

THE SACRED AND THE TEMPLE IN ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY

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Sacred/Temple in Ancient Christianity

The Latin term *sacer* (and related forms, e.g., *sacred*) means something consecrated to God (or to a god or goddess), and *templum* (Greek *temenos*) refers to land “cut off” or set aside from common use and dedicated to a deity. Putting it another way, a sacred area or a temple designates restricted space, and the activities performed in that ground dedicated to a god or goddess are likewise limited to those authorized to be there.

Virtually all ancient cultures had such sacred sites, such as groves, high places, springs, caves, and so forth. Shrines or temples were often erected on *temenea* or sacred lands (*terrae sanctae*), and the rituals and ceremonies performed in the temples were as restricted to authorized participants as were the sites. The name given to such rites was *mysteries*, a word which means to keep one’s mouth closed, or to keep the material secret. The ancients were so faithful to that concept that we still do not know the details of Greek mystery religious rites, to give an example. One can go through one Egyptian temple after another and get the general gist, but exactly what was said and done there is still not perfectly known. The initiates were faithful to their oaths of secrecy.

It would be strange if Christianity did not have a temple tradition, and a study of available sources shows that such a tradition indeed existed. In keeping with the already-mentioned concepts of restricted space and keeping the mysteries of the temple ceremonies from the general public, we should expect our study to

require meticulous research into all available sources. If the people did in fact honor their oaths of secrecy and sacredness, we would have to dig rather deeply to come up with an understanding of that tradition.

Let us begin with the New Testament, looking for clues and evidences of a Christian temple tradition. Much of what I'm going to say will be elementary to many, maybe to all, but it's necessary to cover the ground and lay a foundation.

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) were missionary texts, each directed to a specific audience. The contents of these writings were intended for public consumption and were clearly meant to be read by as many people as possible. One would not expect to find temple mysteries in them, but there might be hints or allusions to such sacred matters. A quick survey will illustrate the point.

Matthew was written to Jews, and the major message to them is that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of their Messianic hopes and expectations. The author makes liberal use of Jewish writings and traditions to illustrate and support his testimony to Jewish readers. Within his public record, however, there are suggestions and allusions to a more restricted level of worship within Christianity.

Contrary to much popular opinion, teaching through parables was not a popular Jewish custom. When Jesus was delivering a number of parables relating to the kingdom of the heavens, His disciples came to Him privately and asked, "Why are you speaking in parables to the people?" (Matthew 13:10). Jesus answered, "Because to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens, but to them it has not been given" (13:11). One must enter into a covenant with God and receive the Holy Ghost to be initiated into that restricted level of understanding. Even the disciples struggled with parables, as we can observe at the Last Supper. After Jesus had given a rather chilling and threatening description of His departure and their imminent sorrow and suffering (John 15:18–16:1–2), their telling response was "[At least] now you are speaking plainly and you are not talking in a parable" (16:29). So much then for the parables being just a common way of teaching.

On one occasion, Jesus was walking with His disciples in the Galilee, not far from Caesarea of Philip (distinct from Caesarea

on the coast, for example), and in the famous conversation there, Simon bore his testimony that Jesus is the Son of the Living—dare I say Resurrected?—God.

And the reason I dare say “resurrected” is that I used to attend a lot of conferences dealing with the Nag Hammadi library and some other texts like that. I had translated virtually the entirety of the library, and it was fun to go to conferences and share ideas.

But the thing that fascinated me was that in a lot of the Gospels and other writings in the Nag Hammadi library, Jesus is introduced as “ó,” which is Greek, but it was used in that fashion in Coptic as well. And it literally says “the *living* Jesus.” But if you read almost all of the translations of those texts, scholars simply refer to it as “the *resurrected* Jesus” (see, e.g., Gospel of Thomas, *incipit*: “These are the words that the living/resurrected Jesus spoke.”)

I thought that was kind of cute. So, one time at a conference I raised my hand, and they said, “Yes, Griggs, what’s on your mind?” And I said, “Well, since you all translate *Ἰησοῦς ὁ ζῶν* as the resurrected Christ, and since Peter refers to Jesus as the ‘son of the living God,’ then maybe we ought to refer to God as the *resurrected* God.”

That did not go down well at all, and they said, “How can you *think* of such a thing?” And I said, “I’m just trying to insert consistency. I know how we do this with our Coptic texts. Why don’t we just transfer it over?” And they said, “Not even a Mormon would go that far theologically.” I let that conversation slide; I didn’t pursue it.

Jesus renamed Simon. He renamed him Peter (Petros)—and we could get into that in some detail but won’t. And then He predicted that Peter would receive the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, which could open the doors of the spirit world or the gates of the spirit world, and Peter, and obviously the others, would be authorized to perform eternal sealing rites for the Saints of God (Matthew 16:13–19). The disciples who were part of this interchange were charged to keep it secret (16:20).

Now, you’ll notice I said *spirit world*, and I know the King James translation uses the word *hell*, but the word that I have translated here as *spirit world* never, ever in Greek literature—from the time of Homer on down through Greek literature—refers to hell as a place of punishment. It’s simply the realm of departed spirits, and there’s no sense of it being either this or that.

In fact, lots of things could happen in the spirit world—and did in the literature. So I hope it doesn't bother anybody that I say spirit world rather than hell.

A week later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John privately to a secluded area on a high mountain (Matthew 17:1). He was transfigured or glorified before them, and He was joined by Moses and Elijah, and the three heavenly figures gave the promised keys of the kingdom to the three Apostles.¹

As soon as the visionary experience was concluded, Peter said to Jesus, "It is good that we are here; if you wish, I will construct a three-part temple (three tents or tabernacles), a part to you, one to Moses, and one to Elijah" (Matthew 17:4). He is referring to three tents or tabernacles all put together in a complex—one part to Jesus, one part to Moses, one part to Elijah. And, by the way, the words used there are, in fact, the words used for *temple* in the Old Testament.

The wording of this passage makes it obvious that there are omissions, but enough is present to ensure the establishment of a temple context for this experience. The priesthood keys were therefore temple related.

As Jesus and the Apostles descended from the mountain-top on the following day (Luke 9:37), the Savior commanded the Apostles to say nothing about that experience until after Christ was raised from the dead (Matthew 17:9). There is clearly a connection between the keys of sealing, the temple, the spirit world, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, but Matthew does not make the relationships clear.

One can ask, Why not? Well, we'll see. Matthew's account of the Resurrection of Christ and His subsequent appearances to His disciples gives yet more intimations of the holding back of sacred matters (the mysteries). The major purpose of all New Testament Gospels is to declare the good news, or the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. His Resurrection is a *bona fides* or guarantee of the redeeming suffering and death of Jesus. Only a sufficient number of His Resurrection appearances to establish veracity is included in each Gospel. They don't give them much. There are just a very few disciples, as you're all aware. The authors are strikingly reticent to give full record of His Resurrection ministry. Even the Book of Mormon

editor of Jesus's appearance to the Nephites states that "there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people" (3 Nephi 26:6). Is that because there were too many or because there was a sacred silence being observed? You have to decide.

A heavenly messenger (angel) instructed the women at the tomb to tell the disciples to travel to Galilee and Jesus would meet them there (28:5–7). As an aside, the four or five days it would require for the disciples to make that journey corresponds to the length of time Jesus spent with the Nephites in the Western Hemisphere. Isn't it nice how things just sort of work out?

Jesus appeared to the women before they passed the angelic message to the disciples—that is, as they were leaving the tomb. Jesus repeated to them the instruction that the disciples would see Him in the Galilee (Matthew 28:9–10).

When the eleven Apostles arrived in the Galilee, they ascended a mountain according to instructions given by Jesus (28:16). Was this the same mountain where three of them had earlier received the temple keys in chapter 17? It's a tantalizing possibility. At this point, the reader is somewhat surprised to read that the entire meeting between Jesus and the Apostles is reported in a three-verse commission to preach the gospel to the entire world (28:18–20). Did they have to go to the Galilee just to receive that three-verse commission? Surely there's more. Why doesn't Matthew give us more than we have? The reader intuitively knows that much more took place than is recorded in Matthew's brief account.

Matthew's reference to the meeting on a mountain (28:16) gives a clue that temple matters also occurred, since mountains are well-known temple symbols. In keeping with our earlier observations that temple mysteries are for an initiated audience in a restricted or holy setting, we can conclude that Matthew is giving broad hints in his testimony concerning a sacred level of worship (the mysteries of God) in Christianity.

It is widely acknowledged that the Gospel of Mark is actually Peter's testimony of Jesus Christ dictated to John Mark in Rome not long before the Apostle's martyrdom there (see, e.g., Eusebius 2:15–16; *Secret Gospel of Mark* 1:16–22, etc.). There are many references, but I'll just speak about one or two.

For example, in 1973 Morton Smith, a professor of history at Columbia University, discovered and published a short text found in a monastery in Israel that purports to be written by Clement of Alexandria in the second century AD.² It purports to be a copy of a letter written by Clement of Alexandria to an otherwise unknown Theodore. In the fragmentary text, Clement states that Mark wrote the Gospel dictated to him by Peter. Later, Mark wrote “a more spiritual Gospel” for those who were being initiated or perfected (folio 1, lines 16–23). “Even so, Mark did not write the things which were not to be divulged, but he did include the material which would, as a mystagogue (guiding one into the mysteries) lead hearers into the holiest part of the sanctuary (temple) hidden by the veil” (folio 1, lines 23–27). Clement adds that the secret gospel was carefully guarded in Alexandria even in his day, “being read only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries” (folio 1, lines 1–3).

It should be noted that many scholars do not accept Smith’s discovery, rather believing that he created a forgery. It occurs to me that you might be interested to know how these things work out.

A number of years ago, I went to a week-long conference on papyrology in Naples, Italy. I had a text that I was translating and publishing that I read in the conference, and it just happened that I was reading it in the particular session of the meeting where Morton Smith was in charge.

He and I had not met before, though I’d read some of his material. As I gave my presentation, he was interested in the text that I was translating. He had also read some things I had published. He came to me after the session and said, “You and I need to become better acquainted.” I said, “Well, okay, we have time. As long as we can get *gelato*, I don’t care.”

So, for the next few days, I spent time—frankly, more time than I would’ve preferred—with Morton Smith, who was a very interesting person. We did talk about the *Secret Gospel of Mark* a lot during those days. We discussed the book that he wrote on the subject as well as an article he had recently published on the same subject in the *Harvard Theological Review*.

We went through this material in detail, and he asked me my opinion because I had done some publishing on things Egyptian and Christian. I can assure you—as much as one can assure

somebody—that Morton Smith neither would nor could have perpetuated this as a forgery. It wasn't in his makeup.

The text itself is not a forgery. I'm sorry, it isn't. I took a course on how to detect forgeries from one of the greatest forgery detectors in scholarship, a man named Darrell Amyx. And in our one-on-one seminar, Amyx taught me how to recognize forgeries in art and texts.

I was confident that I could detect forgeries. It might surprise you how many forgeries there are in the world. In fact, the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago was very proud of their collection of artifacts. However, they found out, thanks to Amyx and others, that some of them were forgeries. The St. Louis Art Museum wanted to become a real splashy museum. So, they went out and bought all kinds of ancient sculptures, Greco-Roman sculptures, and they had this wonderful collection, only again to have Amyx and others show them that they had acquired one of the finest collections of forgeries in the country.

So, there are forgeries out there, but I think people would be hard-pressed to make the Clement of Alexandria text a forgery. I know why they try to do that, and we'll get to that later on.

The first verse of Mark's Gospel states that the record is the beginning of the Gospel (*arche* can also mean foundation, introduction, and a lot of other ideas). The implication is that there is much more, and the text we have is just establishing a basic foundation, the rudiments of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter's enthusiastic and impetuous personality shines through the Gospel of Mark, and the text is replete with miracles, deeds, and actions. You think of Peter's personality and then you read the Gospel of Mark and you'd say, yes, this is definitely a match. His testimony is of an active Jesus; there is little reflection on temple-related concepts.

There is a significant collection of noncanonical writings, however, which shows Peter in temple context, and we will have to defer consideration of them to another time. We will bring forward the two canonical letters of Peter and see what they add to our short survey.

In the first surviving letter, Peter writes to Church members in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) who are experiencing severe

persecution and suffering, and Peter reassures the Saints of God's saving power to both the living and the dead, including those who are persecuted or suffering as they were, twice.

Twice in the letter the Apostle writes about Jesus going to the spirit world and preaching His gospel to the spirits of deceased people (1 Peter 3:18–21; 4:6). Jesus must have given that information to His disciples after the event, and it confirms our hypothesis that the post-Resurrection ministry of the Lord was temple related. When we couple these passages with the promise of the bestowal of sealing keys that extended to the realm of spirits (Matthew 16:18–19), along with the events on the Mount of Transfiguration (17:1–9), the pieces of a great puzzle begin to fall into place. It is revealing and instructive to start connecting the dots, so to speak.

In the second of Peter's New Testament letters, the Apostle gives directions for *theosis*, or putting on the divine nature of God (2 Peter 1:3–8). The Apostle describes these things as "great and precious promises" (1:4), which he says "pertain . . . to life and godliness" (1:3). So, he's giving us instructions on how to become gods and goddesses. In fact, that is precisely the purpose and function of a temple—to pass from the profane to the sacred, from death to life, from the ephemeral to eternity, and from the human to the divine.³ Peter states that this temple experience is necessary to help one make his or her "calling and election sure" (1:10). He ties what he is teaching to the mountain of God (1:18). We've already come up against that, haven't we? When we get "mountain of God," we know we're talking temple language. Peter assures his readers that he is giving them the "more certain (dependable, secure) prophetic teaching" (1:19). It should come as no surprise that Joseph Smith declared that "Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the Apostles."⁴

When Luke composed his testimony of Jesus Christ to his dear friend Theophilus (and by extension to a broader Gentile audience), he wrote that his account was a personal assurance or guarantee to Theophilus that the other similar declarations were true (1:1–4). Virtually all commentators and exegetes agree that Luke's Gospel is a "Sayings Gospel" focusing on the sayings and teachings of Jesus. Most also argue that Luke used as a primary source a mythical source given the title of "Q" (standing for the German word *Quelle*,

or source). I say mythical because no identifiable fragment of such a text has yet been discovered or proved to have existed. But never mind, it's accepted by virtually all New Testament scholars—not all, but most.

Passing over most of Luke's Gospel and hints and clues of temple matters in that composition, we arrive at chapter 24, the Lukan account of the Resurrection and subsequent appearances of Jesus to various people. There is no other chapter in the New Testament (or elsewhere in the Bible, for that matter) that is so tightly constructed in its chronology. The emphasis placed on the sequential timing of the events in this chapter draws attention to that fact. There are three scenes, each referenced to the first day of the Resurrection of Jesus.

By the way, as you well know, chapter and verse divisions in the Bible often do not correspond to the reading of the text. I'm sure Professor Ricks and I could do a much better job of dividing the Bible into chapters and verses. We wouldn't split stories in half. It's so awful to have somebody say, "I'm reading a chapter a day." And you think, "I hope you don't begin with verse one. Because if you do, you're missing part of the story," as everybody here already knows.

(1) Luke 24:1–12. The first scene takes place at the tomb very early on Sunday morning, and those involved were female disciples of Jesus, two heavenly messengers, and, lastly, Peter. As is often the case in the New Testament, the story does not correspond to chapter and verse divisions, and this scene begins at Luke 23:55 and ends at 24:12.

(2) Luke 24:13–32. The second scene takes place on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus, a village some seven and a half miles northwest of Jerusalem. Luke states that the encounter between the two disciples and Jesus took place "that same day" (24:13). You see here that Luke isn't giving us any chance to say, "Well, this happened a few days later." And the three walked in leisurely fashion to the village, conversing along the way (24:17–27). Jesus stayed long enough to have a meal with them, after which he suddenly vanished (24:31).

(3) Luke 24:33–53. Continuing with a precise reference to timing, Luke states that after Jesus left the two disciples, "they rose up

the same hour and returned to Jerusalem” (24:33). One assumes the return journey was made at a faster pace than the earlier one to Emmaus. The two found the eleven Apostles and those with them without apparent difficulty (they knew where to find them), and as they reported their earlier meeting with Jesus, the Lord appeared to all present (24:34–36). A ritual recognition scene follows (24:37–40), after which Jesus ate some food as proof of His physical reality (24:42–43). After a discussion (lecture), Jesus led the group over the Mount of Olives to Bethany. Walking from Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives to Bethany is a comfortable 40-to-45-minute walk if you’re not in a hurry. Once they got to Bethany, Jesus gave blessings to them and then ascended to heaven (24:45–51).

According to this Gospel account, the Resurrection ministry lasted no more than one day, and the precise references to times during that day do not allow for any extension of the Resurrection ministry.

Imagine, therefore, the surprise that Theophilus must have experienced when a courier arrived sometime later with part two of Luke’s composition (Acts). Immediately following the opening address, he read that “Jesus appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection and was with them for 40 days” (Acts 1:3). Don’t you think at this point Theophilus would have gone back to read the last part of the Gospel? How did that work? *One* day in the Gospel and then suddenly he was with them for *forty* days. And not only that, it says he was teaching them of matters “pertaining to the kingdom of God” (1:3). Such a casual statement at the beginning of Acts, following the precision of the one-day account at the end of the Gospel, leaps out at any reader. All of you undoubtedly have experienced what I’ve just talked about. Luke is clearly sending a message that he does not intend to give details about the events of the forty days. He is just going to let him know that there were forty days beyond the one day reported in the Gospel. Nothing more. And isn’t that a strange reticence for the author of the “Sayings Gospel”?

There is more! As Jesus discoursed to the disciples on the Emmaus road, Luke states that “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). Silence. Not one word of what this Resurrected God said! I don’t know about you, but I’m

frustrated at that point. I want Luke to tell me something other than the fact that Jesus did a lot of talking.

Likewise, when Jesus gave a similar discourse to the Apostles later that day on the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms as they all related to Him, “He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the scriptures” (Luke 24:44–45). Again, not one word of what the Resurrected Christ said is divulged by Luke. Add to these passages the silence regarding the content of what Jesus said and did during His forty-day Resurrection ministry, and even a dull reader can discern that Luke is observing a sacred silence on that period of time. The natural conclusion, therefore, is to classify the words and events of the Resurrection ministry as the mysteries of the kingdom relating to the temple keys discussed in Matthew.

What other conclusion is there for us? We’ve been led down the path. We’ve been given all the clues. We are logical. We understand. We can read. It’s very clear. Well, from Luke, let’s go to Paul.

Due to our limited time together, I will pass over most of Paul’s letters, many of which have similar temple allusions, but in keeping with our focus on the post-Resurrection ministry of the Lord, we will pause briefly at 1 Corinthians.

Paul mentions to the Corinthian Saints that he and his fellow Apostles and Church leaders are ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1). In that wording one understands that there is a sacred responsibility to safeguard the temple-related teachings and rituals. No explanation is given for this verse, and scholars do not read the passage as I have interpreted it. As we progress further into our topic, my reading will become clearer and more acceptable.

The Corinthian church was the most unruly and fractious addressed in the Pauline epistles, and the Saints were given much corrective counsel and direction. By the way, he had visited Corinth earlier on a missionary journey, and he wasn’t an Apostle. Then he went back to Jerusalem by commandment, as it were. He was called back to Jerusalem, and it’s pretty clear he was ordained an Apostle then. The Corinthians only knew him as the missionary Paul, and now he’s coming back as the Apostle Paul. They weren’t quite sure what to do with that new authority.

Anyway, they, the Saints in Corinth, seem to have turned away from belief in the ministry and Resurrection of Christ, and Paul devotes a chapter to the subject of the Resurrection. Most scholars mistakenly believe that 1 Corinthians is the earliest written account of the Resurrection of Christ, but the date is less important than the content.

While the Gospels portray limited appearances to a relatively few believers, Paul expands the picture, saying that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred at one time, and more than half of them were still alive when Paul wrote the letter (1 Corinthians 15:6). The implication is, “If you don’t believe me, write to them—they know they saw him.” That large figure indirectly supports the idea that they also received teachings and instructions, none of which is mentioned in the texts. The appearance of the Resurrected Christ to more than five hundred people should give pause to biblical scholars and theologians who think that the Gospels give relatively complete accounts of Jesus’s visit to a few select disciples. I find that a fascinating disconnect.

One evidence for Christ overcoming death and sin for all people through His own death and Resurrection is the practice of being baptized on behalf of deceased and unbaptized people (1 Corinthians 15:29). The implicit argument behind that practice is that it would be meaningless were it not for the redemption available to all people, both living and dead, through the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Christ.

This unique New Testament passage again brings the reader to information and rituals that fit only the post-Resurrection ministry. It dovetails neatly with Peter’s statements about Jesus preaching to the spirits of deceased people in the spirit world. Most modern commentators do not make that connection, however. In their classic volume on *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson give a candid evaluation of the verse:

The only meaning which the Greek seems to admit here is a reference to the practice of submitting to baptism instead of some person who had died unbaptized. Yet this explanation is liable to very great difficulties. (1) How strange that St. Paul should refer to such a superstition without rebuking it!

Perhaps, however, he may have censured it in a former letter, and now only refers to it as an *argumentum ad hominem*. It has, indeed, been alleged that the present mention of it implies a censure; but this is far from evident. (2) If such a practice did exist in the Apostolic Church, how can we account for its being discontinued in the period which followed . . . ? Yet the practice was never adopted except by some obscure sects of Gnostics, who seem to have founded their custom on this very passage. . . . On the whole, therefore, the passage must be considered to admit of no satisfactory explanation.⁵

With respect to their comment that “the practice was never adopted except by some obscure sects of Gnostics,” I’m obliged to say that this is not true. I have plenty of evidence in my own library of much more baptism for the dead activity than that, and not by some “obscure sects of Gnostics.” Overall, they conclude that this passage of scripture “must be considered to admit of no satisfactory explanation.” That’s honest, at least.

One can extract a significant observation from the note of these commentators. When there is no understanding or acceptance of temple teachings and practices, anything related to the temple appears to be nonsense, pagan, or even blasphemous. Paul is concerned that if the Corinthians cannot accept the Resurrection of Christ, they will deprive themselves of all that the Resurrection represents and promises, including the blessings of temple rituals and covenants for both the living and the dead. Paul makes sense if you have the right background.

Let’s go to another of Paul’s writings. Paul’s essay to the Hebrews is essentially an *apologia* for the superiority of the Christian temple over the Jewish temple. That’s not a common way of reading the essay, but I think it’s a defensible one.

The Jewish temple was presided over by high priests ordained by men to the lesser Aaronic Priesthood, and although they continually offered sacrifices at the altar, they could not offer redemption and lead people into the presence of God (see especially Hebrews 5; 8–9). In contrast, the Christian temple is presided over by Jesus Christ, ordained by God to the greater Melchizedek Priesthood (Hebrews 5; 7). He offered Himself as one eternal and redeeming

sacrifice (10:12), and through His offering He made possible access through the veil (10:19–20) into the Holy of Holies and the presence of God.

Interestingly, in Hebrews 10, Paul says that Jesus Himself is the veil we pass through into the presence of the Father. That makes sense to everybody here, even if it doesn't make sense to anybody writing about Hebrews. So, Paul says that we can go in, and here he says into the "holiest place."

Note that Hebrew doesn't have adjectival forms. It doesn't have comparative and superlative. If you want to express a superlative, you have to put two words together—like Lord of lords, King of kings, and so forth. And that is why in Hebrew the term is translated "Holy of Holies." Whereas in Greek we can just say "holiest place." It's the same place in both languages.

Christianity, therefore, according to Hebrews, is not a repudiation of the Jewish temple but is rather an elevation of the temple to match the new covenant and testament of God. This is elementary to all of you, but I felt it was necessary to say, "Look, it is there. It's not a secret." Well, it is in a way, but not to those who know.

Let's move on to the Epistles of John. John's various writings also provide temple-related hints and clues. In the letter we call 1 John, the Apostle and seer is writing to Saints near the close of that gospel dispensation, encouraging them to be faithful to their covenants to the end.

Chronologically, the last writing we have in the New Testament is 3 John. I don't know how many of you have ever participated in what in my youth we called Church roadshows. At the end of each production, there was a person designated to pull a curtain, and he was to listen carefully to the last line of whatever was being said on stage. And then he would pull the ropes and the curtains would fall. Well, 3 John is the curtain puller. The scene is closed, the dispensation is over with by the time 3 John is finished.

But in 1 John, the first letter, he writes of the Saints having "fellowship" with the Father, the Son, and each other. *Fellowship* is a technical term, used both in the New Testament and Greek literature to indicate a shared identity and relationship through a ritual activity. Paul taught that Christians gain fellowship (identity) with Jesus Christ by taking Him into themselves through the bread

and wine of the sacrament (1 Corinthians 1:9; 9:23; Philippians 1:5; etc.). John implies the same shared relationship with the Father and the Son, gained through temple rituals. And that's what happens. We become as They are. In fact, John says, when we see Christ, "we will be like him" (1 John 3:2).

The clearest indication of this is in 1 John 2:27, where the Apostle reminds his readers of the anointing that they have received. The anointing represents the complete temple ceremony and its instructions ("the same anointing teaches you concerning all things" [2:27]). Key words or phrases, then as now, are sufficient to stand for the whole ordinance. Today all one has to do is say "I received my endowment." Well, people who know, know what that means.

The revelation given to John is so obviously a temple document that little needs to be added. The deliverer of the vision is attired in high priestly clothing (1 John 1:12–16), and the Father and the Son are the temple of the New Jerusalem (21:22), precluding the need of a structure to gain their presence. In other words, the purpose of the temple is to go into the presence of God, but if you're going into the city of New Jerusalem and the Father and the center are there, you don't need another building.

Temple symbols and images are scattered throughout the *Apocalypse*. The temple is as central to Christianity as it was to Judaism. We've just been dealing with hints and clues, and surely they're clear enough for us to draw the obvious conclusions.

Conclusion

I have just been laying the foundation for a proper study of the topic of temple and the sacred in early Christian history. We must therefore retitl the presentation, calling it a prolegomenon or proemion to an examination of the subject.

Borrowing an analogy used often by Jesus during His ministry, that of a feast or banquet, I can state that to this point we have only set the table, though we have experienced some aromas and scents of the dishes being prepared for our consumption. We can tell from the place settings, utensils, goblets, cups, and so forth that we are in for a great feast.

Moving forward with our study will require a multimeeting course, perhaps modeled on the pattern of a graduate student seminar. Because I do not have the venue or resources to conduct such a course with you, let me recommend that each person conduct a hypothetical seminar, and I will outline how one might proceed.

First, I will note that each person has a menu and recipes for a list of desired dishes or entrees, but the big question is where to find the necessary ingredients for a temple banquet. There are three sources, and I will give a brief description of each one and then turn us all loose to go after them.

Before that, however, I should mention one thing. All will have observed that in my brief survey of New Testament writings I omitted the Fourth Gospel. Had I included the Gospel of John, there would have been no time for anything else. It will take at least two sessions of our hypothetical seminar to place the Gospel of John in its proper temple context.

When I realized that some number of years ago, it came to me rather suddenly—actually, it was more than that. I'll tell you how it happened. I was preparing for fall lectures. I had some courses to teach, as professors do, and one of the courses I was teaching had to do with classical antiquity.

As I was reading through some delightful Greek plays, I suddenly remembered that I was going to teach some New Testament courses. And I thought I'd better cut this off and prepare for my New Testament classes. So, I put my classical text aside and pulled out my New Testament. I thought, "I'll start with John. I'm familiar with John. I'll go there." I've been writing a commentary on John for many years. I'm not finished yet, but I turned to John and suddenly I realized I was reading the same thing I'd been reading already. I thought, "This can't be; I must have gone brain dead or something."

So I read some more in John. I made some notes and then I went back and got out some books that I have on the origins of Greek drama and the rules that are followed. And, of course, all of that began in the temple. As you know, all of our arts all began in a temple context—drama, art, music, poetry, all these things had temple origins. Everybody knows that.

But as I read those books about the origins and the development of drama in antiquity, and came back to John, I thought, “My goodness, how have I missed this all of these years?” And so, I started all over as I went through the Gospel of John. I’d already made two or three abortive attempts to write a commentary.

In fact, one day Hugh Nibley and I were walking across campus together. I don’t know why and where we were going—that doesn’t matter. But we were just talking, kind of like a road to Emmaus sort of thing, I guess. I asked him how he was doing with his work on the hypocephalus, Facsimile 2 of the Book of Abraham.

He’d been working on that for, I don’t know, ten years or something at that point. He told me, and I replied that I was looking forward to more of his work. Then he very kindly said, “By the way, you’ve been working on John about as long as I’ve been working on that. How’s your John stuff coming along?”

And I said, “Well, no better than yours. I’m not there yet because I’ve run into some issues with John, some things that I hadn’t expected to find. I’ve run into some challenges, things that I’m not sure about.” “I’ve had,” as I put it to him, “strange ideas about John.” And he said, “Oh, tell me.”

So, I told him some of my strange ideas, and he listened and listened. And, finally, when I quit, he said, “Well, those are strange ideas, Griggs.” “But,” he said, “they’re not nearly as strange as the ideas I’ve had about John.” Well, I couldn’t stop at that. So, I said, “Okay, tell me some of yours.” He did, and I admitted to him, “Your ideas are stranger than mine.”

And I said, “Why don’t you then write a commentary on John?” He said, “Now Wilfred, you know why I can’t do that.” So, we walked in silence for a little bit because I was trying to think of what I knew that would prevent him from writing a commentary on John. And I couldn’t come up with anything. So, I said, “All right, Hugh, I give up. Why can’t you write a commentary on John?” And he said, “Because, Wilfred, I would have an eight-hundred-page commentary—and then I could go on to verse two.”

Well, I am not Nibley, so I do not have eight hundred pages on verse one. So far, I’m only up to about five or six hundred pages, and I’ve decided I’ll let the other two hundred pages go with Nibley. That’s fine. But that’s what’s going on. The Gospel of John is so

temple-oriented. Like I said, it would take two sessions of our hypothetical seminar for us to place John in its proper temple context.

But now the three sources that I promised for you:

1. Jewish materials will be helpful, even if at first they might not appear to be relevant to a study of the temple in Christianity. After the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem in AD 70, the priests, Sadducees, and Levites were unemployed and basically disappeared from Jewish history. The rabbis, who had no love for the temple and were not anxious for its return, became the defining power of Judaism, producing at Jamnia near the end of the first century AD a canon of scripture based on the Torah and prophetic tradition and the synagogue as the replacement of the temple (and, of course, they controlled the synagogue). Despite being reluctant witnesses for temple matters because of their antagonism to the temple itself, the rabbis could not entirely ignore the centuries when temples provided the physical and central feature of Judaism. Rabbinical literature from Jamnia to the Mishnah, and then to the Talmuds and beyond, provides a rich, if reluctant, source for information relating to temple teachings and covenants. By the way, we're swamped in Jewish sources. Everybody knows the Dead Sea Scrolls, of course, and that's nice. But they pale in comparison to other discoveries of Jewish sources. For example, the Cairo Geniza, a kind of closet behind where they kept the ark of the covenant. When the Jews didn't want to use a text anymore, they threw it in the Geniza. And this Geniza in Cairo has so far provided more than 300,000 texts. That's a lot. And there's a lot in the Cairo Geniza that still is to be published and translated. I worked on some of it for a while, and I was fascinated. It's there, it's interesting. So, the Jewish sources are more than just in passing.
2. The patristic tradition in Christianity similarly provides indirect and illuminating information relating to temple matters in the ancient Church. From the apostolic era, through the so-called apostolic fathers, and on to the apologists, heresiologists, theologians, ecclesiastical leaders,

and other notable authors, we encounter increasingly disparaging and hostile attitudes regarding temple doctrines and practices, although attempts were made to alter their meanings and sneak them into the theology and liturgy of the Church. One of my favorites is a ninth-century author named Photius.

Photius was a ninth-century patriarch of Constantinople (Catholics and Copts have popes, and Eastern Orthodoxies have patriarchs), and he compiled for a friend a review of 279 Christian literary works. In his *Bibliotheca*, one of the reviewed works was one written by a second-century Egyptian Christian priest and teacher, Clement of Alexandria, a person I happen to like very much.

Citing a work known to him but lost to us,⁶ the theologian declares that while Clement is mostly “orthodox” and acceptable in his writings, he sometimes veers off into heresy and false teachings. As examples of the latter, Photius states that Clement taught that God created innumerable worlds and that matter is eternal and can neither be created nor destroyed (although some is ordered while the rest is disorganized and chaotic). Clement also taught that Adam and Eve were glorified and exalted beings who voluntarily set aside their divine status temporarily to come to the earth and become the first parents of the human race.

Are you at all interested in Clement? Well, too bad, because just when matters are getting interesting, Photius shuts it all down, saying that Clement becomes too blasphemous, too impious, and too disgusting to continue. One could wish that Photius had gone on, or better yet, that we had the lost work of Clement, but it is nice that, despite himself, Photius provides evidence of temple concepts in his diatribe against Clement. Many other church fathers provide similar, if reluctant or unwilling, sources of the sacred and temple traditions in earlier times.

3. The third source is the best of all. During the past two centuries, tens of thousands of ancient texts have been recovered, hundreds of which are explicitly Jewish and Christian and are explicit temple texts both by designation and

content. They are increasingly available in translation for those unfamiliar with the original languages, and as the Lord instructed in Doctrine and Covenants 91:5–6 regarding such materials, “Whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom.” So, we are not discouraged from reading—to the contrary! We are encouraged to get the Spirit of the Lord and then go for it with gusto, with the enthusiasm of Peter’s personality.

In the hypothetical seminars I have proposed, those who sign up have the menus and recipes for the banquet. The ingredients are available to create an ancient Christian temple banquet, and we all need to find them and prepare the feast. If one complains that the search for ingredients is difficult and challenging, we recall what Jesus taught concerning the valuable pearl. One has to search diligently to obtain it. One should not expect to wake up some fine morning and open the front door, hoping to find a bag full of precious pearls on the porch.

So let our individual seminars begin. I assure you from my personal experience that the search for ingredients is worth the effort. May the Lord help each of us to prepare a temple feast or banquet truly fit for the potential gods and goddesses we all are.

Discussant Comments

Stephen Ricks: Professor Griggs did not mention that he and Kent Brown wrote an article that appeared in the August 1975 issue of the *Ensign* with some very interesting insights about the forty-day ministry from the apocryphal Gospel accounts.⁷ Further, John Gee wrote a few things that are quite useful about the forty-day ministry in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.⁸ He observes that these forty-day ministry accounts report the following: Jesus teaches the Apostles the gospel they should preach to the world. He tells of a premortal life and the creation of the world, and that in the world, life is a probationary state of choosing between good and evil, and those who choose good might return to the glory of God. Jesus foretells events of the last days, including the return of Elijah. He also tells the disciples that the primitive church will be perverted after one generation and teaches them to prepare for tribulation.

These apocryphal accounts state that Jesus's Resurrection gives His followers hope for their own resurrection in glory. Besides salvation for the living, salvation for the dead is a major theme, as are the ordinances of baptism, the sacrament or eucharist, and the ordination of the Apostles to authority. They are being blessed one by one in an initiation or endowment with an emphasis on garments, marriage, and prayer circles.⁹

These accounts, usually called secrets, are often connected to the temple and are said to be compared to the Mount of Transfiguration experience that we'll be speaking about momentarily. Sometimes the Apostles are said to ascend to heaven when they see these marvelous things. That is the heavenly ascent.

Whether everything in such accounts is true or not, the actions of the Apostles after the post-Resurrection visits of Jesus contrast sharply with those before. Let me give you just one example of one of the accounts that we find in the apocryphal Acts of John, at verse 94. As we read, before He was arrested—even before His arrest, trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection—He introduced these concepts to the disciples:

Before he was arrested by the lawless Jews, whose lawgiver is the lawless serpent, he assembled us all and said, "Before I am delivered to them, let us sing a hymn to the Father, and so go to meet what lies before (us)." So he told us to form a circle, holding one another's hands, and himself stood in the middle and said, "Answer Amen to me." So he began to sing a hymn and to say, "Glory be to thee, Father." And we circled round him and answered him, "Amen."¹⁰

Further, with regard to the Mount of Transfiguration experience, I think of observations made by Joseph Smith and Heber C. Kimball about these. Joseph Smith said that on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John received priesthood keys from Jesus, Moses, and Elias by revelation and the spirit of prophecy through the power of the priesthood.¹¹

Heber C. Kimball observed that Jesus took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain and there gave them their endowment, and "for the same purpose has the Lord called us up into these high

mountains, that we may become endowed with power from on high in the church and kingdom of God and become kings and priests unto God, which we never can be lawfully until we are ordained and sealed to that power. For the kingdom of God is a kingdom of kings and priests and will rise in mighty power in the last days.”¹²

With regard to the concept of “baptism for the dead,” the possibilities for interpretation of the English phrase “baptism for the dead,” independent of an understanding of the ancient Greek phrase *baptisma hyper ton nekron*, are very considerable, and yet the Greek preposition *hyper* in the genitive (as noted in Liddell and Scott) has only a couple of possible renderings: baptism *over, above* the dead (in a spatial sense) or (vicarious) baptism *on behalf of, for the sake of* the dead.¹³

One finds in discussions of 1 Corinthians 15:29 mention of certain traditions of baptisms over dead persons—that is, baptisms of individuals who had died previously, with living individuals lying beneath the deceased person who provided the proper responses to prebaptismal questions asked.

John Thompson: Stephen and I started off differently. I believe he started off preparing some questions, and I started off preparing a formal response. Then, after we kind of talked a little bit more, right at the last minute he prepared a formal response, and I prepared questions.

So, I do have a few questions. I hope Dr. Griggs is okay with giving some additional reflections by answering some questions that hopefully he can give us some thoughts about.

Four years ago (some of you probably remember this), Tom Wayment spoke at this gathering and gave as his thesis this: he said Christianity was, in its first two hundred years, topophobic—a term meaning “the fear of a certain space.” That it [early Christianity] did not desire a temple, nor did it develop a strong sense of sacred space akin to older Jewish models of sacred space. So that was his thesis, and he went on to argue that there is nothing, he says, in the early sources indicating the early Christian communities desired to build a temple. Rather, we see them making their homes sacred spaces.¹⁴

They use the temple as a metaphor for the collective body, the community—the Pauline concept that the community is the temple. In sum, he advocated strongly for a replacement theology—that the Christian community itself is the temple, replacing the physical temple with a form that’s more inward.

Wayment’s views are not new. They are similar to many Protestant interpretations of scripture, but I did want Dr. Griggs maybe to comment on this kind of argument, that the early Christians didn’t seem to have any kind of desire to build a temple. Is that correct?

Response to Discussants

The questions that are raised are tremendously interesting. But before I give an answer, you should know that I’m not particularly hidebound to traditional scholarship. In my training, I was taught time and again by my teachers and professors not to worry about the orthodox interpretation of texts.

Instead, I was told there would be two bases on which my grades would be determined. One was, could I handle original sources adequately? And two, could I exercise independent thinking? And maybe I’ve taken that too far, but I had fun because when I would go into seminars—having read all of the literature on a particular topic that I was assigned and being ready to deliver my seminar report—there were a few occasions when I disagreed with my professors who had worldwide reputations.

And here I am, a student going in to take on the world, as it were, by disagreeing with them. A fascinating thing happened—not once did I ever catch any difficulty from the professors. They said to me: “We don’t agree with you, but you have demonstrated that you can handle texts and that you can think logically. We think that you might reconsider some things in the future,” but that was never a problem.

So, having said that, now let me tell you why I’m without fear—and at my age, what are you afraid of anyway, right? Being independent is sort of a privilege of age and training.

In the question that you raised, the comments by Professor Wayment were “Christianity this and Christianity that.” Well,

that in itself is kind of a problem: What is Christian and what is not Christian? In 1934, a German scholar by the name of Walter Bauer wrote a book that is titled in English *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*.¹⁵ That book was influential enough that national seminars of biblical scholars were held even as late as the 1990s. I don't know since then whether they continued to do it or not, but they're still debating Bauer.

What did Bauer say that caused such a furor? Bauer went back and reviewed all the sources, and, in essence, he said his hypothesis is that what became Christian orthodoxy has remained Christian orthodoxy down to the present time. And that orthodoxy didn't really come into existence until it began to show up in the late second century and continued on and became ossified by people like Augustine, Jerome, and others.

So, Bauer's hypothesis or thesis is that what became Christian orthodoxy at the very beginning was considered Christian heresy. And what was at the beginning called Christian heresy later on became Christian orthodoxy. In other words, they just sort of switched places. Well, as I said, that thesis of Bauer's has been debated by biblical scholars for, well, at least eighty years, with no agreement in sight.

In other words, it's not going to happen. But you still have to ask yourself, "How do you define what is Christian at the beginning?" I would say that the Christians were not interested in building a temple. You can't make a blanket statement like Wayment because I can show plenty of writings that claim to be Christian and in which, in fact, the temple was central.

Now, I do have two texts that I translated many years ago in which Jesus, the Resurrected Jesus, said to the Apostles, "I'm going to give you the mysteries."¹⁶ And he did—to husbands and wives collected together. And everything you know—all of the dressing, the prayer circle, I mean all of that—we have that over and over again in documents, and in our hypothetical seminar we would go through some of these things.

But then Peter—obviously, Peter—asked the question. Remember Peter wanted to build the temple on the Mount of Transfiguration. So, he brings up the question again, "Shall we build a temple?" And the Lord said, "No, there will not be time to

build a temple. The dispensation will not last long enough for you to construct and use the temple.”

So, he gave them alternative possibilities for carrying out temple activities. In the first place, the building of a temple, right? There was never any desire to build it, but it was by commandment. Peter was ready to build. Of course he was. That’s Peter. But the Savior in these two documents that I translated years and years ago, Jesus, the Resurrected Christ, said, “No, we will not build a temple because there will not be time.”

But now, what about those documents? Well, almost all scholars will say they are not Christian. They are part of the great heresies that existed. I was accused in some of my publications of being a Bauerist, which I laughed at because I’m no Baeurist. I don’t agree with Walter Bauer. I do not believe that there was originally an orthodoxy and a heresy that later switched positions.

That doesn’t correspond to what I have seen in my study of the sources. What I have seen in my study of early Christianity is just a bunch of people calling themselves Christians, and there wasn’t a kind of central authority or communication to bring them all together in unity.

So, there are different kinds of Christians, and who’s to say which are right and which are wrong? This is no surprise to you. This happened already in the time of Paul; the Apostle Paul is fighting against it. And Peter and Jude, they’re all fighting against people that are going off and creating their own brands of Christianity.

So, we can’t get caught in a trap of thinking that somehow what today scholars define as Christianity can be seen as an unbroken line back to the beginning. I contest that the evidence does not support that idea at all. So, what happens is that you have these documents in which temple kinds of things are being pushed by lots and lots of people calling themselves Christians.

But the heresiologists, whom I mentioned a little earlier—I mean, people like Irenaeus, apologists, Epiphanius, and others—said, “No, these are not Christians. Never have been and never will be.” But who’s to say? What made Irenaeus the arbiter of who’s Christian and who’s not Christian? Who made Epiphanius and his *Panarion* the arbiter of what’s Christian and what’s not Christian in the earliest times?

The church fathers are not an unbiased crew of evaluators. They're pushing for their idea of Christianity. For example, you all know the book of Enoch, an apocryphal text, right? Not included in the Old Testament. The rabbis hated it even though the book of Enoch has been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls as part of a scriptural tradition of the Qumran people.

What do you do with that? Well, by the time you get down to Jerome, Hillary, and Augustine, they hated the book of Enoch so much that they were able to get an imperial decree passed that anybody found even having a copy of the book of Enoch would be put to death. Now that's what you'd call censorship with a vengeance. But that's what they tried to do with everything that they didn't believe in. So, if you have a lot of temple texts—and there are a lot of temple texts—you're going to find that the church fathers, this bunch that developed into the orthodox strain of Christianity, are all against that kind of thing.

And what happens is that there's a catchword. It's a very interesting catchword that collects all this material like garbage is collected and thrown into a great big pile. Maybe that's a bad comparison, but the catchword is *gnostic*. I love that word. It's such an interesting word. The word *gnostic* means one who knows. There have been three conferences held in the last hundred and thirty years—I have attended two of them. The first was before my time—and you might say, “Was there anything before your time?” A little. But these three conferences held by scholars have tried to define gnosticism. And it's a fun experience because it doesn't work.

Gnostic is just a bad term. The one thing everybody agrees on is that we don't like them. Is there a modern example of that? Yes. How many times have you heard people say that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is simply a cult? Right. Well, if you didn't know any better, if English wasn't your first language, you'd go get your big *Oxford English Dictionary*, the multi-volume OED, and look up “cult.”

And you'd read down through the definitions and say, “I don't mind being called a cultist because the definitions in the OED are really not that bad.” But that doesn't matter. People don't ask you to define it. They ask you how you feel about it. And so, when they say Latter-day Saints are cultists, what they're doing is appealing to

your emotions, not your intellect, not your brain. And everybody hates cults. So, we're wiped out just like that. Gnostics are the same way. One of the most famous gnostics, to give you an example, is a man by the name of Valentinus. Valentinus was a good Christian. Everybody admits that. Even Irenaeus says, "Yes, he was a good Christian." And Valentinus did something very well.

It wasn't very strange. Everybody was doing it. He went off to Rome to run for bishop.¹⁷ This was at a time when running for bishop was like running for political office, and that's what Origen said happened to the church. Origen's very good about this. Origen said, "The temple fled to heaven. We don't have it anymore. We wish we did."¹⁸ But Origen admits if we had the temple, we wouldn't know what to do with it. Isn't that honest? Origen, by the way, is probably the greatest Christian theologian that ever lived. We have ancient sources that say he wrote and published six thousand books. Do you think he'd make rank advancement?

Origen has a lot of interesting ideas. In his writings, he said, "We wish we had the temple, but we wouldn't know what to do with it." "It is fled to heaven," he says, "and the priesthood of God has fled to heaven." And he said, "The only thing that's left is for men to run for office in the church that remains on the earth."¹⁹ What an interesting description.

So, back to the point, who's going to define what Christianity is? Who had the authority to do that? Well, you know the answer. The Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had that authority. Paul could write and say, "You're out of line." Peter could write and say, "You're dry wells" (2 Peter 2:17). Jude would say even worse things. As Apostles of the Lord, they could define what Christianity is. And though there are many modern scholars I have as friends who are fine people, I will raise the fundamental question, "Who are they to define what Christianity is or isn't?"

And so, it makes no sense for somebody to say to me, "Well, the Christians didn't want to build a temple." It depends on who the Christians are—and who is in the position of arbitrating who really is a Christian. Once the Apostles are gone, all bets are off. Now it's just opinion. I know a lot of people who think the apostolic fathers were just wonderful. I don't have such a high regard for the apostolic fathers. In my opinion, they're just a bunch of ambitious

self-serving people trying to save their own skins—ecclesiastically and sometimes otherwise. Although, there are a couple of them, like Polycarp, that wanted to die—and I think that’s a little morbid. But anyway, you see the problem here, and it is a problem.

Who’s going to define who the Christians are that do or don’t want to build a temple? Well, if you’re just going to write them all off and say they’re all gnostics, I’m going to say, “Well, that’s okay. You can do that if you want.” But I don’t buy that. I have a lot of writings that are said to be gnostic writings that I think could very well be put in the scripture.

A lot of my friends would consider me worse than heretical if they heard me say that, but again, I follow a definition of Christianity given by Joseph Smith, the Prophet.

I’m going to recommend a book to you. It’s a little off subject, but that’s okay. In 1962, a very fine scholar, a physicist, finishing his PhD at Harvard in theoretical physics, somehow went slightly off course and decided to become something else. And he became a very fine historian of science.

His name is Thomas Kuhn. He wrote a book entirely for the natural sciences, but a lot of other disciplines—sociology, psychology, and others—have picked up on this book and tried to use it (I don’t think very successfully). But in any case, Thomas Kuhn makes this point.²⁰ He says, once you establish what he calls a “paradigm”—it’s a framework, a structural framework within which scientists work with axioms, theorems, hypotheses, methods, and they do problem solving. And as long as the paradigm works, they stay with it. But as Thomas Kuhn points out, and it has happened in virtually every natural science, there comes a point when some scientists (usually not one of the established bunch) comes along with revolutionary thinking that provides a whole new perspective on things. Then, suddenly, Kuhn says, there is a shift in the paradigm—sometimes even a replacement of the paradigm with a whole new paradigm. This book should be required reading for just about anybody that wants to know how things develop.

Christian theology was established slowly, gathered steam, and then became Christian theology. The main figure in all of that is Augustine. What was Augustine’s philosophy? Well, he was a Neoplatonist. His philosophy was Neoplatonism, and we know that

he translated Neoplatonist writings into Latin so that he could deal with them better.

Christian theology is essentially Neoplatonic philosophy for almost a thousand years. But thanks to the Arabs, at about AD 1000, the Arabs, who had already established universities and medical schools, went across North Africa. They got up into Spain and established new schools there. People from Northern Europe, France, Germany, and elsewhere would sneak off to attend. It was dangerous to be caught doing this, so they would sneak on down to places like Alhambra, found in Granada, Spain. They would go down to the south, and they'd sneak in and hear lectures, and they learned from the Arabs.

And the Arabs brought back, by the way, Hebrew. Thanks to the Arabs, we have that. But they also brought back Aristotle. Aristotle had been lost as a philosopher. We already had some of Plato, not a lot, but they brought Aristotle.

And Aristotle took that part of the world by storm, and particularly Thomas Aquinas. So, Thomas Aquinas recast Christian theology from Neoplatonism into an Aristotelian mode. And so Catholic theology is more Aristotelian now and not so much Neoplatonist, as it was from Augustine down to, say, Aquinas.

I find this interesting because it goes back to the issue of what is a Christian. Is a Neoplatonist a Christian? What about an Aristotelian Christian? What is it and who is going to decide? Well, now back to Kuhn. In 1820, there was a paradigm shift of major proportions.

The Lord appeared to Joseph Smith, and the two things that had been booted out of early Christianity by the church fathers that didn't like them—revelation and the temple—became the keystones of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. And now I've got a good working, prophetic, God-inspired definition of what Christianity really is.

Can I go back and find it? That's what I spent a lot of my career doing is going back and reading everything I could get my hands on. And if I couldn't read something, I learned the language so I could read it. It's delightful. It's fun to pick up a Slavonic grammar and learn how to read some of that.

I'm not particularly good at it, but I can read Slavonic texts. And same with Ethiopic. I decided I wanted to read the book of Enoch in its Ethiopic version. It's just more fun to go and do it that way. My research has led me to an absolutely wonderful wealth of treasures. So, I guess my response is I'm not going to try and define Christianity for anybody else.

I will let the Lord and Joseph Smith define it for me, and then I will go back using that model—that paradigm, to use Kuhn's language. I'm going to take that paradigm revealed by God to the prophets in our time. I'm going to go back and see what I can find of that paradigm in the past. Man, it's just been fun. Now, maybe you don't think that's fun, but to me that is so much more fun than anything else I can imagine doing.

Now, you asked another question. You asked about Christians building the temple and why the Church didn't want to build a temple? Well, I've tried to give some sort of an answer.

And, you see, the problem is when you get a professorial type, we only learn how to speak in fifty-minute sentences. So, you probably would be well advised not to ask too many more questions. As a matter of fact, I'm going to forego all the rest of my questions. But I just want to respond to your reply. Because I think it was masterfully done.

I had also thought about that moment when they came off the Mount of Transfiguration and wanted to build temples. To me, that's a perfect example of Christian desire, right? To build temples. And I love how you frame that as an answer. I think that was really good. And then to consider also in the book of Acts, right? They're constantly at the temple when Jesus was there, but even after he is gone, they're constantly in the temple, right? That's where they're teaching, that's where they're healing. And then where we learned that a great company of priests joined the Church.

It's the temple-centric people who were drawn to Christianity. So, thank you for that.

Notes

1. Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 158; compare Joseph Smith Jr., in “Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 4 August 1839–A, as Reported by William Clayton,” 14, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-4-august-1839-a-as-reported-by-william-clayton/15.
2. See Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).
3. See Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 18.
4. Joseph Smith Jr. in J. F. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 301; compare Joseph Smith Jr., in “Discourse, 17 May 1843–A, as Reported by William Clayton,” josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-17-may-1843-a-as-reported-by-william-clayton/1.
5. W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 412–13n7.
6. Clement of Alexandria, *Outlines*. See Photius, *Bibliotheca*, tertullian.org/fathers/photius_03bibliotheca.htm#109; http://khazarzar.skeptik.net/pgm/PG_Migne/Photius%20of%20Constantinople_PG%20101-104/Bibliotheca.pdf.
7. S. Kent Brown and C. Wilfred Griggs, “The 40-Day Ministry,” *Ensign*, August 1975, 6–11.
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9. John Gee, “Forty-Day Ministry,” 734–37.
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