

THE SERMON AT THE TEMPLE AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: THE DIFFERENCES

The preceding chapters present an interpretation that in my opinion casts the Sermon at the Temple as a complex, subtle, original, systematic, coherent, and purposefully orchestrated text. Not all people, however, see this text so positively. In fact, most novice readers of the Book of Mormon peruse 3 Nephi 12–14 rather casually, perhaps viewing it as a block of foreign materials unrelated to the surrounding text and bluntly spliced into the narrative of 3 Nephi.

The similarities between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple have led many to view the Sermon at the Temple more as a liability than an asset to the Book of Mormon. Ever since the publication of the Book of Mormon, one of the standard criticisms raised by those seeking to discredit the book has been the assertion that it plagiarizes the King James Version of the Bible, and the chief instance of alleged plagiarism is the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi 12–14. Mark Twain quipped that the Book of Mormon contains passages “‘smouched’ from the New

Testament and no credit given.”¹ Reverend M. T. Lamb, who characterized the Book of Mormon as “verbose, blundering, stupid,”² viewed 3 Nephi 12–14 as a mere duplication of the Sermon on the Mount “word for word” and saw “no excuse for this lack of originality and constant repetition of the Bible,” for “we have all such passages already in the [Bible], and God *never does unnecessary things*.”³ “Careful examination proves it to be an unprincipled plagiarist.”⁴

These criticisms, however, have been drawn prematurely. Until all the possibilities have been considered, passing judgment with such finality is hasty. Indeed, if the foregoing covenantal interpretation of the Sermon has merit, Jesus could have selected no more appropriate text than the Sermon on the Mount for use at the temple in Bountiful. I am aware of no more valuable contribution to our understanding of the Sermon on the Mount than the insights of the Sermon at the Temple. Instead of being a liability or an embarrassment to the historicity of the Book of Mormon, the text and context of the Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Mormon turn out, in my view, to be among its greatest strengths. Through the Sermon at the Temple, some of the things that have baffled New Testament scholars about the Sermon on the Mount become very plain and precious.

The case of critics like Mark Twain and Reverend Lamb gains most of its appeal by emphasizing the similarities and discounting the differences between Matthew 5–7 and 3 Nephi 12–14. Yet under closer textual scrutiny, these differences turn out to be quite significant. Accordingly, in this chapter I will closely examine differences between the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount. While the substantial similarities between 3 Nephi 12–14 and Matthew 5–7 are readily apparent, the results presented be-

low offer reasons to reject the claim that the Sermon at the Temple is simply a naïve, unprincipled plagiarism of the Sermon on the Mount.

While such writers as B. H. Roberts and Sidney B. Sperry have long cited the differences between these two texts to support the claim that the Sermon at the Temple is not a mindless copy of the Sermon on the Mount,⁵ and while some commentators have sensed that the Sermon at the Temple is superior to the Sermon on the Mount in “sense and clearness,”⁶ they have not thoroughly articulated the actual extent or nature of the differences. In the following chapters I undertake such an analysis. I examine each variance (for a complete comparison of the two texts, see the appendix) and conclude that there are enough important differences between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple that the relationship between these texts cannot be attributed to a superficial, thoughtless, blind, or careless plagiarism. On the contrary, the differences are systematic, consistent, methodical, and in several cases quite deft.

For purposes of discussion and testing, the following analyses will assume two things: first, that Jesus began in Bountiful with a speech that he had probably delivered several times in Palestine, for example, when he sent his disciples into the mission field (see Matthew 7:1–2, 9, 11 JST)⁷ and again sometime before his ascension (see 3 Nephi 15:1); and second, that he modified that text for delivery to a Nephite audience in Bountiful after his resurrection. Each instance in which the Sermon at the Temple is different from the Sermon on the Mount will be examined against this assumed context to determine whether logical reasons can be found for the differences. The more rational and subtly sensible these differences are, the more respect one

should reasonably have for the Sermon at the Temple—and at the same time the less appropriate it becomes to speak disparagingly of the Sermon at the Temple as a plagiarism of the Sermon on the Mount.

A Postresurrectional Setting

Jesus appeared to the Nephites at the temple at Bountiful after his resurrection. Since some of the things he said before his death were superseded by his atonement and resurrection, they needed to be modified when explained to the Nephites to fit into a postresurrectional setting. For example, at the time of the Sermon on the Mount, the fulfillment of the law still lay in the future (see Matthew 5:18). But by the time of the Sermon at the Temple, the law of Moses had already been fulfilled, as Jesus had proclaimed out of the darkness at the time of his death (see 3 Nephi 9:17).

Thus, when Jesus spoke in Palestine he said, “One jot or one tittle *shall* in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18; italics added), but in Bountiful he affirmed that one jot or tittle “*hath not* passed away from the law, but in me it *hath* all been fulfilled” (3 Nephi 12:18). Similarly, in summarizing the series of antitheticals in 3 Nephi 12:21–45, Jesus drew them together in the Sermon at the Temple with the following conclusion: “Those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me *are* all fulfilled. Old things *are* done away, and all things have become new” (3 Nephi 12:46–47). In light of the glorified state of the resurrected Jesus at the time of the Sermon at the Temple, he could accurately say, “I would that ye should be perfect even *as* I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48). Furthermore, there was no need in Bountiful for Jesus to instruct the people to pray, “Thy

kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10), a phrase missing from the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon at the Temple (see 3 Nephi 13:9–13), for God's kingdom had already come both in heaven through Christ's victory over death and on earth that day in their midst.

These differences convey significant theological information. First, the Sermon at the Temple clarified that all things under the law of Moses had been entirely fulfilled in Jesus' mortal life, death, atonement, and resurrection. The Sermon on the Mount, on the other hand, never addressed this important question of *when* the law would be fulfilled but left this key issue open, simply saying that nothing would pass from the law "till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). The issue of when that fulfillment became effective deeply and tragically divided a number of the early Christian communities, as is well documented in the New Testament (see Acts 15; Galatians 5).⁸ Second, the Sermon at the Temple speaks from a frame of reference in which Jesus had become glorified with God. Jesus had already ascended to the Father, and thus he could well command his listeners in Bountiful to be perfect as he or as God is perfect (see 3 Nephi 12:48).

A Nephite Setting

When Jesus addressed the Nephites at Bountiful, he spoke in terms they would understand. The change in setting from Palestine to Bountiful accounts for several differences between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple. Instead of "farthing" (as appears in the King James English of Matthew 5:26), Jesus mentions a "senine" (3 Nephi 12:26), a Nephite unit of exchange. Although this change might appear to be a superficial change or an artifice, there is subtle substance to it. Jesus

undoubtedly had several meaningful reasons for mentioning the senine when he spoke to the Nephites.

First, it was not just one of many Nephite measures but was their basic measure of gold (see Alma 11:5–19). Through it one converted values of precious metals into the measurement “of every kind of grain” (Alma 11:7). It was also the smallest Nephite measure of gold (see Alma 11:8–10). Thus, when Jesus told the Nephites that they might be held in prison, unable to pay “even one senine” (3 Nephi 12:26), he was referring to a relatively small amount, equal to one measure of grain. It was also likely not just the smallness that Jesus had in mind, for otherwise he could have spoken of a “leah” (Alma 11:17), their smallest measure of silver. The senine was especially important because it was the amount paid to each Nephite judge for a day’s service at law (see Alma 11:3). Evidently, the losing party in a lawsuit was liable to pay the judges one senine each, a burden that would give potential litigants all the more reason to “agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him” (3 Nephi 12:25). One should note that the Greek phrase *en tēi hodōi*, “in the way,” in Matthew 5:25, idiomatically refers to the commencement of a lawsuit.⁹

Another subtle yet important difference is found in 3 Nephi 12:35: there is no mention of Jerusalem. Of course, no Nephite would be inclined to swear “by Jerusalem, . . . the city of the great King” (Matthew 5:35) since the Nephite view of Jerusalem was rather grim. But more than that, omitting this phrase may be closer to what Jesus originally said in Palestine as well. While Jerusalem was known anciently as “the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:2; *tou basileōs tou megalou* in the Septuagint, 47:2), numismatic evidence shows that the precise phrase “great King” (*basileōs megalou*) was a special political title in the Roman

world that was not used in Palestine until after Jesus' death. This title was given to the client-king Herod Agrippa I as a result of a treaty (*horkia*) granting him several territories in and around Galilee in A.D. 39 and 41, an event he commemorated with coins in his name bearing this distinctive, honorific title.¹⁰ On the basis of this information, it has been suggested that Jesus' saying about oaths (*horka*) may have originally contained no reference to Jerusalem, "the city of the great King," since Herod Agrippa may not have been politically entitled to that title until after Jesus' ministry. While there is no way to be sure about this suggestion, especially since such words were also available to Jesus in the text of Psalm 48:2, the absence of the phrase *the city of the great King* in the Sermon at the Temple would prove consistent with this obscure numismatic information.

A further difference is that there is no mention of rain in 3 Nephi 12:45, whereas Matthew 5:45 says that the Lord makes the sun rise and also the rain fall on the just and the unjust. It is unknown why the Sermon at the Temple does not mention rain in this verse. Perhaps this difference reflects less anxiety in Nephite lands over regular rainfall or less judgmental attitudes in Mesoamerica toward the heavenly origins of rain.

Finally, the Nephites had had no experience with the hypocrites of Matthew 6:2, who cast their alms with the sounding of (or into) trumpets, and thus Jesus did not speak to the Nephites of what such hypocrites "do," but what they "will do" (3 Nephi 13:2). For the Nephites, such behavior was hypothetical or figurative, not familiar.

An Audience Dependent upon Written Law

The Nephites relied heavily on the written law. Their ancestors treasured the plates of brass, also relying heavily

upon those written records for specifications regarding the law of Moses and how they should keep it. Being cut off from most sources of oral or customary Israelite law, the Nephites saw the law primarily as a written body (see 1 Nephi 4:15–16) and viewed any change in the written law with deep suspicion (see Mosiah 29:22–23). The Jews in Jerusalem in Jesus’ day, on the other hand, had an extensive body of oral law to accompany the written Torah, and the oral law was very important in the pre-Talmudic period of Jewish legal history.

Accordingly, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said repeatedly to the Jews in the old world regarding the laws of “the Sinai generation,”¹¹ “Ye have *heard* that it was *said* . . .” (Matthew 5:21, 27; see 33, 38, 43; italics added). To the Nephites, however, such a statement would not have carried as much weight as a reference to the written law. Thus, in the Sermon at the Temple Jesus consistently cited the written law, saying, “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you” (3 Nephi 12:21), “it is written by them of old time” (3 Nephi 12:27), “again it is written” (3 Nephi 12:33), “behold, it is written” (3 Nephi 12:38), and “behold it is written also” (3 Nephi 12:43).

An Explicit Covenant-Making Setting

As has been explained extensively thus far, the Sermon at the Temple was delivered in a covenant-making context. Several significant differences between the two sermons reveal and reflect this important dimension. In the Sermon at the Temple Jesus gave the injunctions and instructions as “commandments” (3 Nephi 12:20), and the people received them by entering into a covenant with God that they would always remember and keep those commandments that

Jesus gave to them that day (see 3 Nephi 18:7, 10). Just as the children of Israel entered into a covenant to obey the law of Moses as it was delivered to them at Sinai, the Nephites at Bountiful received their new dispensation of law by way of a covenant that superseded the old law, as the Sermon at the Temple openly explains. Consistent with this overt setting, the Sermon at the Temple contains unique phrases that belong to the sphere of covenant making.

First, Jesus' words in the Sermon at the Temple were given to the Nephites as commandments. No such designation appears in the Sermon on the Mount, and thus biblical scholars inconclusively debate whether Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount were intended as celestial ideals, as ethical or religious principles, or as social commentary. The Sermon at the Temple, however, leaves no doubt that the words Jesus spoke at Bountiful were intended to create binding obligations between God and his people. Jesus issued laws of the gospel, which all those who entered into the covenant that day were to obey. The people were required to come unto Jesus and be saved by obedience to the "commandments, which I have commanded you at this time" (3 Nephi 12:20).

Second, those who will be received into the kingdom of heaven are those who come unto Christ (see 3 Nephi 12:3, 20). The phrase *come unto me* appears five times in the Sermon at the Temple (see 3 Nephi 12:3, 19, and 20, and 23 twice), but it never occurs in the Sermon on the Mount. Coming unto Christ, according to the Sermon at the Temple, requires repentance and baptism (see, for example, 3 Nephi 18:32; 21:6; 30:2), and coming unto him is thus in essence a covenantal concept. Only those who "come unto [Christ] with full purpose of heart" through his prescribed ordinances will be received or allowed to enter into his presence

(3 Nephi 12:24; compare 14:21; 15:1). The use of the phrase *come unto Christ* is consistent with the covenantal context of the Sermon at the Temple, and this connection is strengthened by the likelihood that the Hebrew phrase translated “come before the Lord” probably has cultic meanings of standing before Jesus’ presence in the temple at Jerusalem.¹² Stephen D. Ricks suggests that the phrase *come unto me* in the Sermon at the Temple may be conceptually equivalent to the Old Testament expression translated “stand in the presence of the Lord,” which is thought to be temple terminology. Along the same lines, John I. Durham presents evidence that the *shalom* described the complete blessedness that is “the gift of God, and can be received only in his Presence.” He further notes that “the concept of the Presence of God was certainly of vital importance to the Old Testament cult.”¹³

Emphasis on the Desires of the Heart

Although the Sermon on the Mount already demands of its adherents an extraordinarily pure heart (see, for example, Matthew 5:8, 28; 6:21), the Sermon at the Temple adds two more references to the heart. The first is expressly connected with the covenant-making process, requiring any person desiring to come to Christ to do so “with full purpose of heart” (3 Nephi 12:23–24; compare 2 Nephi 31:13; Jacob 6:5; 3 Nephi 10:6; Acts 11:23). This instruction replaces the saying in the Sermon on the Mount about bringing one’s gift to the temple altar (see Matthew 5:23–24).

The second such addition sharpens the instruction regarding adultery by issuing the following commandment: “Behold I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart” (3 Nephi

12:29; compare Psalm 37:15). Likewise, the Sermon at the Temple prohibits any anger in the heart at all (see 3 Nephi 12:22), not allowing even justifiable anger, which is allowed in the traditional Matthean text (see Matthew 5:22).

Undoubtedly, these statements about the heart would have been intensely poignant in the minds of the Nephites, since the only thing they knew about the new law at the time the Sermon at the Temple began was the fact that the old ritual law had been replaced by a new law of sacrifice requiring exclusively the sacrifice of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). The added emphasis on the heart would have been especially instructive to those Nephite listeners, given their pressing need to understand this new law that focused so strongly on the sacrifice of the heart.

A More Immediate Relation to God

In several passages in the Sermon at the Temple, subtle changes bring the divine influence more explicitly to the surface. When one is “filled” in the Sermon at the Temple, the beatitude is not left unspecified, as in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:6), but it reads “filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6). One suffers, not just “for righteousness’ sake,” but “for [Jesus’] name’s sake” (Matthew 5:10; 3 Nephi 12:10). The murderer is in danger not just of “the judgment,” but of “the judgment of God” (Matthew 5:21–22; 3 Nephi 12:21–22). And when one comes to Christ after first being reconciled to his brother, Christ himself is the one who “will receive” him (3 Nephi 12:24). Such expressions give the Sermon at the Temple a somewhat more intimate, personal connection with the divine than is conveyed in the Sermon on the Mount. The shorter version of the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer in the Sermon at the Temple places greater “emphasis on the believer’s special

relation to God, to heaven,” and to the position of indebtedness “at the center” of that relation.¹⁴ This characteristic is consistent with the Sermon at the Temple being delivered by Jesus in his divine and glorified state, and with the Matthean instruction being given by the Master to his closest circle of disciples.

Absence of Unseemly Penalties

In two places, penalties mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount are conspicuously absent in the Sermon at the Temple. First, the Sermon on the Mount teaches that anyone who “shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19), but the Sermon at the Temple mentions no such punishment or criticism. Second, where the Sermon on the Mount says, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, . . . and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off” (Matthew 5:29–30), the Sermon at the Temple simply gives the commandment “that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart” (3 Nephi 12:29).

Interestingly, the Sermon on the Mount has been subjected to considerable criticism by commentators on account of these two passages in Matthew 5. In the one case, some have argued that the drastic, eternal punishment of one who breaks even the least commandment seems grossly disproportionate to the crime and too uncharacteristically legalistic for Jesus to have said.¹⁵ In the second case, the suggestion of bodily mutilation seems wholly inconsistent with the extraordinary Jewish respect for the human body—an attitude that Jesus undoubtedly shared—and seems at odds with the other statement in the Sermon on the Mount that one should cast the beam from one’s eye but not cast away the eye (see Matthew 7:5).¹⁶ None of these

problems arises, however, in the Sermon at the Temple. Indeed, the absence of these passages may even support the idea that these two passages were not originally parts of the Sermon on the Mount but were interpolated from Mark 9:43–48, as some commentators have suspected.

Of course, penalties are not entirely absent from the Sermon at the Temple. The strict injunction to “give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” is present in both the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:6; 3 Nephi 14:6). While this passage has presented great problems to interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount who wonder why Jesus would in one breath say “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44) and call other human beings “swine” and “dogs,”¹⁷ this situation can be explained quite naturally, as has been discussed in chapter 4, in connection with a requirement of secrecy in a covenant-making context.

Holy and sacred things are not to be shared or broadcast indiscriminately. Doing so was punished in the ancient world by severe penalties, often mentioned in connection with oath swearing and covenant making. Thus, scholars may be correct in suggesting that the specific penalties mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:19, 29–30) were not originally there (the Sermon at the Temple presents those passages quite differently) but would go too far by concluding that penalties had no role in the teachings of Jesus at all.

A Church Organizational Setting

The Sermon on the Mount gives no clues about how its followers were organized ecclesiastically or about their

institutional positions or relationships. The Sermon on the Mount, for all that we know about it from the Gospel of Matthew, could stand independently as a code of private conduct, quite apart from any religious society or organization. Nothing said expressly in or about the Sermon on the Mount tells us how early Christian communities used the Sermon on the Mount or how its parts related to the various officers and functionaries in that movement. Yet scholars such as Hans Dieter Betz have concluded that the Sermon must have occupied a prominent place in the religious and liturgical life of the early Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.¹⁸

Betz's proposition in general is more than confirmed in the Sermon at the Temple by the fact that it was delivered in connection with the establishment of a group of disciples who would lead the new church of Christ (see 3 Nephi 11:18–22; 12:1; 18:36–37; 26:17–21). Several differences between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple (and often also the JST) make this organizational setting explicit:

1. At Bountiful, Jesus ordained and called priesthood leaders. The discourse in 3 Nephi 12 begins with two ecclesiastical beatitudes not found in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen; . . . again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am" (3 Nephi 12:1–2).

2. All believers were instructed to enter into a covenant of baptism, thereby becoming members of Christ's church (see 3 Nephi 11:21–27, 34, 38; 12:1; 18:5). As a result of this entry, to them it was given to be the salt of the earth: "*I give unto you to be the salt of the earth*" (3 Nephi 12:13), a trans-

ferral and causal connection unstated in the Sermon on the Mount's simple declaration, "*Ye are the salt of the earth*" (Matthew 5:13).

3. The two commissions "I give unto you to be the light of this people" and "Let your light so shine before this people" (3 Nephi 12:14, 16) seem to refer most clearly to relationships among or exemplary roles of the believing covenant people (see 3 Nephi 12:2; 13:25; 15:12), who later in the Sermon clearly are called "the people of my church" (3 Nephi 18:5; compare 20:22; 27:24, 27). With similar language in an earlier dispensation, the Lord had also given covenant Israel its calling and mission: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49:6).

4. The fact that the words in 3 Nephi 13:25–34 were addressed solely to "the twelve whom he had chosen" (3 Nephi 13:25) and the acknowledgement that the offended brother in 3 Nephi 12:22–24, as discussed above, had the priesthood power to judge ("whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of *his* judgment") are two other places in the Sermon at the Temple where that text distinctively presupposes or discloses ecclesiastical or organizational elements.

A Greater Universality

Consistent with Jesus' open invitations to all mankind in the first parts of the text (see 3 Nephi 11:23; 12:2), the word *all* is introduced into the Sermon at the Temple five times in the Beatitudes (see 3 Nephi 12:4, 6, 8, 9, 10). While this may seem a small addition, its repetition creates a crescendo of emphasis on the universality of the gospel and on the absolute desire of Jesus for all people to receive its blessings. In the Sermon at the Temple, "all" those present went forth and touched the Savior (3 Nephi 11:15–16), "all"

came forth with their sick to be healed (3 Nephi 17:9), “all” bowed (3 Nephi 17:9–10), and “all” saw, heard, and witnessed (3 Nephi 17:25; 18:24). The Sermon at the Temple is consistently emphatic that “all” participated, not just a small group of disciples who were separated from the multitudes, as in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:1).

The Absence of Anti-Pharisaical Elements

It has been argued that the Sermon on the Mount passed through the hands of an anti-Pharisaical community of early Christians who were struggling to separate themselves from and who were having strained relations with their mother Jewish faith and the established synagogues in Jerusalem.¹⁹ Indeed, anti-Pharisaism can be seen as one of the main tendencies of Matthew, and hence its manifestations in the Sermon on the Mount have been advanced as evidence of Matthean influence on or composition of the Sermon on the Mount.

Interestingly, the evidences scholars think they see of these anti-Pharisaical comments in the Sermon on the Mount are not found in the Sermon at the Temple. The saying “except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 5:20) is not present in 3 Nephi. A very different and important statement in 3 Nephi 12:19–20 about obedience and sacrifice appears instead. Likewise, the unflattering comparison between good men the world over and the publicans, both of whom love their friends (see Matthew 5:46–47), is wholly absent in 3 Nephi 12. Warnings against hypocrisy are present in both the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 3 Nephi 13:2, 5, 16; 14:5), but these admonitions in the Sermon at the Temple are not aimed specifically at the Pharisees.

The Absence of Possible Antigentile Elements

It has been similarly argued that the Sermon on the Mount as it stands in the Gospel of Matthew was redacted slightly by a Jewish-Christian who held an antigentile bias.²⁰ The evidence for this view comes from three passages. Whatever weight one may accord to such evidence in critical studies of the New Testament, in each of the three cases the perceived antigentile elements are unproblematic for or absent from the Sermon at the Temple, as one would expect in a discourse delivered to a group of people who registered no personal contacts with any gentiles.

Accordingly, the references to publicans in Matthew 5:46–47 are absent in 3 Nephi 12, and the words “for after all these things do the Gentiles seek” (Matthew 6:32) do not appear in 3 Nephi 13:32. The discussion of vain repetitions put up to God by the “heathens” (*ethnikoi*, Matthew 6:7), which is mentioned in the Sermon at the Temple, is a general comment that need not be a later antigentile intrusion into the Sermon on the Mount. In any event, the problem of vain, repetitive apostate prayers was well-known to the Nephites from Alma’s shocking encounter with the practices of the Zoramites (see Alma 31:12–23).

The Absence of Alleged Anti-Pauline Elements

It has also been suggested that certain portions of the Sermon on the Mount are anti-Pauline.²¹ Again, because of differences between the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount, either the purported anti-Pauline materials are lacking in the Sermon at the Temple or it is highly doubtful that the supposed anti-Pauline elements are in fact anti-Pauline.

The most likely deprecation of Paul in the Sermon on the Mount is the passage that condemns anyone who

teaches people to ignore even the least of the commandments in the law of Moses—he will be called “the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). Paul is the obvious figure in early Christianity who taught and promoted the idea that Christians need not observe the law of Moses, and his ideas met with considerable hostility among both Jews and certain Christians. Since Paul was known as “the least” of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:9), it seems quite plausible that early Christians would have seen in Matthew 5:19 a direct criticism of Paul’s position, if not of Paul himself; it is easier to believe this appellation was added to the Sermon on the Mount *after* Paul had called himself “the least” than to think he would have called himself by that name, knowing that this appellation had become part of an early Jewish-Christian prolaw tradition. If the text of the Sermon on the Mount solidified around the 50s A.D. when Paul’s debate was raging, it is possible that Matthew 5:19 was altered somewhat in light of that controversy (the crucial phrase is also absent in Matthew 5:21 JST). If that was the case, one would not expect to find Jesus at Bountiful using anti-Pauline words twenty years earlier in the Sermon at the Temple. In fact, no anti-Pauline elements can be found or suggested in the differently aimed text of 3 Nephi 12:17–19.

Some commentators have concluded that other passages in the Sermon on the Mount are anti-Pauline, but in those further cases the evidence seems even weaker. The concern about destroying or fulfilling the law is too general to be identified exclusively with Paul. Concern over destroying the law, or the role of the law of Moses in the messianic age or in the world to come, was a general Jewish problem, not just an issue raised by Paul’s views of salvation.²² Questions posed to Jesus about tithing, ritual purity,

healing on the Sabbath, and many other such things show that people in early Christianity were concerned with this precise issue from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Concerns about how and when the law of Moses would be fulfilled were equally problematic in Nephite religious discourse for six hundred years, from the time of Lehi and Nephi until the coming of Jesus at Bountiful (see, for example, 2 Nephi 25:24–27; 3 Nephi 1:24; 15:2). It is therefore fitting that Jesus explained his relationship to the old law in both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple.

Warnings against false prophets (see Matthew 7:15) need not refer covertly to Paul but probably reflect long-standing Israelite concerns and rules (see Deuteronomy 18:20–22). The mere presence in the Sermon on the Mount of the criticism against those who call “Lord, Lord” (*kurie, kurie*, Matthew 7:21) does not appear to be evidence that this condemnation was included as a polemic against Paul in a theological anti-*kurios* statement, as some have suggested,²³ for the same phrase appears in the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:46, and Luke can scarcely be accused of being an anti-Pauline collaborator. Similarly, the text that advises people to build their house upon the rock (see Matthew 7:24) is also argued as supporting Peter (the rock) as opposed to Paul; but, again, Luke's inclusion of this statement in Luke 6:47–49 discredits this view, since Luke would not likely have discredited his companion Paul.

While the Sermon on the Mount in its present form may have passed through the hands of an early Christian anti-gentile, anti-Pauline community, most traces of such influences are scant. Even to the extent that such influences may be discernible, the absence from the Sermon at the Temple of the chief bits of evidence of an anti-Pauline hand in the Sermon on the Mount supports the view that the Sermon

at the Temple preserves a reading that predates any such influences on the text.

Other Differences

A number of other differences between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple are worth mentioning. There seems to be a slightly greater emphasis in the Sermon at the Temple on eschatological judgment at the last day. Futurity is stronger in the Sermon at the Temple than in the Sermon on the Mount: for example, “ye *shall* have great joy” (3 Nephi 12:12), and “the salt *shall* be thenceforth good for nothing” (3 Nephi 12:13).

The Sermon at the Temple seems slightly more personal because *who* has been substituted for *which* on several occasions (see, for example, 3 Nephi 12:6, 10, 45, 48; 13:1, 4, 6, 9), but it is unknown whether this first appeared on the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon or as a correction to the printer’s manuscript. While these changes are minor, they add to the overall intimacy of Jesus’ words in the Sermon at the Temple. His audience at Bountiful is not a faceless crowd. Unlike the Sermon on the Mount, 3 Nephi even names some of the people who were there to receive him and his words (see 3 Nephi 19:4).

The Sermon at the Temple achieves greater clarity by explicitly stating certain things that the Sermon on the Mount simply assumes: for example, “it” in Matthew 5 is replaced in the Sermon at the Temple with the explicit antecedent “the earth” (3 Nephi 12:13); a cryptic instruction in Matthew 5:30 is explained and motivated with the elaboration “wherein *ye will* take up your cross” (3 Nephi 12:30); the Sermon at the Temple adds the understood injunction “I say that I would that *ye should* do alms unto the poor” (3 Nephi 13:1), which goes beyond the direction on

how not to give alms; and a rhetorical question in Matthew 6:30 is given with promissory force in the Sermon at the Temple, “even so *will he* clothe you, if ye are not of little faith” (3 Nephi 13:30). These changes strengthen the imperative force of Jesus’ statements, especially those that change negative, self-evident statements into positive commands or promises.

Finally, several reasons may be suggested why Jesus dropped the petition “Give us this day our daily [*epiousion*] bread” (Matthew 6:11) in the Sermon at the Temple. Perhaps the petition did not fit the circumstances because Jesus knew he would spend the entire day with these people and would not take time for lunch. Perhaps it was omitted because Jesus wanted to supply a unique sacramental bread at the end of the day (see 3 Nephi 18:1). Perhaps it was dropped because Jesus is the bread of life, and the people had already received their true sustenance that day in the appearance of Jesus.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the word *epiousion* (daily? continual? sufficient? essential? for the future?) is obscure,²⁴ but one of the earliest interpretations of it (supported by the early fragmentary *Gospel of the Hebrews*) was eschatological: “*maḥar* [the Hebrew that Jerome assumed stood behind the Greek *epiousion*] meant not only the next day but also the great Tomorrow, the final consummation. Accordingly, Jerome is saying, the ‘bread for tomorrow’ was not meant as earthly bread but as the bread of life” in an eschatological sense.²⁵ If the several scholars who refer this petition “to the *coming* Kingdom and its feast”²⁶ are correct, Jesus might have considered this petition unsuitable in the context of the Sermon at the Temple, since the kingdom had in one sense already come. His appearance at that time in Bountiful was a realized eschatological event. Assuming

that this is the meaning of *epiousion*, this deletion would fall into the same category as the other differences, mentioned above, that reflect the postresurrectional setting of the Sermon at the Temple.

In sum, one can readily compare the texts of the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple. There are many differences between the two texts. Although to the casual observer most of these points seem insignificant or meddlesome, a closer examination shows that most of these variations are quite meaningful and subtle. The differences are consistent with the introduction of the Sermon into Nephite culture, with its covenant-making context, and with dating the text to a time before the suspected factional alterations or additions were made to the Sermon on the Mount. All this, in my opinion, speaks highly for the Sermon at the Temple as an appropriate, well-thought-out, and pertinent text, and it supplies considerable evidence that the Sermon at the Temple was not simply plagiarized superficially from the Sermon on the Mount. The differences reflect deeper circumstances and well-considered truths.

Of course there are many similarities between the two texts, and in large sections no differences occur. These similarities are consistent with Jesus' open acknowledgement that he taught the Nephites "the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father" (3 Nephi 15:1). His gospel is one gospel, no more nor less (see 3 Nephi 11:40). The Sermon at the Temple is, therefore, not only appropriately similar to but also meaningfully different from the Sermon on the Mount. The more I know of those differences, the more I am impressed that achieving this subtle balance was not something that just casually happened.

Notes

1. Samuel L. Clemens, *Roughing It* (New York: Harper, 1913), 1:119.

2. M. T. Lamb, *The Golden Bible* (New York: Ward and Drummond, 1887), iii.

3. *Ibid.*, 187–89; italics in original. In response to a similar expression, B. H. Roberts countered, “I am led to believe that you have been so absorbed, perhaps, in tracing out the sameness in the expressions that you have failed to note the differences to which I allude, for you make the claim of strict identity between the Book of Mormon and King James’ translation too strong.” B. H. Roberts, “Bible Quotations in the Book of Mormon; and Reasonableness of Nephi’s Prophecies,” *Improvement Era* 7 (January 1904): 184.

4. Lamb, *Golden Bible*, 212. To the same effect, see Ronald V. Huggins, “Did the Author of 3 Nephi Know the Gospel of Matthew?” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30/3 (1997): 137–48.

5. Roberts, “Bible Quotations,” 184; Sidney B. Sperry, *Problems of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 105–6. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 725, 729, sees a greater emphasis in the Sermon at the Temple than in the Sermon on the Mount on the adoration of Jesus but otherwise considers the two sermons to be virtually identical, both containing “the same splendid array of ennobling precepts” and “the same wealth of effective comparison” (p. 727).

6. Roberts, “Bible Quotations,” 191.

7. I will not discuss in detail the differences between the Sermon at the Temple, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Joseph Smith Translation. For a three-column chart comparing these three texts, see the appendix to the 1990 edition of this book. In the interests of simplicity and pertinence to the present study, the appendix in this volume compares in two columns the texts of the King James Bible and 3 Nephi 12–14. For discussions of the JST’s

features, see Robert A. Cloward, "The Sermon on the Mount in the JST and the Book of Mormon," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1985), 163–200; and W. Jeffrey Marsh, "Prophetic Enlightenment on the Sermon on the Mount," *Ensign*, January 1999, 15–21. The fact that the Sermon at the Temple and the Joseph Smith Translation are not identical to each other shows, from one Latter-day Saint point of view, that Jesus delivered the Sermon several times, and thus one should not necessarily expect to find a single "correct" version of the text.

8. Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Pauline, 1984).

9. Frank Zimmermann, *The Aramaic Origin of the Four Gospels* (New York: KTAV, 1979), 47. Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O. C. Dean Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 69, points out that the expression soon took on a broader meaning, however, than merely "the way to the courthouse." See Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 226.

10. The coins of Herod Agrippa I (A.D. 37–44) bearing the inscription *ORKIA BASILEOS MEGALOU AGRIPA* are catalogued in Ya'akov Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage* (Jerusalem: Amphora, 1982), 2:45, 47, 56, 246; and *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1967), 139–40; see Ernst W. Klimowsky, *On Ancient Palestinian and Other Coins: Their Symbolism and Metrology* (Tel Aviv: Israel Numismatic Society, 1974), 105–6. For this information, I am indebted to Dennis C. Duling of Canisius College for his paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in Chicago, November 1988.

11. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 278.

12. John I. Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," in *Proclamation and Presence*, ed. John I. Durham and J. R. Porter (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1970), 290, 292; see Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

13. Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," 290, 292.

14. Vernon K. Robbins, "Divine Dialogue and the Lord's Prayer: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Sacred Texts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28/3 (1995): 133.

15. Luz, *Matthew* 1–7, 267–72.

16. On the question of whether this mutilation was to be understood literally or as hyperbolic speech, especially in light of similar rabbinic sayings whose actual execution is debated legally and philosophically, see Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 238–39.

17. William F. Albright and Christopher S. Mann say this applies to alien and heathen people. Albright and Mann, *Matthew* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1971), 84. Samuel T. Lachs links the Samaritans with the dogs and the Romans with the swine: "Who are the dogs and the swine in this passage? It is well-known that they are both used as derogatory terms for the Gentiles." Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament* (New York: KTAV, 1987), 139.

18. Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 1–16, 55–69.

19. *Ibid.*, 19.

20. *Ibid.*, 21.

21. *Ibid.*, 20–21. For reasons against seeing Matthew 7:15–23 as anti-Pauline, see David Hill, "False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7:15–23," *Biblica* 57 (1976): 327–48.

22. See, for example, W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952).

23. See, for example, Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 156–57.

24. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 296–97; G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:590–99.

25. Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), 100–101.

26. Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 297; and Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 2:595.