chrysostom), “the guardian” (Origen), “the good shepherd” (Augustine), or “the Lord and Savior” (Eligius). Chrysostom suggested that a Samaritan is a particularly apt representative of Christ because “as a Samaritan is not from Judea, so Christ is not of this world.” Modern readers, for the most part, have lost this plain point of view.

This association, however, is probably the strongest emblematic element in the story. This “Christological interpretation,” as Monselewski defines it, is readily acknowledged by several scholarly commentators and theologians, even if they do not extend the allegorical interpretation to include further elements.⁴¹

Jesus’ audience in Jerusalem may well have recognized in Jesus’ Samaritan a reference by the Savior to himself. Heinrich Zimmermann even promotes the hypothesis that Jesus’ tale may have originated in an actual event in the life of Jesus himself.⁴²

Scriptural corroboration for the relevance of this identification of Jesus with the Samaritan comes from the Gospel of John, when some Jews in Jerusalem rejected Jesus with the insult, “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (John 8:48). Perhaps because Nazareth is right across the valley to the north of Samaria, and because Jewish people generally thought as little of Nazareth as they did of Samaria (John 1:46), the two locations could easily be lumped geographically and culturally together.

Latter-day Saint doctrine resonates strongly with this notion, for just as the Samaritans were viewed as the least of all humanity, so it was prophesied that the Servant Messiah would be “despised and rejected of men” and “esteemed . . . not” (Isa. 53:3). Thus, the idea of the lowest outcast fits the role of Christ, who had to descend below all things in order to redeem humanity from death and hell (see D&C 122:8; compare Alma 7:12).

Also, knowing that Jesus intended the story to motivate listeners to “go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37), Latter-day Saints will identify with the Samaritan, desiring to go and do as he did, not only seeing to the physical

needs of those who have experienced misfortune, but also becoming “saviours . . . on mount Zion” (Obad. 1:21) and helping to bring to pass the work of God, namely “the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). By doing like the Samaritan, we join him in a crucial role as his companions in bringing to pass the work of salvation and exaltation. This relationship between Christ and his disciples is described in two other sayings of the Savior: “I am the vine, ye are the branches,” and “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:5, 4). Likewise, without branches, the vine does not yield fruit.

Furthermore, as has been expounded in great detail by Birger Gerhardsson and others, the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 shares many ethical and religious parallels with the discourse on the Good Shepherd in John 10:1–18.⁴³ In both, Christ, as the Good Shepherd or the Good Samaritan, saves his flock from robbers (John 10:8) and does not turn away from his duty, as do the hirelings (John 10:13) and the priest and Levite. Perhaps even more pointed may be the connecting linguistic detail that the Hebrew word “sounding most like the name Samaritan” (Hebrew, *Shomeroni*) is, according to Gerhardsson, the word *shamar*, meaning not only guardian or keeper “in the general sense of watchman but also occasionally in the special sense of *shepherd*” (as in 1 Sam. 17:20). The verb *shamar* means “to keep, watch, preserve, support, aid, or tend,”⁴⁴ and is “often used as [a] designation of God and of his Anointed,” drawing even closer the linguistic connections between Jesus, the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, and God.⁴⁵ Of course, one should not push any of these verbal connections too far, but these etymological similarities were notably influential in the minds of many of the most knowledgeable early Christian interpreters (Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, Isidore).

As he journeyed. The text may imply that the Samaritan (representing Christ or his emulators) is purposely looking for people in need of help. Origen, especially, took note of this prospect and its theological implications, that “he went down [intending] to rescue and care for the dying man.” The New Testament text makes it clear that the others come “by chance”; but by saying that the Samaritan “came where he was,” the text does not give the impression that his arrival is by happenstance or coincidence. His conduct is depicted as being more deliberate. “Seeing” (*idōn*), the Samaritan sees with his eyes but also understands the situation with his heart.

Had compassion. This is one of the most important words in the story. It speaks of the pure love of Christ. The early Christian writers saw little need to comment specifically on the compassion of Christ, perhaps taking its importance for granted.

Latter-day Saints, however, may wish to think more deeply in this context about the pure love of Christ that each disciple of Christ should

cultivate (Moro. 7:47) and also about the deep sympathy that the Savior feels for the sinner in need, and not just about the misery of the heart (*misericordia*) that became the prominent sentiment felt in this connection due to that Latin word regularly used to translate the Greek word for compassion. The Greek literally means that his bowels are moved with deep, inner sympathy (*esplangchnisthē; splangchnon*, meaning inward parts, bowels; compare Alma 7:12).

This Greek word is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in sentences that describe God's or Christ's emotions of mercy. As is well recognized, "outside the original parables of Jesus there is no instance of the word being used of men."⁴⁶ Thus, Daniélou rightly argues that this word is used in the Bible as a distinctive theological marker, referring exclusively to "God's love" or "divine compassion," further strengthening the allegorical identification of the Samaritan as God or Christ.⁴⁷ This word appears prominently in two other New Testament parables: in the parable of the unmerciful servant, when "the lord of that servant," clearly representing God, "was moved with compassion" (Matt. 18:27); and in the Prodigal Son, when the father, again representing God, sees his son returning, he "had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). Likewise, the Samaritan represents the divinely compassionate God.

Went to him. The injured traveler cannot move, but Christ comes to succor him in his hour of greatest need. He runs to the side of those who suffer and comes to their aid. Without this help, people cannot recover and the victim does not move forward.

Bound up his wounds. For Clement, love, faith, and hope are "the ligatures . . . of salvation which cannot be undone." For Chrysostom, "the bandages are the teachings of Christ," or the binding of Satan and freeing of man. For Ambrose, Christ binds the sinner "with a stricter rule." For Augustine, the Lord restrains the traveler from further sin. Isidore posited that the Samaritan "cured the human race of their wounds of sin," while Eligius believed the Samaritan "bound his wounds while telling him to repent." Interestingly, Origen made the point that the Samaritan apparently comes prepared: "he had bandages, oil, and wine with him."

Latter-day Saints will understand that the repentant person is bound to the Lord through covenants and thus might find further significance in the process of binding than in the possible symbolic meaning of the fabric of those ligatures. As in the binding of Isaac, the receiving soul is prepared to be bound, to sacrifice all for the Lord. The soul is also bound to the Lord in covenant, and the wounds are tied together with a new dressing. Inasmuch as the robbers have carried off the garment of the traveler and have left him stripped, the Samaritan begins the process of replacing the lost garment or rebuilding the victim's spiritual protection by binding the wounds—"to bind up the brokenhearted" (D&C 138:42)—with these bandages.

Oil. A lotion of olive oil would have been very soothing. While most early Christian writers saw here only a symbol of Christ's words of consolation, words of good hope or remission, Chrysostom saw the oil as a reference to "the holy anointing." This may refer to many ordinances or priesthood blessings: the initial ordinance of anointing (Ps. 2:2; 18:50; 20:6), the use of consecrated oil to heal the sick (James 5:14), the gift of the Holy Ghost (often symbolized by the anointing with olive oil),⁴⁸ or the final anointing of a person to be or become a king or a queen.⁴⁹ In ancient Israel, kings were anointed with olive oil. The names Christ and Messiah also mean "the anointed one," and accordingly the Christ figure gives the needy soul that which is of his very essence. Latter-day Saints recognize the importance of being anointed in preparation to receive the blessings of eternal life, and LDS scholars find it interesting that "in both scripture and early Christian tradition, olive oil is symbolic of the Holy Ghost. This is because the Holy Ghost provides spiritual nourishment, enlightenment, and comfort, just as olive oil in the ancient Near East was used for food, light, and anointing."⁵⁰

Wine. The Samaritan also takes his wine and lets it gush out into (*epicheōn*) the open wound, helping to cleanse and disinfect it. For some of the Fathers, this wine represented the mystery of faith (Chrysostom), the doctrine or word of God (Origen), or the exhortation to labor with the highest fervor of soul (Augustine, Eligius); but others were quick to point out that the wine is "something that stings" (Origen), for God "stings our wounds with a declaration of judgment" (Ambrose).

The earliest Christian interpretation associates this wine with the blood of Christ, "the blood of David's vine" (Clement), an idea with which Latter-day Saints would readily identify. The redeeming blood of Christ symbolized in the administration of the sacrament purifies the body and soul. The administration of the wine, which cleanses and purifies the body and renews the covenant of baptism, potently represents the atoning blood of Christ. Accordingly, the Good Samaritan brings not only physical help but also the saving ordinances of the gospel. This atoning wine may sting at first, but it soon brings healing and purity and becomes soothing and comforting.

And set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

Set him on his own beast. The early Fathers uniformly saw in this phrase a reference to Christ's own body, fulfilling the prophecy that the servant will bear "our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17 quoting Isa. 53:4). Augustine said that to be placed on the beast is "to believe in Christ's incarnation," for in the flesh Jesus bore our sins and suffered for us. Certainly Christ carries each of us into salvation. The allegory, however, does not say that the



FIG. 11. The compassionate service of the Samaritan. Illustration by Rudolf Schäfer, from a 1929 German edition of the Bible published in Stuttgart.

Samaritan carries us on his own back or flesh. The story says that the victim is placed on the Samaritan's own beast, which might represent Christ's yoke or some other extension of his power, such as the priesthood, missionaries, or other agents through whom Christ ministers in bringing people into the Church. Although the text does not specify what kind of beast is involved, it may well be an ass, prefiguring a sharing of the Lord's beast of triumphal entry, with Christ allowing each person whom he rescues to ride as the king himself.

Inn. For the early Christians this element readily symbolized "the church," "the holy church," or "the universal church" of God. In his Latin translation of Origen's homily containing the words of "one of the elders," Jerome adds a reference to "the stable," but the inn (*katalumē*) of Luke 2:7, meaning "a guest room," should not be confused with the inn (*pan-docheion*) of Luke 10:34, meaning "a public house." Interestingly, the story in no way indicates where the inn is located or where the robbers attack, so the Samaritan may take the victim back up the road toward Jerusalem, beginning his ascent back toward the holy state.

The ideas of a wayside inn, a public shelter, or a hospital, all of which are implicit here, offer meaningful symbols for the Church of Christ. It is not the heavenly destination, but a necessary aid in helping travelers reach their eternal home. Those within the inn are cared for temporarily, and those who work there expect the Samaritan to come again, perhaps with other victims in need of their care.

Took care of him. Christ stays with the injured person and takes care of him personally the entire first night. The Lord does not turn the injured person over too quickly to the innkeeper; he stays with him through the darkest hours. As Origen commented, Jesus cares for the wounded “not only during the day, but also at night. He devotes all his attention and activity to him.”

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

On the morrow. Chrysostom assumed that this refers to a time after this life, “after the holy resurrection,” but Ambrose and Augustine saw here a prophecy by Jesus that he would be resurrected, that he would come again after Easter or “after the resurrection of the Lord.” In other words, Christ ministered in person to his disciples for a short time, for one day and through that night; but “on the morrow” when he departed (that is, after his death, resurrection, and ascension), he left the traveler in the care and keeping of the Church. For Latter-day Saints, however, the dawning of the new day in the life of the rescued victim naturally relates to the beginning of the convert’s new life, enlightened by the true light.

Two pence. Early on, Irenaeus, Origen, and the elder saw these coins (which would have borne the images of Caesar) as symbolizing the image of God the Father and his Son, the one being the identical image of the other (Heb. 1:1–3). Chrysostom and Ambrose, however, found here a reference to the scriptures, specifically the Old and the New Testaments, while Augustine identified them with “the two instructions on charity” or love (Luke 10:27). One might suggest that they could also represent in modern times the two priesthoods or any two witnesses to the truth.

Because the two pence (*denaria*) would represent two days’ wages, these coins could well represent making adequate provision for the needs of the person through the stewardship of the Church. If Jesus is saying, “I will pay you for two days’ work,” then he may also be implying that he will return on the third day.⁵¹

Moreover, the amount of money involved here was probably not arbitrarily selected. Two denaria, or one half-shekel, was the amount each Jewish man had to pay as the temple tax each year.⁵² By paying this amount, the Samaritan may be saying symbolically that he has now paid that obligation for the hapless traveler, providing the means for him to be in good standing within the house of the Lord.

Innkeeper. Chrysostom and Augustine saw the innkeeper as Paul, but Isidore suggested that the innkeeper could represent all of the Apostles or their successors who preached the gospel. If the inn refers to the Church in

general, however, the host could be any Church leader who takes responsibility for the nurturing and retaining of any rescued and redeemed soul.

When I come again. The Christ figure promises to come again, a ready allusion for several commentators to the Second Coming of Christ (the unnamed elder and Chrysostom) or to the day of judgment (Ambrose). As Daniélou notes, the Greek word *epanerchesthai* is the same word that appears one other time in the New Testament, in Luke 19:15, referring distinctively to the time when Christ will come again to judge who has done what with the talents or pounds they have been given. These two occurrences of *epanerchomai* are the only uses of this word in the New Testament, significantly heightening the strength of this eschatological element in the allegory of the Good Samaritan.⁵³

Repay or reward. The innkeeper is promised that Christ will cover all the costs, “whatever you expend.” The root of the Greek word *prosdapanaō* means not only “expend,” but also implies “spend[ing] freely,” even to the point of wearing out or exhaustion.⁵⁴ The expectation is that the stewards over the Church will drain themselves in carrying out their responsibilities and that the Lord will make them whole in the day of judgment.

Beyond that, the New Testament text implies more than simply that the Samaritan will reimburse the innkeeper upon his return. He will “reward” (*apodidomai*) the worker generously and appropriately. While the word *apodidomai* can mean simply to repay a debt (as in Matt. 18:25–34), it is also the word used in Matthew 6:4, 18, speaking of God’s great rewards to the righteous (he “shall reward thee openly”), and in Matthew 16:27 (“he shall reward every man according to his works”), as well as in Luke 19:8 (to “restore fourfold”). The innkeeper is therefore assured that, eternally, all his effort will be worthwhile. Chrysostom thus saw the Samaritan’s pledge as a promise of bestowing “a crown of justice” and “a payment worthy of your labor.” Accordingly, this final, significant element in the story gives the assurance that all those who do the Lord’s bidding will receive a just and generous reward in the day of reckoning (compare Matt. 25:40) based, as Irenaeus said, “on the increase we have produced.”

Perhaps more than any other element in the story, this promise of the Samaritan to pay the innkeeper whatever it costs—in effect giving him a blank check—has troubled commentators who try to visualize this story as a real-life event. Who in his right mind in the first century would give such a commitment to an unknown innkeeper, especially considering that hostellers were often thought to be disreputable? But when the story is understood allegorically, it becomes clear that when the Samaritan (Christ) makes this promise and gives the innkeeper his charge, they already know and trust each other quite thoroughly.⁵⁵ Otherwise the ending of the parable limps rather badly, for why else would the innkeeper exhaust his resources on behalf of the victim if he did not already know and trust the Samaritan?

TABLE 1. A Summary of Patristic Allegorizations and LDS Types and Shadows of Luke 10

Luke 10	Patristic Allegorizations	LDS Types and Shadows
a man	Adam	all mankind
went down	left Paradise	left premortal existence
from Jerusalem	a heavenly place	presence of God
to Jericho	the world	a telestial world
fell	straying, pride	fallen state, sins
among robbers	Satan, evil forces	Satan, expected trials
stripped him	losing immortality	stripping authority, garment
wounded him	effects of disobedience, sin	blows of mortality
departed	God did not allow more	required to depart
left him half dead	soul is immortal	two deaths
by chance	n/a	not by the original divine plan
priest and Levite	law and prophets	those with partial authority
passed by	could not help	lacked higher power to save
Samaritan	Christ, guardian	Christ, most humble, despised
saw	n/a	knowing him and seeing all
had compassion	miserericordia	pure love of Christ
went to him	to be a neighbor	succoring him in need
bound his wounds	teachings, rules	binding, covenant
pouring in	n/a	gushing forth and filling up
oil	soothing, hope	healing, anointing, Holy Spirit
wine	stinging reprimand	atonement blood
on his own beast	body of Christ	with helper, triumphal rescue
inn	the church	church, but not a final destination
took care	church accepts all	Jesus personally cares for all
on the morrow	after resurrection	dawning of new day, born again
two denaria	Father and Son, two Testaments	two days, annual temple tax
the innkeeper	apostles, Paul	any church leader
when I come again	Second Coming	Second Coming
repay	suitable reward	cover all costs, reward well

Thus, the story of the Good Samaritan works very well as an extended allegory for the plan of salvation. All of its elements fit meaningfully into an allegory of the fall and redemption of mankind, encasing many allusions to divine, sacred, sacramental, ecclesiastical and eschatological symbolic elements. Especially from a Latter-day Saint point of view, this interpretation offers a strong reading of the text. In terms of completeness, coherence, insight and outlook, this may be its best reading. Even beyond

the elements recognized by the early Christian commentators, the following factors have heightened significance for Latter-day Saints: the universality of all people coming down from the premortal world to this earth, the holy temple symbolism of Jerusalem, the stripping of the garment, the implicit reference to the first and second deaths in being half dead, the limitations of the Aaronic or lower priesthood, the pure love and succoring condescension of Christ, the anointing with oil, the washing away of sins through the blood of the Savior, the necessary role of the Church in assisting in the work of the plan of salvation, and the prospect that each faithful servant of the Lord can and should go and do like the Savior himself in helping to bring to pass the eternal life of all mankind.

QUESTIONS AND FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Thinking about the implications of this allegorical interpretation of the Good Samaritan raises several questions of various kinds that call for further exploration. In each case, additional research sheds positive light on this interesting and, I think, important understanding of this story, one of the most significant and influential stories ever crafted and told by the Savior. The purpose of the remaining sections of this article is not only to legitimize this allegorical interpretation, but, even more, to explore some of its attractive implications.

The Loss of the Allegorical Approach

On learning about the broad allegorical design of the Good Samaritan, one quickly wonders, Why have people not heard more about the early Christian approach to the Good Samaritan before? When did the story of the Good Samaritan lose its primary allegorical signification? Seeing it as an allegory of the plan of salvation discloses a whole new range of powerful meaning in the traditional parable. When and how did this understanding get lost?

It is clear that the allegorical interpretation remained the dominant understanding of this New Testament passage at least well into the Middle Ages, as is evidenced in the stained-glass windows of several European cathedrals. Even into the Protestant Reformation, the allegorical or Christological interpretation remained the basic understanding.⁵⁶ It was so deeply ingrained that even Martin Luther retained all of the basic elements in the traditional allegorical interpretation. Because he rejected the efficacy of the Catholic sacraments in bringing about the salvation of mankind, Luther made a few small adjustments, seeing the oil and wine as simply symbolizing “the gospel” and the Samaritan’s animal as “the cross.” Thus, in his sermon on August 22, 1529, Luther worked through each element in the parable, commenting allegorically on such things as

the love of God, the Samaritan as the image of Christ, the robbers as the devil, the plight of the victim as the helplessness of mankind, and the inn as the Christian church.⁵⁷

The rise of humanism, scholasticism, individualism, science, and secularism during the Enlightenment, coupled with Calvin's strong antiallegorical stance⁵⁸ and capped off with the dominantly historical approach to scripture favored in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, eventually diminished the inclination of scholars to see much more in this text than a moral injunction to be kind to all people⁵⁹ and a criticism of organized religion as not having the power to benefit mankind.⁶⁰ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "the Christological interpretation almost completely disappeared."⁶¹

As Leslie Barnard points out, "the great German scholar Von Harnack described [allegorization] as a species of 'biblical alchemy,'" but Barnard is right that such a view is "facile in the extreme."⁶² With Barnard, those who enjoy the identification of multiple levels of meaning in the words of Jesus and who recognize that the parable of the Good Samaritan need not necessarily have had only "one, original, simple meaning in Jesus' eyes" may well lament the loss of the original inclination to see this parable as an allegory or typology.⁶³ Unfortunately, this approach has been largely overwhelmed in recent years by the critical historical or sociological approaches strongly preferred today in modern biblical scholarship.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Historical Approaches

How have modern biblical scholars approached the story of the Good Samaritan? Where do they focus their attention? Most modern exegetes have concentrated on historical matters in an effort to explain the real-life significance of details in the story. Significant studies have been published, for example, on the following subjects:

1. The animosity that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans at the time of Jesus.⁶⁴
2. The rabbinic debates at the time of Jesus over the meaning of the biblical law on loving one's neighbor.⁶⁵
3. Jewish sayings on the priority of mercy (*ḥēṣed*) over law or sacrifice, commenting especially on Hosea 6:6, "for I desired mercy, and not sacrifice."⁶⁶
4. The ritual purity laws that might have inhibited a Jewish priest or the Levite from helping the injured traveler.⁶⁷
5. "The apostasy of the Jewish religious leaders" in first-century Judaism.⁶⁸

6. The infestation of robbers that made it dangerous for people to travel from Jerusalem to Jericho or in the hill country or desert wadis during the days of Jesus.⁶⁹
7. The illegality of importing oil from Samaria into Judea.⁷⁰
8. The filthy and dangerous conditions of wayside inns in the ancient world.⁷¹
9. The commercial status of debts incurred at public inns in that era.⁷²

Building on these pieces of background information, most of these commentators have sought to intensify the central ethical message of the parable. For example, hatred between Jews and Samaritans can serve to emphasize the shamefulness of not showing kindness to anyone in need, even if the needy person falls outside of one's own accepted religious or societal group; petty technicalities concerning blood or corpse defilement can be used to accentuate the idea that charitable deeds are more important than priestly purity.⁷³

Other approaches, of course, have been taken by modern interpreters. Some have applied reader or audience response analysis to the narrative,⁷⁴ and others have employed redaction criticism, literary criticism, or text-linguistic criticism.⁷⁵ But for the most part, interest in historical factors has predominated.

As interesting and as instructive as these historical details may be, however, they often run contrary to the plain ethical reading of the parable, let alone its overall allegorical thrust. For example, while it may have been hard for a Jew to admit that a Samaritan had been a neighbor to the injured man, we know nothing about the ethnicity or occupation of the beaten man himself. Despite the fact that some commentators flatly state that "the one who is robbed and beaten is a Jew,"⁷⁶ and others have even been so bold as to figure that he is a "notoriously dishonest" Jewish merchant whose itinerant lifestyle prevents him from observing "even the most basic laws concerning food preparation and purity,"⁷⁷ for all we actually are told in the text the man who is left half dead may be a Samaritan or a Gentile or a pious Jew. His identity is unstated. But without knowing his identity, we know little about the social nature of the Samaritan's compassion. Hence, historical information about such things as the hostility between Jews and Samaritans, the illegality of importing oil from Samaria into Judea, the need to show mercy to foreigners,⁷⁸ or the issue of Jews showing kindness to proselytes,⁷⁹ while interesting issues, are largely irrelevant to the actual story and superfluous to one's becoming or being like the Savior. If Jesus' purpose was to instruct people to be kind to those outside one's normal circle of friends, he should have clearly identified the victim, for instance, as a Jew or a Roman. Jewish debates may have prompted the lawyer's questions, but they did not dictate Jesus' answer.

Likewise, concerns about priestly impurity may be a red herring. After all, the man is not yet dead, and thus corpse impurity (Num. 19:11–12) is not a live issue. Moreover, in Jewish law, saving life was a high legal obligation for all people: “One is under an express affirmative duty to save and protect any person in physical danger. ‘If thou seest him drowning in the river or robbers attacking him or a wild beast coming upon him, thou art duty bound to save him.’”⁸⁰ Jewish law derived this rule from Leviticus 19:16, “Thou shalt not . . . stand [idly by] against the blood of thy neighbour,” and concerning the risk of attempting to rescue someone who is already dead, “doubt there operates in favour of life.”⁸¹ Moreover, logic requires that the problem of corpse contamination could not have been a major legal impediment in any case of rescuing a person from life-threatening distress, for such a concern would have necessarily presented itself in every case of saving life.⁸² While a narrow, legalistic definition of the term “neighbor” might relieve a person of this duty to rescue, just as it would shorten the tether of the second commandment (Lev. 19:18), a supposed concern over corpse impurity adds nothing in support of excusing a person from rescuing a victim in such a case and thus is irrelevant to the logic of the story.

Similarly, all of the historical information about robbers in the countryside surrounding Jerusalem may heighten a modern reader’s awareness of the dangers to which travelers were exposed at the time of Jesus, but this information may actually undermine the effectiveness of the parable. Why would any traveler in his right mind go out into such an area alone? Knowing those risks, a historically sensitive audience would have been puzzled by the implausibility of Jesus’ tale: Does this man go down from Jerusalem recklessly or irresponsibly? Likewise, the foolishness of the Samaritan in giving an innkeeper an open financial account would not seem to help the audience in encouraging them to “go and do likewise” and to think more deeply about the fuller meaning of the story.

Thus, paying too much attention to historical detail may actually derail the richness of the story. Jesus’ contemporary listeners probably would have been thrown off balance from the outset of this scenario precisely because this hypothetical fact situation ran contrary to the social or historical norms of the day. In a similar fashion, the parable of the Prodigal Son also begins with a situation that was at least “deplorable,” when that son asks his father to accelerate the distribution of his inheritance while such a transfer by a living father to a son was highly irregular under the Jewish laws of inheritance in Jesus’ day.⁸³ Rather than shedding great light on these parables, such anomalies would have been the audience’s first clue that these stories were not to be understood primarily “historically” but typologically. The same realization should tip off modern readers that overemphasizing historical details will lead them down wrong roads as well.

Previous LDS Commentaries

How have Latter-day Saint commentators interpreted the parable? LDS writers have published too little about the Good Samaritan to allow one to speak of an LDS interpretive history with respect to this text. Although some LDS writers have sensed the depth of doctrine embedded in this episode, normally the story has been passed over by writers or speakers, as if it offers little beyond the patently obvious.⁸⁴

Of those who have paused to write about this text, most have fallen into line with the ideas emphasized by modern Protestant historicism. Elder James E. Talmage focused his few comments largely on historical observations about the dangers of traveling and Jewish-Samaritan hostilities; indeed, Jesus' story seems so richly realistic that Elder Talmage ventured the opinion that it may even be "true history as well as parable."⁸⁵ Of course, an actual event may have stood behind parts of this story, and allegorization and historicity need not be mutually exclusive.

Robert Matthews has accented the polemical setting of the lawyer's question in rabbinic arguments in Judaism around the time of Jesus and interprets the parable as a stern warning against what he sees as the Jewish attitudes of intellectual line drawing.⁸⁶ Keith Howick similarly perceived the narrative as antidialectical and antirabbinical ("the parable exemplified the selfish nature of Judaism common at the time of Jesus"), urging modern people to avoid the mind-set of the lawyer who "asked his question from a stilted, narrow, and unloving perspective" and, instead, teaching people to "no longer be bound by duty, but by love."⁸⁷ Placing emphasis on the negative historical backdrops frequently mentioned in connection with this story, however, may lead us to make unfair judgments. After all, Jesus was a Jew, not all Jews were dialectical fanatics, not all Jews hated the Samaritans, and the feelings of the priest and Levite remain unstated. While historical caricatures simplify certain extremes and occasionally drive home important messages, they usually do so at the expense of many other valuable insights and attitudes that can enrich our reading of the text.

Taking a strong Christ-centered but still fairly elemental approach to this text, Brent Farley has astutely read the story as a reflection of Jesus (the Samaritan) being born into an "unpopular race" as a Jew, as a symbolic depiction of Jesus' atonement for sinners, and as encouragement for people to accept "the Savior's atoning payment" by showing mercy and love to their fellow beings themselves.⁸⁸ Farley is the main LDS commentator, besides Nibley, mentioned above, who has stepped even a short distance beyond the historically based approach usually taken to this parable by modern writers. However, as a paradigm of the human condition and the plan of salvation, the story embraces a broad symbolic view of human progress that extends well beyond this basic connection, noted by Farley and Nibley, between the Samaritan and Jesus himself.⁸⁹

An Eternal Imperative

One may next wonder, does the allegorical reading diminish the moral force of the parable? Ian McDonald has expressed the concern that “in the hands of the Fathers the parable loses its provocative, moral challenge. It becomes instead a confirmation of the faith of the church.”⁹⁰ Fred Craddock, who offers a strong ethical interpretation of the story by emphasizing the great energy expended and the dangers risked by the ceremonially unclean Samaritan to act with love expecting nothing in return, worries that “often poor analogies trivialize [the] text.”⁹¹ The entire allegorical approach should not be judged, however, by its weakest exemplar, any more than the entire historical approach should be dismissed because of the silliest of any historical assertions. Rather than detracting from the moral implications of this story, an allegorical reading that is solidly grounded in the plan of salvation enhances its power to motivate ethical conduct. While there is obviously great value in approaching the parable temporally and moralistically, the allegorical approach adds an important eternal perspective to the moral guidance offered by the Good Samaritan. As Werner Monselewski rightly concludes in his extensive survey of the history of interpretation of the Good Samaritan, one need not force a choice between “ethical or nonethical” interpretations: “Emphasis can be placed sometimes more on the ethical aspect and other times more on the theological aspect.”⁹² The two do not exclude or threaten each other.

The allegorical foundation undergirds the ethical force of this story by supplying this narrative with its unique, Christian rationale. Without the gospel of Jesus Christ, the story of the Good Samaritan is just another ethical tale, with no greater moral force than one of Aesop’s fables. Without the background of the plan of salvation and the purpose of this mortal existence, the parable lacks a compelling moral mandate, in which case its principal remaining rhetorical motivator is shame: one should stop to help the victim because it would be shameful to be like the insensitive priest or uncaring Levite. When it is superimposed upon an underlying awareness of the plan of salvation, however, the lesson of the parable gains an eternal mandate that impels moral conduct: one should stop to help the victim because this will help to bring about the kingdom of God on earth and bring to pass the eternal life of man. This reading positions deeds of neighborly kindness within an expansive awareness of where we have come from, how we have fallen into our present plight, and how the binding ordinances and healing love of the promised Redeemer and the nurture of his Church can rescue us from our present situation, provided we live worthy of the reward at the time of his Second Coming. In this view, even the smallest of these deeds are not to be seen as trivial acts of politeness or common courtesy, but as the way to follow in the footsteps of the Savior

himself by helping to save lives, both physically and spiritually. The allegory thus confirms the entire purpose of this existence. No wonder Jesus told this story, not so much to answer the question, "Who is my neighbour?" but ultimately to respond to the query, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

The Lawyer's Questions

Where, then, does an allegorical reading of this story leave the second question asked by the lawyer? The main scholarly objection to any allegorical reading of this parable arises from the specific context in which Luke relates this story, namely in response to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" After telling his story, Jesus did not return to the first question, but only to the second question when he asked, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:36). This is where the pericope in Luke ends. If we are to understand that the story of the Good Samaritan is about Christ himself rescuing all of mankind, how is that story responsive to the lawyer's second question?

In addressing this query, some have wondered if the story of the Good Samaritan originally belonged in the setting of the legalist's questions, or if Luke took two separate accounts (one dealing with the two great commandments and another about rescuing those in need) and worked them into a single narrative. On the one hand, Eta Linnemann has concluded, "The dialogue of the scribe with Jesus [in Luke 10:25–28] over the question 'Who is my neighbour?' was linked in the course of tradition with another dialogue of a scribe with Jesus [in Luke 10:30–37], in which the catch-word 'neighbour' also occurred."⁹³ Joseph Fitzmyer also holds that "only secondarily has [the story of the Good Samaritan] been joined to the preceding [questions of the lawyer], since it does not really answer the lawyer's second question."⁹⁴ Many other biblical commentators note that the story seems to be forced into the context of Luke 10:25–28 and that it does not legally settle the question of defining who is one's neighbor.⁹⁵ According to this view, the original form of this encounter is preserved "best in Mark 12:28–34," which discusses the issue, "Which is the first commandment of all?" (Mark 12:28) without the aid of a parable of mercy.⁹⁶

If it should turn out that the Good Samaritan story originally stood separate from the lawyer's questions, this would not be troubling for present purposes. In fact it might actually strengthen the argument in favor of interpreting the tale allegorically and acontextually. As a freestanding story it could readily serve as a symbolic kingdom parable or as a parable of self-reference to Jesus quite independent of the legal question about the definition of the term *neighbor*.

On the other hand, perhaps one should not give up too quickly on the connecting context presented by the Gospel of Luke. By responding to three objections that have been raised by scholars against the Lucan setting, Howard Marshall defends the Lucan context of the Good Samaritan. Marshall points out (1) that in the larger setting of Luke 10:29–11:13 we find “an exposition (in chiasmic order) of the two commandments,” and so the lawyer’s question is integral to the overall context and has not been downgraded by Luke; (2) that the connection between the question and the parable is not “contrived,” but grows out of the close link between the terms *love* and *neighbor* in Leviticus 19:18; and (3) that Luke’s faithfulness to his sources and the Palestinian nature of the story argue against the idea that the parable is merely a redaction of Mark 12:28–34.⁹⁷

Similarly, William Stegner has mounted an interesting argument that, because the words *do*, *live*, and *a [any] man* are found in Leviticus 18:5 (“ye shall therefore keep my statutes, . . . which if a man do, he shall live in them”), which was arguably interpreted in the conventional exegesis of Jesus’ day as applying to “the world to come,” we should understand that the legalist was asking Jesus to interpret the meaning of that specific passage, and that, in telling the story of the Good Samaritan, “apparently, Jesus was simply following the conventional exegesis of Leviticus 18:5 of that day,” thus closely linking the lawyer’s question and Jesus’ mode of response. As interpreted by rabbinic logic, Leviticus 18:5 confirmed that any ordinary man who studies the Torah will enjoy eternal life as much as a priest, Levite, or Israelite.⁹⁸ Against the backdrop of this schematic, Stegner argues, an ordinary Samaritan becomes as good as a High Priest in attaining eternal life.

Additionally, one might point to an interesting array of wordplays that bind together the lawyer’s question and the story of the Good Samaritan. Gerhardsson advances the idea that in Hebrew, words for *neighbor*, *shepherd*, and *Samaritan* are close enough to suggest that the lawyer’s question and the parable of the Good Samaritan, indeed, belonged originally to each other, linked through Leviticus 19:18, “for here there is a play upon words of the same kind as we find in the Jewish midrashes, where it is a matter of serious exegetical principle. . . . The pericope Lk 10:25–37 was a unity from the first.”⁹⁹

Thus, arguments can be mounted for, as well as against, the original linkage between the lawyer’s second question and Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan. If that question and the parable were originally connected, as Luke reports, perhaps (even more potent than philological or rabbinic evidence) the allegorical message of the parable may offer the strongest corroboration of all for that linkage, for the lawyer’s original question was not “Who is my neighbour?” but “What shall I do to inherit

eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). Jesus answered that first question precisely with a story that depicts the plan of salvation, the course of mortality, the Fall, sin, facing certain death, redemption through Christ, being restored to life, and enduring to the end in righteousness. The real issue was not the second question but the first, from which Jesus was not distracted. The story of the Good Samaritan seems out of context only when the first and primary question is forgotten.

The lawyer was not prepared to understand all of this: that Jesus was the good neighbor, that people should love Christ the neighbor as themselves, or that every person who comes down from heaven to this earth is not only one’s neighbor, but also a spiritual brother or sister. But if the lawyer was able to understand even part of the allegory, enough that he would go and do like the Samaritan, he would be set on the path that would eventually lead to his goal of inheriting eternal life. When Jesus concluded his instruction with the injunction, “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37), he was inviting the lawyer to consider his own divine potential to do like the Savior himself and, in so doing, to become eventually like the Savior in enjoying eternal life.

Hearing the Intent of Jesus

Is it possible, then, that Jesus intended anyone in his audience to understand the story of the Good Samaritan as an allegory referring to himself and the plan of salvation? It would easily appear that he could have expected some to hear and understand. Jesus usually intended his parables to be understood at several levels. After he had told the parable of the sower, his disciples asked him, “Why speakest thou unto them in parables?” (Matt. 13:10). Jesus answered, some people know the deeper meanings of things pertaining to “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” but to others “it is not given” (Matt. 13:11). As Joseph Smith went on to affirm, “the parables were all plainly elucidated” by Jesus to his disciples,¹⁰⁰ and many of those elucidations were allegorical,¹⁰¹ presenting truths “so plain and so glorious, that every Saint in the last days must respond with a hearty Amen to them.”¹⁰² Assuming that the parable of the Good Samaritan was also intended to be understood as having a deeper meaning, we underestimate the story if we do not look for a second level of meaning in this text. If the allegorical interpretation followed for so many years among Christian readers is not to be accepted as the deeper mystery behind the story, then what else might serve us with such an esoteric reading?

Moreover, many of the parables and analogies in the sayings of Jesus contain some element of self-reference to Jesus himself:¹⁰³ the light (John 8:12), the living water (John 4:10), the bread of life (John 6:48, 51), the good shepherd (John 10:11), the true vine (John 15:1), the rock (Matt. 7:24), the gate (Matt. 7:13)—all of these images can refer to Jesus himself. In the parable

of the wheat and the tares, Jesus is well understood as the farmer who “sowed good seed in his field” and wisely allows the wheat and tares to grow together until the harvest (Matt. 13:24–30). In the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:18–23), Jesus scatters his words, which fall on variously receptive soils. In the parable of the wicked tenants (Matt. 21:33–39), Jesus clearly refers to himself as the son and to the wicked husbandmen as the chief priests (Matt. 21:45). In the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids, the bridegroom represents the coming Lord (Matt. 25:1–13). Indeed, this manner of interpretation is recommended in the New Testament itself. In John 5:39, Jesus admonished people to “search the scriptures,” in particular to find ways in which the scriptures testify of him and thereby find “eternal life.” In keeping with these practices and instructions of Jesus, the story of the Good Samaritan also refers to Jesus himself and to the mysteries of the kingdom in his gospel of salvation. Given this rhetorical environment, would not a discerning audience have been conditioned to look for, and indeed to expect to find, some reference in the story of the Samaritan by Jesus to himself, who himself had been called “a Samaritan” by people in Jerusalem (John 8:48)?

Implications for Finding the Historical Jesus

Can one, then, suggest that the historical Jesus taught a concise plan of salvation that went well beyond a mere proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God? Knowing the scholarly fire storms that swirl around any attempt to speak definitively about the historical Jesus, most scholars would probably not venture an opinion about how much of the allegorical meaning Jesus himself actually intended. But if one may assume (as many do) that Jesus wrote himself into this story in the figure of the Samaritan, then the invitation is open to see many of the other allegorical meanings in the story as originating with Jesus as well.

No one doubts that Jesus created and told the story of the Good Samaritan. Even the Jesus Seminar, in its critical “search for the authentic words of Jesus,” places Luke 10:30–35 in red, the group’s highest attribution of authenticity.¹⁰⁴ The Seminar recognized that the parable challenged a Jewish audience to include “a different ethnic group” within their definition of the term *neighbor*, and seeing the story “as a metaphorical tale that redraws the map of both the social and the sacred world, the Seminar regarded this parable as a classic example of the provocative public speech of Jesus the parabler.”¹⁰⁵

The Jesus Seminar and most New Testament scholars would go this far, but no further. For the historian, Jesus is permitted to speak on legal and social issues, but not on theological or ecclesiastical matters. That restriction, however, anachronistically presupposes a modern distinction between

church and state, between religion and politics. Bright lines between those domains did not exist in Western thought until perhaps as late as the Enlightenment. From an ancient perspective, Jesus is at least as likely to have been a provocative parabler on theological issues as on political questions.

One cannot prove, of course, that Jesus intended his tale to be understood soteriologically or theologically, as the typological analysis suggests. But if people dismiss this possibility on the grounds that Jesus did not make theological or ecclesiastical statements, their argument begs the question, for Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan itself may be just such a statement.

Indeed, on other occasions, the historical Jesus used such concepts as robbers or Adam and Eve in his regular course of theological instruction. When he called the temple merchants a "den of thieves [robbers]" (Mark 11:17), he conjured up not only political, but also prophetic images (Jer. 7:11); and by logical extension, he found in the Genesis narratives important instructions regarding the theological underpinnings of the law of divorce (Matt. 19:4–7).

The historical Jesus also regularly grounded his ethical teachings in a theological matrix. He spoke in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain about compassion and love: "If the story of the Good Samaritan bears any similarity to any other New Testament text, it is closest to Matthew 5:43–48 and Luke 6:27–36."¹⁰⁶ Those two texts explicitly state theological motives for showing mercy and brotherly love in bringing to earth the kingdom of heaven: "[God] sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45) and "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36). It is not hard to imagine that Jesus similarly grounded the ethical message of the Good Samaritan in theology as well.

If Jesus intended his audience to see the path to eternal life in theological and ecclesiastical as well as ethical terms, many opinions about who Jesus was and what he taught would change drastically. In this regard, the evidence of the plan of salvation found in the Good Samaritan may be a stone rejected by the builders (to paraphrase Ps. 118:22; Mark 12:10). It is always possible that the allegorical understanding of the early Christian Fathers was first detected in the story retrospectively, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it all fits so well with the plan of salvation that it seems improbable that the creator of this parable was unaware of the symbolic payload that its words easily carry. It may well be the premier place in scripture where the Savior himself teaches the plan of salvation during his mortal ministry.

Not an Isolated Case

Do the scriptures speak allegorically about the plan of salvation on other occasions? Other allegories of the plan of salvation are indeed to be

found in the scriptures and elsewhere in early Christian literature. These clear instances of allegory increase the plausibility that Jesus intended the story of the Good Samaritan to be understood allegorically as well. The use of allegory has a long-standing place in Israelite scripture,¹⁰⁷ in Jewish wisdom literature before the Christian era,¹⁰⁸ and a most interesting example is found in the early Christian “Hymn of the Pearl.” This text is a beautiful example of another allegory conveying the paradigm of the plan of salvation, of mankind coming from a premortal state to be tested, to be given robes, powers, and the ability to overcome the adversary.¹⁰⁹ Thus, seeing the story of the Good Samaritan as an allegory is in keeping with the world of early Jewish and Christian literature.

While the modern mind seeks a single right answer to the meaning of a text, ancient Jewish and Christian writers and readers expected texts to convey meanings at multiple levels. The school of Rabbi Ishmael taught: “*And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces: i.e., just as [the rock] is split into many splinters, so also may one Biblical verse convey many teachings.*”¹¹⁰ In each passage of scripture, Origen sought a bodily or literal sense, a soul or moral sense, and a spiritual or allegorical sense. Likewise, Jesus, the great parabler, would not have expected his audience to listen with only one ear.

Enriched Reader Response

One of the great strengths of seeing the Good Samaritan as an allegory is that it allows listeners in the audience to identify, at different points in their lives, with virtually all of the characters in the story. Readers may well ask themselves, “With whom in this allegory should the listener identify?” The richest reading draws the reader in at various positions. “Though the action of the Samaritan is at the center of the parable, as polyvalent, it invites us to identify with the other characters.”¹¹¹

When this account is reduced to a historical, one-level parable, the listener gets the impression that the only role with which the listener should identify is that of the rescuing Good Samaritan. Christ surely intended that all people should see themselves as the Samaritan in a physical sense, and also as saviors on Mount Zion in a spiritual sense, aiding in the cause of rescuing lost souls, assisting in the work and glory of God in bringing all of God’s children to eternal life. Through this story, people should learn that they should strive to go and do like Jesus, who cast himself in the role of Joseph in Egypt, who also said in rescuing his brethren, “This do, and live” (Gen. 42:18).¹¹²

Disciples, however, may also want to think of themselves as the innkeeper and go and be like that man who tends to the long-term recovery needs of the injured traveler. He too is neighbor to the one who falls

among the robbers. Eventually it is the innkeeper who is promised the Samaritan's reward. It also even becomes possible for a listener to identify with the Lord's beast, guided by the Savior and helping him to rescue souls.

Or again, the listener may identify with the traveler himself.¹¹³ As the story begins, the audience sympathizes with the traveler, and listeners are invited to put themselves into the position of this unfortunate person. James Gordon stresses this as the original turn of the story: "I believe that Jesus was really suggesting to the lawyer that he should place himself in the position of the *wounded traveller!*"¹¹⁴ Understood from this angle, the story becomes a commentary on the Golden Rule, seeing that you should do unto others as you would have them do to you. There is power and virtue in positioning oneself, initially, not as the Christ or the rescuer, but as the person in need of being saved: "More existentially, . . . identification with the victim relativizes our notions of how we can receive the graciousness of God. It often comes from those least expected."¹¹⁵

Thus, a listener may identify in different ways with each of the characters in this story. Accordingly, we might at times call this story "The Parable of the Distressed Traveler," or "The Parable of the Loyal Innkeeper."

Symptoms of the Apostasy

A significant by-product of this study is the collecting of evidence that shows how the Christian understanding of the parable of the Good Samaritan changed over time. Most modern critics simply lump all of the early allegorical readings of the parable into the same hopper without recognizing that meaningful variations existed from one interpreter to another. In several respects, the core elements of the allegory remained constant from one writer to the next, but as time went on and as Christian doctrine moved further and further away from the first century, certain key elements grew fainter and eventually dropped out of the picture.

For example, very early in this development Clement expressly stated that "the man" who goes down represents "all of us," but most of the later writers identified him only as "Adam." Those early Christians, like Origen, who understood the doctrine of the universal premortal state of all mankind¹¹⁶ could have readily recognized "the man" as a representative of all humanity, who have come down from a premortal world, not only as a depiction of the primal parent.

Likewise, Chrysostom recognized the man's robe as a concrete symbol, calling it a "robe of immortality" or "robe of obedience," while later interpreters saw this element more metaphorically as "the covering of spiritual grace" or simply as "immortality," dropping the thought of actual robes or garments from the discussion.

Origen came close to noting the concept of the second death in his identification of being left "half dead," commenting that the soul is immortal

and cannot be killed. Clement perceived that the “wine” has something to do with the blood of Christ as the son of David. Irenaeus understood that the Samaritan, by giving the two coins, entrusts “to us,” meaning all Christians, the duties of being fruitful in caring for the household of God. These potent, early ideas, however, gave way to duller and more blatantly didactic associations in the writings of the later Fathers, or faded from recognition entirely.

Cases such as these suggest that time took its toll as the Apostasy moved, century by century, father away from original Christianity. As a full understanding of the plan of salvation faded from consciousness, the ability or proclivity of Christians to detect in the allegory of the Good Samaritan the full mystery of that plan of salvation also diminished in respect to certain important details.

As I have explained elsewhere and for similar reasons, the prophet Nephi predicted that the apostasy would involve at least three stages with respect to the scriptures: first, “plain and most precious” parts would be “taken away from the gospel”; second, “many covenants of the Lord” would be lost; and third, “plain and precious things” would be “taken away from the book” (1 Ne. 13:26–28).¹¹⁷ Significantly, much can be lost in the way of understanding, especially from the kinds of knowledge that come from proper covenant-making ordinances, without losing much in the way of actual text.

Objections to an Allegorical Approach

It should not surprise us, then, that some people, lacking a full understanding of the plan of salvation, have rejected the value of this allegorical reading out of hand. Of course, different people may simply prefer different approaches to literary criticism or textual interpretation. But we may still wonder, what evidence or attitudes motivate their objections? As far as I can see, the reasons proffered against a typological or archetypal allegorical reading of this parable have not been overwhelming.

C. H. Dodd, an important Protestant Oxford classicist of the mid-twentieth century, simply viewed the allegorical approach with abhorrence, calling it “quite perverse.”¹¹⁸ Such a gross sentiment on Dodd’s part should probably be attributed to the flowering of positivism and the excesses of historical realism that were in their heyday at Oxford at that time. As John Donahue points out, although some allegorizations may have become “fanciful,” the malleability of allegory need not be viewed as a soft reading or as an interpretation lacking in rigor.¹¹⁹

Darrell Bock, a recent evangelical commentator, readily concedes that Egelkraut and Schurmann have shown that the Samaritan represents Jesus,¹²⁰ but then he goes out of his way to denigrate all other allegorical

features of the story: “Efforts to allegorize other aspects of the parable fail. The man leaving Jerusalem does not equal the Adamic fall nor are the robbers Satan. The priest does not represent the Law nor the Levite the Prophets. The parable focuses on basic morals and compassion, not salvation history. The text gives no basis for reading the parable symbolically.”¹²¹ No reasons are stated for these claims, beyond these bald proclamations. I suspect that Bock’s evangelical theology drives him to reject so vehemently any such allegorical allusions to salvation history. After all, for a person who believes that salvation is obtained solely by confessing one’s faith in Jesus, the story of the Good Samaritan should have ended with the injured man simply looking up at the Christ figure and declaring, “I have been saved.”

Similarly, Father Joseph Fitzmyer generously acknowledges the long-standing allegorical exegesis in his own Catholic tradition, but he discounts it on the ground that such a reading is based on ideas that are “extrinsic” to the text.¹²² But this objection proves too much, for the same logic would preclude the possibility of any symbolic meaning behind most of the parables of Jesus, for in most cases symbolism is not intrinsically self-evident or overtly stated in any text. Fitzmyer concedes that “Luke would be the first to stress the love of Jesus for the afflicted and distressed of humanity, but,” he asserts, “that is not the point of this so-called parable.”¹²³ One wonders, why not? And can the parable only have one “point”? In addition, Fitzmyer willingly traces this extrinsic allegorical material back to the second century, with Marcion and Irenaeus; but again one wonders, may the larger allegory not stem from Christian understandings even a step or two earlier than that?

Joachim Jeremias concluded that none of Luke’s parables should be read as allegories because Luke does not explicitly give them an allegorical interpretation. Jeremias argued that “various layers of tradition” in first-century Christianity differed widely “in their use of allegorical interpretation.”¹²⁴ To support this claim, he tried to distinguish the voice of Jesus from the work of Matthew, the hand of Mark, or the influence of the early church, especially in light of the surprising absence of allegorization in the Gospel of Thomas.¹²⁵ Regrettably, Jeremias passed over all of Luke in a single paragraph. While he rightly observed that Luke drew heavily on the explicit allegorical “tradition lying behind him” when using his Synoptic source materials, Jeremias saw in the rich collection of Luke’s unique parables “no examples of allegorical interpretation.”¹²⁶ He based this conclusion on the absence of overt evidence in Luke that spells out the intended allegorical interpretation. But the absence of such pointers does not necessarily preclude an inherent allegorical dimension in the Lucan parables, especially in a case such as that of the Good Samaritan, which was given to answer the

lawyer's questions in an obviously symbolic manner. One finds in Jeremias the odd conclusion that, although the origin of allegorization "is evidently to be found in the first place on Palestinian soil,"¹²⁷ the Lucan-source parables (indisputably from Palestine) were originally "free from allegorizing interpretations."¹²⁸ But maybe not. The argument from Luke's interpretative silence is weak, especially in light of the text's inclusion of the lawyer's formative questions at the outset that make an interpretive postscript unnecessary. Perhaps Luke gave his future scholars too much credit, assuming that they would get the allegorical or Christological message without needing to have it all laid out for them.

Thus, the objections raised against the use of allegory in reading the Good Samaritan are not particularly persuasive. Reticence to embrace the idea that the parable envelops an allegory of the plan of salvation may be less a result of logic and more a reflection of the loss of clear knowledge about that foundational plan.

A Turn toward Allegorical Thinking

Of course, not all modern scholars turn away from allegorical or multi-valent readings. One may even ask if the allegorical approach has made something of a comeback in recent years in some literary circles. Indeed, several recent interpretations of the Good Samaritan have gone beyond the limits of historical criticism, leading Fitzmyer to acknowledge that "many modes of exposition, most of them allegorical and extrinsic," including Christological, ecclesiological, sacramental, or soteriological readings, "have not been wanting in modern times."¹²⁹ Several reasons may account for this resurgence.

Some scholars, such as Father Daniélou, are drawn to the value of the "ancient tradition" as an antidote to modernity. He concludes: "It is legitimate to see in this parable one of the most admirable expressions of the plan of salvation. And when the theologians borrow from its terminology, this is not fantasy but legitimate development in the transmission of the meaning of the parable."¹³⁰

More modernist interpreters, such as Ian McDonald, correctly draw on critical theory to point out that all readers, including the historicist readers, unavoidably "bring their presuppositions to the text."¹³¹ Using postmodern insights, McDonald shows that the parable may not be as simple as people have usually assumed.¹³² Through the use of reader response analysis and the view of the victim "from the ditch," McDonald concludes that "the parable crafts an image of divine reality invading the conventional world of first-century Palestine. The Fathers were right," he emphasizes, "to look for something beyond the literal or historical dimension."¹³³

In a postmodern age, other readers may be more willing to ask, with Leslie Barnard, “What if the parable of the Good Samaritan did not have one, original, simple meaning in Jesus’ eyes?”¹³⁴ Allowing also for the possibility of an allegorical or archetypal reading requires “no flight from reality into a world of make-believe” or the use of some “inferior art-forms.”¹³⁵ This sort of interpretive work is not to be “discarded by a more enlightened and critical age” but is “an essential part of what is an ongoing task—the theological and spiritual interpretation of the New Testament—a task which must be attempted in every age.”¹³⁶

A Stronger Allegorical Reading

Surveying all of the foregoing, readers in this latter-day age may thus ask: Is it possible, in light of the restored knowledge of the plan of salvation, to see the parable of the Good Samaritan in stronger allegorical terms than ever before? Indeed, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ offers a deep spiritual reading and reinstates a more coherent flow of thought into the parable’s allegorical subtext than is found in the traditional expositions.

It must be conceded that the patristic allegorization suffers at certain points from jarring shifts and disjunctures. For example, one begins with “the man” representing “Adam,” but by the end of the story, the victim has inexplicably transmuted into a representation of “all people” who are brought to the Church. One feels the allegorical ground shifting beneath the reader’s feet. Another problem arises when the “bandages” and the “wine” are said to represent the “teachings” of Christ. But one would expect “teachings” to be conveyed at a time of instruction by the innkeeper or Church leader (who transmits the instructions of the gospel), and not to be introduced by the Samaritan at the agonizing point of the victim’s near death and incoherence. Likewise, the beast seems to be a poor representation for the body of Christ when the Christ figure is still in the picture, walking alongside the animal.¹³⁷ Incongenial points such as these in the traditional interpretation have left the patristic exegesis vulnerable to complaints that it is too facile and capricious to be taken seriously.

Latter-day Saint doctrine, however, lays alongside the parable more congruously than do the traditional readings. The plan of salvation, as taught by the modern-day prophets, offers an overriding framework that embraces each element in the parable comfortably and sequentially. The LDS typology runs smoothly from beginning to end, including the doctrine that the spirits of all mankind have come down from a premortal sphere, that all humans have entered into this telestial world, have suffered the effects of the fall, have sinned and depend necessarily on the atonement of Jesus Christ, are washed clean from the effects of the Fall by the gift of our Lord, are carried triumphantly back into the fold, are cared for by the pure love of Jesus, need to serve and be served within his Church, strive to

prepare for his Second Coming, and, ultimately, are to go out and do for others as the Savior himself would do.

Indeed, Latter-day Saints may understand the plan of salvation and readily recognize its relevance to the parable of the Good Samaritan precisely because they enjoy the blessings of the temple and the Pearl of Great Price, which clarify the pattern of the fall and redemption that was established from the foundations of the world (Gen. 1–3; Moses 1–5). That sequence clearly begins with Adam and Eve and all mankind (Moses 3:5), a lone journey into this telestial world (Moses 5:1), and efforts by the great impostor to attack,¹³⁸ usurp authority,¹³⁹ and destroy (Moses 5:13, 18–57). The cycle ends in a step by step preparation, through priesthood (Moses 6:7), anointing and washing (Moses 6:35), covenants (Moses 6:52–54), the atonement of Jesus Christ and his comfort (Moses 6:59–62), and the building up of Zion and the kingdom of God (Moses 7:16–19), preparing the world to greet the Lord on the day of judgment and to receive the celestial reward of eternal life (Moses 7:21). Nothing is more naturally paradigmatic for Latter-day Saints than is this plan, this road map of salvation, the “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), a major element in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

Seeing the parable of the Good Samaritan as a capsule of the plan of salvation offers a strong, respectable reading of this text. The strength of seeing this text as an allegory derives largely from the fact that all the elements in the story fit naturally and easily into place in the overall layout. Nothing seems forced or contrived. The pieces all interlock and fit together, as they should if they were designed to be understood that way. A Latter-day Saint construction of the allegory makes even stronger sense of each of its elements, recognizing once again how the scriptures “truly testify of Christ” (Jacob 7:11).

In light of these strengths, it is not surprising that the basic elements of this allegorical interpretation thrived as a very early Christian tradition. This plain and precious reading was the dominant understanding of this story among the early Christian Fathers. Variations that flowered on this stock interpretation over the years evidence the vitality of a received understanding of the story put to use in various devotional or theological settings.

These readings provide a second level of meaning to the parable, a hallmark of the teachings of Jesus. If this meaning is not the hidden “mystery” of this parable, what other message of the kingdom should one seek for in this story? Or should we think that in this, one of the most effective of all his parables, Jesus, for some inexplicable reason, had no divine kingdom message in mind?

Moreover, the allegorical or typological reading works better in some ways than does the purely historical approach. For example, it solves such problems as why a person would go down the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho alone, or why the Samaritan would give a blank check to an unknown innkeeper. If the story was intended primarily to reflect historical reality, it is hard to imagine such events actually occurring or Jesus recommending the latter imprudent behavior as a regular practice, even in the name of charity.

Rather, the allegorical view focuses the attention of Jesus and the reader on the primary question asked by the lawyer about how one might obtain “eternal life.” Only at the allegorical level does Jesus’ answer involve the plan of salvation, the way of obtaining eternal life. Only in this way is Jesus’ response not evasive, but directed at the primary question of the lawyer. At the same time, the allegory also responds to the derivative and narrower question about the definition of the term *neighbor*.

This journey turned out to be longer, but at the same time more interesting, than I originally expected. As I have shared these ideas with friends and colleagues, they too have found the allegorical approach to be intriguing and enriching. At a minimum, one may confidently conclude that, whatever else a person might think about the ultimate probity of the methods of symbolic interpretation, seeing the parable of the Good Samaritan as an allegory of the plan of salvation offers a powerful, spiritual avenue for recognizing that the same truths were taught by the Lord Jesus Christ during his mortal ministry as were restored in this dispensation by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Knowledge of God’s eternal plan of redemption indelibly transforms and enriches the meaning of this quintessential Christian text. For me, the tale will never be the same again.

John W. Welch is Editor in Chief of *BYU Studies* and the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law, Brigham Young University. Unless otherwise noted, all plates are from Le Centre International du Vitrail, Chartres, or Colette Manhes and Jean-Paul Deremble, *Le Vitrail du bon Samaritain: Chartres, Sens, Bourges* (Paris: Centurion, 1986). Used by permission.

1. For example, *Utah Code Annotated* 26–8–11 (emergency medical assistance); 40–5–6 (mine rescues); and 78–11–22 (motor vehicle accidents), which is listed under the heading “Good Samaritan Act” in *Utah Code Unannotated*.

2. For a discussion of how Jesus’ story motivates moral perception and builds Christian identity, see William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999).

3. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:261; Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 276–77.

4. David Rolph Seely, "The Allegory of the Olive Tree and the Use of Related Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1994), 291. For a discussion of the use of metaphor, simile, allegory, and hyperbole in the parables of Jesus, see Richard D. Draper, "The Parables of Jesus (Matthew 13)," in *Studies in Scripture: Volume Five, the Gospels*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 5:262–78.

5. Thomas S. Monson, "Your Jericho Road," *Ensign* 19 (February 1989): 2.

6. Ceslaus Spicq, "The Charity of the Good Samaritan," in *Contemporary New Testament Studies*, ed. M. Rosalie Ryan (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1965), 219. Spicq argues that the story is more than a parable, but he sees it as a "pattern story," which is not much different.

7. Seely, "Allegory of the Olive Tree," 291.

8. Werner Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter: Eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Lukas 10, 25–37* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), 15.

9. Not all allegories are typological, and not all typologies are based on an allegory.

10. See, for example, Michel Zink, *Littérature française du Moyen Age* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 229–33.

11. Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2d ed., Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 7 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988), 100.

12. Malcolm Miller, *Chartres Cathedral* (Andover, Eng.: Pitkin Pictorials, 1985), 66, 68, 71.

13. Miller, *Chartres Cathedral*, 68.

14. Wolfgang Kemp, *The Narratives of Gothic Stained Glass*, trans. Caroline Dobson Saltzweid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66–78; Colette Manhes and Jean-Paul Deremble, *Le Vitrail du bon Samaritain: Chartres, Sens, Bourges* (Paris: Centurion, 1986). A window at Rouen employs thirty-seven scenes associating Christ with the story of the Good Samaritan but not necessarily in allegorical mode.

15. Leslie W. Barnard, "To Allegorize or not to Allegorize?" *Studia Theologica* 36 (1982): 1–10; Jean Daniélou, "Le Bon Samaritain," in *Mélanges bibliques: Rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1956), 457–65. It exceeds the scope and purpose of this article to analyze in detail the differences between the readings of the Good Samaritan that can be found in the writings of the early Christian fathers, let alone to describe their broad theological stances that influenced each particular allegorization of this parable. It is sufficient at this point to recognize that the tale of the Good Samaritan was understood from very early times as more than a simple story.

16. All quotes of Irenaeus in this article come from: *Contra Haereses*, 3.17.3, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857–1900), 7:930–31; or *Against Heresies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1950–57), 1:445.

Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 202) was one of the first to comment on the Good Samaritan. Writing in opposition to certain heresies in the second century A.D., he used the story to buttress his point that God had conferred his Spirit upon the church, like the dews from heaven, protecting church members from being consumed by the heretical fires of the devil. For Irenaeus, this assuring point was proved by the fact that the Good Samaritan (symbolizing Christ himself) gives to his disciples the image and superscription of the Father and the Son, represented by the "two royal denaria [coins]" mentioned in Luke 10:35. In particular, Jesus' description of the Samaritan giving the innkeeper the two coins symbolizes God giving his image to the leaders of the church, who give

the image to the man, restoring him to the image and likeness of God in which he was originally created. Irenaeus's argumentative use of the Good Samaritan in this way may give evidence that his orthodox readers already understood the story in a broad authoritative allegorical sense; otherwise, he could not very well have assumed that this allegorization would have carried much weight in rebutting his heretical opponents.

17. All quotes of Clement in this article come from: Τίς ὁ σωζόμενος Πλουσίος, 27–29, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, 9:633–36; or *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:599.

Clement of Alexandria (died c. 215), writing in the second and third century, argued generally that man should love God (as required under the first great commandment) and should likewise love Christ (because he was the neighbor who helped the victim in the narrative in Luke 10 and, therefore, must be loved under the second great commandment). For Clement, the answer to the lawyer's question "Who is my neighbour?" is none other than "the Saviour Himself," who pitied us, was put to death, and is the only physician who cuts out our sinful "passions thoroughly by the root." In Clement's view, the main conclusion to be drawn from the story of the Good Samaritan is that "we are therefore to love [Jesus Christ] equally with God," and we do that by helping our neighbors.

18. Origen, quoted in Joseph T. Lienhard, trans., *Origen: Homilies on Luke, Fragments on Luke*, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, vol. 94 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1996), 138.

19. Because Origen attributed all the rudiments of this interpretation to one of "the elders," who for Origen and other early Fathers were "rigorously" associated with the earliest Jewish Christians (Daniélou, "Le Bon Samaritain," 458, citing also Irenaeus, Papias, and Clement), one may conclude that this reading may well have been known in the original circles of Church leaders. The precise meaning of the word *elders* in second-century Christianity, however, is unfortunately obscure and in flux. R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, *Studies of the New Testament and Its World*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1994), 210–35. In the second century, Papias declared that whenever possible he would ask people what they had heard from "the elders," by whom he meant by name Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or "any other of the Lord's disciples." *Fragments of Papias*, 1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:153.

20. All quotes of Origen in this article are based on either Jerome's surviving Latin translation, Origen, *In Lucam Homiliae*, 34, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, 13:1886–88; or from *Origen: Homilies on Luke*, trans. Lienhard, cited above, 137–41; or from a related fragment in Greek often attributed to Origen, Fragment 71 (Rauer 168) in Origen, *Homélie sur S. Luc: Texte latin et fragments grecs*, trans. and ed. Henri Crouzel, François Fournier, and Pierre Périchon, vol. 87 of *Sources Chrétiennes* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1962), 520.

Origen (c. 184–c. 254) himself modified one, but only one, part of the understanding he received from "one of the elders." Preferring an interpretation that kept some people out of harm's way, Origen argued that "we should not think that [the story of the man who fell among robbers] applies to every man" but only to those who wrongly and intentionally go down into "vices and sins," suffering the wounds of disobedience. Accordingly, for Origen, Jesus (the Samaritan) goes out intentionally (with bandages and oil in hand) to rescue the wounded man who has caused his own misfortune, just as Jesus goes out seeking the lost sheep of the fold who have wrongly strayed off the path and away from the church.

Other than quibbling over this one detail, however, Origen accepted all of the other allegorical elements in the interpretation that was apparently current in his day.

Thus, Origen saw Christ as “this Samaritan [who] ‘bears our sins’” and exhorted all of the righteous to “‘be imitators’” of Christ, “to pity those who ‘have fallen among thieves’” and to “bear their burdens.” Such an interpretation was consistent with the conclusion that Jesus gave to the story, “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37). Compare Luke T. Johnson, *Sharing Possessions* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 105. Origen’s exhortation also harmonized with his limited reading of “a man,” but it diminished the audience’s inherent identification with the victim, who otherwise had symbolized all people everywhere, who are fallen and in need of being rescued.

21. All quotes credited to Chrysostom (346–407) in this article come from: Ἀνθρώπος τις κατέβαινε καὶ λησταῖς, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, 61:755–58; and Εἰς τὴν παραβολὴν τοῦ ἔμπεσόντος εἰς τοὺς Ληστάς, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, 62:755–58. These texts were possibly written by Proclus of Constantinople or someone else. Whoever wrote them, these texts add further evidence of the common tradition in early Christianity regarding the Good Samaritan. For convenience, they will be attributed to Chrysostom.

Chrysostom did not label the story “The Parable of the Good Samaritan,” but rather “The Parable of Him Who Fell among Robbers” and “A Certain Man Who Went Down, and Fell among Robbers.” He accepted all the standard allegorical components in the traditional reading but used the story in the end mainly to show that the gospel welcomes all the Gentiles, that when the Gentiles do good it is because they “shew the work of the law written in their hearts,” and that the church (the “inn”) embraces all people, as the Apostle Paul taught.

22. All quotes of Ambrose in this article come from: *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam*, 7.69–84, in *Ambrosii Mediolanensis Opera* part 4, *Corpus Christianorum*, vol. 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), 237–41.

Ambrose (c. 339–397), who advised Roman emperors and wrote in the West in the late fourth century, was a strong advocate of celibacy and strict Christian living in order to overcome the fall of Adam. In his lengthy commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Ambrose emphasized the “amazing mystery” signified by the parable of the Good Samaritan. He built upon the traditional approach and used it as a strong vehicle through which to convey his message of the perils, terrors, and exile of mortality: the bandages are the stricter rules of Christ that bind up our sinful wounds; the wine that cleanses us with judgment is stinging, not soothing; and without Christ (the Samaritan) we are in a state of utter despair because of our poor and filthy condition from which he alone rescues us.

23. All quotes of Augustine in this article come from *Quaestionum Evangeliorum Libri Duo, Liber Secundus: Quaestiones in Evangelium secundum Lucum*, 19, in *Patrologiae Latinae*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1841–1903), 35:1340–41.

Augustine (354–430) was influential in the West. He was baptized by Ambrose and became the bishop of Hippo Regius (in modern-day Algeria). One of his fifth-century treatises gives answers to questions covering numerous passages in the Gospel of Luke. Augustine’s interpretation of the story of the Good Samaritan, which he referred to as the story of “The Man Who Descended from Jerusalem to Jericho,” paralleled rather mechanically the basic allegorical understanding promoted by Origen’s unnamed elder, except at the end. There Augustine equated the innkeeper with the Apostle Paul, who advised people to remain celibate virgins in order to serve others in charity and receive the promise of future glory as the Samaritan promises the innkeeper that he will return and pay him for his services.

24. All quotes of Isidore in this article come from *Allegoriae quaedam Scripturae Sacrae*, 204–6, in *Patrologiae Latinae*, 83:124.

In the sixth century, Isidore (560–636), archbishop of Seville, wrote about the Good Samaritan only in passing. He saw the Samaritan as Christ curing all “the human

race from their wounds of sin” and the inn symbolizing “the Apostles or their successors who rectify our predicaments through the gospel.”

25. All quotes ascribed to Eligius in this article are from *Homilia 9: De vulnerato Samaritano*, in *Patrologiae Latinae*, 87:627–28.

Homily 9, usually attributed to Eligius (588–660) in France, is curiously headed “The Wounded Samaritan” (*De vulnerato Samaritano*). Apparently the author assumed that the wounded man is a Samaritan, and perhaps for that reason the Jewish passersby do not come to his aid and rescue. For him, the main attraction in this story was the compassion, the tears, and the immense grace of the Savior who accepts our confession and forgives our sins.

26. The allegory was reiterated or explicated for several centuries by Fulgentius of Ruspe (467–533) in *Patrologiae Latinae*, 65:931–32; the Venerable Bede (672–735) in *Patrologiae Latinae*, 92:468–70; Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel (d. about 825) in *Patrologiae Latinae*, 102:446–48; Rabanus Maurus (776?–856) in *Patrologiae Latinae*, 110:448–51 and 111:80; and Theophanes Kerameus (1129–52) in *Patrologiae Graecae*, 132:291–304.

27. To be clear, I use these words to mean the following: *Allegorization* is a mode or method of interpretation that can be applied to any kind of text while not denying, for example, the text’s historical content. An *allegory* is a specific kind of composition. With reference to the Good Samaritan, both meanings can apply. Jesus composed this story, perhaps based on an actual event, in the form of an extended allegory; that text can then be read allegorically to elicit from its elements various allegorizations. On medieval allegorization, see Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale, 1: Les quatre sens de l’écriture* (Paris: Aubier, 1959), especially the first chapter. I thank Carl Griffin for his comments on these early Christian sources and their methods.

28. It is impossible to know which Aramaic words Jesus used. It may be relevant that the Syriac versions of Luke 10:30 use a different root word in their term for *man*.

29. Leonard J. Coppes, “’ādām,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:10; Fritz Maass, “’ādām,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:75–87.

30. On the high risks of being attacked by robbers or suffering other misfortunes while traveling in the ancient world, see Barry J. Beitzel, “Travel and Communication,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:644–46; and notes 69 and 71 below.

31. Of course, the symbolism of Jericho can be understood in other ways. It is possible that Jericho is not all bad. For present purposes, however, I am simply assuming that the traveler intentionally embarks on the experience of mortality and is on his way down but is rescued when forces beyond his own strength leave him helpless. It is interesting to wonder where the traveler should go after he leaves the inn: should he go on to Jericho? back to Jerusalem? or on to some destination better than either of them? Perhaps he will choose to stay at the inn to help others as he has been helped.

32. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 664–65, 655.

33. See John W. Welch, “Legal and Social Perspectives on Robbers in First-Century Judea,” in *Masada and the World of the New Testament*, ed. John W. Welch and John F. Hall (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1997), 141–53.

34. *Ekduō* is the opposite of *enduō*, to “get dressed,” from which the word *endow* literally derives.

35. On Joseph's coat as a sacred garment, along with an extensive discussion of priestly clothing in general, see Hugh W. Nibley, "Sacred Vestments," in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol 12 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 131–32.

36. Fred E. Woods, "Elisha and the Children: The Question of Accepting Prophetic Succession," *BYU Studies* 32, no. 3 (1992): 47–58.

37. Ironically, the word *synkuria*, from *syn* and *kureō* (literally to hit or fall together, and hence a coincidence), nevertheless sounds as if it comes from the word *kuria* (lady, mistress) with its cognate *kurios* (lord, or the Lord). This verbal happenstance is itself simply a coincidence. Significantly, the word used in the parable is not *tuche* (by fate, or luck). The priest is not there by chance or by fortune, but simply as events happen to run together.

38. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 147–207. Jeremias examines in detail the various roles of these priests, chief priests, and the high priest. For the number of priests, see his analysis on pp. 199–205, especially his conclusion on p. 203.

39. Philo, *The Special Laws*, 1:156, in *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson, 10 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 7:188–89; quoted and discussed in Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 209.

40. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 209, quoting Tamid 32b, Soncino Talmud, 18 volume edition (London: Soncino, 1978).

41. For example, Heinrich Zimmermann, "Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter: Luke 10:25–37," in *Die Zeit Jesu*, ed. Günther Bornkamm and Karl Rahner (Freiburg: Herder, 1970), 67. For the definition and a discussion of several such Christological interpreters, including Barth, Gollwitzer, and others, see Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter*, 7–14.

42. Zimmermann, "Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter," 66–67.

43. Birger Gerhardsson, *The Good Samaritan—The Good Shepherd? Coniectanea Neotestamentica*, vol. 16 (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1958).

44. Francis Brown, *The New Brown—Driver—Briggs—Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 1036.

45. Gerhardsson, *The Good Samaritan—The Good Shepherd?* 17; italics in original.

46. Helmut Köster in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:553.

47. Daniélou, "Le Bon Samaritain," 461.

48. John A. Tvedtnes, "Olive Oil: Symbol of the Holy Ghost," in *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 427–59.

49. Stephen D. Ricks, "Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom,"* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 249–50.

50. Tvedtnes, "Olive Oil," 427.

51. Daniélou, "Le Bon Samaritain," 461.

52. See John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, Library of Early Christianity, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 78.

53. Daniélou, "Le Bon Samaritain," 461.

54. Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 169–70.

55. Although Eric Bishop does not mention any allegorical interpretation, he endeavors to solve the infelicity in reading the story historically by speculating that

“presumably the Samaritan and the inn-keeper were already acquainted from the former’s previous trips across Jordan.” Eric F. F. Bishop, “People on the Road to Jericho: The Good Samaritan—and the Others,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 42 (1970): 4.

56. The most extensive history of the interpretation of the Good Samaritan over the past two millennia is Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter*.

57. Hartmut Hoevermann, “Wer ist der barmherzige Samariter? Eine ungewohnte Perspektive in Luthers Auslegung von Lk 10, 23–37,” *Luther* 64 (1993): 54–57.

58. Hans Gunther Klemm, *Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter: Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), 129–41.

59. James C. Gordon, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan (St. Luke 10:25–37): A Suggested Re-orientation,” *Expository Times* 56 (1944–45): 302–4.

60. Hermann Binder argues that the priest and the Levite symbolically represent organized or “cultic religion.” Hermann Binder, “Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 15 (1959): 176–94.

61. Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter*, 159.

62. Barnard, “To Allegorize or not to Allegorize?” 5.

63. Barnard, “To Allegorize or not to Allegorize?” 10.

64. Jewish-Samaritan hostilities is a favorite theme among scholars. Spicq, “Charity of the Good Samaritan,” 221–22; David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1989), 154–61; William R. Farmer, ed., *The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 1407, citing Ben Sirach 50:25–26; James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 430–32; see generally Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 352–58, who sees the message of the parable simply as “neighbourly love triumphing over deep-rooted national hatred,” 358.

65. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 3d ed. (Oxford, 1886; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), 234–39; Georg Eichholz, *Gleichnisse der Evangelien: Form, Überlieferung, Auslegung* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971), 153–63.

66. J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970), 220–22, 226.

67. W. J. Masson, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan,” *Expository Times* 48 (1936–37): 179–81; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), 202–5; Binder, “Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter,” 176–94; Spicq, “Charity of the Good Samaritan,” 221; Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 176; Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 218; David Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, ed. Stanley E. Porter, vol. 119 (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 82–83. Sharon Ringe, however, speculates that the priest and Levite are traveling away from Jerusalem and therefore cannot be concerned about ritual purity. Sharon H. Ringe, *Luke*, Westminster Bible Companion, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 159.

68. S. Brent Farley, “The Calling of the Seventy and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:1–37),” *Studies in Scripture*, 5:318.

69. Douglas E. Oakman, “Was Jesus a Peasant? Implications for Reading the Samaritan Story (Luke 10:30–35),” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22 (fall 1992): 121–22. When Jews in that time period embarked on a journey, they prayed: “May it be Thy will,

O Lord my God, to lead me forth in peace, and direct my steps in peace and uphold me in peace, and deliver me from the hand of every enemy and ambush by the way.” Berakoth 29b, Soncino Talmud. Ringe, however, goes so far as to think that some in Jesus’ audience “may well have seen the robbers as the only sympathetic characters in the story. Some might even have engaged in such activity [as freedom fighters] themselves.” Ringe, *Luke*, 158–59.

70. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 220–21.

71. Oakman, “Was Jesus a Peasant?” 122; Ringe, *Luke*, 158: “Decent people would avoid them at all cost.”

72. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 218–19; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 449–50.

73. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (X–XXIV)*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 884; Eric Franklin, *Christ the Lord: A Study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke–Acts* (London: SPCK, 1975), 158; Eta Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 54; Frederick Houk Borsch, *Many Things in Parables* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 64–71.

74. Oakman, “Was Jesus a Peasant?” 117–25.

75. Kristján Búason, “The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25–37: One Text Three Methods,” in *Luke–Acts: Scandinavian Perspectives*, ed. Petri Luomanen (Vandenhoeck: Finnish Exegetical Society, 1991), 1–35.

76. Farmer, *International Bible Commentary*, 1407; see also Francis Zerwick, “The Good Samaritan,” *Furrow* 6 (1955): 293, who argues that it was “likely that the man lying in his blood was their brother, a Jew like themselves.”

77. Ringe, *Luke*, 158.

78. Evans believes that in this parable Christ teaches a higher law: that the Old Testament commandment to love one’s neighbor also extends to foreigners. But this seems unlikely on two accounts: it is unclear that the Samaritan has loved a foreigner, and the point is not that one should love the Samaritan (a foreigner) but rather be like him. Evans, *Luke*, 177.

79. John Bowman, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan,” *Expository Times* 59 (1947–48): 151–53.

80. George Horowitz, *The Spirit of Jewish Law* (New York: Bloch, 1953): 124.

81. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 215, citing Mishnah, *Pesahim* 8.6.

82. In any event, the impurity could be cured in seven days, a relatively minor inconvenience. Corpse impurity was not limited to priests but affected everyone (Num. 5:2, 19:11), although it would have hit the priest harder than the Levite or a lay person.

83. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 100–125.

84. David O. McKay, Richard Anderson, and Catherine Parry discuss many of Jesus’ parables but say little or nothing about the Good Samaritan. David O. McKay does not mention the Good Samaritan. David O. McKay, “Jesus, the Master Storyteller,” *Instructor* 87 (November 1952): 321–22, 339. Richard Anderson sees the Samaritan as “a moral hero.” Richard Lloyd Anderson, “How to Read a Parable,” *Ensign* 4 (September 1974): 58–63. Catherine Parry does not cover the Good Samaritan; however, she has addressed this parable for a forthcoming publication. Catherine Corman Parry, “‘Simon, I Have Somewhat to Say unto Thee’: Judgment and Condemnation in the Parables of Jesus,” *BYU 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1991), 113–19.

85. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 430–32.

86. Robert J. Matthews, *The Parables of Jesus*, published typescript (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1969), 64–66.

87. E. Keith Howick, *The Parables of Jesus the Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 97, 98.

88. S. Brent Farley, "The Parables: A Reflection of the Mission of Christ," in *A Symposium on the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980), 78; restated in Farley, "Calling of the Seventy," 318–19.

89. Farley, "Calling of the Seventy," 318–19. H. Wallace Goddard similarly recognizes that the "Samaritan clearly represents Jesus." Goddard finds "remarkable lessons for family life" in the behavior of the Good Samaritan as it contrasts with the behavior of others in the parable. H. Wallace Goddard, "The Good Samaritan as a Model for Family Life," in *My Soul Delighteth in the Scriptures*, ed. H. Wallace Goddard and Richard H. Cracroft (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 176, 171.

90. J. Ian H. McDonald, "Alien Grace (Luke 10:30–36): The Parable of the Good Samaritan," in *Jesus and His Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today*, ed. V. George Shillington (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997), 48.

91. Fred B. Craddock, *Luke* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 151.

92. Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter*, 180.

93. Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 56.

94. Fitzmyer, *Gospel according to Luke*, 883.

95. For further discussion, see Jan Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished: The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 64–66; Ringe, *Luke*, 157; Zimmermann, "Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter," 58–62.

96. Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*, 56.

97. Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, 445–46.

98. William Richard Stegner, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan and Leviticus 18:5," in *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders*, ed. Dennis E. Groh and Robert Jewett (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), 30–33.

99. Gerhardsson, *The Good Samaritan—The Good Shepherd?* 17, 28–29.

100. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 98.

101. Joseph Smith taught that the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3–8) alludes directly "to the commencement, or the setting up of the Kingdom" at the time of Christ. The parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24–30) has, at first, to do with early Christianity "in its infancy," while in its reference to the harvest we "have an allusion directly to the human family in the last days." Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 97, 98, 101.

The mustard seed (Matt. 13:31–32) represents the expansive growth of the restored Kingdom through the sprouting of the Book of Mormon out of the earth "in the last days," and the leaven (Matt. 13:33) may be understood as the rise of the Church out of "a little leaven that was put into three witnesses." Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 98, 100.

The treasure hid in the field (Matt. 13:44) is "the Latter-day Saints selling all that they have, and gathering themselves together unto a place that they may purchase"; and the man seeking goodly pearls (Matt. 13:45–46) represents "men traveling to find places for Zion, . . . who, when they find the place for Zion, or the pearl of great price, straightway sell that they have, and buy it." Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 101–2.

The net cast in the sea (Matt. 13:47–48) is "the seed of Joseph spreading forth the Gospel net upon the face of the earth," and the scribe bringing forth out of his treasury both old and new (Matt. 13:52) represents the restoration of old truths and "covenants" through the coming forth of "the Book of Mormon" and "also the translation of the Bible—thus bringing forth out of the heart things new and old." Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 102.

102. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 102. Unfortunately, we have no evidence that Joseph Smith ever commented on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

103. "One main doctrine [in the parables] is the Savior's witness to his divine calling." Anderson, "How to Read a Parable," 62.

104. Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 323; red type indicates that the text would be included "unequivocally in the database for determining who Jesus was," 36.

105. Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *Five Gospels*, 324.

106. Monselewski, *Der barmherzige Samariter*, 159.

107. Isaiah used the vineyard allegorically in Isaiah 5. Zenos's allegory of the olive tree in Jacob 5 is perhaps the best example found anywhere of an extended, symbolic depiction of the relationship between God and his people, individually and collectively, and the process and history of salvation.

108. Speaking in popular parables or seeking deeper meaning in scriptural stories was already a well established part of Jewish wisdom from at least the second century B.C. As Elias Bickerman shows, pious Jewish intellectuals in hellenistic Jerusalem busied themselves with discovering hidden double meanings in just about all of their traditional literature:

As for the intellectual duties of the sage, Ben Sira says that he will interpret the hidden meanings of maxims and be conversant in dark parables. . . . The wise Kohelet, for instance, was busy with *meshalim* (12:9). This bewildering terminology is derived from the wise men of olden times, from the age of Ahikar, who spoke in proverbs, and from the age of Solomon, who spoke of trees, beasts, and fishes. Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 168.

Jewish sectarians at that time sought to "fulfill" (*darash*) the Torah, literally to fill the Hebrew scriptures with their fullest possible meanings. Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 172. This often involved what modern critics would clearly identify as embellishing, stylizing, or appropriating old stories for new purposes; but to the ancient exegete the meaning was embedded in the text itself: "The rabbis called this work of actualization 'Haggadah,' a term that intimates that Scripture itself is 'telling' its new meaning." Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 177. Similarly, but more systematically, Philo of Alexandria in the first century A.D. sought to discover a spiritual allegory behind each passage of Jewish scripture. For example, see Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis 2–3*, in Colson, *Philo*, 1:140–473.

109. John W. Welch and James V. Garrison, "The 'Hymn of the Pearl': An Ancient Counterpart to 'O My Father,'" *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 127–38.

110. Sanhedrin 34a, Soncino Talmud.

111. John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 133.

112. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 219.

113. Zimmermann, "Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter," 64.

114. Gordon, "Parable of the Good Samaritan," 303; italics in original.

115. Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 134.

116. See Hugh Nibley, "Treasures in the Heavens," in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 173–77.

117. John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount: An Approach to 3 Nephi 11–18 and Matthew 5–7* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 119–20.

118. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 2.

119. Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 133–34.

120. Zimmermann also readily agrees that “the Christian tradition is not in error, seeing Christ in the compassionate Samaritan” but shies away from further allegorical meanings that must be “kept at a distance.” Zimmermann, “Das Gleichnes vom barmherzigen Samariter,” 67.

121. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, Volume Two: 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegitcal Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 2:1033–34.

122. Fitzmyer, *Gospel according to Luke*, 885. Eichholz, *Gleichnisse der Evangelien*, 175–78, similarly recognizes the allegorical tradition from the Alexandrian elder and Augustine on down to Luther and Erasmus but rejects it as “foreign” to the independent meaning of the text and, in the words of Calvin, as “foolish games,” 177.

123. Fitzmyer, *Gospel according to Luke*, 885.

124. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 67.

125. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 66–89.

126. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 87.

127. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 89.

128. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 88.

129. Fitzmyer, *Gospel according to Luke*, 885.

130. Daniélou, “Le Bon Samaritain,” 465.

131. McDonald, “Alien Grace,” 42. See generally Hans-Georg Godamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993).

132. For example, I would point to David Tiede, who has written, “It is difficult to gain a fresh perspective on a text which is so familiar” and is “simple enough for a child to see.” David L. Tiede, *Luke*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 207, 209.

133. McDonald, “Alien Grace,” 44–45.

134. Barnard, “To Allegorize or not to Allegorize?” 10.

135. Barnard, “To Allegorize or not to Allegorize?” 5.

136. Barnard, “To Allegorize or not to Allegorize?” 10.

137. If Jesus had wanted the parable to indicate that he alone would bring the victim into the Church, he could have had the Samaritan carry the victim on his own back.

138. Represented in the parable in the form of death blows. Compare Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 108–111, 216; see also the apocryphal work, *Vita Adae et Evae*, 34:1–2, in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, ed. R. H. Charles, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:142, in which Adam suffers seventy blows to various parts of his body as chastisement for the Fall. I thank Don Norton for this point.

139. This element is present in the parable as the robbers strip or undress (literally, “un-dow”) the victim.

140. Gerald N. Lund, “Plan of Salvation, Plan of Redemption,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1088–91.