

# STVDIA ANTIQVA

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THE JOURNAL OF THE STUDENT SOCIETY  
FOR ANCIENT STUDIES

FALL 2002  
VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
PROVO, UTAH

The Student Society for Ancient Studies at Brigham Young University is pleased to present this issue of *Studia Antiqua*. From its inception, the Society has sought to provide BYU students from all disciplines of ancient studies opportunities to further their academic interests. Certainly one element that is critical for such a specialized field is that of student research and publication. To provide this venue of student publication, *Studia Antiqua* ("Ancient Studies") has been created. The journal is dedicated to publishing original undergraduate and graduate research in all areas of ancient studies. It is hoped that such a publication will offer students the opportunity to improve their research and writing abilities, allow them to experience the editing and publication process, as well as prepare them for further educational pursuits by building their academic resume. The Society hopes that this opportunity will motivate ancient studies students in their current class work by allowing them to expand their academic vision and goals.

The process employed by the journal first has the students submitting papers they have written which are reviewed by the Student Editorial Advisory Board (consisting of the Society Presidency). Once the board decides which papers represent the highest quality of original research and writing, those selected papers are given to the appropriate member of the Faculty Review Board. As respected faculty in each area of ancient studies review their respective papers, the students are given helpful and professional suggestions for improvement, making each paper more academically credible. The papers are also given to competent student editors who help with grammar, structure, and formatting.

SUBMISSIONS of original ancient studies articles will be accepted during the first week of every Fall and Winter semester, and should be turned in to the Ancient Studies Office in 5435 HBLL. All articles must be of sufficient length to cover the topic and should be fully documented in Chicago Style. For questions regarding submissions, applying for an editorial position, or for any other comments contact the journal's Editor in Chief through the Ancient Studies secretary (801 422-3498) or at [studia\\_antiqua@yahoo.com](mailto:studia_antiqua@yahoo.com).

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# STUDIA ANTIQUA

## THE JOURNAL OF THE STUDENT SOCIETY FOR ANCIENT STUDIES

### BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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*Studia Antiqua* is a semi-annual student journal dedicated to publishing the research of undergraduate and graduate students from all disciplines of ancient studies at Brigham Young University. The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Student Society for Ancient Studies, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Student Society for Ancient Studies is pleased to present this third issue of *Studia Antiqua*. Since the initial discussion of creating a venue for students to research and publish in ancient studies, the journal has been founded, funding has been offered by various departments on campus, a large amount of support has been forthcoming from both faculty and students, and now three issues have been produced.

While the second issue (Winter 2002) established a standard in formatting and design for future issues, this third issue marks even further growth and development. Notably, the generous and incredible talent of Michael Lyon has been added in the numerous illustrations used for the articles and section pages. The high quality of images offers a more professional and fascinating look to the journal and truly brings a new depth to the information provided to the readers. The images are quite detailed and are supplemented equally by detailed captions. Together, great insights are given to the reader concerning the topics covered by the articles. We can't thank Michael enough for the time and contribution he volunteered.

In addition to the images, two new sections were added to this issue to offer the ancient studies students on campus a broader view of the field. The first is a section containing book reviews on recent works of interest to those in ancient studies. As an experimental attempt, Rob Hunt (SSAS President) and I each wrote a review of books we recently read. In this case, they both relate to biblical studies (where Rob and I personally spend most of our time), but we are hoping that as more members of the society and readers of the journal come across interesting works in the various fields of ancient studies, those reviews will be submitted and considered for future publication. The purpose of this section will be to increase the interest in and information concerning important books being written so that our students and readers will be more motivated to pursue their personal readings in their respective fields of study. We hope this will be a continuing and exciting section of the journal in the future.

Another section added in this edition was one for the purpose of increasing dialogue on various issues raised by previous articles in the journal. This idea was sparked as we received a wonderful, complimentary, and insightful letter by Dr. Jeffrey R. Chadwick (Religion) commenting on John Robison's article on the crucifixion (Winter 2002). We felt that it would be important for the author to respond to his comments, thus creating a friendly and constructive dialogue on an interesting topic. Like the book review section, we hope this will also become a regular feature. As faculty or other students write in to comment on what they are reading and the authors are given a chance to respond, all interested readers should benefit from such insightful discussion (comments may be sent to [studia\\_antiqua@yahoo.com](mailto:studia_antiqua@yahoo.com)).

As always, S. Kent Brown and Pat Ward at Ancient Studies have been our most loyal supporters. Members of our Faculty Review Board have also contributed precious time to offer solid review to improve the articles. Likewise, our Editorial Staff has volunteered time and energy, all of which is much appreciated. Once again, funding was provided in generous amounts by M. Gerald Bradford of ISPART, Roger T. Macfarlane from Classics, Dil Parkinson from Near Eastern Studies, and from the deans of G.E. and Honors. Without the cumulative support from these various areas, this journal could not be a reality. Drew Johnson at BYU Printing has offered helpful assistance in the actual publication, and Mel Thorne has once again been extremely helpful in providing the facilities for formatting at the Humanities Publication Center. Finally, an enormous personal thanks goes to our Managing Editors, Lani Axman, Andrea Ludwig, Robert Ricks, and John Robison for their tireless work in the formatting to prepare for publication—they have been invaluable.

With the articles, new book review and dialogue sections, and wonderful images, I hope *Studia Antiqua* continues to inform and inspire students in their future pursuits in the fascinating field of ancient studies.

Matthew J. Grey  
Editor in Chief

January 2003  
Brigham Young University

## UPDATE ON THE STUDENT SOCIETY FOR ANCIENT STUDIES

*Studia Antiqua* is the academic journal sponsored by the Student Society for Ancient Studies at Brigham Young University. It is one of the highlights of the society and represents a culmination of hard work by BYU students at the end of each semester. Out of all the activities performed by the society, the journal represents the only material, tangible source of its hard work and activities. It also highlights students from many different majors and backgrounds whose love of the ancient world pull them together into a common forum.

After the summer break of 2002, the SSAS professor lecture series started with fervor as we hosted Brother Truman G. Madsen, emeritus professor of philosophy at BYU. Attendance approached 300 people despite an adventurous—and multi-speaker—beginning. Other speakers this semester such as Stephen Robinson, John Welch, Kent Brown, and David Grandy also enjoyed good attendance. Better attendance for both professor and student lectures was one of the society's goals for this year. Despite some rocky moments in the presidency, attendance was increased overall for both activities. We are confident that as news of our lectures spreads, attendance will continue to increase.

The new presidency proved itself most capable as it worked together as a team to overcome some difficulties in the beginning of the semester. As a presidency, we knew this was a pivotal year—for the society and the journal. Our fears were somewhat abated with the solid turnout for the lectures, but even more, the encouraging interest and submissions for the journal. What was once a dream of putting together a solid, respectable student journal has now turned into a reality. In addition to those who submitted papers, we have the hard work of Matthew Grey and his tireless team of editors to thank for this. My personal thanks goes to Robert



Ricks who, although graduated and busy with graduate applications and employment, has taken his own personal time to assist in raising the bar of this journal through his editing experience.

If I could characterize the society this last semester in one word it would be *persistence*. Thanks to the efforts of our historian, Elizabeth Siler, vice-president, David Staheli, and technical advisor, Olya Pustolyakova (now Olya Platt), the society survived a somewhat tumultuous semester and hosted many fine lectures. Thanks to the students and the journal's editorial staff, the society is sponsor to another journal. The persistence of these individuals put the society on firmer ground. The future looks bright as we begin another semester full of insightful professor lectures and excellent student forums.

We thank all those who donate their time to the journal and society. We especially thank those departments whose generous contributions help make this journal something we can all be proud of. The society continues to strive to improve in all aspects and sincerely invites comments for improvement and new ideas.

Robert D. Hunt  
Society President

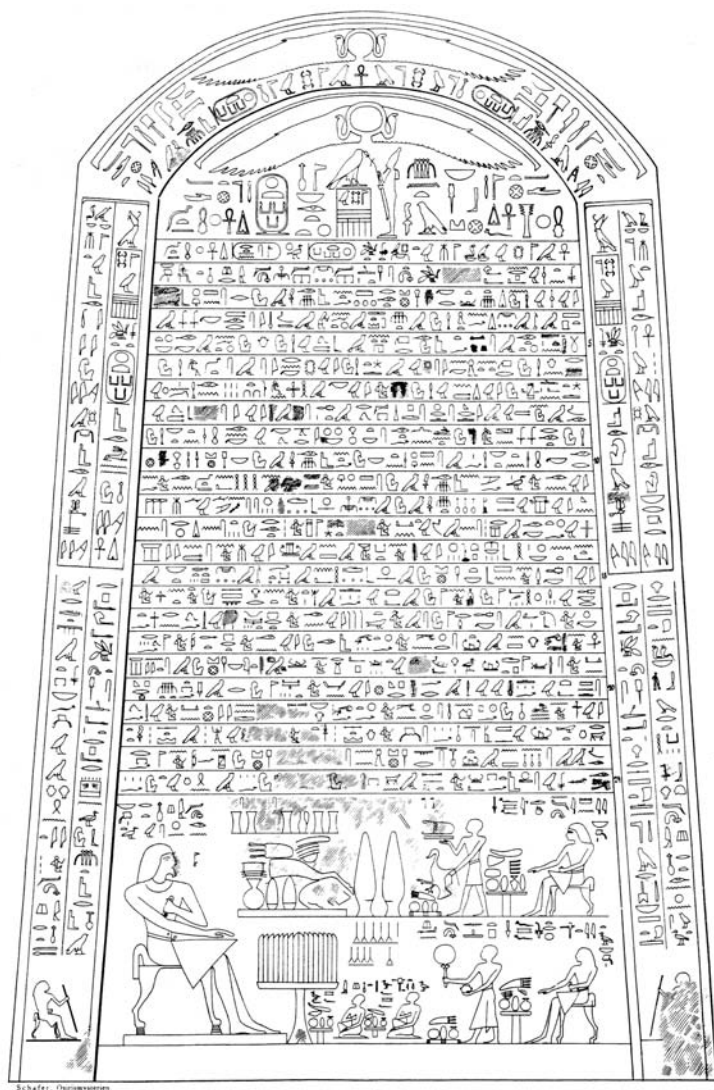
January 2003  
Brigham Young University



# NEAR EASTERN STUDIES



On this Neo-Sumerian limestone stele, c. 2200 B.C., the crowned Gods wear the sacred fleece garment, the *kaunakes*, over their shoulder. Ningizzida holds Gudea by the wrist and leads him into the presence of the gods.



H: 100 cm

Berlin 1204

Ikhernofret, a high-ranking vizier under Senwosret III, c. 1850 B.C., erected this elegant stela near the great temple of Osiris at Abydos. He placed it there in order to share in temple offerings after his death. He chose the more expensive basalt because it would last longer than the usual softer limestone. His discriminating taste is shown by the high level of artistry in the design.

# The Ikhnofret Stela as Theatre: A Cross-cultural Comparison

Naomi L. Gunnels

*This paper, in an interest to discover if ancient Egypt had theatre, sets out to define "theatre" and then use its definition(s) to compare an ancient Egyptian text called the Ikhnofret Stela to the medieval Cycle Plays. Throughout the paper similarities are brought to light, showing that these two events are easily put into the same category. As the Cycle Plays are considered theater, the Ikhnofret Stela may also be considered such.*

The beginning of the Western tradition of theatre is traditionally dated from the Athenian festivals of Dionysos in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Our notions of drama, acting, physical theatre space, costume, mask and the relation between actors and audience can be said to stem from these festivals, their rites and ceremonies.<sup>1</sup>

Is Greek Theatre, encompassing the Athenian festivals of Dionysos, really the first theatre in the world?

*I acted as 'his beloved son' for Osiris Khentamenthes, distinguishing his great [image] which endures forever. —Ikhnofret stela,<sup>2</sup> c. 1868 B.C.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Aegyptische Lesestücke zum Gebrauch im Akademischen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1924), 70–71. For the reader's knowledge the word stela and stone are interchangeable. In the true definition, 'stela' is the name of the carved standing stone-orthostat, and usually refers to just the writing, and the word 'stone' encompasses the entire tablet Ikhnofret wrote on.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre*, 8th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 9.

The Ikhernofret stela, one of the most renowned Egyptian texts concerning the Osiris Festival of ancient Egypt, was written at least twelve hundred years before the Athenian festivals of Dionysos. In the first chapter of the theater history textbook by Oscar Brockett, in reference to the text on the Ikhernofret stone, he says, "As they [some scholars] see it, this was one of the most elaborate dramatic spectacles ever staged."<sup>4</sup>

The question of whether Greek Theater is really the first theater in history is of genuine concern to those who feel the Egyptians were an advanced culture. Why would a culture so advanced as the Egyptians not have a form of entertainment that has in some way or another been incorporated in organized societies for more than two thousand years, even when it was banned by monarchs and religious institutions? The journey to answer these questions begins by first reading and translating a stela from a time predating the Athenian festivals of Dionysos. One English translation<sup>5</sup> in particular was useful to speed along the translation process and to see how differently this text can be translated. The differences in translation are the primary basis for the vastly differing opinions of scholars about the 'theatricality' of this text. A second basis for differing opinions is the very definition of the word *theatre*. In this case, to discover the Ikhernofret Stela's theatricality, defined parameters that explain key terms must be used in this comparison. The definition of 'theatre' is of utmost importance in deciding if the Ikhernofret stela can be classified as theatre. There are many ways of defining this word, but we will use definitions from three recognized philosophers and scholars of theatre. These definitions will help compare and contrast the between the Christian Cycle Plays of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries and the Ikhernofret stela.

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<sup>4</sup> See Brockett, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom* (Freiburg: Ruprecht, 1988), 99–100.

## What is Theatre?

Plato felt that his young students should be wary of Homer's *mimesis* or "impersonation, performance" of his characters in his poetry. According to Gerald Else, Plato felt that Homer was not merely representing his characters, but was actually pretending to be those characters.<sup>6</sup> This 'pretending to be someone you are not' is what Plato defined as *mimesis*, and what is known today as imitation. When Aristotle becomes 'Teacher,' he is either much more ambiguous or more definitive, depending on one's view of the necessity for details. He says three things can define imitation: medium—the "poet's words, or the painter's colors, or the musician's sound"; object—imitation of an action, and manner—narration.<sup>7</sup> If the medium and the object depict the same thing, then imitation may be done by "narration—in which case he [the poet] can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged—or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us."<sup>8</sup>

Two thousand years later, Victor Turner has claimed, "there is . . . theatre something of the investigative, judgmental, and even punitive character of law-in-action," meaning that one of the purposes of theatre is to comment and make judgments about the society in which that play is taking place, "and something of the sacred, mythic, numinous, even 'supernatural' character of religious action."<sup>9</sup> It seems that Turner defines theatre as having elements that try to change civilian life as well as religious. Richard Schechner says, "A performance is called theater or ritual because

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<sup>6</sup> Gerald Else, *Plato and Aristotle on Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1986), 74–75.

<sup>7</sup> S. H. Butcher, trans., *Aristotle's Poetics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>9</sup> Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1982), 12.

of where it is performed, by whom, and under what circumstances.”<sup>10</sup> He asks if the event is supposed to be ‘efficacious’ (“to effect transformations”= ritual) or ‘entertainment’ (theatre), and then supplies tenets of both types of events.<sup>11</sup> For Plato and Aristotle the key is imitation, but Turner seems to allow both secular and religious characteristics, and for Schechner the results desired by those performing must be known.

## The Challenge

Comparing the Cycle Plays to the Ikhernofret stela cannot be done without looking to outside sources for information on both texts. The Cycle Plays and the Ikhernofret stela tell but little of *why* each is considered a Cycle Play—what do those words mean? These words mean that theatre scholars have decided to categorize a certain kind of play and, because of their similarities, call them Cycle Plays. Cycle Plays were written in a certain time period, thus forming a genre. They all involve townspeople, guilds and the Church. They all seek to retell sacred time, while traveling to spots that have built sets prepared for the show around the town. Since the category has been developed and has several examples to give a ‘feeling’ for what a Cycle Play is, a comparison can be made. To test another sort of play against the tenets of the Cycle Play category is now easy. But the trick with the Ikhernofret stela is that the motive here is not to convince the reader that it is a Cycle Play, but rather that it is a play or theatre like the Cycle Plays. The Ikhernofret stela has enough similarities to the Cycle Plays that if one can consider the individual Cycle Plays theatre, they must also consider the Ikhernofret stela theatre as well.

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 120.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, see Appendix A.





Medieval cycle plays were performed on large wooden carts that were wheeled through the city. In spite of the limited space, they presented elaborate visual effects. In this conjectural reconstruction, the Last Judgement is shown with God on his throne, while the archangel Michael weighs the souls of the dead with the damned being swallowed by the gaping jaws of Hell.

## The Comparison

The Abydos Passion Play, as the Ikhernofret stela is called by Brockett, has a great many similarities to the Cycle Plays of England, but specifically, four similarities that can relate to our definitions of theatre.<sup>12</sup> Both concern religious texts, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, as well as audience in general, and traveling to sacred spots in the city in which the event is happening, which can represent the idea that life is a journey and a cycle.<sup>13</sup>

Although the length and scope of the dramas varied widely, they all dealt with the same basic subject matter: God's ordering of the existence as revealed in the Bible, the Apocrypha, legends about biblical figures and saints, writings of the church fathers, and collections of sermons.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Brockett, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Thank you to Michael Lyon for additional insights.

<sup>14</sup> Brockett, 94. Even in the Cycle Plays there were just barely enough similarities to group them together.

The Cycle Plays had “imitations,” as Plato and Aristotle have defined it. Many Biblical figures were played by guild members who were urged to be worthy of their role.<sup>15</sup> When the Cycle Plays were being performed, everyone had the day off and they all participated to show their loyalty to the church. This was demonstrated by receiving Communion in the morning in order to prepare them for their service.<sup>16</sup> This action ‘saved’ all those who participated, as it represented Christ’s atonement for all mankind.<sup>17</sup> Therefore the Christian Cycle Plays included ‘something sacred and mythical . . . of religious action,’ but the desired results were to ‘save’ the person and thus change them. Does that make it ritual? Brockett defines the Cycle Plays as “a less elaborate secular theatre.”<sup>18</sup> Although the Cycle Plays are also referred to as “religious plays” they are, on the same page, referred to as “secular drama.” The word ritual is not applied to the Cycle Plays, neither is it even mentioned; but according to Schechner’s definition, these plays should be categorized as ritual especially since the participants—players and viewers—were re-enacting Sacred Time.<sup>19</sup>

The Ikhnofret stela is also about a religious function. This festival was held in honor of the god Osiris at the Osiris temple in the sacred city of Abydos.<sup>20</sup> The text is the description of the Osiris festival procession run by the temple priests. “I made the hour-priests of the temple [diligent] at their tasks, and made them know the ritual of every day.”<sup>21</sup> When Ikhnofret, “the Prince, Count, Royal Seal-bearer, Sole Companion, Steward of the Gold-House, Steward of the Silver-House, Overseer of the Treasury,” wrote his

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Lyon’s review.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Lyon’s review.

<sup>17</sup> Megan Sanborn, lectures, August to November 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Brockett, 107.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Lyon’s review.

<sup>20</sup> From translation of the Ikhnofret stela.

<sup>21</sup> Lichtheim, 99.

stela it was after “survey[ing] the works for the preparation of the Osiris-feasts” he also does such things as clothing “the god, in my office of Master-of-Secrets” and “act[ing] as ‘his beloved Son’ for Osiris.”<sup>22</sup> In order to do these things he must have been a priest because he had to have access to the temple; only priests had access to the sanctuaries where some of these rites would have been performed.<sup>23</sup> Not only did Ikhernofret perform rites as a substitute for the king, but so did the king. “Sethos I is himself represented as Osiris,” and “this play was [also] enacted by priests.”<sup>24</sup> The scenes would have included the “re-enacting of the events of the life and death of the god.”<sup>25</sup> This text fits Plato and Aristotle’s definitions of theatre because of the actions of the priests and Ikhernofret himself, as well as fulfilling the investigative, judgmental, sacred and supernatural part of Turner’s definition. But Schechner’s definition does not fit.

Under Schechner’s definition, theatre is fun, but results come from ritual. These words, applied directly to the Ikhernofret stela, define it as having no theatricality because its purpose is to effect resurrection, but there was great fun during the revelry of the procession.<sup>26</sup>

A rivalry between Carlo Goldoni and Carlo Gozzi, two very famous playwrights, suggests that Schechner’s definition is invalid, and even wrong. His definition has failed to define certain theatrical events and genres as “theatre,” although these events have always been called theatre. Schechner’s definition would venture to suggest that these two men are not playwrights, an obvious fallacy.

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<sup>22</sup> See Ikhernofret stela, ln. 15, 11.

<sup>23</sup> John Gee, Egyptologist, lecture, from August to November 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Rosalie David, *A Guide to Religious Ritual at Abydos* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1981), 121.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Lyon’s review.

Both of these men wrote plays during the time of the *Commedia dell'arte* (1545–eighteenth century).<sup>27</sup> Goldoni started writing plays that addressed issues in order to bring about change, while also making the people laugh at moral jokes. Gozzi wanted to stick to the traditional *Commedia dell'arte* form which was, by this time, empty of any substance and existed only to make the audience laugh. So Gozzi had more emphasis on vulgar laughing moments, the ‘lazzi,’ which is a principle of *Commedia dell'arte*. He also tried to raise the audience’s level of morality by trying to offend with his plays and vulgar jokes.<sup>28</sup> The controversy in this example was about levels of morality versus tradition, but the fact is that both men were trying to increase morality while allowing the audience to enjoy themselves. Are these men not considered playwrights then because their work desired results as well as fun? Schechner’s definition would suggest that they are not, and it would therefore also suggest the Ikhernofret stela is not theatre for it, too, was performed with specific results in mind.

The major theme and intention of the Ikhernofret stela is resurrection, which comes after the experience of life and death, forming a cycle of life, death and rebirth into a life very similar to the one experienced here but glorified. The Ikhernofret stela does not tell us about Osiris’ birth. We learn about it from other sources explaining the Osiris Myth. From one such book as this we learn that

it is thought [by scholars] that the acts mentioned on this [Ikhernofret] stela are given in the right order, since they are compatible with what is known of the Osiris Myth. . . . The ceremony was performed for the benefit of the deceased

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<sup>27</sup> Brockett, 143–44. We do not know when the exact dates are but it had over 200 years of influence.

<sup>28</sup> Megan Sanborn, lecture. We know little about these men and their intentions from their texts. Our information comes mostly from outside sources.

king and for the eternal resurrection of all worshipers of Osiris . . . [and] the complex of rooms dedicated to Osiris must surely have been the secret place where the resurrection of the god was experienced; here, the dramatic ritual reached its climax.<sup>29</sup>

Osiris was the “ruler of the netherworld” and “was the night form of the sun,” or the moon.<sup>30</sup> With each month’s new moon, it was believed that Osiris had been resurrected, and with time Osiris became the principle of resurrection—his name and the word becoming one and the same. The reason Ikhernofret would have “act[ed] as ‘his beloved Son’ for Osiris” was because Sethos III, the king at that time, would have acted as Osiris the god, so that Sethos III could receive resurrection, a benefit of performing these rites for Osiris every year. But every king needed a ‘son’ to perform those rites for/to him, and in this text the “sole companion,” Ikhernofret, was that ‘son.’ The Egyptian Pharaohs desired “life, stability, dominion and health like Re for eternity.”<sup>31</sup> The only way to share in that eternal life that Re, the sun god, had was to be resurrected. This is how the cycle relates to Osiris, who was synonymous with resurrection.

In a like manner, some of the Cycle Plays emphasized Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. One might say that the Cycle Plays were to effect change for the common people and that the performance in Abydos was only for the Pharaoh and therefore cannot be theatre, but at the time the Ikhernofret stela was written the performance actually applied to all in attendance.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See David, 121.

<sup>30</sup> Manfred Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980), 93.

<sup>31</sup> The “life, stability, dominion, and health like Re for eternity,” the most common formula, can be found in almost any Egyptian temple wall motif that talks about a Pharaoh, but its frequency should not blind us to its importance.

<sup>32</sup> See David, 121; Veronica Ions, *Egyptian Mythology* (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1968), 129.

Efficacy (to effect transformations)<sup>33</sup> was desired after this festival ended, but some of Schechner's tenets of ritual again, do not apply. The "performer [was not] possessed, [or] in [a] trance," rather the priests were always conscious of what they were doing and who was around them.<sup>34</sup> Turner's definition, with its call for rationale (investigation, judgement) and belief (sacred character of religious action), is satisfied in that there was action and consequence—perform the rites, receive resurrection. Faith in the "supernatural" and the sacred rites was also needed because only the priests could see and do them, and the people had to have faith that they would work on their behalf. In addition, the priests only acted in that priestly capacity for one month out of every four. The rest of the time they worked their land or were craft makers like everyone else. In actuality, much of the audience were at some time or another the performing priests.<sup>35</sup>

The final similarity to discuss is the audience itself, and tied up in the audience is the issue of travel. By the Twelfth Dynasty "the pilgrimage to Abydos was now a very important feature of religious life." A sacred cemetery now called the Umm el Qa'Ab, "Mother of potshards," was the destination the priests traveled to while performing the ceremony written on the Ikhnofret stela. One approaches Umm el Qa'Ab by the "Pilgrim's Way" or the wadi.<sup>36</sup> Today the wadi is still the worn, dirt path that it was in the Twelfth Dynasty, and on either side are tall ridges, somewhat like hills, that the audience would stand upon to watch. It is called the "Pilgrim's Way" because of all the devout followers who came to worship Osiris.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Schechner, 120.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> John Gee, lecture.

<sup>36</sup> See Lichtheim, pl. X.

<sup>37</sup> Omm Sety and Hanny El Zeini, *Abydos: Holy city of Ancient Egypt* (Los Angeles: L L Company, 1981), 27.

The desert was then already crowded with tomb. . . . On the days of annual pilgrimage, which coincided with the great Feast of Osiris, the necropolis became like an overcrowded city. . . . The tardy . . . would have had to share space with vendors of 'souvenirs of abydos.'<sup>38</sup>

The people came from all over to witness the grand event, which had significant religious value, and had to fight for space with vendors. Usually vendors do not try to sell things at events that are not for entertainment. So significant were the sacred areas those who walked in the wadi on this sacred festival day and were not "priests going about their business" would be burned.<sup>39</sup> This area was one of the most sacred spots in Egypt and no one was allowed to walk there unless they had clearance. Clearance was only given to priests who were performing their priestly functions at the time they walked there. There were actually guards stationed at the four corners of the wadi to keep trespassers out, and if the guards let people in who were not supposed to be there they could be burned too.<sup>40</sup> (Being burned to death was considered one of the cruelest and most shameful ways to die because the Egyptians wanted their bodies for the afterlife, as we know by the mummies that are still preserved today.<sup>41</sup>)

Just as the Egyptians had sacred spots in Abydos, the medieval people had sacred spots in their towns and cities, and everyone came into the city and the cathedral the days the Cycle Plays were performed. At the time of the Cycle Plays there was no such thing as the Catholic Church, the Church of England or any other Christian religion. There was only one religion—the Church.

The Cycle Plays were a grand event. They were performed with long intervals between them. Sometimes that interval could

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>39</sup> Anthony Leahy, *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1924): 75.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> John Gee, lecture.

be ten years, and when it was performed it was performed several times throughout the city on that day, but not again for another ten years, unlike the plays we go to see today that play almost everyday for months. The medieval people got the days of performance off because they were holy days.<sup>42</sup> It is logical to assume that because of the infrequency of these plays the shows were a huge social event. Everybody already had the day off to go to these plays, and they went adorned in new clothes designed to be nothing less than impressive. The Cycle Plays were most likely the biggest event of the year, or decade even, and in that way they are very much like the Osiris Festival. No other annual holiday was more important to the ancient Egyptian religion, and since the priests and their families were the audience it was probably the most important social event concerning salvation as well.

This last similarity in defining theatre agrees with Richard Schechner's tenets of theatrical events. He asks if the audience is participating or watching. In the Ikhernofret stela, they are doing both. While the play is happening those up on the ridges of the wadi are bystanders, they do not interrupt or participate in any physical way, but every couple of months many of those bystanders become priests. Maybe he is a businessman or an artist or a shoemaker, but when his turn comes to participate as a priest in this festival he takes on the role of actor. But does that constitute 'participation' as Schechner meant it? According to his definition of theatre an event must have the tenets of one or the other.<sup>43</sup> But in this situation, tenets from both sides fit. With Schechner's definition we may not be able to define the Ikhernofret stela because it appears to be both theatre and ritual. Plato and Aristotle would say that it is a play because the actors 'imitated' someone at some time. Turner's definition deals specifically with the text, and so is applicable to the matter concerning actors.

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<sup>42</sup> Brockett, 106.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix A.



## Conclusion

Is the Ikhernofret stela theatrical or theatre? By the definitions used, some pieces of the Ikhernofret stela are theatrical. Some are not. Two of the definitions seem to say that the stela is theatre on a regular basis, but Schechner's definition seems to concur only on the point of view of the audience. The only trouble is that in each similar situation the full view of the similarities cannot be seen without help from those who have written about the two subjects under comparison, and that makes it hard to judge concretely—the very reason why this controversy is still alive today.

The ultimate decision lies with the scholar and reader, though it seems that to the Egyptians this religious text, when enacted in the Festival, would have been theatrical. We cannot, and may never, fully understand their culture and therefore their absolute definition of theatre, for which there is no word in Egyptian. The Egyptians thought about life in completely different ways, in contrast to modern thought processes. Because of this, making comparisons between the twenty-first century lifestyle and the ancient Egyptian is extremely difficult and involves the arranging of many puzzle pieces. It would be as if two people were speaking two different languages with no translator. Communication is impossible without some level of understanding. Understanding requires similar mindsets and backgrounds. This common starting point of experience is sometimes called a language of intelligibility—some way of making up for a dissimilar view of life. In reality, the modern student cannot have a full comprehension of Egyptian society. Already, few can agree on the subject of what theatre is, deciphering this enigma is only compounded when ancient history is added in.

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## Appendix A

EFFICACY	ENTERTAINMENT
RITUAL	THEATRE
results	fun
link to an absent “other”	only for those here
symbolic time	emphasis now
performer possessed, in trance	performer knows what s/he’s doing
audience participates	audience watches
audience believes	audience appreciates
criticism discouraged	criticism flourishes
collective creativity	individual creativity

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# Let My Prayer Be Set Before Thee: The Burning of Incense in the Temple Cult of Ancient Israel

James L. Carroll  
Elizabeth M. Siler

*This survey paper discusses the burning of incense in its relation to the temple cult of Ancient Israel. The burning of incense is studied in its context of the religions surrounding Israel, and the ingredients in Exodus 30 are considered. Various rabbinic commentaries are also surveyed, and a Latter-day Saint interpretation is given for this ancient Israelite temple ritual.*

Much work has been done on the details and meaning of the temple cult in ancient Israel in academic and religious research. Unfortunately the burning of incense has not been treated as thoroughly as most of the other elements of the temple rites.<sup>1</sup> This is surprising given that the burning of incense played such a central role in the worship of the various religious groups surrounding

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<sup>1</sup> The following works treat the temple cult in general, but only treat the burning of incense superficially: *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994); *The Temple in Time and Eternity*,

Israel.<sup>2</sup> We will first attempt to situate the cultic use of incense in Israel within the religious practices of the day. We will then discuss the composition of Israel's sacred incense and its use in their religious rites. Finally we will discuss some possible LDS interpretations of this religious act. A book would be necessary in order to adequately cover any of these topics, however, we hope to provide a survey of these interesting subjects to facilitate a more thorough investigation in the future.

### Incense in the Ancient Near East

The offering of sacrifice and the burning of incense are the two most attested forms of worship in the ancient Near East. Evidence for the use of incense can be found in Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Israel, and Egypt. In ancient Egypt the evidence for this is especially abundant. Multiple depictions of the burning of incense can be found on most Egyptian temples and tombs.<sup>3</sup> Evidence of the ancient use of incense extends far from the center of our current study into such distant areas as China and Mesoamerica. Thus, the burning of incense was both common and nearly universal in the ancient world.

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ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999); William Brown, *The Tabernacle and its Priests and Services, Described and Considered in Relation to Christ and the Church* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1899; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996); Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, Updated Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994); Richard N. Holzapfel and David R. Seely, *My Father's House* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft). Kjeld P. Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986) is one exception.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Kings 11:8, 22:43 (for additional references see footnote 9).

<sup>3</sup> See Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000). pp. 29, 191, 205, and 211 for examples of incense depictions in temples. See also *Valley of the Kings*, ed. Kent R. Weeks (Italy: Friedman/Fairfax, 2001), 232–233, 236, 244–245, 314 for similar depictions in tombs.

Incense was used in secular settings to combat normal, everyday odors. As one researcher has pointed out, the cultures that used incense the most “[were] all situated in warm climates, which cause[d] odors from sweat and putrefaction to develop fast. There is no doubt that the use of incense materials [was] furthered in an attempt to do away with such unpleasant smells.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, it would not be surprising if the use of incense to alleviate unpleasant odors in everyday life migrated into religious life. This is especially likely in light of the prevalent practice of offering animal sacrifices at cultic centers. This practice undoubtedly increased the foul odors surrounding the cultic center where the animals were slaughtered, and thus increased the need for some form of aromata.

From its more practical uses, incense gained abstract significance once it entered the temple cults. For example, to the Egyptians incense had a purifying power, cleansing the air both literally and ritually.<sup>5</sup> The Egyptians also considered the smoke of the incense as a stairway connecting the earthly abode with that of the heavenly. Thus, to the Egyptian, incense provided both a means of ascent and communication.<sup>6</sup>

The use of incense was also common throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Although there are no ritual texts from Arabia to explain the details of their use of incense, several altars have been found in Arabia with the names of various aromata inscribed upon them.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, incense was commonly imported from Arabia into Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine.

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<sup>4</sup> Nielsen, 1.

<sup>5</sup> As an example see *The Book of the Dead*, ch.133 “There shall be made a sky with stars purified with natron and incense.” Faulkner, “The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead” (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1985), 122.

<sup>6</sup> Nielsen, 9–10. In later Christianity this thought was assimilated and incense was used in funerary settings, where the ascending smoke represented the ascension of the deceased. Udo Becker, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols* (New York: Continuum International, 2000), 156.

<sup>7</sup> Nielsen, 17–19.

Incense was also common in ancient Canaan. The biblical text is replete with descriptions of the use of incense by the Canaanites and the Israelites who were swayed by Canaanite religious practices. The Bible describes the burning of incense by the Canaanites both upon sacred “high places” and in sacred “groves.”<sup>8</sup> Also, many small horned altars have been found in Palestine. These smaller altars were most likely used for the burning of incense.

### Incense in Ancient Israel

The ancient Israelites came from the land of Egypt, where the burning of incense was central to religious worship, into the land of Palestine, where its use is well attested. The Israelites were situated very near the Arabian Peninsula from which they could easily import large amounts of incense. Thus, the Israelites would have had easy access to incense, and they would have been well acquainted with the use of incense in religious worship. It is therefore understandable that the offering of incense was one of the required sacrifices under the Law of Moses.

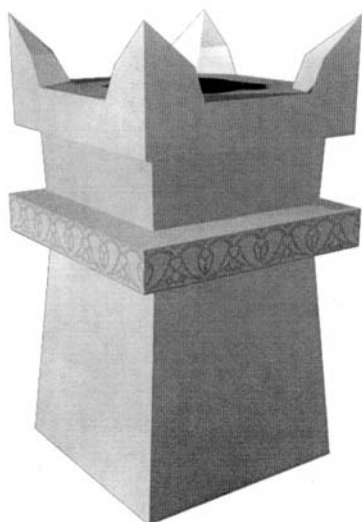
Given the painstaking detail in the Pentateuch concerning the various sacrifices offered at the tabernacle, it is little wonder that the composition of the incense to be burned in the tabernacle is strictly prescribed in the Pentateuch. Exodus 30:34–38 states:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight, and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy. And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt

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<sup>8</sup> 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4, 23; 15:4, 35; 16:4; 17:11; 18:4; 22:17; 23:5, 8; 2 Chronicles 25:14; 28:3–4; Isaiah 65:3, 7; Jeremiah 19:4.

מזבח הקמרת  
The Altar of Incense



קרנת המזבח

Horns of the Altar. Though no explanation is given in scripture, the four horns probably represent the four corners of the world.

זר זהב

Crown of Gold. This molding appears on many of the stone and pottery altars. The modern Hebrew term evokes a wreath of flowers. We have used a typical Phoenician hanging lotus pattern which they adapted from an Egyptian motif.

make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

This passage gives very specific instructions on what ingredients are to be used in the cultic incense, how it is to be mixed, and a proscription against using incense composed of these materials for unholy purposes. Given these simple instructions it should be easy to reproduce the cultic incense of ancient Israel. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Although we have the names of the substances preserved in our records, the actual knowledge of what these ingredients are has been lost. Many different—and often contradictory—hypotheses have been set forth as to the

identity of the ingredients of the cultic incense. Unfortunately, there has been very little research comparing the strengths and weakness of the various hypotheses.

The Bible describes the burning of incense as a type of sacrifice. The offerings of blood sacrifice, and apparently the burning of incense as well, were done away with at the death of Christ (3 Ne. 9:19). However, Joseph Smith, the first Latter-day Saint prophet, taught that the offering of sacrifice would return before or at the second coming.<sup>9</sup> It may be that the burning of incense will be restored as part of the law of sacrifice. We feel that this possibility makes the discovery of the composition of the Israelite's temple incense a valuable contribution. The following sections will attempt to summarize the various theories as to the identities of the ingredients of the temple incense.

*Stacte.* Stacte, the first of the four ingredients mentioned by name, is the usual English translation of שֶׁטַח in the Hebrew Masoretic text. The Hebrew root שֶׁטַח means "to drip," an accurate description of how gum resins are formed. The only other place in the Bible where the Hebrew word is used is Job 36:27, describing drops of water.

In the Septuagint, שֶׁטַח is translated as ΣΤΑΚΤΗ, which is where our English word comes from, and, like the Hebrew שֶׁטַח, means "to drip." There is sufficient evidence that the Greek ΣΤΑΚΤΗ was a form of myrrh.<sup>10</sup> The Septuagint's translation was most likely in error because it seems unlikely that שֶׁטַח is a form of myrrh, which would usually have been rendered מִרְרָה, which is the extremely common form for myrrh. This form for myrrh was used earlier in the same chapter in reference to the anointing oil. If שֶׁטַח is not myrrh it seems that its translation in the Septuagint as ΣΤΑΚΤΗ was made simply because both שֶׁטַח and ΣΤΑΚΤΗ mean "to

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 172–173.

<sup>10</sup> Nielsen, 61, 63.



drip.” Therefore our English translation of נֹטֶף as *stacte* in the King James Version is unfortunate, because it stems from the Greek mistranslation.

By the time the Talmud was written, the Hebrew צִרִי had replaced the word נֹטֶף for this spice, as can be seen in the Talmudic list of the ingredients of the sacred incense.<sup>11</sup> צִרִי is a word that occurs elsewhere in the Bible. It is mentioned with spices that were carried by Ishmaelite traders in Genesis 37:25, and then in Genesis 43:11 as a gift from Jacob in the land of Canaan to Joseph in the land of Egypt. Later in Jeremiah, it is translated into English as “balm” and seems to hold some medicinal qualities. In every instance where the word צִרִי is used, it is translated into the Septuagint as ρητινῆς. Although there are other possibilities for צִרִי, it can be most likely identified with one of the storax trees<sup>12</sup> or with the balsam tree.<sup>13</sup> Balsam, according to Josephus, grew in Palestine<sup>14</sup> and thus seems to fit the requirement put forth in Genesis 43:11 that it be native to Palestine. However, since balsam seems to be more directly related to בִּשְׁמִים, *bosem*, the storax tree seems more likely. Our word storax may even come from the Hebrew צִרִי.

The Talmud states that נֹטֶף comes from a tree.<sup>15</sup> Because of this description and the Talmudic association of נֹטֶף with צִרִי, some commentators believe that נֹטֶף also comes from the storax or balsam tree. However, some commentators believe that נֹטֶף is of the *Cistus* genus, a type of flower.<sup>16</sup> This is most likely incorrect

<sup>11</sup> Nielsen, 62.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> United Bible Societies, Committee on Translations *Fauna and Flora of the Bible* (London: United Bible Societies, 1972), 178.

<sup>14</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, IV, V, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Jacob Neusner, trans., *Tractate Keritot* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 1.6.7.

<sup>16</sup> *Fauna*, 178.

because the rabbis were clear that this ingredient came from some sort of a tree. Furthermore the ingredient was most likely formed from dripping sap because of its name, a process not usually associated with the aroma of flowers.

In conclusion, נטרף was not of the *Cistus* genus because it must have been a tree. נטרף was also not simply myrrh because the Hebrew word מר would have been the more logical choice to describe myrrh. נטרף most likely either came from the balsam tree, or one of the many types of storax trees.

*Onycha*. The Hebrew and Greek words for *onycha* betray its mystery. The Hebrew שחלת, comes from a root meaning “to roar.” The Greek translation ονυξ means “fingernail” or “claw.” The Talmud, whose Hebrew is of a later date than the Bible, refers to the substance as צפרן which also means “fingernail.”<sup>17</sup> The word שחלת also seems to be related to שחלים, a type of cress. The term cress refers to a large variety of plants including the more common “water cress.”

Another possibility comes from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, which defines שחלת as the shell of an aromatic mussel that lives in the Red Sea.<sup>18</sup> Cansdale supports this idea, indicating that the operculum of a species of strombus was the ingredient for the incense.<sup>19</sup> He also states that opercula were used for incense “until the end of the last century.” Henk K. Mienis of the National Mollusk Collection at Hebrew University also believes that שחלת came from a mollusk and notes that burning opercula was a home-made remedy even as late as the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Nielsen, 65.

<sup>18</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1971–72), s.v. “onycha.”

<sup>19</sup> George Cansdale, *All the Animals of the Bible Lands* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 232.

<sup>20</sup> Henk K. Mienis, “Human uses of opercula,” <[http://manandmollusc.net/operculum\\_paul.html](http://manandmollusc.net/operculum_paul.html)> (15 September 2002).

However, an Ugaritic text lists the substance among types of vegetables, implying that שחלת is also a vegetable and therefore not from a mussel.<sup>21</sup> The Talmud specifically states that although שחלת is not from a tree, it does grow from the ground.<sup>22</sup> To further complicate things, around the eleventh century, the Jewish commentator Rashi said that שחלת was “an aromatic root that is smooth and shiny like a fingernail.”<sup>23</sup>

According to Winifred Walker's *All the Plants of the Bible*, שחלת is a form of rock rose, *Cistus ladaniferus*, and produces a resin called labdanum. The bush is described as having petals with markings like fingernails, thus its connection with the Greek ονυξ.<sup>24</sup> Labdanum is defined as any resin that comes from a *Cistus* plant.<sup>25</sup>

שחלת is the most difficult ingredient to identify. Given its linguistic background and Talmudic interpretations it seems more likely to be a plant than an animal, and thus not the shell of any mussel. שחלת seems either to come from an unknown cress, an unknown white root, or a plant from the *Cistus* genus.

*Galbanum*. Galbanum (חלבנה, ξαλβανη), the third ingredient for the incense, is one of the easiest to identify. The Greek is simply a borrowing of the Hebrew word, so there is no chance of error in translation from Hebrew to Greek. The Hebrew root for this word, חלב, means “milk,” suggesting that the plant resembles milk in some way.

<sup>21</sup> Nielsen, 66.

<sup>22</sup> Keritot 1.6.7. The Talmud also discusses how onycha was prepared, stating that “Iye of leeks was rubbed over onycha to beautify it, and Cyprus wine was used for steeping the onycha to intensify its odor” (Keritot 1.6.2).

<sup>23</sup> Rabbi Abraham Ben Isaiah and Rabbi Benjamin Sharfman, trans. and ed., *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary* (Brooklyn: S.S.&R, 1950), 391.

<sup>24</sup> Winifred Walker, *All the Plants of the Bible* (New York: Harper, 1952), 158.

<sup>25</sup> *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G & C Merriam, 1956), 2nd ed., s.v. “labdanum.”

<sup>26</sup> Walker 86, *Fauna*, 123.

Galbanum, the sources agree, comes from the *Ferula galbaniflua* plant, which is a member of the carrot family.<sup>26</sup> Galbanum grows in the Mesopotamian area, and thus had to be imported in biblical times.<sup>27</sup> The gum was collected by slitting the stem a few inches above the ground and letting the milky substance flow out and harden.<sup>28</sup>

The Talmud describes galbanum as smelling bad.<sup>29</sup> The rabbi speaking notes that “without being told that item, I never would have been likely to include it.” Galbanum is also described as “stinking,” and symbolizes, according to Rabbi Hana bar Bizna, sinners that participate in ordinances with Israel.<sup>30</sup> However, some modern Bible commentators claim galbanum has a pleasant smell.<sup>31</sup> Philo praises galbanum, comparing it to air and calling it sweet smelling.<sup>32</sup> In some personal correspondences with those who have smelled the sap from the *Ferula galbaniflua* we have been told that it smells strange in its natural state, but smelled good when burned. This may explain the contradictions in the descriptions of the galbanum’s smell, and provides further evidence for the identification of galbanum with the *Ferula galbaniflua* plant.

*Frankincense.* Frankincense (לְבָנָן, λιβανωτο) is the most common incense mentioned in the Bible. The word that is usually translated as “frankincense,” is translated as simply “incense” in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The root לְבָן means “white,” indicating the color of the substance or perhaps the white smoke that it produces. The substance comes from a type of tree in the *Boswellia* genus that grows in southern Arabia.<sup>33</sup> That frankincense

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<sup>27</sup> Walker, 86.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Keritot 1.6.7.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 1.6.9.

<sup>31</sup> *Fauna*, 123; Walker, 86.

<sup>32</sup> Philo, “Who is the Heir of Divine Things,” 41.197 in *The Works of Philo*, trans. and ed. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 292.

<sup>33</sup> W. W. Müller, “Frankincense,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol II, 854.

comes from Arabia is attested in the Bible: Isaiah 60:6 and Jeremiah 6:20 both describe frankincense coming from Sheba on camels.

Unlike the other ingredients of the holy incense, frankincense was also used in other parts of the temple. The flour offerings and meat offerings were both required to have frankincense mixed in (Lev. 2:1,15; 6:15). Frankincense was also required to be on the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:7). It was specifically forbidden to add frankincense to a sin offering (Lev. 5:11), or to an offering to recognize adultery (Num. 5:15), perhaps indicating its holy nature. Levites were specially assigned to watch over it (1 Chron. 9:29). Also unlike the other spices, frankincense was specifically mentioned as a fragrance for the Israelites' secular use (Song of Sol. 3:6) in addition to its use in the temple. It was very valuable even into New Testament times, and was one of the three kingly gifts given to Jesus at his birth (Matt. 2:11). The Talmud tells us that each year the frankincense surplus from the previous year was used to pay temple craftsmen.<sup>34</sup>

*Rabbinical Traditions about Incense.* In Talmudic times the list of ingredients grew from four to eleven.<sup>35</sup> The rabbis claimed that all eleven spices were mentioned to Moses on Sinai. They most likely arrived at this number by homiletical exegesis. They said that the first mention of the word "spices" actually refers to two unnamed spices, because the word is plural. The next three spices are given by name, which makes a total of five ingredients. Then the next use of the term "spices" somehow meant that the number of spices should be doubled, making ten. Then the final ingredient, frankincense, was added, making a total of eleven ingredients. To reach eleven spices, the rabbis added myrrh, cassia, spikenard, saffron, costus, aromatic rind, and cinnamon to the original four ingredients. They also added a few minor ingredients that steep the mixture and make the smoke rise higher.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Keritot 1.6.2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 1.6.7; see also *Encyclopedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1971–72), s.v. "Incense and Perfumes."

As is typical of the writers of the Talmud, there is quite a bit of commentary over very minute details in the Exodus verses. In discussing the required weight for each ingredient, the Talmud notes that the ingredients mentioned in the actual scripture share the greatest weight in the incense, and the other ingredients were all in lesser quantities.<sup>37</sup> This is perhaps reflective of their later addition. Earlier, Rabbi Judah infers that accidentally adding too much of a spice is acceptable, because “the Holy One . . . takes note of the overweight.”<sup>38</sup>

As noted earlier, the verses in Exodus dealing with the temple incense mention that those who “make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people” (Ex. 30:38). The Talmud expands upon this statement, noting that a person who made the incense in order to learn how to make it was not under condemnation, but those who make it simply for the pleasure of smelling it were those who were cut off.<sup>39</sup> They added that the act of smelling something holy was not sacrilege, but burning the leftover incense for secular purposes after the sacrifice was performed was forbidden.<sup>40</sup> Burning the incense before the sacrifice was offered was allowed, presumably to allow the mixture to be tested.

However, the desire to keep people from profaning the holy incense could be taken to extremes, even for the rabbis. The Levitical family of Abtinas was in charge of making the incense for the temple, and they refused to release their recipe to anyone, lest someone use it to perfume profane things instead of holy things.<sup>41</sup> They were not remembered fondly, despite mild praise for their good intentions. The only time the writers of the Talmudic account had positive things to say about this family was when an old

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 1.6.2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 1.5.3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 1.6.1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Yoma, trans. Jacob Neusner (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 3:11.

man surreptitiously gave a copy of the recipe to Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri.<sup>42</sup>

## The Burning of Incense in Ancient Israel

Once the priests prepared the incense, it was brought to the temple or tabernacle. The incense was burned upon a special altar made from shittim wood, and overlaid with gold. This altar had four horns upon its corners, similar to the Canaanite altars found in Palestine. The altar of incense was placed within the Holy Place, directly before the veil of the temple. Coals were brought from the altar of sacrifice and placed upon the altar of incense with either tongs, a shovel, or a golden censer.<sup>43</sup> The incense was sprinkled over these coals by the high priest twice daily (Ex. 30:7–8), once in the morning and once in the evening when the lamps were also cared for. By second temple times the privilege of lighting the lamps and burning incense upon the altar was extended to the other priests.

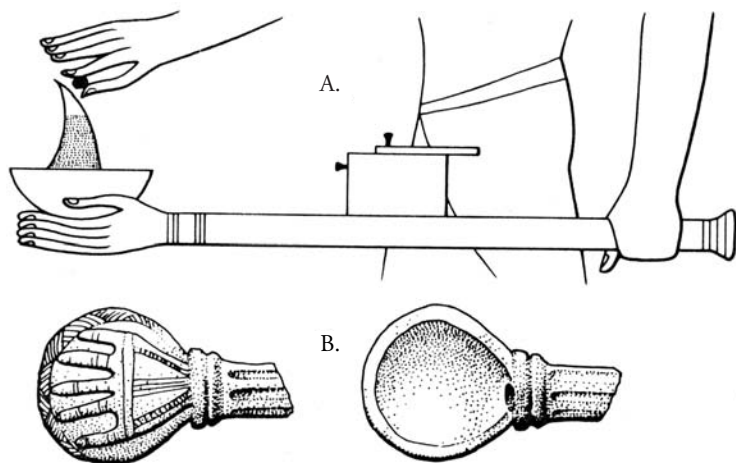
On the Day of Atonement the high priest made a special offering of incense. Upon this day he entered the Holy Place, and placed blood from the sacrifice upon the four horns of the altar of incense. Then he entered the Holy of Holies, where he burned incense in a special censer. The exact shape and composition of this censer is unknown. It may have been similar to the spherical hanging censers that became common in Christianity, or it may have been shaped like the cupped hand common among the Egyptians.<sup>44</sup> The burning incense created a cloud of smoke before the ark, similar to the cloudy pillar from which Jehovah

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> See Isaiah 6.

<sup>44</sup> Nielsen, 39. We do know that censers of this shape were used by Israelites. It is unclear whether they were part of their traditional religion, or in some form of syncretic worship.



Incense was often burned in special holders made in the form of a cupped hand, the “golden spoons” of Exodus 25:29. From the Egyptian version (A) at Beni Hasan, c. 1100 B.C., to an actual steatite example (B) found at Meggido, the “filled hand” (the Hebrew letter *kaph* means “palm”) is the widespread sign of offering sacrifice.

communed with the children of Israel during the Exodus.<sup>45</sup> It was from behind this cloud that Jehovah could commune with the priest (Lev. 16:2, 12–14). This idea is similar to the Egyptian idea that incense formed a connection between earth and heaven.

## The Symbols of Incense

Latter-day Saint scripture encourages readers to liken the scriptures to themselves (1 Ne. 19:23). By taking this perspective, one can begin to discuss what a scripture or a particular symbol means to the individual. This tends to leave the world of scholarship behind. Discussing a personal interpretation or a personal experience is not especially scholastic; yet, it is in the personal that the power of the religious is found. Each individual that

<sup>45</sup> It is also similar to the cloud veil described in Ether 3.



approached an incense altar, whether in a temple, in a grove, or on a mountaintop, saw in this act of worship a symbol of some religious idea.

According to the Psalmist, the rising smoke of incense is a representation of prayer: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). This idea of incense as a symbol of prayer had been clearly reinforced by the time of the rise of Christianity.<sup>46</sup> Yet it is unclear how each element of the very ritualized instructions for the burning of incense represented prayer. Because there is so little information on this subject we are left to our own impressions. As in many symbolic matters, there may be no right or wrong interpretation, as the symbols were intended to be flexible in order to remind a sincere seeker of what they most needed at the moment. What follows then is one possible LDS interpretation of the symbols of the Israelite temple cult.

The incense altar was placed before the veil of the tabernacle or temple. Perhaps this is because God can only be approached through prayer, and it is sacred and sincere prayer that has the power to pierce the veil and bring us into the very presence of God.<sup>47</sup> The coals upon which the incense was burned were brought from the altar of sacrifice.<sup>48</sup> This may be because prayers and sacrifice are related. Today, prayers are offered in the name of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins so that we could be purged from our sins, making us clean that we may stand in the presence of the Lord. On the Day of Atonement, the blood of the sacrifice was placed upon the four horns of the altar. Horns usually

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<sup>46</sup> See Luke 1:8–10, 13; Revelation 5:8; 8:3–4

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Smith–History 1:13–16; Ether 3.

<sup>48</sup> William Brown, *The Tabernacle and its Priests and Services, Described and Considered in Relation to Christ and the Church* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1899; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 130; Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, Updated Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 127; also Isaiah 6:6; LDS Bible Dictionary, s. v. "Incense."

represent power, and the blood clearly represents the blood of the lamb; therefore, the blood of Christ has power to cleanse even the four corners of the world as individuals pray for repentance.

The coals that cause the incense to burn are reminiscent of the power of the Spirit, which burns within our hearts, revealing to us that which we should pray for (Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26) as well as giving us the Lord's answers to our prayers (D&C 9:7–8). In this sense the burning coal may represent not only the burning of our hearts, but the sea of glass and fire that will one day become a means of pure revelation to all the faithful (D&C 130:6–11).

The incense was composed of rare and valuable materials, apparently as valuable as gold. Frankincense and myrrh were gifts worthy of a king. Perhaps the destruction of such valuable commodities in the religious worship is meant to remind the worshipper that in order for prayers to be heard there must be a willingness to give up worldly possessions and dedicate the intent of the heart to the Lord. It is little wonder that fasting and the giving of fast offerings are considered so essential in preparing the hearts so that the prayers may be heard.

## Conclusion

Understanding the composition of incense and its place in other Near Eastern cultures is essential to understanding its use in ancient Israel. The burning of incense, far from being a side note to Israelite temple worship, was in fact a central aspect. Similarly, the Lord considers prayer an important and central part of life, and a prerequisite for the performance of other acts of worship. "Ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul" (2 Ne. 32:9).

# Temple Symbolism in *The Conflict of Adam and Eve*

Duane Wilson

*The Conflict of Adam and Eve is a fascinating pseudepigraphic work that tells the story of the couple after they are cast out of the Garden of Eden. After they left the garden, God commanded them to live in a cave called the Cave of Treasures. This paper explores the function of the Cave of Treasures as a temple to Adam and Eve. Some of the aspects of temple worship discussed include the garment, the use of tokens, and aspects of prayer and revelation.*

*The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* is a pseudepigraphic work of unknown authorship that was written in Arabic between the seventh and ninth centuries A.D.<sup>1</sup> It was later translated into Ethiopic. The text is divided into three parts, the first of which contains a lengthy story about Adam and Eve after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden. The other two parts recount the history of the Israelites from Adam and Eve to the time of Christ. Although the latter two parts are clearly taken from another pseudepigraphic work entitled *The Cave of Treasures*, the first part

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<sup>1</sup> For the argument about it being written after the seventh century A.D., see Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 98. For the argument that it could not have been written after the ninth century A.D., see John Gee, Brian M. Hauglid, and John A. Tvedtnes eds., *Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001), 219.

is entirely unique. Most of this first section could best be described as bizarre. Adam and Eve are portrayed as being extremely traumatized by the differences between living inside and outside the garden. They are so disturbed by the change that they commit suicide several times. Each time they do so, God sends his son to bring them back to life. Though these occurrences are very odd, there are several fascinating concepts presented in the account of Adam and Eve. One of the most interesting features of the text is that different parts of the story parallel aspects of ancient temple typology and worship. This paper will explore the different aspects of ancient temple worship that are found in *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. Specifically, it will demonstrate that the "Cave of Treasures," the place where Adam and Eve lived after they were cast out of the garden, acted as a kind of temple for Adam and Eve.

John M. Lundquist created a temple typology that describes different characteristics that were present in many ancient temples. Lundquist outlined fifteen similarities, and this paper will look at nine of these similarities as they relate to the Cave of Treasures.<sup>2</sup> These items are (1) The temple was oriented toward the four cardinal directions. (2) The temple was the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain. (3) The temple indicated successive ascent toward heaven. (4) The temple was located on sacred, set-apart space. (5) God revealed the plans of the temple to the king. (6) The temple was the central, organizing unit in ancient society. (7) Kings, priests, and temple worshippers were clothed in special garments in the temple. (8) Kings, priests, and temple worshippers were washed. (9) Temples were often associated with the realm of the dead.

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<sup>2</sup> The full list of Lundquist's temple typology is found in John M. Lundquist, "The Legitimizing Role of the Temple" in *Temples of the Ancient World*, Donald Parry, ed., (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 184–88.

Instances in the story of *The Conflict of Adam and Eve* clearly show that the Cave of Treasures functioned in similar ways to ancient temples. It was similar to the temple typology in that (1) the cave was oriented toward the four cardinal directions. (2) The cave was located on the cosmic mountain. (3) The area around the temple indicated successive ascent to heaven. (4) The cave was located on separate, set-apart space. (5) God himself prepared the cave for Adam and Eve. (6) The cave was the central, organizing unit of Adam, Eve, and their posterity. (7) Adam and Eve were given clothing in the cave. (8) Eve had to wash herself before entering the cave. Adam was also washed for different reasons in the story. (9) The cave was the burial place for Adam and his righteous sons.

In addition to Lundquist's typology, this paper will discuss other aspects of ancient temples, including the cave as a place of prayer and revelation, the use of the altar by Adam and his posterity, the importance of tokens in the Cave of Treasures, and the appearances of Satan as an angel of light.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> All quotes from the text come from the only English translation of *The Conflict of Adam and Eve* extant. This was done by Solomon Caesar Malan in 1882. Original spelling will be used in all quotes. In regards to the origin of the book the author stated,

"[the] 'Conflict of Adam' is altogether a Christian work. . . . It is probably the work of some pious and orthodox Egyptian of the fifth or sixth century, who tells his story, or stories—some of which are also found in the Talmud and thence in the Coran and elsewhere—as they were then believed; adding here and there a good deal of his own. . . . His object then, is to connect the first Adam with the coming of the second, Christ; five thousand five hundred years after Adam's fall in Eden . . . [It] was probably written in Arabic in Egypt; whence it was taken farther south, and translated into Ethiopic. At all events no Greek or Egyptian original of it, is, as yet, known to exist."

Solomon Caesar Malan, *The Book of Adam and Eve*, also called the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1882), v–vi (Hereafter cited as *Conflict*; where multiple page numbers occur consecutively, page numbers will be cited in the text). This is obviously a very dated analysis. Much scholarship needs to be done to establish a better date and possibility for authorship.

## Cardinal Directions

As with many ancient temples, the Cave of Treasures was oriented toward the cardinal directions. It was located directly west of and below the Garden of Eden.<sup>4</sup> The cave was oriented in a north-south manner, as evidenced by the fact that the entrance was on the north of the cave.<sup>5</sup> Specific directional orientation of the cave is also mentioned later in the text. In reference to tokens which were placed in the cave the text states: "they laid the gold on the south side of the cave, the incense on the eastern side, and the myrrh on the western side."<sup>6</sup> At Adam's death his body was laid, "on the eastern side of the inside of the cave, the side of the incense."<sup>7</sup> It is clear that the cardinal directions played an important part in relation to the Cave of Treasures.

## Cosmic Mountain

The idea of the cosmic mountain simply means that most ancient temples were located on a mountain. The Cave of Treasures was found on a mountain that was considered sacred, as the text makes evident. After Cain separated his posterity from the posterity of Seth, he left the mountain where his father had dwelt. Seth and his posterity stayed on the mountain which was "the mountain of the Cave of Treasures."<sup>8</sup> In another place the same mountain is referred to by the patriarch Jared as "the Holy Mountain."<sup>9</sup> Thus the mountain that contained the cave was a cosmic mountain, considered holy.

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<sup>4</sup> *Conflict*, 36. "And when they had come out of the cave they went up the mountain to the west of the garden."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 33. The mentioning of gold, incense, and myrrh is obviously a Christian influence that was inspired by the items given at Christ's birth. These items will be discussed in more detail later.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 137–38.

## Successive Ascent

As was stated in Lundquist's typology, many temples suggest ascent to heaven through their architecture. Although there is no direct evidence of ascent within the cave itself, the idea of successive ascent is still evident in the text. After Cain killed Abel, he later married and "went down to the bottom of the mountain, away from the garden."<sup>10</sup> Adam dwelt on a mountain with his remaining son Seth and his other posterity, the same mountain upon which the Garden of Eden and the Cave of Treasures were found. The text states this about Seth and his children:

But Seth and his children, dwelt northwards upon the mountain of the Cave of Treasures. . . . Then, again, the garden was not far above them, but only some fifteen spiritual cubits. . . . Seth and his children dwelt on the mountain below the garden.<sup>11</sup>

Thus it is obvious that the Garden was at the highest point on the mountain and the Cave was below it. Though no specific mention is made of Cain's posterity being banned from the mountain, when some of Seth's posterity wickedly decided to go and see what was below the mountain, they were cut off from returning to the dwelling place of their fathers. The text states:

But after they had thus fallen into this defilement, they returned by the way they had come, and tried to ascend the Holy Mountain. But they could not, because the stones of that holy mountain were of fire flashing before them, by reason of which they could not go up again.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Conflict*, 104.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–19. The text also states: "Now one spiritual cubit answers to three cubits of man; altogether forty-five cubits" (119).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 137–38. The then head patriarch Jared had warned them saying, "'O my good and innocent and holy children, know that when once you go down from this holy mountain, God will not allow you to return again to it'" (136–37).

Thus the area below the mountain was considered the abode of the wicked that had been cut off from the righteous posterity of Adam. This comes as no surprise, since the Garden of Eden would have still been more sacred than the Cave of Treasures, while the cave was more sacred than the abode of the wicked below the mountain.

### Sacred, Set-apart Space

After the posterity of Cain were cut off physically from the Holy Mountain, it became set apart from the wicked people. Only those who refused to leave the mountain—and thus defile themselves with the seed of Cain—could stay there. All others were cut off. In addition, even though the mountain containing the Cave of Treasures was sacred, the most sacred space was still the top of the mountain where the Garden of Eden existed. The garden was so sacred that only those commanded by God were allowed to enter.<sup>13</sup> This is similar to ancient temples, which were built on sacred space that was set apart.

### Cave Prepared by Deity

Most ancient temples were said to have had their plans revealed by God; in the case of the Cave of Treasures, God simply created the cave himself and chose it as a place for Adam and Eve to dwell. God chose the location for Adam's dwelling after he was cast out of the garden.

But when God made Adam go out of the garden, He did not place him on the border of it northward. . . . as to the southern side [of the garden], God was not pleased to let Adam dwell there. . . . He made our father Adam dwell in the western

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<sup>13</sup> For instances of entry into the Garden see *Conflict*, 31–32, 39. Here God commanded angels to obtain items from the Garden. These instances will be discussed later in the paper.



border of the garden. . . . And God commanded him to dwell there in a cave in a rock—the Cave of Treasures below the Garden.<sup>14</sup>

Thus God created the cave specifically as a dwelling place for Adam.

### Central, Organizing Institution

It is clear from the text that the Cave of Treasures became a central place to Adam and Eve and their posterity. In fact, the cave was used to define the place where Adam and his posterity dwelt: “the mountain of the Cave of Treasures.”<sup>15</sup> After Adam and Eve had children, they moved from the Cave of Treasures to another place. However, they still frequently visited the cave. The text states that Adam went there frequently to pray and to rejoice.<sup>16</sup> After Adam and Eve’s children were born, they brought them to the cave to be blessed.<sup>17</sup> Adam and other patriarchs were buried in the cave after their deaths. In addition, their posterity often came to the cave to worship and minister to the bodies.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the cave became so important to Seth and his children that they rarely left it. In describing them the text states:

They continued in praises to God, and in singing psalms unto Him, in their cave—the Cave of Treasures. Then Seth stood before the body of his father Adam, and of his mother Eve, and prayed night and day.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Conflict*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 107. After an experience with Satan, “Adam took Seth, and they went to the Cave of Treasures, and rejoiced therein.” *Conflict*, 112.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 94. After Abel and his twin sister Aklema were born Adam “brought them to the Cave of Treasures, where they received a blessing.”

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 121. It appears that a constant vigil was kept, including a candle or light that was always lit. See *Ibid.*, 117, 124, 128.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

## Clothing

The text states that after Adam and Eve had been gone from the Garden for fifty days they did some work which stained their bodies and caused them much suffering. Adam asked for some type of clothing and God led him to the skins of sheep that had been killed by lions on the south side of the Garden. They obtained the skins, but had no idea how to make garments from them.

Then God sent to them His angel to show them how to work it out. And the angel said to Adam, 'Go forth and bring some palm-thorns . . .'

Then the angel began before them to work out the skins, after the manner of one who prepares a shirt. And he took the thorns and stuck them into the skins, before their eyes.

Then the angel again stood up and prayed God that the thorns in those Skins should be hidden, so as to be, as it were, sewn with one thread.

And so it was, by God's order; they became garments for Adam and Eve, and he clothed them withal.<sup>20</sup>

Although no symbolic function is mentioned, it is interesting that the angel makes sure that the garment appears to be sewn with one thread. This is similar to the garments worn both by the high priest in ancient Israelite religion and by Jesus, which were made as one piece.<sup>21</sup> The text shows that Adam and Eve's garments were originally given as a protection from the physical world;

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<sup>20</sup> *Conflict*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> John A. Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, Donald Parry ed., (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 692. "The robe of Jesus, like that of the high priest in ancient Israel (see Exodus 28:32) was woven as one piece (see John 19:23)."

however, the similarity between priestly garments and the garment of Adam implies that there might have been some important function beyond just that of physical protection.

## Ritual Washing

References to washing are found from early in the text. It is explained that God did not place Adam's dwelling north of the Garden, "lest he should draw near to the sea of water, and he and Eve wash themselves in it, [and] be cleansed from their sins."<sup>22</sup> Later on they apparently try such a course of action. After they had been out of the garden eight days, Adam said, "But now, arise, let us go to the sea of water we saw at first, and let us stand in it, praying that God will again be favourable to us and take us back to the garden."<sup>23</sup> Adam felt that they would be forgiven if they stood in the water for forty days. Though their plan did not work, it is interesting that they believed that standing in the water might somehow help God change his mind.<sup>24</sup> They apparently felt that they could be washed from their sins. Later on in the story Eve bore a child, but she did not approach the altar where Adam offered sacrifices or the Cave of Treasures until she had washed her body in the river.

However, before Eve had offered up the offering, Adam had taken her, and had gone with her to the river of water, in which they threw themselves at first; and there they washed themselves. Adam washed his body and Eve clean.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Conflict*, 2. Therefore, there was a sea of water that somehow could have cleansed them.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> The text states that Satan deceived Eve into thinking he was an angel and convinced her to come out of the water before the forty days was complete (*Ibid.*, 35). The author never tells us if the plan would have worked had they completed it.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

Thus some form of washing was instituted in order to make Eve pure after childbirth. Both she and Adam washed themselves before she approached any sacred place after her childbirth. This is similar to the tradition of ritual washing in ancient temples.

## Realm of the Dead

The Cave of Treasures becomes the grave of Adam and all the patriarchs until Noah. Abel was the first to be buried there after he was murdered. Then, just prior to his death, Adam insisted that he be buried there after his death. He told his son Seth, "The moment I am dead take ye my body . . . and leave me here in this Cave of Treasures in which are all these tokens which God gave us from the garden."<sup>26</sup> His body was laid "on the eastern side of the inside of the cave."<sup>27</sup> Later Eve, Seth, Enos, Jared, Lamech, and Methuselah were all buried there.<sup>28</sup>

The Cave of Treasures, when measured against the temple typology set out by Lundquist, was clearly similar in many ways to ancient temples. In addition to the similarities to Lundquist's typology, however, there are yet other aspects of temple worship that are also found in *The Conflict of Adam and Eve*.

## Prayer and Revelation

Temples often functioned as places of prayer and revelation. It therefore comes as no surprise that the Cave of Treasures had a

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<sup>26</sup> *Conflict*, 115.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 118, 121, 123, 140, 146, 150. Enoch did not die in the book. His fate was as follows,

God transported him from that mountain to the land of life, to the mansions of the righteous and of the chosen, the abode of Paradise of joy, in light that reaches up to heaven; light that is outside the light of this world; for it is the light of God, that fills the whole world, but which no place can contain. Thus, because Enoch was in the light of God, he found himself out of the reach of death; until God would have him die (141).

similar function. The first thing that Adam and Eve did upon entering the cave was to offer prayer.<sup>29</sup> This began a custom of praying often in the cave. "Then Adam and Eve took the skins, and went back to the Cave of Treasures; and when in it, they stood and prayed as they were wont."<sup>30</sup> In response to their prayer about the skins, the Lord sent an angel to help them. This is one of many examples where they received revelation in the cave. The most interesting revelation given in connection with the cave was delivered because of a prayer offered by Adam when he was inquiring about marrying Eve. According to the story, they were not yet married and Satan had been tempting Adam to fornicate with Eve. Adam prayed for help and God sent angels to him with instructions on how to marry her. Thus not only did Adam receive revelation in the cave, but he and Eve were married there according to the instructions they received from the God through the angel. Even after Adam and Eve moved their residence elsewhere, they continued to visit the cave and pray.<sup>31</sup> After Adam died, his posterity returned daily to pray.<sup>32</sup> "They constrained their children and their women every day in the cave to fast and pray, and to worship the most High God."<sup>33</sup>

One aspect of prayer mentioned in the book is that of prayer with uplifted or "spread out" hands, the common practice in the Ancient Near East. Almost all of these instances are mentioned in connection with visits from Satan.<sup>34</sup> The first instance is a time

<sup>29</sup> *Conflict*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 90–91. They were married 223 days after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>34</sup> The one instance where uplifted hands are not connected with a visit of Satan is a time when Adam prays for forgiveness.

Then Adam arose, and *spread his hands* unto God, beseeching and entreating Him with tears, to forgive him what he had done. And Adam remained thus standing and praying forty days and forty nights. He neither ate nor drank until he dropped down upon the earth from hunger and thirst (87, emphasis added).

when Satan appears as his true self (he is generally disguised in some other form) and tells Adam that he is a king over him and will rule over his posterity and wage war against them. In response to this,

Adam and Eve *spread their hands* unto God, praying and entreating Him to drive Satan away from them; that he do them no violence, and do not force them to deny God. Then God sent them at once His angel, who drove away Satan from them.<sup>35</sup>

In another instance, Satan appears to Seth in the form of an angel. He tempts Seth to come with him to another world and marry one of the beautiful women there. Seth attempts to escape and cannot.

But Seth, when he saw how he kept on talking, and that he would not leave him, ran and went up to the altar, and *spread his hands* unto God, and sought deliverance from Him. Then God sent His Word, and cursed Satan, who fled from Him.<sup>36</sup>

## Altar

Worship at altars was also an intimate part of ancient worship. It was done both at temples and at other places. Although the altar in *Conflict of Adam and Eve* was not directly connected with the Cave of Treasures, it was an important part of the story. Soon after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve built an altar and made an offering upon it. The offering was, oddly

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<sup>35</sup> *Conflict*, 65, emphasis added. Another instance is recorded with the patriarch Jared. After he had been deceived by Satan and his followers who had led Jared down from the Holy Mountain “he then spread his hands and prayed with a fervent heart, and with much weeping, and entreated God to deliver him from their hands” (126–30).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 112, emphasis added.

enough, an offering of Adam and Eve's own blood.<sup>37</sup> After this, Adam frequently made offerings, though not of his own blood.<sup>38</sup> "This, then, was the first offering Adam made unto God; and so it became his custom to do."<sup>39</sup> The actual location of the altar was above the Cave of Treasures, but below the Garden of Eden.<sup>40</sup> This could imply a successive ascent to holiness, meaning that the altar was a more sacred and holy place than the cave, while the Garden was the most holy place. They continued to make offerings. The next major offering was at the time of their first harvest, and after that, an offering for their newborn children.<sup>41</sup> Adam showed his sons Cain and Abel how to present offerings, and later Seth and Adam's posterity submitted an offering at Adam's death.<sup>42</sup> In addition to these special altar experiences, the altar was also used daily. This is evident in a narrative about the young Seth:<sup>43</sup> "He also fasted when bringing up his offering every day, more than his father did."<sup>44</sup> Thus, at least for Seth, offering at the altar was a daily occurrence. In connection with Seth's offerings, I point

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<sup>37</sup> *Conflict*, 23–24. Adam and Eve had committed suicide by jumping off a mountain. God sent His "Word" to bring them back to life. After they were alive again, Adam took the leaves and dust that his blood had spilled upon and offered them on the altar. This was symbolic of Christ shedding his own blood.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

But God knew that Adam had in his thoughts, that he should often kill himself and make an offering to Him of his blood. Therefore did He say unto him, 'O Adam, do not again kill thyself as thou didst, by throwing thyself down from that mountain.'

The further sacrifices were generally crops that Adam had harvested. For an example see *Conflict*, 81.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. For the entire altar incident see *Conflict*, 23–25.

<sup>40</sup> The text states that after they offered the offering, "Adam, Eve, and the children, drew near together, and came down from the mountain, rejoicing" (93).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 81, 92.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 95–96, 118.

<sup>43</sup> In a later story of Seth, just prior to his death, he desired to build a roof over the altar in order that a blessing would come upon his children and they would not go down from the mountain. The roof was built with the desired effect. *Conflict*, 119–20.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 109–10.

out the previously mentioned story of Satan being cast out of Seth's presence after he prayed at the altar occurred. It is interesting that Seth had already finished his offering and was apparently some distance from the altar when Satan came to him. This is evident because Seth "ran, and went up to the altar" in order to pray.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the altar must have had some special significance beyond simple sacrifice or Seth would not have thought it important to run back to it and offer his prayer there. It also implies that the altar was connected with prayer as well as sacrifice.

## Tokens

Although not mentioned specifically in the temple typology, tokens were clearly a part of ancient religious society. They were often used as a means of identification. In this story, the objects referred to as tokens are signs from God rather than a means of identification. However, the tokens in this story clearly have a sacred function and are given as signs from God.

Three days after Adam and Eve had been cast out of the garden, Satan came and attempted to kill them. Fortunately, God was merciful and cast Satan out of their midst. After this Adam pled to receive something from the Garden of Eden, "as a token to him, wherein to be comforted."<sup>46</sup> In response to Adam's pleadings, God sent three angels to gather different objects that would stand as tokens. Michael was sent to India to obtain golden rods that would

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<sup>45</sup> *Conflict*, 112.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. Adam and Eve had been following Satan, who had said that he was an angel. "But when they came to the mountain to the north of the garden, a very high mountain, without any steps to the top of it, the Devil drew near to Adam and Eve, and made them go up to the top in reality, and not in a vision; wishing, as he did, to throw them down and kill them, and to wipe off their name from the earth; so that this earth should remain to him and his hosts alone. But when the merciful God saw that Satan wished to kill Adam with his manifold devices, and saw that Adam was meek and without guile, God spake unto Satan in a loud voice, and cursed him" (30–31).



shine in the night, helping to take away the fear of darkness that originally gripped Adam in the cave.<sup>47</sup> Gabriel was commanded to go into the Garden and obtain incense while Raphael went there to get myrrh. They then took the tokens to Adam.

And when Adam saw the golden rods, the incense and the myrrh, he was rejoiced and wept because he thought that the gold was a token of the kingdom whence he had come, that the incense was a token of the bright light which had been taken from him, and that the myrrh was a token of the sorrow in which he was.<sup>48</sup>

However, Adam found that the tokens had other meanings that God had already assigned to them. God gave “gold as a token of My kingdom; incense as a token of My divinity; and myrrh as a token of My sufferings and of My death.” The Lord continued, “But, O Adam, put these by thee in the cave; the gold that it may shed light over thee by night; the incense, that thou smell its sweet savour; and the myrrh, to comfort thee in thy sorrow.” The author of the book adds, “These three things did God give to Adam, on the third day after he had come out of the garden, in token of the three days the Lord should remain in the heart of the earth.”<sup>49</sup> As already mentioned, in addition to the three tokens given by God, Adam placed figs from the garden in the cave as a sign of God’s goodness. Thus Adam received the tokens and their many different symbols, most relating to the coming of Jesus Christ. After this instance, not only did Adam cease to complain about his abode in the Cave of Treasures, but the cave was now called the cave “of concealment.”<sup>50</sup> This seems to imply that the tokens were

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<sup>47</sup> *Conflict*, 31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

something special and were specifically concealed within the cave because of their importance.

Apparently, it was the tokens themselves that caused the cave to be special. Just before Eve was to bear her first children she said to Adam, "This cave is a pure spot by reason of the signs [wrought in] it since [we left] the garden; and we shall again pray in it. It is not meet, then, that I should bring forth in it."<sup>51</sup> Thus she refused to bear her children in the cave because she did not want to defile it. The text does not explain what it means by signs, but it could be referring to the tokens, the many miracles that had happened in the cave, or both. Adam must have agreed to the importance of keeping the cave pure, for they moved to another cave in order for Eve to bear the children. Then, as mentioned, they brought the children back to the cave to bless them, even though they continued to dwell in another place.

The last major discussion about the tokens takes place just prior to Adam's death. Adam was instructing his son Seth on what to do with his body and the tokens:

Preserve this gold, this incense, and this myrrh, that God has given us for a sign; for in days that are coming, a flood will overwhelm the whole creation. But those who shall go into the ark shall take with them the gold, the incense, and the myrrh, together with my body; and will lay the gold, the incense, and the myrrh, with my body in the midst of the earth.

Then after a long time, the city in which the gold, the incense, and the myrrh are found with my body, shall be plundered. But when it is spoiled, the gold, the incense, and the myrrh shall be taken care of with the spoil that is kept; and naught of them shall perish, until the Word of God, made man [sic] shall come; when kings shall take them, and shall offer to Him, gold in token of his being King; incense, in token of His being God of heaven and earth; and myrrh, in token of His passion.

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<sup>51</sup> *Conflict*, 91.

Gold also, as a token of His overcoming Satan, and all our foes; incense as a token that He will rise from the dead, and be exalted above things in heaven and things in the earth; and myrrh, in token that He will drink bitter gall; and [feel] the pains of hell from Satan.<sup>52</sup>

Thus the final meaning of the tokens is explained. They were to be presented at the birth of Christ. It is clear that the actual origin of the items given as tokens was the biblical story of Christ's birth. Although the different meanings of the tokens are very fascinating, the most interesting part of the narrative comes directly after Adam has told their meaning to Seth. He then says, "And now, O Seth, my son, behold I have revealed unto thee hidden mysteries, which God had revealed unto me."<sup>53</sup> Adam felt that revealing the true purpose of the tokens and their meanings was something sacred. It was so sacred that it is considered "a hidden mystery." It is not surprising that the tokens are revealed in the Cave of Treasures, consistent with the cave's function as a kind of temple.

## Appearances of Satan

Satan is a major player in *The Conflict of Adam and Eve*. He appeared to Adam and Eve at least fifteen times in order to tempt

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<sup>52</sup> *Conflict*, 115–16. Several interesting points are made when the body of Adam is laid to rest after the flood. In a certain place Noah commanded his son Shem saying,

"Then take Melchizedec the youngest son of Cainan, thy son; for God has chosen him from all generations of men, to stand before Him to worship and to minister unto Him, by the body of our father Adam. Then lay the body of Adam in the midst of the earth; and set Melchizedec to stand by it; and show him how to fulfil his ministry before God." Moreover Noah said unto Shem his son, "If ye will keep my commandment and go [as I tell you], an angel of the Lord will go with you, and show you the way, until ye come to the place where ye shall lay the body [of Adam] in the midst of the earth; for in that self-same place shall God work salvation for the whole world." (161).

Thus this book suggests that Melchizedek was the grandson of Shem, that he was chosen to minister to the body of Adam, and that Adam was buried in the same place that Christ would accomplish the atonement.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

and destroy them.<sup>54</sup> He appeared many more times to their posterity. In several of these appearances, he disguised himself as an angel of light in order to trick and confuse those whom he visited. In one of these instances, "Satan came to the cave, clad in a garment of light, and girt about with a bright girdle. In his hands was a staff of light."<sup>55</sup> In this state, Satan said that he has been commanded by God to take them to another place and, "clothe them in a garment of light, and restore them to their former state of grace, and leave them not in misery."<sup>57</sup> Satan began to lead Adam and Eve to another place in order to destroy them, but before he could lead them too far, God chased him away. In his explanation to Adam, God stated that Satan "began to give you tokens as if they were all true."<sup>57</sup> Satan appeared with special clothing and attempted to give tokens to Adam so that he would mistake him for a true messenger of God. Fortunately, God was there to help Adam realize that Satan was not a true messenger, but a false messenger who gave false tokens.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

*The Book of Adam and Eve* (also known as *The Conflict of Adam and Eve*) is a fascinating exploration of the life of Adam and Eve and their posterity after they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. In it, Adam and Eve used the Cave of Treasures as a sort of replacement for the Garden of Eden, which they were

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<sup>54</sup> *Conflict*, 106.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 67–68.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>58</sup> In another instance, Satan appears to Seth with a staff of light in hand, and girt with a girdle of light. At that time Satan tempted Seth to go live with him in his world where "we have no God; but we all are gods; we all are of the light, heavenly, powerful, strong, and glorious," 110–11. Another time Satan appears at the mouth of the Cave of Treasures with his hosts. He is sitting on a throne and flashing light into the cave, however, he cannot enter because Adam and Eve are praying (27–29).

forbidden to enter. This is evident by the similarity of the Cave of Treasures to certain aspects of Lundquist's temple typology. *The Conflict of Adam and Eve* also exhibits other aspects of ancient temple worship, including the Cave of Treasures as a place of prayer and revelation, the altar above the cave that was used by Adam and his posterity, the importance of tokens in the Cave, and the appearances of Satan.



# NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES



In this mosaic at Ravenna, c. A.D. 520, a youthful Christ dressed in the royal purple blesses the loaves and fishes, reverently held by his disciples, who wear white *dalmatic* with *clavi* and mantle. The mantles are depicted with the *gammadia* woven into their corners.



This is the earliest surviving figural representation of the Transfiguration, A.D. 565–66. Its preservation is due to its remote location at Saint Catherine's monastery at Mount Sinai. Christ raises his right hand in the usual benediction while seven shafts of light radiate out to the world. The intense cerulean blue of the *mandorla*, or oval halo, around Christ is the artist's representation of the literary image in Exodus 24:10: "Under his feet . . . lapis lazuli clear as the sky," thus connecting the two sacred mountains where prophets saw God.



# The Mount of Transfiguration

Rebecca Lynne Sybrowsky

*The sacred events on the Mount of Transfiguration solidified Simon Peter's authority to lead the nascent Church. By examining, the scriptural account of the Transfiguration, with Old Testament parallels and modern revelation, this article demonstrates that Peter received the authority and the governing keys requisite to lead the kingdom of God on the earth.*

*This article is a chapter of a thesis entitled "The Leadership of Peter in the Early Christian Church."*

We made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed. (2 Pet. 1:16–19)

Although each of the synoptic gospels recorded an account of the events on the Mount of Transfiguration, the details included in the New Testament accounts are cursory (Matt. 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–13; Luke 9:28–36). The command that Christ gave Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone of the events until after his resurrection can explain some of this: "And as they came down from

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the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead" (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9). Although they discussed the transfiguration among themselves (Mark 9:10), Luke added that, "they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen" (Luke 9:36). However, in addition to the synoptic gospels, Peter and John elsewhere refer to the witness of the glory of Christ they received on the mount (John 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:16–19; 1 John 1:1–3). Speaking of the experience upon the Mount of Transfiguration, Joseph Smith explained that we do not yet have a record of the full account of the apostles' experiences on the mount.<sup>1</sup>

While the limited records imply that there is much we do not know about what occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration, this experience, following the events a week earlier at Caesarea Philippi, was foundational in Peter's preparation to succeed Christ in becoming the leader of the Church. It is significant that the synoptic authors placed the transfiguration passage immediately following Peter's declaration of Christ, thus linking Peter's promised keys to guide the church with his presence on the Mount of Transfiguration. Terence Smith asserts, "The transfiguration is often interpreted as a divine confirmation of Peter's confession of Jesus' Messiahship."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the events at Caesarea Philippi and at the mount legitimized Peter's administrative and ministerial authority of leadership.<sup>3</sup> Peter's declaration of Christ and the

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the account, Joseph said: "of which account the fulness ye have not yet received." Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1, comp. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 208.

<sup>2</sup> Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity: Attitudes towards Peter in Christian Writings of the First Two Centuries* (Tübingen, Germany: Gulde-Druck GmbH, 1985), 170.

<sup>3</sup> See Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*, 155; T. Smith, 139–40; Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Anchor Bible: 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37c (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 171–72.

Mount of Transfiguration are related events in which Peter received the authority over the kingdom of God on the earth, or keys of the kingdom. These keys were the directing power of the Church. The basis of Peter's authority centered on the fact that he received both the governing keys and the requisite divine revelation to direct the young Church.

### **Literary Context**

One week after Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi, Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus up a high mountain where the keys to the kingdom Christ promised to Peter were conferred upon all three of them (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28). Both Matthew and Mark placed the ascension of the Mount of Transfiguration six days after the events at Caesarea Philippi, while Luke recorded that these events were eight days apart. Presumably, Luke included the terminal days while Matthew and Mark only counted the days between the two events.

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus had taught his disciples about his impending death and resurrection. His teachings, undoubtedly, were fresh on the minds of all involved in the transfiguration, which partially explains why there were other references to Jesus' death and resurrection at the transfiguration. It is significant to note that both Peter's confession of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi and the transfiguration occurred as Jesus was preparing to leave Galilee and begin his Judean ministry, six months before Jesus' crucifixion. Thus, these experiences transpired at a pivotal time in the ministry of Jesus and in the preparation of Peter and the apostles to lead the church after his death.

### **Historical Context**

Exodus 24 records an account of Moses on Mount Sinai which parallels the New Testament account of Christ, Peter,

James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses selected three worshipers, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, to confirm the covenant as well as seventy Elders.<sup>4</sup> They were to worship from a distance while Moses alone would go near to the Lord (Ex. 24:1–2). As they went up Mount Sinai, “they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness” (Ex. 24:10). Moses then ascended Mt. Sinai alone and as a cloud overshadowed him he heard the voice of the Lord:

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. (Ex. 24:15–18)

This passage and the transfiguration account described similar circumstances surrounding sacred experiences. Most significantly, both included the ascent up a mountain to remove the participants from the people in order to participate in a sacred experience in which a covenant was given and the glory of the Lord was manifested by his presence there. Both biblical accounts emphasize that a cloud accompanied the glory of the Lord (see Matt. 17:2, 5; Mark 9:2, 7; Luke 9:29, 34–35). Just as the transfiguration was six days apart from Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Messiah and his receiving the promised of governing keys of the kingdom, there was also a six-day time period between Moses’ initial ascent up into the mount and his second entry into the cloud

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce Chilton, “Transfiguration,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 640–42.

when he received the law. Thus, the parallels between the Mount of Transfiguration and Moses' experiences on Mount Sinai indicate that the sacred events on the mountains were similar in significance. Just as Moses was the receiver of sacred revelation on Sinai which included the divine dispensation of the law, covenants, and commandments which governed Israel, so also would Peter, James, and John receive sacred covenants and teachings which would enable them, with Peter at their head, to lead the Church after the death of Christ.

### Synoptic Accounts

Each of the Synoptic gospels included an account of the experiences upon the Mount of Transfiguration. While the synoptic writers agreed on the general events that transpired on the mount, each writer presented unique details. For example, while each noted that Peter, James, and John were afraid while on the mount, each offered a different reason as to why. Mark recorded their fear as the reason why Peter suggested the building of the tabernacles for Christ, Moses, and Elias (Mark 9:5-6); Luke stated "they feared as they entered into the cloud" which overshadowed them (Luke 9:34); while Matthew said they were afraid after hearing the voice of the Father from the cloud declaring the divinity of Jesus (Matt. 17:5-7). Both Matthew and Mark included a conversation between the three apostles and Christ regarding the meaning of the rising from the dead and Elias (Mark 9:10-13). Matthew recorded that when the Father witnessed that Jesus was his beloved son, he stated: "in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 17:5). Luke added the greatest number of unique details to his account of the transfiguration. He opened his account by noting that Christ ascended the mount to pray (Luke 9:29). The Lucan account also includes that while Moses and Elias spoke with Jesus about his upcoming death, Peter, James, and John "were heavy with sleep" (Luke 9:31-32).

Terence Smith points out that in the Matthean account, in connection with Matt. 16:17–19, “the transfiguration appears to have been interpreted as an additional assurance of Peter’s authority, granted on this occasion by means of a vision of the transfigured, heavenly Jesus.”<sup>5</sup> Of the transfiguration accounts, Matthew’s appears to contain the most common elements of the three gospel accounts, as Mark’s and Luke’s both include several verses unique to their records.

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard [it], they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. (Matt. 17:1–9).

## The Mountain of Transfiguration

The New Testament accounts of the transfiguration record, as the setting for the event, that Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a high mountain apart from others by themselves (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2; see also Luke 9:28). The JST Mark account adds that Peter, James, and John “asked [Jesus] many questions concerning

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<sup>5</sup> T. Smith, 203.

his sayings” before he led them up into the mountain (JST Mark 9:1). Luke includes that one of Jesus’ purposes for ascending the mountain was to pray (Luke 9:28–29), lending itself to the interpretation that the transfiguration was to take place in a sacred, set apart place. Jesus’ injunction to Peter, James, and John emphasized the sacredness of the experience: “Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead” (Matt. 17:9; see also Mark 9:9; Luke 9:36).

“After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart” (Matt. 17:1). Here, Matthew emphasized Christ’s removal of Peter, James, and John to a sacred space in a secret setting. Jesus took παραλαμβάνει Peter, James, and John unto himself. This removal has the connotation of being taken to oneself, being taken with, or being received with favor.<sup>6</sup> Matthew stressed this taking of Peter, James, and John as Jesus “bringeth (ἀναφέρει) them up into a high mountain.” This emphatic repetition of being taken or led up is reminiscent of religious, sacrificial rituals and could also be translated as “to bring up,” “to uphold,” “to offer” (in sacrifice), or “to restore.”<sup>7</sup> The fact that Jesus took them “into a high mountain apart” emphasizes the secrecy of this removal to a sacred location. The phrase κατ’ ἰδίαν literally means “privately, by oneself.”<sup>8</sup> Mark emphasized that Jesus took them “apart by themselves,” illustrating the desire for solitude during these events.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 619. See also F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed., rev. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 149.

<sup>7</sup> Henry George Liddell, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 64. See also Bauer 1979, 63.

<sup>8</sup> Liddell, 375. See also Bauer 1979, 371.

<sup>9</sup> C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible: Mark* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 361.

experiences on the mount were limited to only Jesus, Peter, James, and John. Thus, as Jesus conferred authority upon Peter to lead the Church, the presence of James and John with Peter indicated that they would jointly hold the keys and use them to direct the church under Peter's leadership.

From Moses' experiences upon Mount Sinai to Peter, James, and John's experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, mountains have always been symbolic of temples or the house of the Lord.<sup>10</sup> "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Is. 2:2; see also Ps. 48:2). This mountain imagery illustrated the successive ascent toward deity that the temple enables. In ancient Near Eastern cultures, high mountains as temples expressed the idea of a successive ascent toward heaven. Stephen Ricks asserts that "Jesus and his earliest followers, unable to perform their sacred ceremonies in temples, were obliged, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, to resort 'to the mountain top as did Moses,' which itself was a type of temple."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in the temple context, their ascension up the Mount of Transfiguration was a progressive ascent into sacred space. Sacred space is a place where the divine has been manifested. The following points have characterized it: a set apart place, a restricted entrance with guards, a meeting point between heaven and earth, a dwelling place for deity on earth, a performing of sacred rituals, an observatory or place of learning, and ascending degrees of

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<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of what constitutes a temple and its ritual in the ancient Near East, see John M. Lundquist, "What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 83–117.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen D. Ricks, "Christ and the Temple," unpublished article in possession of author, 9. See also Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 608; hereafter cited as J. Smith 1980a.



sacredness.<sup>12</sup> Joseph Smith taught that one reason why Christ removed Peter, James, and John to the high mountain was so they could receive the fulness of the priesthood,<sup>13</sup> often described as receiving the temple endowment.<sup>14</sup>

Although the location of the mountain does not determine the occurrence of sacred events upon it, traditions of a mountain location for sacred events are significant in establishing a strong precedent for future sacred events on the same mountain. New Testament accounts do not name the mountain upon which the transfiguration occurred; however, tradition holds to two possible sites: Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon. Although the Old Testament texts associated both mountains with holy and sacred locations of righteousness, the arguments for Mount Hermon as the location of the transfiguration are more convincing.

*Mount Tabor.* Moses identified Tabor as a place of worship for the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar. "And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the

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<sup>12</sup> Donald W. Parry, "Sacred Space and Profane Space," *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 415–16.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion on Christ also receiving the fulness of the priesthood on the mount, see Joseph Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 246, 307, n. 38; hereafter cited as J. Smith 1980b.

<sup>14</sup> See Ricks, 10. To the significance of Peter, James, and John receiving their temple endowment on the mount, he quotes Heber C. Kimball,

Jesus took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain, and there gave them their [temple] endowment. . . . For the same purpose has the Lord called us up into these high mountains, that we may 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.

Heber C. Kimball, "Proclamation of the Gospel to the Dead," *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9 (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 327.

abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand" (Deut. 33:18–19). While this reference does not specifically mention Tabor as a mountain where the people were to offer sacrifices, the boundaries of Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali met at Mount Tabor, and, consequently, Tabor is likely the sacred mountain mentioned in this passage.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps this Old Testament tradition combined with Tabor's location near Galilee gave rise to the Christian tradition, dating to the fourth century A.D., which cited Tabor as the location of the transfiguration.<sup>16</sup> Although this tradition identified Tabor as the Mount of Transfiguration, the arguments for Hermon as the location are more convincing than those for Tabor. Edersheim explains the reasons for choosing Mount Hermon over Mount Tabor as the transfiguration site:

There can scarcely be a reasonable doubt that Christ and His disciples had not left the neighborhood of Caesarea,<sup>1</sup> and hence, that 'the mountain' must have been one of the slopes of gigantic, snowy Hermon. In that quiet semi-Gentile retreat of Caesarea Philippi could He best teach them, and they best learn, without interruption or temptation from Pharisees and Scribes, that terrible mystery of His Suffering.

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<sup>1</sup> According to an old tradition, Christ had left Caesarea Philippi, and the scene of the Transfiguration was Mount Tabor. But (1) there is no notice of His departure, such as in generally made by St. Mark; (2) on the contrary, it is mentioned by St. Mark as after the Transfiguration (ix. 30); (3) Mount Tabor was at that time crowned by a fortified city, which would render it unsuitable for the scene of the Transfiguration. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See also Rafael Frankel, "Tabor, Mount," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 305.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950), 92.

Thus, the arguments for Mount Hermon as the site of the transfiguration seem to be more compelling largely because the Hermon range is in the region of Caesarea Philippi, where Christ and his disciples had been the week prior, and its remote location was more likely to provide a sacred retreat than Tabor with a fortified city on its summit.

*Mount Hermon.* Most Old Testament references to Hermon described the range as one of the northern borders of the lands which the Israelites possessed (see Deut. 3:8–9; 4:48; Josh. 11:3, 17; 12:1, 5). However, one passage associated Mount Hermon with the location where the Lord pronounced the blessing of eternal life: “As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Ps. 133:3).<sup>18</sup> This passage is significant because it referred to Hermon not only as a sacred location of worship, but also as a location where recipients receive blessings which give them the promise of eternal life.

Jewish tradition associates Mount Hermon with “a place of cursing and vowing.”<sup>19</sup> Both 1 and 2 *Enoch* identify Mount Hermon as the location where two hundred “watchers,” or fallen angels, made mutually-binding vows. Upon deciding to choose wives from among the children on men, the leader of these angels feared that all would not follow him and he alone would pay the penalty of this sin. They all answered, “‘Let us all swear an oath, and bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.’ Then sware they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because

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<sup>18</sup> This reference is one of only two Old Testament references to eternal life: “life for evermore” (Ps. 133:3) and “life everlasting” (Dan. 12:2).

<sup>19</sup> R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, rev. ed., vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 440.

they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it" (1 *Enoch* 6:3–6).

2 *Enoch* presents a similar scenario of fallen angels upon the mount; however, it differs from the 1 *Enoch* account in that only three break their vows on Mount Hermon and are faced with great punishment from God. "Three of them went down on to earth from the Lord's throne, to the place Ermon [Mount Hermon], and broke through their vows on the shoulder of the hill Ermon and saw the daughters of men how good they are, and took to themselves wives, and befouled the earth with their deeds. . . . And therefore God judged them with great judgement, and they weep for their brethren and they will be punished on the Lord's great day" (2 *Enoch* 18:4–6). These pseudepigraphal Enoch accounts establish Mt. Hermon as a location upon which sacred events—or their reversal—took place, including the taking of sacred vows associated with mutual imprecations.

Jewish legends also associate Mount Hermon as a spot worthy of revelation, one of the four mountains contending for the Shekinah of God to rest upon it (as also was Mount Tabor), and a possible location upon which the heavenly Jerusalem would descend.<sup>20</sup> Archaeological evidence supports Mount Hermon as a location for sacred temple experiences. Ritual centers, Baal-gad and Baal-hermon, were located at the base of Hermon. The highest of Hermon's three peaks houses the remains of a temple dating from the first to fourth century A.D., Qasr ash-Shabib. Additionally, archaeological excavations have uncovered more than twenty temple sites on Mount Hermon and its surrounding areas, which, when compared with other regions of the Phoenician coast, is an unprecedented number.<sup>21</sup> Not only do these traditions lend

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<sup>20</sup> Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1937), 83; vol. 6, 31–32.

<sup>21</sup> Rami Arav, "Hermon, Mount," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 158–59.

themselves to the interpretation that it was Mt. Hermon, not Tabor which was the site of the transfiguration, but they also establish a precedent for sacred experiences, including obtaining divine revelation, making sacred vows, and receiving the blessings of eternal life.

## The Transfiguration

Upon their arrival on the Mount, Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John. "The fashion of his countenance was altered" (Luke 9:29) "and his face did shine as the sun" (Matt. 17:2). The word 'transfiguration' (μεταμορφώθη) literally refers to a change in form.<sup>22</sup> As a part of the transfiguration, his clothing shone brightly. The synoptic gospels recorded: "And his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2); "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9:3); "And his raiment was white and glistering" (Luke 9:29).

Later in his narrative, Luke identified this transfiguration as "glory" which had come upon Christ (Luke 9:32). The symbolism of Christ's glory and the transformed countenance and clothing reflects both the divinity of Christ and the sacredness of the event.<sup>23</sup> In biblical usage, the word "glory" is a symbolic description of "splendor, beauty, magnificence, radiance, and rap-  
ture, . . . primarily a quality ascribed to God and places of his presence, including places of worship and heaven. The glory of God is an image of his greatness and transcendence."<sup>24</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>22</sup> Bauer 1979, 511.

<sup>23</sup> Ricks describes how the transfiguration of Christ itself was a type of a sacred garment used in rituals and temple settings. "The white linen clothing that the priests wore while performing their ceremonies and the white linens of the Dead Sea Scrolls covenants were but a pale reflection of the blinding brightness of the raiment of Christ's clothing," Ricks, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 330.

transfiguration was a literal, visible change in which a manifestation of his divinity descended upon Jesus.

Other biblical and apocryphal accounts use similar language to describe this divine glory. In Enoch's vision, as he approached the throne of God, he states: "And the Great Glory was sitting upon [the throne]—as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow" (1 *Enoch* 14:20). 2 Enoch uses the phrases "their faces were like the shining sun" and "their faces were more radiant than the radiance of the sun" to describe heavenly messengers (2 *Enoch* 1:5; 19:1). Furthermore, Albright and Mann point out that the book of Revelation employs similar language sixteen times in conjunction with both heavenly beings and heavenly things.<sup>25</sup>

Peter and John would later refer to this experience as a time when they witnessed Jesus' glory. John opened his gospel account by witnessing of the glory of Christ, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14; see also 1 John 1:1–3). In his second epistle, Peter stated, "[we] were eyewitnesses of [Christ's] majesty. For he received from God the father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him. . . . And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16–19).

There is a precedence for the idea that all those who were present on the mount received this divine glory so that they could withstand being in its presence. The JST Genesis account of Moses' vision explains that "Moses was caught into an exceedingly high mountain. And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence" (Moses 1:1–2). Moses described the glory of God descending upon him as a transfiguration: "But now

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<sup>25</sup> W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, vol. 26 (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 220. See also Esdras 7:97; and Rev. 1:14–16.

mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him” (Moses 1:11). As Moses descended Mount Sinai with the covenant, he “wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with [God]”; however, Aaron and all the children of Israel witnessed that his face shone after being in the presence of the Lord (Ex. 34:29–35). Joseph Smith taught that Peter, James, and John were also transfigured on the mount.<sup>26</sup> In both cases, the transfiguration before the presence of the Lord was likely a result of divine glory being extended to mortals in a divine presence so that they could withstand his glory.

### Moses and Elias

During the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah<sup>27</sup> appeared in glory and talked with Christ “of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31; see also Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4). Moses and Elijah, and their presence at the transfiguration, are symbolic of the Jewish Law and Prophets, respectively.<sup>28</sup> The Old Testament describes the significant role Moses and Elijah held in history and, consequently, the keys which they held: Moses as the ancient gatherer of Israel, and Elijah as holding the power to seal the heavens (see Ex. 3:7–17; 1 Kings 17:1–7; 18:1). Significantly, the translations of both Moses and Elijah at the end of their mortal

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<sup>26</sup> J. Smith 1980a, vol. 3, 387.

<sup>27</sup> While Elias is also used as a title of one who is sent to prepare the way for the coming of Christ, in this context, it is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Elijah. Elijah would be known as an Elias, As was John the Baptist, both of whom had roles in preparing for the mission of Jesus Christ. See Bauer 1979, 345. See also JST Mark 9:3 which states that John the Baptist also appeared during the transfiguration.

<sup>28</sup> Ryken, 859. Albright, 220. See Rebecca L. Sybrowsky, “The Leadership of Peter in the Early Christian Church” (master’s thesis, BYU, 2002), ch. 4, for the historical context of the Jewish respect for the Law and Prophets.

lives enabled their presence on the Mount of Transfiguration so that they could physically give to Peter, James, and John some of the keys which govern the kingdom of God.

As we have seen, keys are biblical symbols of power and authority held by prophets for governing the kingdom of God. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman discuss the meaning of keys in biblical texts: "Keys symbolize power because they are given to those who are judged trustworthy. . . . In the Old Testament keys belong to the steward of the house, the trusted servant, the one that the master has chosen for the household affairs." Thus, in the biblical context, keys are dual images of trust and responsibility. "For the one who gives the keys, they are symbols of trust and belief in the character of the steward. For the one who receives the keys, they are symbols of responsibility." While Jesus taught the Jewish leaders that keys control access to revelation (see Luke 11:52), his statement implied that, because the Jewish leaders did not fulfill their responsibility in accessing and teaching the truth, they had lost the keys which they had once held.<sup>29</sup> The biblical references to keys (Is. 22:22; Matt. 16:13–20; Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7) imply that there are several keys associated with the kingdom of God.<sup>30</sup>

As two of the foremost prophets in the Old Testament with roles that embodied trust and responsibility, both Moses and Elijah held keys for the governing of the kingdom. Joseph Smith recorded that it was on the Mount of Transfiguration that Peter, James, and John received some of these governing keys of the kingdom. "The Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount when they were transfigured before him."<sup>31</sup> These keys were presumably the "keys of the kingdom" which Christ had previously promised to Peter with which he would lead the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:19). The Old

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<sup>29</sup> See also Ginzberg 1937, vol. 4, 286, 303.

<sup>30</sup> Ryken, 859. See ch. 4, "Upon this Rock," for a discussion of keys, specifically those which were promised to Peter.

<sup>31</sup> J. Smith 1980a, vol. 3, 387.



Testament accounts reveal that Moses held the keys to the law and to the gathering of Israel while Elijah held the keys to the sealing of the heavens (see Ex. 3:7–10, 16–17; 1 Kings 17:1–7; 18:1). As Peter, James, and John received the governing keys of the kingdom, Moses and Elijah's presence on the mount suggested that it was at this time that they conferred their keys upon the apostles.

*The Law and the Prophets.* As the receiver of the law, Moses typified the commandments of the Lord and adherence to the Jewish customs that distinguished Israel from other nations. The Law of Moses was so significant that Jesus taught several times that he would not destroy the law but that he would fulfill it. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17–18; see also Luke 16:16–17; 24:44). John later testified that Jesus fulfilled the law: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). As the leader who received the law, Moses also held the responsibility to gather Israel to their promised land (Ex. 3:7–10, 16–17). While this commission was physical, it also typified a spiritual gathering through obedience to the law, commandments, and covenants. Thus, Moses not only was symbolic of the Law, but he also represented the physical and spiritual gathering of Israel to the Savior.

Like Moses, Elijah stands out among the Old Testament prophets of Israel, being "traditionally held to be the greatest Hebrew prophet" whose return would be a necessary prelude to the deliverance and restoration of Israel.<sup>32</sup> Malachi spoke of both Moses and Elijah as he prophesied of the destruction of the wicked before the coming of Christ in the final days of the earth's

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<sup>32</sup> F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2d edition, rev. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 451–52.

history. "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:4–6). This prophecy of an appearance of Elijah before the coming of the Lord led to a Jewish tradition that Elijah would return as a forerunner before the coming of the Messiah, a tradition to which the New Testament also strongly attests (see Matt. 16:13–14; Mark 6:14–15; 8:27–28; Luke 9:7–8, 18–19; John 1:21–23).<sup>33</sup> Discussing this prophecy, Joseph Smith explained that "Elijah was the last Prophet that held the keys of the Priesthood." Consequently, Elijah would return before the great and dreadful day of the Lord "because he holds the keys of authority to administer in all the ordinances of the Priesthood; and without the authority is given [*sic*], the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness."<sup>34</sup> Elijah was to restore these keys so that the hearts of the fathers could be turned to the children and the children to the fathers or, in other words, so that what was bound (or sealed) in the heavens might also be sealed on earth.

Elijah was renowned for the miracles he performed, specifically that of sealing the heavens for over three years (1 Kings 17:1–7; 18:1). This key, or power and authority, of sealing the heavens which Elijah held is perhaps what Jewish tradition referred to as Elijah's "keys of rain."<sup>35</sup> Tradition also holds that, at the time of the Babylonian captivity, the keys were taken from the Jewish leaders and returned to Jehovah, whose hand appeared in a cloud to remove them because of the unworthiness of the servants who held those keys.<sup>36</sup> This tradition implies that the keys could return

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<sup>33</sup> Jerome T. Walsh, "Elijah," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 465. See also Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956), 600–01.

<sup>34</sup> J. Smith 1980a, vol. 4, 211.

<sup>35</sup> Ginzberg 1937, vol. 6, 318–19.

to a worthy servant from the hand of the Lord in a cloud. The dialogue in Matthew 16:13–20 and Peter's presence on the Mount of Transfiguration reveals that Jesus had judged Simon Peter to be such a servant who was worthy to hold the keys of the kingdom of God (see Matt. 16:13–20). Thus, these keys are likely the keys of the binding and loosening of the heavens which Jesus had promised Peter that he would receive for the governing of the Church (Matt. 16:18–19).

*The Translation of Moses and Elijah.* The traditions of their translations partially explain Moses and Elijah's physical presence on the mount. While the Old Testament text attested to the translation of Elijah, it recorded that Moses died, but left some uncertainty because no one knew where his sepulcher was: "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:5–7).

Although Deuteronomy offered a vague account of Moses' death, Josephus repeated a tradition that Moses "disappeared" or was translated:

Now as soon as they [Moses, Eleazar, and Joshua] were come to the mountain called Abarim, (which is a very high mountain, situated over against Jericho, and one that affords, to such as are upon it, a prospect of the greatest part of the excellent land of Canaan,) he dismissed the senate; and as he was going to embrace Eleazar and Joshua, and was still discoursing with them, a cloud stood over him on the sudden, and he disappeared in a certain valley, although he wrote in the holy books that he died, which was done out of fear, lest they should venture to say that, because of his extraordinary virtue, he went to God. (Ant. 4.8.48 §326)

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, 286, 303.

Josephus' description of the transfiguration of Moses offers a likely explanation for his disappearance, as the inability to locate the tomb of a revered prophet is unusual in biblical culture.<sup>37</sup>

Both the Old Testament text and Josephus' history attest to Elijah's translation. 2 Kings records that Elijah and Elisha journeyed together prior to Elijah's translation. "There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11). Josephus also speaks of Elijah's translation: "Now at this time it was that Elijah disappeared from among men, and no one knows of his death to this very day; but he left behind him his disciple Elisha, as we have formerly declared. And indeed, as to Elijah, . . . it is written in the sacred books that [he] disappeared, but so that nobody knew that [he] died" (Ant. 9.2.2 §28). It is significant that both Moses and Elijah were translated because their translations made possible their appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration with physical bodies which enabled them to confer the keys which they held upon the three apostles.

### Peter, James, and John

Of the twelve apostles, only Peter, James, and John witnessed the transfiguration. Scholars often refer to their inclusion at

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<sup>37</sup> Speaking of the Alma the Younger's translation, The Book of Mormon records: "And it came to pass that he [Alma] was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of. Behold, this we know, that he was a righteous man; and the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up by the spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses. But behold, the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself; and we suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself; therefore, for this cause we know nothing concerning his death and burial" (Alma 45:18–19). Referring to both this passage and Deut. 34:5–7, Bruce R. McConkie concludes that Moses and Alma the Younger were both translated. McConkie suggests that the phrase "buried by the hand of the Lord" was a figure of speech which meant that the individual was translated. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d edition (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 805.

several sacred, closed-door events as an inner circle among the twelve apostles.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the presence of the three on the Mount of Transfiguration leads to the idea that it was a very sacred event, exclusively for the training of those who would hold all of the keys necessary to lead the church.<sup>39</sup> The synoptic accounts illustrate that the apostles did not have a full understanding of the significance of the events which transpired during the transfiguration (Mark 9:6, 10; Luke 9:33). However, they provided an explanation for the apostles' incomplete understanding of the transfiguration by describing the reactions of Peter, James, and John on the mount, including their falling asleep for a time, Peter's comment on the building of tabernacles, and their fear.

*Sleeping Disciples.* One of Luke's unique additions to the Mount of Transfiguration narrative is in regards to the disciples sleeping during the visit of Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elias conversed with the Lord "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him" (Luke 9:31–32). Hengel suggests that Peter's sleeping at the transfiguration scene "has probably been drawn from the Marcan Gethsemane scene" in an attempt to place Peter in a softer light by removing mention that he slept while Christ suffered at Gethsemane.<sup>40</sup> However, the exhaustion of Peter may be more significant to an understanding of the events on the Mount of Transfiguration and, in light of Luke's concern for historical accuracy, deserves more examination than merely excusing it as drawn from another scene.

There is a strong modern-day and scriptural precedent for recipients of heavenly visions to experience physical weakness and

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<sup>38</sup> PHEME PERKINS, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 60.

<sup>39</sup> See J. Smith, vol. 1, 36; vol. 5, 152.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 62.

exhaustion as Peter, James, and John did at both the Mount of Transfiguration and the Garden of Gethsemane. In February 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, in a room with twelve others, received the vision of the three degrees of glory in which the heavens were opened to them (D&C 76). Philo Dibble, who was present, recorded, "Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which Joseph remarked smilingly, 'Sidney is not used to it as I am.'" <sup>41</sup>

Several prophets have recorded similar weakness following a vision. Joseph Smith, in his account of the First Vision, remarked, "when the light had departed, I had no strength." <sup>42</sup> After his vision of the glory of the Lord, Daniel recounted, "I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (Daniel 10:8–9). Lehi, following a vision, returned home and "cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen" (1 Nephi 1:7). Moses also records similar weakness following his experience when he ascended the high mountain to converse with God face to face. "As he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth. And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man" (Moses 1:9–10). Therefore, Luke's addition that Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep during the transfiguration scene attests to a divine presence during the vision, and implies that the apostles received a significant vision, effectively declaring the prophetic stature of Peter, James, and John as ones worthy to receive such a vision.

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<sup>41</sup> Philo Dibble, "Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Juvenile Instructor* 27, no. 10 (15 May 1892): 303–4.

<sup>42</sup> J. Smith 1980a, vol. 1, 6.

*Tabernacles.* As Moses and Elias departed, Peter declared that “it is good for us to be here” and suggested building three tabernacles on the mount for Jesus, Moses, and Elias (Matt. 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33).<sup>43</sup> Both Mark and Luke recorded that Peter did not know what to say when he put forth the idea of building tabernacles; however, Mark added the detail that “he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid” (Mark 9:6; see also Luke 9:33).

Peter’s comment on the building of three tabernacles links the experiences on the mount with the celebrations of a sacred Jewish festival. Three times a year all Israelite males were to “appear before the Lord God” and keep feasts unto him, one of which was the feast of the tabernacles (Ex. 23:14–17; see also Deut. 16:16), which Josephus described as “the most sacred and greatest feast among the Hebrews” (Ant., 8.4.1 §100). The feast of tabernacles was also called the “feast of the ingathering” or the “feast of the harvest” (Ex. 23:16). The feast began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month with its celebrations lasting for seven days, beginning on the Sabbath (Lev. 23:34, 39).<sup>44</sup> It commemorated the dwelling of the children of Israel in booths or tents (σκήνη) during the exodus (Lev. 23:43); the feast also celebrated the gathering in of all their “labours out of the field,” or the harvest (see Ex. 23:16). The Mount of Transfiguration occurred at the time of the feast of the tabernacles. As the feast was celebrated at the time of the harvest, one of its characteristic rituals was the building of and dwelling in huts or booths constructed from boughs of trees. Thus, Peter’s suggestion at the building of tabernacles may have

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<sup>43</sup> Fitzmyer discusses Luke’s word choice in the phrase “gradually withdrew from him” (vs. 33). He identifies it as literally meaning “‘in their withdrawing from him.’ Luke uses *en to* + [infinitive]. . . . The [infinitive] is present, suggesting gradual withdrawal.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: Luke*, vol. 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 801.

<sup>44</sup> There are references to an eighth day of the festival celebrations, which may explain why Luke placed the transfiguration eight days after Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi while Matthew and Mark place the events six days apart. See Lev. 23:37, 39; Num. 29:35.

indicated his confusion over the purpose of Moses and Elijah's appearance and the current festival.

Terrence Smith discusses the significance of Peter's comment in Mark 9:5–6, as these verses, like Mark 8:29–33, “single Peter out for special mention. His proposal to build tabernacles for the three heavenly figures (v.5) elicits the Markan comment ‘for he did not know what to say, for they were afraid’ (v. 6) which would seem to indicate that the writer thought the proposal was inappropriate for the occasion.” Smith goes on to propose some possible interpretations of Peter's suggestion to build three tabernacles. He argues that “it does seem clear that Peter wished to construct more permanent dwelling-places for the heavenly figures;” however, what is unclear are Peter's motives behind the suggestion. Perhaps Peter merely wished to observe the rituals of the festival, or maybe he was expressing hope that the building of tabernacles would “ensure that the presence of the transfigured Jesus would not be temporary.” A final reason suggested by Smith is that Peter was showing an incorrect assumption in looking at the transfiguration as the parousia, or the coming of Christ, instead of recognizing it as a preview of the parousia.<sup>45</sup> While there are several possible meanings of and motives behind Peter's suggestion to build tabernacles on the mount, the only explanation the New Testament offers is simply that which Mark proposed: “he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid” (Mark 9:6).

*Fear.* Although they noted the apostle's fear at different times during the course of events on the mount, each of the Synoptics recorded that the disciples were afraid during at least some of the events. Luke tells us that they were within the cloud which overshadowed them, and “and they feared as they entered into the cloud” (Luke 9:34). Mark described their fear at the time of Moses and Elias' appearance. Matthew recorded their fear after they heard the voice of God the Father: “And when the disciples heard

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<sup>45</sup> T. Smith, 171–72.



it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid" (Mark 17:6–7). Mann suggests that a better translation of Mark's word for fear, *εκφοβοι*, would be "religious awe."<sup>46</sup> This is significant because it indicates that the events on the mount were of so sacred a nature that they inspired religious awe from Peter, James, and John. Because such an emotion would likely not be a momentary sensation, it is probable that their "religious awe" continued during several of the forthcoming events on the mount.

### God the Father

As Peter spoke, a cloud overshadowed them. The appearance of a cloud in sacred settings is a sign of the presence of God.<sup>47</sup> Mann argues that Matthew's description of a "bright cloud" was referring to the Shekinah (literally, the dwelling place of Jehovah) which was a visible manifestation of divine presence identified by a bright shining cloud and signifying the glory of the Lord.<sup>48</sup> As on the Mount of Transfiguration, the appearance of the Shekinah, or cloud marked the presence of the Lord when Moses received the Law on Sinai (see Ex. 14:19; 16:10). When Moses was preparing the people to receive the covenants that would make them a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, the Lord told Moses that he would come in a thick cloud so that the people could hear as he spoke to Moses and so that they would believe Moses forever (Ex. 19:9). On Sinai, "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with [Moses] there" (Ex. 34:5). And as Moses set up the tabernacle for Israel to worship the Lord, a cloud covered the tent and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

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<sup>46</sup> Mann, 360.

<sup>47</sup> Albright, 220.

<sup>48</sup> Mann, 361.

Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. (Ex. 40:34–38; see also Ex. 13:21–22)

Thus, the cloud covering over the tabernacle as they journeyed was a symbol of the presence of the Lord with Israel. 2 Maccabees recorded a prophecy that the glory of the Lord would return with the appearance of a cloud when God would show his mercy and gather his people again as he did in the time of Moses (2 Macc. 2:7–8). Therefore, as it did on Sinai, the appearance of the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration signified the presence of God.

As the cloud came upon them, Peter, James, and John heard God the Father as he declared, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5; see also Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34–35). Peter later described the voice as “a voice from heaven” (2 Pet. 1:18), adding detail to Luke’s description of it as “out of the cloud” (Luke 9:35). The voice of God the Father gave the same declaration of Jesus as at the time of his baptism (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Fitzmyer notes that, in the transfiguration narrative, the voice is addressing Peter, James, and John rather than addressing Jesus as it did at his baptism.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the voice of God the Father witnessed to Peter, James, and John of both the divine Sonship of Jesus and of his approval of the life and works of his son. After attesting to the divinity of Jesus, the Father gave the disciples a simple command: “hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5; see also Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). This injunction of the Father to

the disciples implies that Jesus likely gave instruction to the apostles in that sacred setting; however, while some gnostic texts purport to contain the Savior's revelation to the disciples on the mount,<sup>50</sup> the New Testament accounts did not record the instructions the Savior gave his disciples on that occasion. The cloud left suddenly, enabling them to see. As they looked around, they found themselves alone with Jesus on the mount who enjoined them not to be afraid (Matt. 17:8; Mark 9:8; Luke 9:36).

Although there is no biblical record of Jesus' instructions to his disciples at that time, it is clear that on the mount, "the three disciples are represented as witnessing an event with eschatological significance."<sup>51</sup> Joseph Smith recorded that those who endure in faith and obey God's will, "the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come; When the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount; of which account the fulness ye have not yet received."<sup>52</sup>

## The Commission

"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead" (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9). "And they kept

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<sup>49</sup> Fitzmyer, 802.

<sup>50</sup> Gnostic sources identify the transfiguration as the source of Peter's authority, when he received the gnosis, or knowledge, from Christ. "Then a great light appeared so that the mountain shone from the light of him who had appeared. And a voice called out to them saying, 'Listen to my words that I may speak to you. . . . I am Jesus Christ who am with you forever.'" "The Letter of Peter to Philip" 8.134.9–18 in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, rev. ed., ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 434.

<sup>51</sup> T. Smith, 171.

<sup>52</sup> J. Smith 1980a, vol. 1, 208.

it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen" (Luke 9:36). After they descended the mountain, the disciples kept the charge the Savior gave them to keep the events both sacred and secret. While Peter, James, and John questioned among themselves the meaning of the phrase "the rising from the dead," they asked the Savior "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Jesus replied, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." Thus, Jesus, in teaching of his coming crucifixion, testified that just as Elias suffered at the hand of the scribes and the leaders of the Jews, the Son of Man also "must suffer many things, and be set at nought." The disciples then understood that Jesus was identifying the Elias which the scribes referred to as John the Baptist (Matt. 17:10–13; Mark 9:10–13).

### **Peter's Account of the Transfiguration**

In his second epistle, Peter referred to his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration as an event at which he obtained not only a more sure word of prophecy, but he also obtained the authority to interpret scripture. Peter opened the discussion of the transfiguration by exhorting the people to work to make their calling and election sure so that they may receive an inheritance in the kingdom of God (2 Pet. 1:10–11). He taught that he wished the people to retain in their memories his witness of the glory of Jesus and of his calling and election made sure as he expected his own death shortly (2 Pet. 1:13–15). Thus, as Peter looked toward martyrdom, he declared the truthfulness of his witness of Jesus Christ by offering his testimony as an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty and glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. (2 Pet. 1:16–19)

Peter declared that they were eyewitnesses to Christ's majesty as the Father gave honor and glory to him on the mount when he proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Peter added that the disciples received a more sure word of prophecy and authority there: καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον. The literal rendition of this phrase is "and we have the more sure prophetic word." The root adverb, βεβαιος, refers to a sure, certain, dependable confirmation.<sup>53</sup> With the adverb's comparative ending, Peter is describing a prophetic assurance which is more certain than prior prophetic blessings the disciples had received.

Although Peter identified the voice of God as accompanying their more sure word of prophecy, Joseph Smith taught that this sure word of prophecy required more than hearing the voice of God; a second witness was also necessary.

"Now, there is some grand secret here, and keys to unlock the subject. . . . And though they had heard an audible voice from heaven bearing testimony that Jesus was the Son of God, yet he says we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place.

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<sup>53</sup> Bauer, 1979, 138.

Now, wherein could they have a more sure word of prophecy than to hear the voice of God saying, This is my beloved Son.

“Now for the secret and grand key. Though they might hear the voice of God and know that Jesus was the Son of God, this would be no evidence that their election and calling was made sure, that they had part with Christ, and were joint heirs with him. They then would want that more sure word of prophecy, that they were sealed in the heavens and had the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Then, having this promise sealed unto them, it was an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Though the thunders might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble and tribulation. Then knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>54</sup>

Thus, a more sure word of prophecy is the assurance that one will be sealed up to eternal life with the Savior, a promise which is bound both on earth and in heaven. In addition to the Father's voice declaring the divinity of his Son, the more sure word of prophecy was an extra assurance, a promise of eternal life, ratified and sealed in the heavens.<sup>55</sup>

This more sure word of prophecy which Peter received on the Mount of Transfiguration also indicates his authority to receive revelation pertinent to the governing of the Church. Brown, Donfried, and Reumann make a connection between Peter's more

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<sup>54</sup> J. Smith 1980a, vol. 5, 388–89.

<sup>55</sup> Several discourses in *The Journal of Discourses* associate the “more sure word of prophecy” with divine revelation, direct communication between God and humans, and living oracles. See Joseph F. Smith, “The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,” *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 15, (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 327–28; Charles W. Penrose, “The Church of Christ,” *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 24, (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 86–87; Brigham Young, “How Divisions Were Introduced into the Christian World,” *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 12, (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 65.

sure word of prophecy received on the mount (2 Pet. 1:19) and his “authority to interpret the words of Scripture, especially the prophecies (1:20–21).”<sup>56</sup> Terence Smith also discusses Peter’s experiences at the transfiguration as the source of his authority. “In 2 Peter, Peter’s authority rests upon his vision of the Lord’s majesty at the Transfiguration (1:16–18), an experience which legitimizes his role as a sure foundation against the ‘myths’ and ‘false words’ of the opponents.” Smith goes on to discuss how in the Apocalypse of Peter, the transfiguration is used to emphasize Peter’s position as the founder of the gnostic community. This portrayal of Peter includes his capacity to convey authoritative interpretations not only because he was the ruler of the community but also because the Savior explained to him the meanings of key religious events.<sup>57</sup> “And [Christ] said unto [Peter], ‘Be strong for you are the one to whom these mysteries have been given, to know them through revelation.’”<sup>58</sup> Thus, both 2 Pet. and some extra-biblical sources asserted that the revelation which Peter received on the mountain, in part, provided a basis for his authority.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

The Mount of Transfiguration was a decisive event in Peter’s training to become the leader of the Church, for it was

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<sup>56</sup> Brown, 155.

<sup>57</sup> T. Smith, 139–40.

<sup>58</sup> “Apocalypse of Peter,” 7.3 in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, rev. ed., ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), 377.

<sup>59</sup> While some gnostic texts attest to the leadership of Peter, they base Peter’s leadership on the gnosis he received from Christ. In the tradition of Matthew 16:13–20, Peter was described as the one who received revelation; however, the gnostic interpretation replaced the leadership keys and authority Peter received with the gnosis or understanding of the mysteries. For a more in-depth discussion of the gnostic interpretation of the Matthew 16 and 17 passages to solidify their claim for pre-eminence by declaring that Peter was given the “gnosis” rather than revelation see T. Smith, 131–33.

upon the mount that Peter received the governing authority over the church. In addition to the appearance of Moses and Elijah, the transfiguration of Jesus, and the voice of the Father witnessing the divinity of the Son, it was there that Old Testament prophets endowed the keys of the kingdom upon Peter, James, and John.<sup>60</sup> Besides receiving the governing keys, Peter, James, and John were witnesses to an eschatological vision and recipients of revelation pertaining to the governing of the kingdom, including temple experiences. Peter would later testify that upon the mount, they received the more sure word of prophecy, an assurance that they would be joint heirs with Jesus Christ, being sealed up to eternal life (2 Pet. 1:16–19).<sup>61</sup>

The experiences on the Mount of Transfiguration were a preparation for the coming crucifixion of Jesus—not only for Jesus who conversed about his death with Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:28, 31), but likely also for the disciples. Although they did not fully understand the significance of the events on the mount (Mark 9:6, 10; Luke 9:33), Christ taught them of his impending crucifixion and endowed them with all the keys and knowledge necessary for the governing of the Church. Thus, while Peter, James, and John did not receive a full understanding of the events to come, the transfiguration experience led the disciples to a clearer knowledge and understanding of the mission of Jesus Christ, the saving ordinances, and the ruling of the kingdom of God on the earth. This event was so significant for Peter's development as the leader of the early Christian Church that later, when testifying of his authority, he referred to his experience on the mount as a witness to his right to testify of Christ and to lead his Church.

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<sup>60</sup> J. Smith 1980a, vol. 3, 387; see also vol. 5, 152.

<sup>61</sup> J. Smith 1980b, 201–02, 204–08.



# The Hellenization of the Gospel: The Prologue of John and the Joseph Smith Translation

Nicholas Birch

*The prologue of the Gospel of John is one of the most hotly debated sections of scripture. It is also one of the most beautifully poetic sections in the Bible. Many argue that the words, ideas, and writing styles of the prologue show that it was composed at a later date than the remainder of John. Other scholars argue that the poetry of the section can be used to date it to the period of the writing of John. Even with this evidence, there is serious question as to the source of the ideas presented in the prologue. Further examination of the prologue using the poetry of the section along with some additional tools provides interesting and surprising insights into the original message and purpose of the work.*

Generally, an introduction serves to gently introduce a reader into material that may be new, foreign, or difficult. An introduction helps connect what the reader already knows with what the author is trying to present. However, one introduction that fails quite miserably on all these points is the prologue to the Gospel of John. This introduction has confused readers and done little more than create debate and disagreement for centuries.

The prologue, the first eighteen verses of John, has been called “. . . the most beautiful, the most profound, the most beloved passage in the Christian Scriptures.”<sup>1</sup> It has been used as a blessing

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Albert Kirk and Robert E. Obach, “The Prologue,” *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (New York: Paulist, 1981), 11.

of newly baptized children and the final prayer of Roman Mass.<sup>2</sup> The prologue is beautiful in its language. It uses profound imagery that has endeared the passage to Christians throughout time. However, the prologue is also one of the most confusing, most disagreed upon passages in scripture. Its ideas seem to be quite different from the teachings of the other Gospels, and even the remainder of Gospel of John, some appearing nowhere else in scripture. Raymond Brown said of it, "The prologue is written in a carefully constructed, interlocking poetic pattern found but rarely in the Gospel proper. Moreover, the prologue employs important theological terms not found elsewhere in the Gospel, for example, *logos* ("Word" personified), *charis* ("grace" or "covenant love"), *pleroma* (fullness)."<sup>3</sup>

The debate over the prologue centers on the authorship of it and the rest of the gospel. The differences of both writing style and doctrine have lead many to declare that the prologue is the work of a different writer then the gospel proper. The disputed ideas also relate closely to ideas from Hellenistic philosophy of the time. This gives further ammunition to the detractors, and highlights the possibility of the prologue coming from a Greek thinker. Much of John has been subjected to similar questioning. H. M. Jackson says of the book,

Critical scholarship has long since concluded that, in the form in which we have it, the work is the end result of the labors of what may have been a long line of redactors and that it cannot, consequently, be regarded as having had an "author" in the sense of a single composer working, with whatever sort of prior material, in a single unit of time, however long.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel According to John," *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1966), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, XXIV.

<sup>4</sup> H. M. Jackson, "Ancient Self-Referential Conventions and Their Implications for the Authorship and Integrity of the Gospel of John," *Journal of Theological Studies* 50 (1999): 1.

In answer to the problems raised over the prologue, some of its defenders have appealed to its poetry. A counter-argument that has been brought forward is that these verses may be a Christian hymn sung by early church members,<sup>5</sup> which the author quoted as a poetic opening to his work. Unfortunately there is no external evidence for the existence of such a hymn outside John. Further, even if such evidence could be found, proof for the original inclusion of the hymn in the Gospel would still be lacking. The hymn could have been added in at any time in the long history of the Gospel. The ideas still would clash with the rest of the Gospel, and in fact, with all four Gospels and the rest of the books of the New Testament. Without a date for the hymn, it cannot even be firmly placed as a possible source for the author of the original work.

Using poetry to separate additions and changes in the scriptures has found use in other places. Duane Garrett has recently applied a similar method to the story of Noah in Genesis. Garrett points out that the entire narrative is written in chiasmic form and uses this to dispute the theory that the book was taken from multiple outside sources.<sup>6</sup> William O. Walker, Jr. used a similar chiasmic-based argument to label 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 a latter addition to the scriptures.<sup>7</sup> The prologue poem also seems to be broken and have non-poetic insertions, but these are incidental to the question at hand: is the prologue poem the insertion of a later hand?

The poetry in the prologue is of a very specific nature. It does not follow meter and rhyme such as modern poems use. The very particular manner of poetry the prologue follows gives insight into its origin. It suggests that the poem was at least available at the

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<sup>5</sup> Kirk, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 25-27.

<sup>7</sup> William Walker, "2 Cor 6.14-7.1 and the Chiasmic Structure of 6.11-13; 7.2-3," *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002): 142-2.

time of the penning of John. In support of this thesis, Howard M. Teeple pointed out that the first few verses of the Gospel carry characteristics of Hebrew poetry. He states his belief that the writer of the gospel used an early Christian hymn that was based on a Hebrew poem to open his work.<sup>8</sup> If this were the case, the hymn must have circulated from early in the history of Christianity. At an early date, many of the Christian converts had a Hebrew background and were familiar with Hebrew literature; the hymn, part of their old religion, was easily adapted into the new. If the hymn were compiled then, the doctrines would be from those taught by the very earliest church fathers.

Teeple bases his findings on a style of Semitic poetry called chain linkage. In chain-link poetry, words are repeated in pairs to tie together phrases and sentences. ("Hebrew poetry differs itself fundamentally from modern poetry in that it concerns itself not with sound rhymes but rather with rhymes of thought.") Teeple divides the hymn into Semitic and Hellenist parts. In the former he puts; verse 1, most of verse 3, verses 4-5, and verse 11. His Hebrew poem reads like this:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God. All things came to be through it, and  
without it nothing came to be. In it was life, and the life was  
the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the  
darkness did not overcome it. It came to its own, and its own  
did not receive it.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Howard M. Teeple, "The Prologue," *The Literary Origin of the Gospel of John* (Evanston: Religion and Ethics Institute, 1974), 135.

<sup>9</sup> Sanford Calvin Yoder. *Poetry of the Old Testament* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1973), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Teeple, 135.

The Christian hymn addition consists of parts of verse 3, 9, and 12, as well as verses 13, 14, 16, and 18.<sup>11</sup> The chain-link poetry style can be seen in the Hebrew poem as follows:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came to be through it, and without it nothing came to be. In it was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not over come it. It came to its own, and its own did not receive it.

Important words—such as Word, God, and life—are repeated to give rhythm and unity to the piece. The portions that Teeple determines to be Greek additions do not show this pattern. This allows the separation of the pieces of the prologue from the Hebrew and Greek worlds. However, even with the evidence for an early origin of the hymn, Teeple states his belief that it is still a later addition to the scripture. He bases this on the differences of ideas and wording not found elsewhere in John.<sup>12</sup>

Most agree with Teeple, that the focus of this prologue seems to be distinctly Hellenistic. The opening verses deal with the “Word.” This is a translation of the Greek word *logos*. The Logos was referred to by many Greek philosophers around the time of Christ. The term was originally used by the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, who used the word to name what he felt was the controlling “reason” behind the universe. This force was also the way that men came to know the truth.<sup>13</sup> The Logos touched all men, but most chose not to respond to its teachings; “Although intimately connected to the Logos, men keep setting themselves against it.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>13</sup> Phillip Wheelwright. *Heraclitus* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 68.

Later, the idea was adopted and modified by a number of Greek thinkers. Around the time of Christ, some of the more influential of these were the Stoics and the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo. The Stoics believed that God existed in everything in the physical universe through the Logos, "as honey does the honey comb."<sup>15</sup> Philo was a Jew who tried to harmonize Hebrew and Greek thinking. Philo used *logos* in a number of different ways, often similar to the Stoics' concept of an omnipresent God.<sup>16</sup> He also used the term much as Heraclitus did, speaking of the Logos as the unseen world that the physical world is patterned on, this unseen world stemming from God's thinking of the perfect Forms.<sup>17</sup> He also referred to it as the first-born son of uncreated Father, foremost of the angels, and in each human mind, though only in part.<sup>18</sup> These ideas of the properties of the Greek Logos match almost exactly the properties of the Word presented in the prologue. Both are universal, the power behind creation, and the enlighteners of all men. Both are presented as god-like beings.

To answer these arguments, defenders refer to a number of ancient Hebrew sources. Among them are the Creation account in the book of Genesis and Proverbs 8. In Genesis, the word of the Lord is the power through which the cosmos is created (see also Psalm 33:6), similar to the creative powers of the word in the prologue of John. In Proverbs 8 and in many other surviving pieces of Hebrew literature collectively called the Wisdom literature, the idea of wisdom is personified. In Proverbs, wisdom is able to cry, dwell, and stand. The idea of personifying an abstract idea was not totally unfamiliar to the Hebrews. These arguments are used to

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<sup>15</sup> J. Lebreton, "The Logos," *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1 Sept. 2002. < <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09328a.htm>.>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria* (New York: Paulist, 1981), 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 26.

point to the possibility of the Word of the prologue being a Hebrew construction. James Randal Harris (1917) felt the author used a “recast Hymn by substituting *logos* for *sophia* and attaching this ‘Logos-Hymn’ to the gospel as its preface.”<sup>19</sup> Those making these arguments surmise that the author was using Hebrew concepts to teach the nature of God, particularly omnipresence and eternal existence.

Did the author intend to teach the ideas of a logos-god? Or were the characteristics of a universal, omnipresent god latter added to the words of the apostle by one seeking to validate his own doctrine? Teeple shows the original source was Hebrew, but we are unsure which, if any, additions to the poem the author of the prologue intended to include. Even with the Hebrew poetry in the prologue, Teeple still believes that the poem was not meant by the original author to be part of his work. We would need the original work of John in order to tell if the author used a Hebrew poem with the ideas already added in, or if he only used the poem and another hand added in the Hellenistic ideas later. Fortunately, we have an additional tool to separate the additions from the original text. In 1830, Joseph Smith was given revelations restoring the “plan and precious things” of the Bible. We find his corrections in the Pearl of Great Price and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. One of the passages of scripture on which he was eventually given revelation was the prologue of John. By looking at the Translation, we can gain insight into the original author’s words.

What is surprising is that the words of the Joseph Smith Translation fit as well, if not better, than the text Teeple uses to show Hebraisms in the prologue. Assuming the Joseph Smith Translation to reflect a more original text, this gives evidence that the original intent of the author was to at least to use Hebrew poem as source, if not a Greek/Hebrew hymn. The poetry in the

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<sup>19</sup> Teeple, 127–8.

Joseph Smith translation is underlined in the following:

In the beginning was the Gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was the gospel, and the gospel was the life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the world, and the world perceiveth it not. (Verse 11 reads the same in both versions.)

The patterns show the Semitic origins of Joseph Smith's restored text. The changes Joseph Smith made show the forms of chain-linkage, and not just where words were replaced. Entirely new passages link to each other and to the old passages in the chains. The Hebrew style is maintained, but the ideas that so many feel are added to the gospel from Greek philosophy are not found. Further, there is no longer a need for a mixture of Greek and Hebrew in a hymn. The ideas are not Hellenistic in nature. The *logos*-god is conspicuously absent. Instead of *the Word*, we find *the word*. This word is equivalent to the gospel. The *word of the Lord* is used in the Old Testament for His commandments and gospel (see Num. 15:31, 1 Chron. 16:15). Also, early Christians used *the word* as a name for the Gospel.<sup>20</sup>

The Greek *logos* can also mean a saying. Using this meaning, the poem tells us that the gospel was what was said (taught), and it was with the Son. In addition, to the Greek philosophers, reason, also *logos*, was the supreme truth. To the Greek mind—Greek most likely being the language John wrote in—the text conveys that the gospel, from the beginning, is *logos*, reason and truth. This gospel was preached through the Son, who has reason and

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<sup>20</sup> Brown, 519.



truth, who has *logos*. The author writes to an audience raised in a culture where *logos* is truth, and explains to them where this truth comes from.

We can also see the author's insertions into the Hebrew poetry. The two lines that do not fit the chain-link style are "In the beginning was the Gospel preached through the Son," and "The same was in the beginning with God." Though perhaps part of a hymn, they also could be the additions of the evangelist himself. His reason for adding these lines may have been to make the poem more suitable for use as his introduction. These lines are much like the beginning of Genesis, where the writer starts at the beginning. This is not a new idea, a new philosophy of a radical sect. It is what has been from the beginning. Neither is the Son new, but has been guiding the search for truth *from the beginning*. This same Son was also in the beginning with God. The same is the creator of all things.

The gospel being a life and a light is also a Hebrew concept. Many times in the Old Testament, following God's commands is referred to as the way of life. In Psalm 119:105, the word of the Lord is called a lamp and a light. To the Jews, the gospel was a way of life. The laws set down by Moses by the word of the Lord lead them, lighted their paths, in a way that kept them alive spiritually.

In his book on the use of poetry in the Old Testament, Sanford Calvin Yoder explores the use of poems in biblical texts. It was quite common for biblical authors to quote outside poems to present ideas in their work. Many of the poems that we find in the Old Testament are from sources that are lost to us now.<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising therefore to see the author of John to be following the same course in quoting a poem to open his work. The poem may also have been familiar to the audience he wrote to, connecting ideas they knew to those he was trying to teach them. The

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<sup>21</sup> Yoder, 6.

availability of Hebrew poems to an Aramaic-speaking author at the turn of the era should not be surprising. Hebrew was used as the language of the Jewish synagogues at this time, and would be familiar to the author.<sup>22</sup>

The overall message of this restored passage is quite different from the message of the Word. Here, we see a Son who has led men down the path of truth from the beginning. He is the Creator and the Lawgiver. It is a basic introduction to the premortal Christ. It connects the Hellenistic ideas of reason seeking truth with the Hebrew ideas of revealed truths, by explaining where truth, *logos*, comes from.

Further, the ideas of Christ's words and his light are common throughout the rest of the gospel of John. Both occur more in the gospel of John, even without the prologue, than in of the Synoptic gospels. This is quite different than the prologue as it survives today, where certain words are found only in the prologue. The alien ideas there are what set it apart from the rest of the Gospel. In this Hebrew poem, the evangelist found ideas similar to those he wanted to present about the life of Christ and therefore used the poem to open his work. The rest of the prologue simply furthers the introduction to Christ, bringing in the opening of the Christian experience with John the Baptist. It does not need the addition of a Greek hymn mixed with the Hebrew poem. Teeple gives no evidence that the rest of the prologue (what he considers the Greek portion of the hymn) is lyrical rather than prosaic. The direct use of a Hebrew poem by the original author of the Gospel eliminates the need to postulate the existence of another author.

In contrast to how the Joseph Smith version of the prologue simplifies and unifies the rest of the Gospel, the version as it has been passed through the ages has the opposite effect. The Word version of the passage focuses on equating the truth with a God.

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<sup>22</sup> Brown, CXXIX.

As Teeple points out, “The author has converted the Logos from the abstract Word of God in the poem to a definite being, a god.”<sup>23</sup> Based on the Joseph Smith Translation, this was most likely not the intent of the original author of the prologue.

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<sup>23</sup> Teeple, 137.



# CLASSICAL STUDIES



This dignified Roman marble depicts a husband and wife with their right hands in the *dextrarum coniunctio*, the symbol of marriage that transcends the grave.



On the left, in one of the earliest surviving depictions of Heracles, c. 620 B.C., he is shown slaying the evil Geryon and his guard dog. He wears the usual Greek hero's kilt with geometric patterns and bronze greaves like his opponent. Over them, he wears the impervious skin of the Nemean lion, his first labor. His knapsack is probably a bowcase.

On the right, a basalt bas-relief of Melkart, c. 800 B.C., was found at Breidj near Aleppo. He wears the distinctive Phoenecian kilt and carries a pierced bronze battle-ax. His conical headress links him to Assyrian depictions of the gods. The Aramaic inscription invokes Melkart, "Protector of the city."

# Melquart and Heracles: A Study of Ancient Gods and Their Influence

Robin Jensen

*Societies in general revere their heroes, holding them in high regard and giving them adulation—sometimes deserved, sometimes not. However as the following quote illustrates, societies need heroes and ancient societies were no different, they needed their heroes, men and women they could look up to and revere. This paper analyzes and compares the aspects of two such heroes, Melquart of Phoenicia and Heracles of Greece, attempting to prove that Melquart, though lesser known had just as much influence on the Phoenician society as Heracles had on the Greek*

“Without heroes we're all plain people and don't know how far we can go.”

Bernard Malamud

Ancient Phoenicia is a culture that most people, including scholars, know comparatively little about. Excelling at commerce, exploration, and colonization, Phoenicia was a dominant power in the ancient Mediterranean world, but with the lack of writings and archeological finds, reconstructing their society, including their religion, is difficult. Even their most influential god Melquart must undergo a different sort of historical analysis: a comparative study with Heracles of Greece shows that, like Heracles with the Greeks, Melquart had a great amount of influence upon the people of ancient Phoenicia.

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Heracles was a prominent figure in Greek legend. A son of Zeus and of a mortal woman named Alcmene, Heracles' most well known acts were the twelve labors imposed on him for murdering his wife and children—near-impossible tasks that would gain him undying fame. The stories of Heracles were creative and compelling enough to be transmitted throughout history. But much of the credit for the Heracles cycle surviving to our day should be given to his story-loving people. Stories of Heracles were told and passed down through the oral traditions until eventually they were recorded centuries later.

Though no one is certain of his origin, Heracles was a part of the Greek culture for quite some time. When Homer mentions Heracles in the *Odyssey*, it is not an explanatory passage; on the contrary, Homer assumes that the reader is already familiar with the story. "Son of Zeus that I was, my torments never ended . . . he saddled me with the worst heartbreaking labors,"<sup>1</sup> Heracles says to Odysseus. He talks about his labors as though Odysseus is already familiar with what he has done. These Heracleian stories must have started circulating before Homer and not only influenced the great minds of the time, but were also enjoyed by the common people.

As Greek culture progressed, many cults arose to worship Heracles. "[U]ltimately [Heracles] becomes the most popular object of cult in Greece and in Greek Italy and Sicily, as both a hero and a god."<sup>2</sup> Heracles caught the imagination of the ancient Greeks, showing that the Greek civilization needed to be inspired by a hero, just as many other civilizations around the world. Numerous poets wrote about Heracles; unfortunately, many of these writings have been lost. Even in the fourth century B.C., there had been so many poets who had devoted works to Heracles

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<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey* 11.711–13

<sup>2</sup> Mark W. Padilla, *The Myth of Herakles in Ancient Greece: Survey and Profile* (New York: University Press of America, 1998), 3.



that Aristotle complained about the low quality of work then centered on the god.<sup>3</sup>

The ancient authors were voicing what the people felt. It is the imagination and acceptance of the people that makes a story survive for generations. Authors may write about many things, but if the subjects of the works do not grab the attention of the people, the story does not stick. Heracles was not made great by the authors, but by the people who wanted to hear about him. Only the inspired heart touched by a story of Heracles made him "the mightiest and most famous of Greek heroes."<sup>4</sup> His influence became enormous. Many temples were erected for him, and he played an "important iconographic [role] . . . on the temple of Zeus at Olympia."<sup>5</sup> It was said that he founded many cities and towns during his labors and sired the people to inhabit them. He was also credited with organizing the Olympic Games.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, Heracles competed "successfully in various athletic contests . . . and is found . . . as a cultic presence in many Greek gymnasias."<sup>7</sup>

Ancient Greek society did not rest on the back of the Heracleian myths; rather it received life and variety from them. Heracles' influence gave the Greeks the popular Olympic Games, temples in which to worship, and stories to pass on to their posterity. And the Greeks, in contrast to the Phoenicians, left behind many writings and clues which modern scholars are able to analyze. Just as the Greeks honored their hero, the Phoenicians also revered their god Melquart by recounting, spreading, and enjoying stories about him.

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<sup>3</sup> See Ibid., 8. See Arist., 1451A = *poet.* 8.1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Catherine B. Avery, ed., *The New Century Classical Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 540.

<sup>5</sup> Padilla, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Plutarch says Pythagoras calculated the height of Heracles from the difference between the Olympian stadium and the standard 600 ft. stadium. This gave rise to the Latin proverb *ex pede Herculeum*.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 31.

Though there are few clues left to give scholars a satisfactory understanding of the Phoenician civilization, what has survived paints a picture in which colonization, commerce, and religion are the most important aspects of Phoenician society. Reconstructing a complete history of the Phoenicians is impossible but the attempt is necessary to get a picture of what life was like for the Phoenicians. This partial reconstruction comes not only by examining the remnants of the Phoenicians themselves, but by analyzing their remains in other civilizations as well.

The Greeks were aware of the Phoenicians as far back as Homer: “[I was] Eight years out, wandering off as far as Cyprus, Phoenicia, even Egypt.”<sup>8</sup> Other authors such as Herodotus<sup>9</sup> and Josephus<sup>10</sup> also speak of the Phoenicians, showing the profound influence the Phoenicians had in the ancient Mediterranean world. Though travel was difficult and dangerous, the different cultures of the ancient world were not completely isolated. In fact, they interacted and traded often with each other. These societies not only shared commerce, but many civilizations, like the Phoenicians, sent out colonies all over the Mediterranean world and beyond. This did much to increase their influence on surrounding cultures. As the Phoenicians colonized many areas, they carried with them their religion, a religion with Melquart at the center.

Modern understanding of Phoenician religion comes from three main literary sources: the Old Testament, the Greek authors, and the inscriptions made by the Phoenicians themselves. The outside sources, namely the Old Testament and Greeks, are biased and therefore not entirely reliable.<sup>11</sup> The Phoenician inscriptions offer very few hints about their religion—one does not often write

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<sup>8</sup> *Odyssey* 4.92–93

<sup>9</sup> See 2.44.

<sup>10</sup> See Moscati, 8.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Isaiah 23:1–4.

a detailed explanation of such things in inscriptions. Yet the existence of the god Melquart, most likely the highest god in Phoenician theology or at least the most commonly worshipped, is proved by these scant ancient literary sources and also by modern archeological finds.<sup>12</sup> These sources, however, give scholars very little historical contexts. Therefore, because so little Phoenician history has survived, scholars are forced to look elsewhere for evidence explaining the culture of the Phoenicians. By understanding Heracles and his position in Greek culture, the identity of Melquart becomes a more vivid figure to the modern scholar.

By looking at the influence Heracles had on the Greeks, and seeing that Heracles and Melquart were identified with each other in ancient Greek literature, it is possible to construct a probable idea of Melquart's influence on the Phoenicians. To see the influence of Heracles on Greece, one need only look at Greek legends, art, and religion; the influence of Melquart upon the Phoenicians can also be seen, though not as obviously in their surviving artifacts. In spite of the scarcity of remains, it is certain that Melquart was vital to Phoenician stories and culture. The Phoenicians were no different than many other cultures in history: they needed a god whom they could proudly idolize. Melquart fulfilled this need in several roles. He was known as a mighty hunter and played the central role in the Phoenician spring festival during which he died and was resurrected.<sup>13</sup> He was also worshipped for his power over the sea.<sup>14</sup>

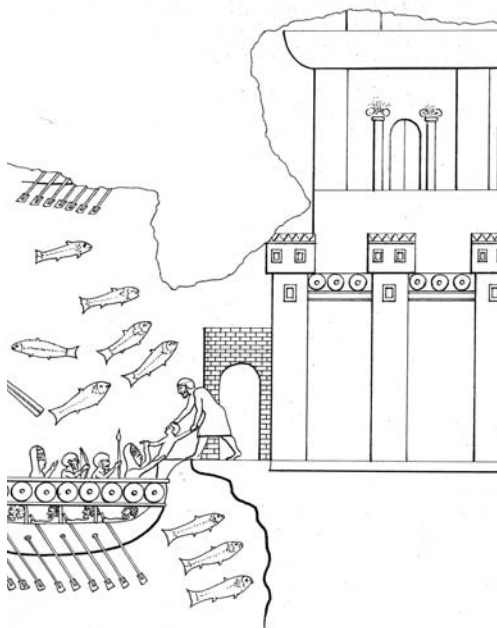
Heracles and Melquart were similar enough to be classified by the ancient commentators as coming from the same primitive source, or at least they were influenced by each other. "But to

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<sup>12</sup> See Maria-Eugenia Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West: Politics, Colonies, and Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 127–8

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*



In 1846, Henry Layard excavated the early 7th century Assyrian palace of Sennacherib at Ninevah. Using the *camera obscura*, an assisted drawing device, he made meticulous drawings of the many large bas-reliefs he uncovered. This was fortunate, since many of the slabs were lost when their rafts sank in the Tigris. This scene records the Assyrian conquest of Tyre and shows its king, Luli, handing one of his children to a queen. He flees from the city, which has a large structure rising above the crenelated walls and their shields. This building may represent the famous temple of Melkart with its two pillars of gold and emerald as described by Herodotus.

Demarous was born Melicarthus, who is also called Heracles,<sup>15</sup> Sanchoniatho wrote in his *Theology of the Phoenicians*.<sup>16</sup> In mentioning other contemporary societies, ancient writers often replaced the names of foreign gods with names of gods to whom they could relate. For example, Herodotus, in speaking of his visit to the Phoenician city of Tyre, stated that he “made a voyage to Tyre in Phoenicia [and found] a temple of Heracles.”<sup>17</sup> In his visit

<sup>15</sup> Isaac Preston Cory, *Ancient Fragments of the Phoenician, Chaldean, Egyptian, Tyrian, Carthaginian, Indian, Persian, and Other Writers*, 2nd ed. Secret Doctrine Reference Series (Minneapolis: Wizards Bookshelf, 1975), 11.

<sup>16</sup> Philo of Byblos, who lived in the first century A.D., claimed to have translated this Phoenician historian who lived circa fourteenth or thirteenth century B.C. Sanchoniatho got his material from inscriptions on the Ammounais, pillars or images of the Baal Ammon.

<sup>17</sup> Herodotus 2.44.

to Tyre, Herodotus did not in actuality find a temple dedicated to a god named Heracles, but instead found a temple to the god Melquart. Because Herodotus was writing to the Greeks, and also because he saw much in Melquart that reminded him of Heracles, he saw fit to conflate the two. It also strengthened the pride of Greek cult by showing it to be so widespread.

Melquart seems not only to have been related to Heracles in attributes, but also in his number of followers; he was as widespread in Phoenicia, if not more so, as Heracles was in Greece. As with Heracles, Melquart founded cities and his followers formed cults and erected temples dedicated to him.

Many believe that the temple dedicated to Melquart at Tyre did not have a statue of Melquart, but instead only two pillars meant to represent him: "I visited the temple, and found it richly adorned with a number of offerings, among which were two pillars, one of pure gold, the other of emerald, shining with great brilliancy at night."<sup>18</sup> Twin pillars, like these, were often seen where Phoenician colonies were founded. "Melkart . . . had a temple, close to the harbour, in all the Phoenician colonies."<sup>19</sup> Lodge, who accepts the hypothesis that Heracles and Melquart were the same, theorizes that the pillars of Heracles at the Straits of Gibraltar, were in actuality dedicated to Melquart by the Phoenicians.<sup>20</sup> Other temples dedicated to Melquart were found at Malta, Carthage,<sup>21</sup> and other locations around the Mediterranean, all of which paid homage to the god of the Phoenicians.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., c.f. the two pillars in front of the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 7:15–16) which Hiram of Tyre helped build.

<sup>19</sup> Perrot, 75.

<sup>20</sup> Lodge, 128. The tradition of the two pillars may have had an influence on the two bronze pillars of Solomon's Temple, made by the Tyrian craftsman Hiram Abiff. Macrobius and Lucan say the pillars were erected by Sesostris, the Egyptian Hercules.

<sup>21</sup> Moscati, 139 and 193.

The people of Carthage, in building a temple to their god, not only showed devotion to Melquart, but they revealed their desire to attribute to Melquart a central part of the founding of their city and the continuity of their culture with their parent city of Tyre. Their myth recounts that Ellisa, sister of the King of Tyre, and a priest of Melquart were sent from Tyre to colonize Carthage before the battle of Troy. "The Tyrian origin of Carthage is best confirmed by the annual embassies which the city sent through the ages to Tyre. These embassies constantly carried offerings to the temple of Hercules (Melqart)"<sup>22</sup> Strong devotion to a common god was an important way to create a bond between two cities, which could be strengthened over the centuries. Such was the bond between Carthage and Tyre, a bond with Melquart in the center.

Many cultic followings of the god Melquart sprang up all over the ancient world. There were cults in Tyre and Carthage;<sup>23</sup> one dedication at Malta reads "'To the Lord Melkart, Baal of Tyre.'"<sup>24</sup> Phoenicians were telling and re-telling the stories of their mythical figure to their children, their neighbors, and those with whom they came in contact through trade. Even a place as remote as Spain had a "cult of Reshef-Melqart,"<sup>25</sup> (an Asian war deity also worshipped in New Kingdom Egypt) showing that, like the Heracleian myths, the tales of Melquart spread into distinct cultures because of their popularity.

As Heracles inspired stories, temples, cities, and cults, so too did his ancient Phoenician counterpart: Melquart. Phoenician men, women, and children told and heard stories of their god who, with tales of honor and glory, captured the imagination of his followers. It is even probable that the stories gave the Phoenicians a god they could worship or even strive to emulate,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>24</sup> Perrot, 67.

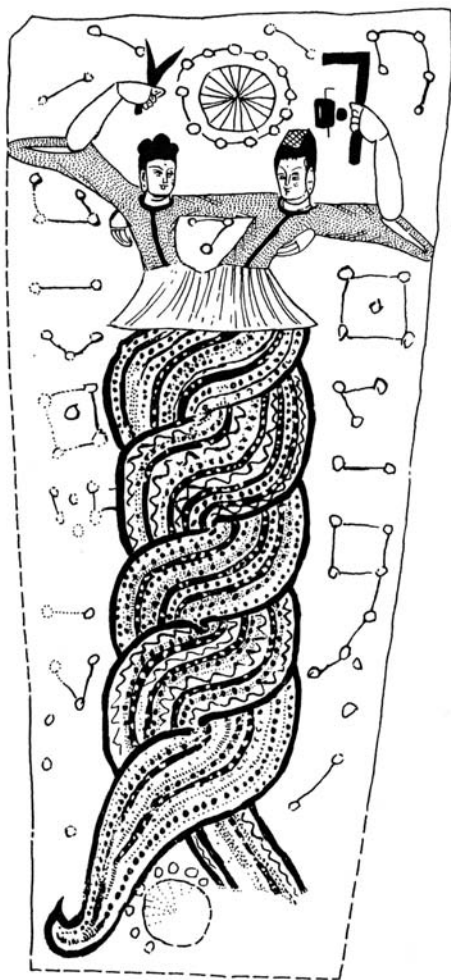
<sup>25</sup> Moscati, 241.

just as the Greeks did with Heracles. The similarities between the two gods show a bond between the two cultures which can be helpful to investigate what the largely unknown Phoenician culture was like. As is shown in literature and numerous artifacts, Greek culture was heavily influenced by the cult of Heracles. Phoenician culture can be shown to have been influenced by Melquart in a similar way. Human societies need heroes, and ancient cultures were no different. Phoenicians set aside a big part of their culture for the incubation, rearing, and worship of their god, and they reaped the benefits of his influence.





# FAR EASTERN STUDIES



In the underground tomb of Fan Yen-Shih, d. A.D. 689, two painted silk veils show the First Ancestors of the Chinese, their entwined serpent bodies rotating around the invisible vertical *axis mundi*. Fu Hsi holds the set-square and plumb bob as he rules the four-cornered earth, while his sister-wife Nu-wa holds the compass pointing up, as she rules the circling heavens. The phrase *kuei chu* is used by modern Chinese to signify "they way things should be, the moral standard"; it literally means the compass and the square.



# A Historical Setting for the Forming of Neo-Confucianism in Classical China

Tyson J. Yost

*The Chinese have traditionally been known to be very eclectic in regards to religion. To understand why the Chinese have such a seemingly ambiguous stance towards practicing a single religion one must first understand the historical background of religious development in China. Then one can look at the role of spirituality in China and the nature of religion in the lives of the Chinese people both in classical and modern times.*

There is a saying that a Chinese man wears a Confucian cap, Taoist robe, and Buddhist sandals.<sup>1</sup> Yet how is it that these three differing ideologies can co-exist within the same framework in the life of the Chinese? It is rightly conceived that the three philosophies of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are fundamentally different and, at the basic level, seemingly incompatible. Yet all three are at the foundation of what makes the Chinese who they are today. The answer to this enigma lies in the melding and utilization of these three prevalent philosophies that have dominated China for centuries and weaving them into one unified pattern of existence that has been termed by historians as Neo-Confucianism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lao Tzu, *Dao Teh Ching*, trans. John C. H. Wu (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), vi.

<sup>2</sup> Laurence C. Wu, *Fundamentals of Chinese Philosophy*, Social Philosophy Research Institute, vol. 3 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 233–234.

Within this paper we will take a brief look at the historical setting that prepared the stage for the forming of Neo-Confucianism. We will then study the assimilation of several specific Buddhist and Taoist ideas into traditional Confucianism. Finally we will explore the ultimate synthesis and clarification of these ideas into the cohesive and unified philosophy of Neo-Confucianism as it is known today.

The development of Neo-Confucianism occurred over the span of several centuries. It was not simply one man in a single lifetime that promulgated this philosophy, but rather it was the result of centuries of evolution and the assimilation of ideas from numerous scholars and philosophers. In order to understand the reason for the development of Neo-Confucianism and the factors that influenced that development it is important to understand the historical setting of China at the time that this development first took place.

With the decline and fall of the Han dynasty in A.D. 220 and the subsequent three-and-a-half centuries of numerous small dynasties and warfare a great unrest and dissatisfaction with the old tradition arose among the people of China. Arthur F. Wright, in his book *Buddhism in Chinese History* states, "The breakdown of the old order, the ensuing age of questioning, of social and intellectual discontent, rendered Chinese of all classes receptive to a great variety of new ideas and attitudes."<sup>3</sup> With this unrest Buddhism was able to flourish and take its place in Chinese culture. Along with this surge in Buddhism, there also came a heightening of Taoism and its principles among the people who were questioning the usefulness of Confucianism since it had so obvious failure to keep the government of the Han dynasty unified.

For those three-and-a-half centuries when there was a major surge in the development of Buddhist and Taoist thought, Confucianism in general was in a perpetual state of downfall and

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Press, 1959), 40.

disuse by many of the factions among the Chinese. Yet Buddhism and Taoism were unable to bring stability to the political unrest that had swept over China. Once again the people questioned the usefulness of the common practices and beliefs that were held by the majority of the elite. With the establishment of the Sui Dynasty (A.D. 581–618) we find the beginnings of a revival of Confucianism. Wright explains it in these words: "Of far greater historical significance was the selective revival of Confucianism. Its ritual-symbolic procedures were refurbished for use in the court and countryside to give the Sui an aura of legitimacy."<sup>4</sup>

The Sui Dynasty was quickly replaced by the militarily strong Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618–907), which reestablished the examination system for bureaucratic advancement and held the Confucian classics as the official philosophy of the government. Yet after years of domination by such highly metaphysical and mystical philosophies as Buddhism and Taoism, Confucianism seemed to some to be unable to provide for the spiritual needs of the people. The philosopher Fung Yu-Lan said

Confucianism had by this time already lost the vitality which it had once manifested. . . . The original texts were there . . . yet they failed to meet the spiritual interest and needs of the age. After the revival of Taoism and the introduction of Buddhism, people had become more interested in metaphysical problems.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the two most influential men in this period of reestablishment were Han Yu and Li Ao. Wing-Tsit Chan states that, "so far as Chinese thought is concerned, his greatness [Han Yu] and that of Li Ao lie in the fact that they saved Confucianism from its possible annihilation by Taoism and Buddhism." They

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>5</sup> Fung Yu-Lan, *Selected Philosophical Writings of Fung Yu-Lan* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1991), 484.

were able to save Confucianism by “attacking Taoism and Buddhism, which were then at their height,” and in so doing “Han Yu reversed the tide of Confucian decline.”<sup>6</sup> Dun J. Li proposes that

The beginning of Neo-Confucianism can be traced to two major sources: the reaction to the kind of Confucianism practiced from the Han times and the response to the challenge of Taoism and Buddhism, especially the latter. . . . During the T'ang dynasty scholars like Han Yu called upon China's intellectual elite to rebuke Buddhism as a form of superstition, but to combat it they did not develop a new ideology.<sup>7</sup>

It was in this time of turmoil that the people entered into a state of dissatisfaction and intellectual unrest. Buddhism and Taoism were failing to provide a political foundation upon which to build a dynasty and Confucianism had failed to provide metaphysical answers to the intellectual curiosity of the people. In order to establish Confucianism again as the dominant path of thought and governance many Confucian scholars began a great effort to persecute and destroy the opposing two modes of thought and to elaborate upon Confucianism to provide a spiritual justification to their claims of supremacy.

Dun Li explains the Confucian elaboration in this way:

One must have one's own system to fight an alien system, and they [the scholars] searched diligently in the Confucian classics for those ideas that were regarded as most appropriate for the occasion. When these ideas were found inadequate, they did

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<sup>6</sup> Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 450.

<sup>7</sup> Dun J. Li, *The Ageless Chinese: A History*, 3d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 229.

not hesitate to borrow from their opponents . . . the result was a Confucianism strongly imbued with Buddhist and Taoist influences.<sup>8</sup>

Lawrence C. Wu states:

The Confucianists began to construct a metaphysics, with considerable appropriations from Buddhism and Daoism, which would provide a foundation for the Confucian ethic and a philosophically more satisfying understanding of the universe. . . . Given the synthetic tendency of Chinese philosophers, the new philosophy . . . would understandably incorporate features of Buddhism and Daoism [Taoism] along with the strong moral and social concerns of Confucianism.<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to note that as time went on, the more the Confucianists tried to improve their claim of supremacy and establish themselves as the dominant thought the more they incorporated the ideals and philosophies that they were opposing.

The elaboration and incorporation of foreign ideas into Confucianism resulted in a wide variety of philosophical developments. In the interest of time and length I am not going to elaborate upon the various philosophers and the evolution of the ideas over time, but rather I am going to discuss and define three of the basic principles found within Neo-Confucianism and their relation to Buddhism and Taoism and then briefly discuss how Neo-Confucianism was ultimately synthesized into a comprehensive, unified school of thought.

The first principle of Neo-Confucianism I wish to address is the idea of the tai-ji, or the "Great Ultimate." Siu-chi Huang defines the tai-ji in this way, "The tai-ji is (1) the primary and neces-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>9</sup> Wu, 233.

sary cause of the universe, (2) forever in a continuous process in terms of motion and rest, and (3) the highest moral standard of mankind.”<sup>10</sup> As the Tao is to Taoism, so is the tai-ji to Neo-Confucianism. Tai-ji is the base of truth for the universe, and it is upon this that everything is built. Tai-ji is in a continual cycle of motion and rest that is analogous to the idea of the yin and yang principles found in Taoism and Confucianism. From this constant state of flux within the great ultimate evolves the five elements, which are organized to create things and from which all things spring. Many philosophers expounded upon this concept that was often the foundation for many of the diagrams and charts used to explain the basis of the universe.<sup>11</sup> While Tai-ji obviously echoes both the Tao and Taoism, it is also reminiscent of Buddhism and the idea of a constant cycle of death and rebirth, destruction and re-creation in which there is a power that is greater than the processes that take place within that power. There is a great ultimate within which all things come into being, pass away, and then come again. Yet this great ultimate is really beyond our ability to describe or understand.

Housed within this concept of tai-ji are the principles of li and ch’i. As the tai-ji is the universal cause of all things and all things are housed within this great ultimate, it is seen that everything has a purpose and the ability to carry out that purpose to its natural end, this is described as li and ch’i.

Dun Li provides an excellent insight into the meaning of li as expounded by the Neo-Confucianist.

The possession of a human form does not necessarily make a man; more important is the principle of reason (li) that underlies the essence of being a man. . . . As a chair is not a chair if

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<sup>10</sup> Siu-chi Huang, *Essentials of Neo-Confucianism: Eight Major Philosophers of the Song and Ming Periods* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), 24.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 21–26. Huang provides greater explanation and insight into the meaning of tai-ji, which I have only briefly touched upon.



it cannot sustain the weight of a human body, a man is no longer a man and is in fact indistinguishable from the lowest animals if he has lost his sense of humanity or his essence of being a man.<sup>12</sup>

All objects and causes of the universe are found within the tai-ji, and all objects are endowed with li. In many ways li can be considered an object's nature or reason for existence.

So what is man's li? To what purpose or end is man striving for? Fung Yu-Lan gives us an interesting answer and insight into this question by stating that "the ultimate purpose of Neo-Confucianism is to teach men how to achieve Confucian Sagehood."<sup>13</sup> Yet li is only half of the equation. For, if li is the principle, reason, nature, or mind of man, there must be substance to house this ephemeral essence. Herrlee G. Creel explains the li and ch'i in this way, "All existent things are made up . . . of principle [li] plus ch'i. The term ch'i cannot really be translated, but is somewhat like our idea of 'substance'. . . . All things (even bricks) consist both of ch'i and of the li."<sup>14</sup>

The great ultimate is the cause of all things in the universe and in order to allow li to be fulfilled the great ultimate provides ch'i as the vehicle.

Man's nature . . . is his li, which is part of the Supreme Ultimate. Thus the li of all men is the same, but unfortunately their ch'i ("substance") is not. If one's ch'i is impure, one is foolish and degenerate, as if a pearl (one's li) lay concealed in muddy water (the impure ch'i). One must get rid of the impediment of this cloudy ch'i and recapture one's original nature.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Li, 232.

<sup>13</sup> Fung Yu-Lan, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, 489.

<sup>14</sup> Herrlee G. Creel, *Chinese Thought: From Confucius to Mao Tse-Tung* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 207.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

Dun Li gave one of the best explanations of ch'i when he said, "To develop ch'i to its fullest extent is to attain moral perfection—the highest goal, which every man should strive to achieve."<sup>16</sup> Li is a principle of nature that exists before substance is created, but the substance is necessary for the purpose to be fulfilled. Just like the idea of a "perfect" chair can exist in the mind of a carpenter, but it cannot actually be sat in until the wood and other necessary parts are put together in the proper and perfect way in order to fit the "ideal" chair.<sup>17</sup>

This explanation of li is somewhat different from the li that was taught by Confucius and his followers. So where did this change come from? It clearly has received some influence stemming from Buddhism. Fung Yu-Lan said,

The ultimate purpose of Buddhism is to teach men how to achieve Buddhahood . . . likewise, the ultimate purpose of Neo-Confucianism is to teach men how to achieve Confucian Sagehood.<sup>18</sup>

It seems plausible that the Chinese had become so indoctrinated with the teachings of Buddhism that they were unable to understand the simple concept of Confucian sagehood unless it was presented to them in Buddhist terms. The idea of li is equal to that of man becoming Buddha. Likewise the idea of ch'i is analogous to the Buddhist idea that matter is an illusion and must be overcome. If I a person were to become a sage and fulfill his destiny he

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<sup>16</sup> Li, 232.

<sup>17</sup> These concepts of *li* and *ch'i* in Neo-Confucianism hold interesting parallels and comparisons with Aristotle's ideal of the universal good and forms in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. See particularly Book I, chapters 6–9. See also Fung Yu-Lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1953), 537; a very interesting look at this parallel can be found in *Carson Chang, The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), 255.

<sup>18</sup> Yu-Lan, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, 489.

must do all that he could do to develop his ch'i and overcome the illusion of his own flesh, desires, or physical shortcomings. Presenting this old idea in such a mystical fashion seems to have become almost a requirement in order to allow the teachings to be received with great appeal. With this change in approach the people acquired a metaphysical ideal that not only was not alien, but also, in its combined form, it offered a practical method for government and order.

Yet this change did not come about by happenstance, rather it was mostly through the tireless efforts of a man, Zhu Xi. Indeed, Wing-Tsit Chan, when speaking of Zhu Xi, states that, "Generally speaking, while he reaffirmed the basic doctrines of Confucianism, he brought its development over the centuries, especially during the Sung period, into a harmonious whole and gave it a new complexion."<sup>19</sup> Neo-Confucianism exists as it does today due to Zhu Xi and his synthesis of these ideas.

Along with synthesizing the various strands of thought Zhu Xi also promulgated his own philosophy as to how one is to develop ch'i in order to fulfill one's li. According to Creel, Zhu Xi taught that, "we should seek knowledge by 'investigating things,' not merely their li or principles. Our ultimate goal is to understand the li, but, in order to understand this abstraction, we must examine its concrete manifestations."<sup>20</sup> It is the investigation of things that allow us to understand the principle behind them. One cannot understand li without investigating the ch'i that houses and allows the li to be fulfilled.<sup>21</sup>

Not only did Zhu Xi also synthesis these thoughts into a unified whole but he also was able to make Neo-Confucianism more

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<sup>19</sup> Chan, 589.

<sup>20</sup> Creel, 211.

<sup>21</sup> There are generally considered to be two main schools of Neo-Confucianism: the one taught by Zhu Xi and the other by the great scholar Wang Yang Ming. The former focused upon the investigation of things and is called the rational school of Neo-Confucianism. The later is considered the mind or thought school of Neo-Confucianism and is associated with and closely

utilitarian and closer to the actual doctrine of Confucius. Wing-Tsit Chan states, "Through his interpretations . . . he made Neo-Confucianism truly Confucian, stripped of the Buddhist and Taoist influence which had been conspicuous in previous Neo-Confucianists."<sup>22</sup> Yet, the necessity to house one's thoughts in a metaphysical casing remained behind, as did the mystical nature of some of the teachings.

It must be remembered that Confucianism, in any form and in any age, is at heart a moral philosophy of virtuous acts and government.

Although Neo-Confucianists did base their whole movement on the metaphysical concept of principle (li), metaphysics is not one of their distinctions. But in emphasizing the Confucian Way of having action and of sustaining and supporting the life of one another . . . in reiterating the ancient Confucian ideal of . . . ordering the state, and bringing peace to the world . . . they did much to retain the real strength of the Confucian system.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the metaphysical ideologies that are associated with Neo-Confucianism, it is at its core a political philosophy concerned with governing people and making life worth living. Neo-Confucianism opposed the escapism and nihilism of Taoism and Buddhism and promoted activity and stability in an unstable society.

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resembles the Chan Buddhist teaching of gaining enlightenment in one's own mind and not from outside sources. As Zhu Xi's school was officially adopted by the government of the time as the philosophy that was used in the examination system and has continued through to the present century, it is considered the official standard of Neo-Confucianism. Therefore I do not make mention of Wang Yang Ming in this paper. For more information on Wang Yang Ming and his philosophy see Creel, 209–216; John E. Wells, Jr., *Mountain of Fame: Portraits in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), ch. 13.; and Chan, ch. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Chan, 589.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

It is of interest to note that since the beginning of the development of Neo-Confucianism, which started in the Sui and T'ang era, there has been no major lapses of political continuity between dynasties such as those found in the warring states period and the era of the three kingdoms at the fall of the Han dynasty. It is possible that, despite all of its wonderful moral and virtuous teachings for the government and rule of the people, traditional Confucianism was lacking that basic element of spirituality which seems to add great faith and power to the confidence of the people in their belief system.

This paper has shown the historical setting of early China and the process by which Neo-Confucianism has amalgamated traditional Confucianism with Buddhism and Taoism to help mold Chinese culture into what it is today. "The pattern of behavior that we sometimes associate with the Chinese . . . does not originate in Confucius. . . . It originates in Neo-Confucianism, rather than classical Confucianism of the pre Ch'in period."<sup>24</sup>

No matter what one might understand or think of Neo-Confucianism it cannot be denied that it has left an indelible impression upon the minds and culture of China. It has influenced virtually every aspect of Chinese and Asian culture. This in turn has allowed for the rich flowering and unique development of a society that is worthy, in many ways, of our respect, admiration, and emulation.

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<sup>24</sup> Li, 229.



# BOOK REVIEWS

This section is intended to inform the reader concerning works recently published by leading scholars within the various fields of ancient studies. Readers are invited to submit proposals for reviews of exceptional works they have read to [studia\\_antiqua@yahoo.com](mailto:studia_antiqua@yahoo.com).





William G. Dever. *What did the Biblical Writers Know and When did They Know it? What Archaeology Can Tell Us About the Reality of Ancient Israel*  
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

Reviewed By Matthew J. Grey

The field of archaeology has long held an honored position of fascination for students of the Bible because of the field's importance to the study of the world from which the Bible originates. In this regard, a recent work by William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?*, will be of great value to students of biblical studies and related fields, as well as lay readers with an interest in the topic of archaeology's relationship to the Bible. Here Dever has offered both a readable and enjoyable introduction to the field of archaeology, as well as a head-on discussion on issues of extreme importance in current biblical scholarship. As he writes to the popular audience, constantly offering helpful discussion, maps, and images, the book is less an in-depth reference source than a quite insightful overview of the issues meant to familiarize the reader with the subject. Dever also masterfully combines the popular overview with solid research and commentary that naturally elevates the reader's understanding and appreciation for the intimate relationship between archaeology and the Bible.

Dever himself insists that he is not out to "prove" the Bible through archaeology, but merely to promote the honest investigation of such an important field. Raised the son of a mid-western Protestant preacher, his academic background includes study at a liberal Protestant Theological Seminary, the Hebrew Union

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College, and direction of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. Eventually, Dever moved into the university setting in the capacity of teaching and writing on Syro-Palestinian archaeology. During his career, he converted to Judaism but today is a secular humanist.

This multi-layered background has allowed Dever to catch the vision of the possible link between the fields of archaeology and biblical studies (which, incidentally, he shared in a BYU Forum in recent years). Indeed, this concept is the driving force behind the project being discussed here. The two declared emphases of the book are to 1) counter the current trend of “revisionist” scholars and their flagrant abuse of archaeology, and 2) show how modern archaeology indeed “brilliantly illuminates a real Israel in the Iron Age, and also to help foster the dialogue between archaeology and biblical studies that [he] had always imagined” (x).

In Chapter 1, “The Bible as History, Literature, and Theology,” Dever quickly introduces the issue currently at the forefront of biblical studies—Is the Bible really history? Indeed, the historicity of the biblical narratives are under fierce attack, and currently posing the greatest challenge are a group of scholars known as the “revisionists.” This is a small collection of mostly European intellectuals who, while not representative of the mainstream, are certainly among the more vocal and active. Their agenda, as Dever quotes from their own sources, is not even to attempt rewriting a history of ancient Israel, but to abolish it altogether (deny its very existence) and create a new discipline of biblical studies.

As their emphasis includes the mythical, folkloric, and epic elements of the biblical account, their conclusion is that the Bible contains no history whatsoever. It is mere literature, after all, and as such, not only has no real grounding in history, but has no real meaning either! Steeped in current trends of postmodernism (“no one can ever really know anything”), the revisionists impose this reasoning onto the biblical text and maintain that we can never

really know what happened, the biblical authors themselves had no real intention in their writing, and that any meaning must rely upon the response of the reader. Dever summarizes this approach by their insistence that the reader of the bible 1) identify the text's problems and look for any possible dissonance, 2) read the text in their own language (i.e., English or Spanish) so as to strictly adapt the message to their own situation, 3) read the text in terms of political correctness, and 4) be rid of the old fashion notion that literature is a reflection of reality. All of this concludes, for the revisionist, that no correct interpretation of the Bible's history or meaning is possible.

Dever offers a list of criticism for this seemingly reckless approach to the biblical text (or anything else for that matter!) which includes its "anti-history" attitude, as well as its promise to offer results superior to traditional scholarship which, in reality, is more entertaining than edifying. The revisionists, Dever maintains, completely ignore any original context the writings may have had and focus solely on the current social application of the text (a philosophy apparently adopted by many local Sunday School instructors as well!). Finally, their post-modern "know nothing" approach, while bypassing any linguistic and historical support (again comparable to the average Sunday School class) sustains a "cultural relativism"; the text can mean anything the reader wants it to mean. This allows for more of a forum for promoting modern ideologies and political correctness than an understanding of the biblical text itself.

Critical to the discussion, Dever demands that certain controls exist when approaching a text. First and foremost, the text, in this case the Bible, is a product of a particular time, place, language, and culture, all of which are absolutely essential to understand in gleaning the original meaning from the text. Also is the certainty that the author of the text actually did have a specific audience in mind and did have an intended message when writing the text. While these things seem almost absurdly obvious, they

are indeed lost on many in the field. Truly, an original meaning can be deciphered, but background in languages and history must be attained to adequately find it.

In Chapter 2, Dever offers a more in-depth discussion on revisionist thought, methodology, and agenda. A main tenant of this new approach, to be utterly refuted by Dever in subsequent chapters, is that all texts of the Hebrew Bible in their present form actually date to the Hellenistic Era (2nd-1st centuries B.C.) rather than the much earlier period that it describes. It is, after all, non-historical propaganda with the intent of creating a historical Israel for religious and political purposes. Thus, the revisionists attempt to “liberate” the Bible from any historical setting whatsoever. This “new approach” pretends to make all other traditional approaches (linguistics, archaeology, history) altogether obsolete. However, little by way of filling the gap is attempted. By briefly discussing some of the major revisionist voices (Phillip Davies, Thomas Thompson, Peter Lemche, and others), all seem to agree that both “biblical” and “ancient” Israel are mere fictitious social constructs whereas little can be said of any real Israel that may have existed.

Dever finds this approach faulty to say the least, and quite honestly irresponsible scholarship. “The fact is that one of the revisionists’ major faults is that they ignore, cite selectively and cavalierly, misinterpret, distort, or otherwise abuse modern archaeology and the rich data that it produces” (48). For Dever, the presence of such rich and telling archaeological data as has been produced in the last few decades is a major, and ignored, obstacle to this overly liberal approach. Supporting this assertion makes up the remainder of Dever’s work. To conclude Chapter 2, Dever entertainingly summarizes the revisionist mindset. Such philosophies include: always attacking the establishment in the name of revolutionary scholarship, creating false issues and dichotomies, rejecting consensus scholarship as the more bizarre gets the attention, denying objective facts and insisting that all interpretations (except their own) are biased and illegitimate,

pretending to science but rejecting or falsifying evidence, being politically correct in term of race, gender, and class, and above all announcing the inevitable triumph of the “new truth.”

Chapter 3 discusses the role and importance of archaeology and what it can (and must) add to biblical studies. A main point Dever makes is the insistence that a relationship be recognized between the text and discovered artifacts. Both act as data to describe something of the ancient world, and both offer an essential context in which to establish a true history. As the archaeological data is external to the text, it acts as an independent witness of those things the text may describe. Thus the dialogue between text and artifact must be achieved, meanwhile respecting the legitimacy of both fields of study (biblical text and archaeology), competence and open-mindedness on behalf of both types of scholars, and the courage and honesty of both to accept new things. This dialogue is necessary to discover the real story of ancient Israel.

The subsequent two chapters give powerful examples of how the text and archaeological data must and do work together. Dever begins the discussion by reminding the reader that some texts are more historically reliable than others. While a Latter-day Saint may appropriately differ with the extent to which assigning historicity may be taken, Dever nevertheless offers insightful and informative discussion on the various schools of textual criticism (the J, E, P, and D schools) and himself believes that 1-2 Kings, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and the Prophets all offer bits of true history within the text. While he accepts the current thought of later redaction and editing (perhaps post-exilic), he insists that “nuggets” of true history are found in these texts that demonstrate their authentic ancient origins.

For example, Dever shows how the biblical text describes the period of the United Monarchy (tribal structure, conflicts with incoming Philistines, and internal interactions with local Canaanites) and the various ways in which the archaeological record converges with the text (evidence of the house plan, and ex-

ternal and internal affairs, etc.). He also points to such important finds as the Tel Dan inscription, a 9th century recording of a “king of Israel” in connection with the “house of David.” This is clear evidence that such a concept existed much earlier than the revisionists will allow. Dever likewise points to the 10th century gates at Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo as an important correlation to the strong centralization of government which textually characterizes the reign of Solomon. Along with these matters, the extensive administrative lists as well as the great details describing Solomon’s Temple all have solid parallels among the archaeological data. Such convergences between text and artifact serve to support the history rather than detract from it.

In discussing Solomon’s Temple as a model of this phenomenon, Dever writes,

let me now emphasize that every single detail of the Bible’s complicated description of the Jerusalem temple can now be corroborated by archaeological examples from the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. There is nothing ‘fanciful’ about 1 Kings 6-8. What is truly fanciful is the notion of the revisionists that a writer in Babylon in the 6th century, much less in the hellenistic-Roman era, could have ‘invented’ such detailed descriptions, which by coincidence happen to fit exactly with Iron Age temples in Syria-Palestine hundreds of years earlier – temples that had long disappeared and had been forgotten (155–7).

For Dever, as with many students of Joseph Smith and his incredible feat in providing the Book of Mormon, the possibility that writers living in a much later age (Hellenistic) and having no access to the earlier accounts (10th-9th century), as the revisionists maintain, and yet providing such precise detail as will be vindicated by archaeology hundreds of years later is simply too incredulous for words. “Perhaps the question is simply this. Which

strains the reader's credulity more: the supposedly 'fanciful' descriptions of the temple in the Hebrew Bible; or the revisionists' scenario of its 'total invention' by writers living centuries later?" (157)

In a following chapter Dever continues along these lines, this time by pointing to what we now know of daily life in ancient Israel. As it turns out, the archaeological record confirms the details contained in the biblical text. These include the detailed king lists of Assyria and Babylonia (one inscription even mentioning King Hezekiah by name, although with a different propaganda twist than is found in the bible), as well as descriptions and artifacts of the popular religion practiced by the Israelites and condemned by the prophets. Examples of this are the high places, incense stands, Asherah figurines, and other items now discovered and denounced by the major Israelite prophets. Other textual and artifactual convergences include signature seals, ostraca, economy, pottery types, measures of volume, and ivory carvings—all alluded to in the biblical text and attested to by archaeology with precision.

It would be incredible to suggest that the biblical references were 'invented' by writers living in the Hellenistic or Roman period. They must have had ancient sources, in this case records going back at least to the 8th century, if not earlier (239).

The final section of the book returns to refuting revisionist ideology, now having cited the large quantity of evidence to sufficiently undermine their arguments. He again decries the political correctness of their revisions by reminding the reader that we *can* know things of the world of the bible. Indeed, understanding the archaeology, history and languages of the text are essential to solid scholarship.

The section ends with Dever discussing the "historical core" of the bible. In other words, those portions of true history we can

find within the text. Indeed, for Dever, elements of early Israel, the United and Divided Monarchy, and the settings of the prophets are quite consistent with the archaeological record, some even in remarkable ways. So in asking the question posed in the book's title, what did the biblical authors know and when did they know it?, For Dever, the answer is that they knew a lot and they knew it early ("based on older, and genuinely historical accounts"). "One cannot simply force all the biblical texts down into the Persian, much less the Hellenistic, period" (273). As, again, is often said of Joseph Smith producing the Book of Mormon, if the writing really is a later "pious fraud," surely there would *something* historically inaccurate to give it all away—"which surely even the most ingenious 'forger' could not have known" (273).

A final question asked by Dever, in response to Davies' proposition of a Hellenistic composition, is what would the text indeed look like if it *was* written in the Greek era? Certainly, Dever concludes, it would look a lot more Greek. Perhaps containing the Greek world-view of rational western thought, rather than the strictly oriental thought that is clear in the text. Or possibly more allusions to the Greek *poleis*, rather than to the Iron Age city life that is described in ancient Israel. Or most of all, it surely would have been written in Greek, rather than the Hebrew and Aramaic in which it originated. Indeed, for a 2nd century writer to project a story back into the Iron Age, he would have to do it without trace of anachronism (i.e., giving away the conditions of his own day), write with no records (for all Iron Age records had disappeared, only to be discovered centuries later), and he must provide such a work of fiction so as to fool the entire world for 2000 years (that is, until Davies and his revisionist friends found him out!).

Thus Dever, in blasting the minimalists, encourages the reader to continue study of the Bible, accompanied by archaeology, and to constantly search for those historical nuggets contained in the narrative. Even in the portions of the Bible Dever



does not believe to be historical, he recognizes the importance of asking, what are the authors (or editors) trying to say in interpreting these things? The answers have proven to provide the very foundations to our society and should not be discounted. We should take the Bible at its best, rather than at its worst as the revisionists do. For Dever, it is important to find the middle ground (verses the extreme left of the minimalists or the extreme right of the fundamentalists) and defend it.

For a Latter-day Saint student of the Bible, there are some conclusions Dever makes that may soon conflict with LDS belief (i.e., authorship, some elements of historicity, etc.). However, after perusing much of the research in biblical scholarship, his approach and research is overall quite refreshing in its conservative stance and its honest assessments of the facts, seemingly unbiased by current trends in ideology and academics. The principles of biblical studies he purports (the stress on language, context, history) should be well considered by the Latter-day Saints in their own study of the bible. Not to mention the amount we could learn of Book of Mormon apologetics with Dever's arguments and methodology. Overall, this is an easy to read and an academically inspiring book by a competent scholar offering insight and hope to the believer that there are still academics out there honest enough to declare that the Bible might contain truth after all!



Ze'ev W. Falk. *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times:  
An Introduction*

Provo, Utah and Winona Lake, Indiana:  
Brigham Young University Press and Eisenbrauns, 2001.

Reviewed By Robert D. Hunt

Having been out of print for far too long, the second edition of Ze'ev Falk's book is most welcome and continues to add to both biblical and legal scholarship. Organized by such topics as "Administration of Justice," and "The Family," this book allows the student and scholar to use it only as a reference or to peruse through it cover to cover. As the subtitle states, this book is only an introduction to Hebrew law, but it provides a solid foundation for further study into Hebrew law as a whole or specific issues. Falk has provided extensive footnotes as well to aid in further study.

The most prominent feature of Falk's book is perhaps his presentation of Hebrew law from his spiritual interest. His linguistic, historical, and legal abilities are not diminished by this presentation rather they are enhanced by it. Using the biblical text as his starting point, Falk draws in law codes from around the ancient Near East to augment the discussion. He maintains that Hebrew law developed independently of its neighbors but not in a vacuum. Thus the similarity of the Hebrew law code with its contemporary law codes (such as those of Babylon and Assyria) is due to their similar circumstances and societies.

Falk begins his discussion with a look at the source material. One of the positive things about his book is the sources he uses.

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To be sure, talmudic and other rabbinic sources are helpful in looking at biblical law, but in many cases they are used anachronistically and hence distort biblical law. Falk, although he uses these later sources to buoy up his research does not rely on them and typically gives them as a supplementary point. This methodology makes for a valuable reconstruction of biblical law as it was viewed by the ancient Israelites.

When looking at his sources, Falk makes the valuable observation that for ancient Israel (and for many ancient societies for that matter) the law was indistinguishable from religion. "Justice is administered in the name of God and quite often the court of official body convenes in the sanctuary or on the occasion of a religious ceremony" (5). Violation of the secular laws is synonymous with violation of God's law. This helps explain the importance the ancient Israelites placed in their laws and their enforcement. It also elucidates the king's role in his kingdom. Contrary to most other contemporaneous societies, the king was not the lawgiver but rather had his role as the upholder and defender of the law that Israel's true king, God, had given.

Falk's analysis of the tribal environment in which Hebrew law arose also proves invaluable. Just as Hebrew law did not develop within a vacuum, so the Mosaic code did not develop independent of its tribal predecessors. Although the Mosaic code changes or differs from them, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their contemporaries contributed to Hebrew law and its traditional interpretation. As the tribes evolved into a nation and a state, so too did the law code require evolution. Using multiple sources and examples, Falk highlights this evolution and discusses its relevance to interpreting Hebrew law today.

Law governs the way people interact with others and projects the values of its society. One of the strengths of Hebrew Law is Falk's discussion of how the law affected the people living under it. His discussion varies from business to family issues such as divorce. His discussion on marriage proves most informative when

reading the biblical text. Clearly, marriage laws illuminate the intricacies of Isaac and Jacob's marriages, but also elucidate the prophetic typology of the Lord as the bridegroom and Israel as the bride. Understanding how the ancient Israelites performed and viewed their marriage covenants adds further insights to some of the prophetic passages that use the nuptial and marital laws as a basis for their condemnation of Israel (see for example Jeremiah 3:1 and Ezekiel 16:8–63).

Throughout his work, Falk spends a significant amount of time discussing the different terms used for the legal ideas of Hebrew law. Beginning with "Terms of Law," Falk alternates between listing the terms with their definitions and weaving the terms in his narrative. This proves most helpful and is one of the highlights of his book. Most valuable is the seamless manner in which he does this so as to be beneficial to both the Hebraist and non-Hebraist. In this way, the book again proves valuable to a vast audience from different scholarly levels.

Law during biblical times played a most central role in daily life. Inextricably connected to the religious and spiritual life of ancient Israel, an understanding of Hebrew law seems vital to an understanding of the biblical text. Gaining such an understanding can at times seem a most daunting task. However, using Falk's book as a foundation upon which to build helps bring the task into a more manageable sphere. The organization, helpful terminology, and the many lucid examples make his book a must for those with any interest in the Bible.



# THE DIALOGUE

The purpose of this section is to generate discussion concerning articles published in previous issues of *Studia Antiqua*. Professors and students alike are encouraged to send questions or comments pertaining to the articles to [studia\\_antiqua@yahoo.com](mailto:studia_antiqua@yahoo.com).





## Comments on John C. Robison's "Crucifixion in the Roman World"

Jeffrey R. Chadwick

Congratulations on the most recent (Winter 2002) of *Studia Antiqua*. It looks in every respect to be a fine and high quality publication. Thank you for the complimentary copy, and for the opportunity to serve on the second issue's faculty review board. I have read the volume with interest, and wish, in addition to extending congratulations, to comment on one of the fine articles.

"Crucifixion in the Roman World: The Use of Nails at the Time of Christ" by John C. Robison (Vice President of the Student Society for Ancient Studies) is a thorough and well researched article, which I very much enjoyed reading. In fact, I read it twice, the second time pausing to make careful notes. This was because of a notable error (or perhaps it may be called an omission) in the article. I wish to point out this error, hoping that (1) the record may be corrected concerning the subject matter, and (2) perhaps this information might be passed on by you to the author, so he may adjust his otherwise excellent work before it is printed again.

The introduction to the article (the italicized abstract which appears above the actual first paragraph) states that "... in the well known case of Jesus, we are never told how he was fastened to the cross." This assumption runs throughout the article, and explicitly appears in a number of places, for example the footnote on p. 27 which alleges that "... the sources do not explicitly state that Jesus' hands and feet were nailed. . . ." This is, of course incorrect.

It is true that the four New Testament gospels do not mention nails in the passages which report the actual act of Jesus being crucified (Matt. 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:33, and John 19:18). However, it is absolutely clear from the text of John 20 (and it is also strongly implied in Luke 24) that Jesus was fastened to his cross with nails. John 20:25 explicitly mentions nails, in the context of the story of the apostle Thomas:

“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails . . . I will not believe” (John 18:25).

Two verses later, we are told that the Risen Christ gave Thomas the opportunity to examine the physical evidence in the manner he desired:

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands . . .” (John 18:27).

The event where the other ten apostles had been granted this same examination is recorded in Luke:

“And when he had thus spoken he shewed them his hands and his feet” (Luke 24:40).

While Luke, like the second passage of John, does not specifically say “nails,” it is an obvious allusion to the motif mentioned in the first passage from John, which does specifically mention nails. How, then, can it be maintained that “we are never told how he was fastened to the cross,” or that “the sources do not explicitly state the Jesus hands and feet were nailed?” (Surely the texts of John and Luke are not suggesting that the apostles were examin-

ing rope burns—particularly since Thomas had mentioned nails!)

It appears that Robison, in putting together an otherwise fine article, simply missed an important New Testament passage—one that could have easily been located by looking up “nail” in any decent Bible concordance or index. This points out to me once again the importance of “searching the scriptures” prior to searching all the rest of the sources we so often rely upon as scholars of the ancient world.

Another *ancient* source Robison might have quoted, particularly since the journal is essentially a Latter-day Saint product, is the Book of Mormon, where the Risen Christ says:

“Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet . . .” (3 Nephi 11:14).

The Nephites are said to have complied with Jesus directive, and the nail prints are duly noted:

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet . . . (3 Nephi 11:15).

Now it might be felt that if the audience for the paper were interfaith or ecumenical, the Book of Mormon would not be looked upon as a legitimate ancient source, and might therefore not be quoted (although I think this is a timid position). But certainly in an LDS setting, the Book of Mormon ought to be considered one of the “ancient sources.”

In defense of Robison, may I relate an anecdote which demonstrates that he is not alone in having missed the New Testament references. Two of the fine scholars that he frequently cites as proponents of the “crucifixion by tying with ropes” model, James Charlesworth and Joseph Zias, also somehow missed those

passages. In August of 2000, I was invited by Charlesworth (a delightful guy who insists I call him “Jim”) to present at the scholarly conference on “Jesus and Archaeology” in Jerusalem which he had organized, and which took place at the Notre Dame de France Hospice. My topic was on “Jesus and the Archaeology of the Golan,” but the topic presented by Zias (an equally nice guy who insists one call him “Joe”) was on the methodology of crucifixion, specifically in terms of whether or not Jesus was nailed or tied to the cross. Zias’ thesis, of course, was that in the absence of specific textual evidence to the contrary, Jesus was likely crucified by being fastened to the cross with ropes rather than nails. After explaining at length how such a method could cause a most uncomfortable death, he concluded by opening the floor for questions or comments.

I was somewhat taken aback that in ten minutes of queries and comments by some of the worlds finest biblical (i.e., New Testament) and archaeological scholars, no one defended the idea that Jesus was nailed to the cross. Although several were clearly uncomfortable with Zias’ conclusion, no one rose to quote the New Testament evidence—no one seemed to remember it. At length I raised my hand, was recognized by Charlesworth (who moderated the question and comment sections), and stood up to speak. Opening my Bible, I said I’d like to ask how we ought to respond to the words of Thomas in John 20:25, and then read aloud the scripture:

“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails . . . I will not believe.”

The room was absolutely silent for about fifteen seconds. A hundred people just sat there, the atmosphere electric. I think they were feeling the power of the scriptural word as it rested upon us all. It was one of the most remarkable experiences I’ve ever had. Joe Zias was speechless. Finally, he ended the long pause of silence

by simply saying “I don’t have an answer for that passage, other than we obviously missed something very significant.” Jim Charlesworth then chimed in, with his characteristic big smile, and said: “Wouldn’t you know that it’s our Mormon friend who points out to us what we overlooked in the Bible.”

The remarks and slaps on the back I received from Catholics and Protestants alike after the session, and the genuine friendliness which both Joe and Jim showed me at the luncheon afterward, all demonstrated that the appeal to the scriptures had fallen on receptive minds and hearts. I hope the small critique I have raised in relation to John Robison’s fine article will find the same response.

All the best,

Jeffrey R. Chadwick  
Church History and Doctrine



## Author Reponse

John C. Robison

I very much appreciate Dr. Chadwick's response to my article. I found his comments both well founded and insightful. In light of a few of his points I thought it might be helpful for me to respond so as to detail some of my thought processes as I wrote the paper which might then explain why I wrote what I did.

New Testament scholars look at the accounts of Christ's life quite a bit differently than we do as Latter-day Saints (a point with which Dr. Chadwick is very familiar. This is more for the benefit of readers not familiar with New Testament scholarship). Scholars look at the Gospel accounts, not as a testimony written by a disciple/prophet of Jesus, but rather as a compilation of oral traditions and sayings of Jesus that circulated among the faithful for decades before they were ever written down.

The accounts that we deal with concerning the crucifixion of Jesus are of two sorts (in their eyes). The first is the historical account of the actual crucifixion, this is presented in each gospel in essentially the same manor; that is, the editor of the account in speaking of the crucifixion states in a subordinate clause, "and they crucified him" (Matt. 27:35), "And when they had crucified him" (Mark 15:24), "there they crucified him" (Luke 23:33), and "where they crucified him," "When they had crucified him" (John 19:18, 23). And then there are the other accounts that speak of Jesus returning to His apostles as a resurrected being and having them feel the marks of the nails. Most likely because these events

are seen as outside the explanation of science (i.e. the resurrection) scholars tend to dismiss these later accounts as being more in the category of folk tales/miracle stories that have very little historical value. Thus, they dismiss the accounts even though they make perfect sense to us, indeed they are one of the basic tenets of our beliefs. It is for this reason then that so many scholars say that we don't know how Jesus was crucified and thus they can advance their theories of Jesus being tied to the cross (see the position, among others, of Dr. Zias and Charlesworth, both in my article and in Dr. Chadwick's letter).

As I went through and studied primary accounts of crucifixion it quickly became apparent that nailing was much better represented in ancient texts. My intent then in writing the article was to demonstrate that the events spoken of in the scriptures were not mere folk tales but also based on historical reality. I sought to do this by basing my research on the tools that these very same scholars had used to defend a position of tying.

Finally, I have one admission to make. I am very thankful to Dr. Chadwick for pointing out my lack of references to the crucifixion in the New Testament. I had no intention of such an omission—indeed, that was the very thing that I had hoped to defend. I hope this helps clarify my position.

Sincerely,

John C. Robison





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