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## The Temple, the Book of Revelation, and Joseph Smith

Author(s): John L. Fowles

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# The Temple, the Book of Revelation, and Joseph Smith

*John L. Fowles*

## Apocalyptic Literature and Joseph Smith

The Book of Revelation has drawn the interest of scholars and students of the Bible for hundreds of years. Our distinguished guest, Margaret Barker, has written a 453-page commentary entitled *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. In her own words, “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* is the culmination of many years’ work; all my publications have been leading in this direction and their conclusions form the foundation of this book.”<sup>1</sup>

ἀποκάλυψις is a Greek word meaning “revelation” or “an unveiling.” As a genre, apocalyptic literature usually details the authors’ visions of the *eschatological* or end times as revealed by a heavenly messenger or angel. Traditionally, biblical scholars believe that apocalyptic literature of Judaism and Christianity embraces a considerable period, from the centuries following the exile down to the close of the middle ages. These revelations may come from angels or other figures who have been taken up to heaven and then return to earth with messages regarding past and present events, which often are recorded in highly symbolic language.

However, Margaret Barker’s thesis is:

The apocalyptic texts were not the original product of a Hellenizing, oppressed minority group late in the second temple period, but the repository of Israel’s oldest traditions.<sup>2</sup>

In my judgment, the Book of Mormon, as well as the teachings of Joseph Smith, concurs with Barker’s analysis of these apocalyptic texts.

Visions of God’s throne (Isaiah 6:1–4; Ezekiel 1:26–28; 1 Nephi 1:8) and angelic tours of the heavens, which include seeing God’s own temple in heaven (Revelation 1:1–3; 1 Nephi 14:21–27), are all recorded in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 7:15; 11:19; 14:17; 15:5,6; 21:22) and in other non-canonical literature such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pseudepigrapha (1 Enoch 14: 18–24) and the Nag Hammadi writings found in Egypt. In her first work, Dr. Barker labeled these writings as the “Older Testament” because they represent an earlier time than our present Old Testament—which was compiled, redacted, and produced after the Babylonian captivity. The Book of Revelation contains memories of the first temple and this “older tradition.” It is among the earliest Christian writings and worthy of our study and inquiry into the early Christian worldview of the temple.

The Book of Revelation was also important to Joseph Smith and early Mormonism. My purpose in the short time I have today is to demonstrate that some of Joseph Smith’s revelations, translations, and teachings parallel with the Book of Revelation and other apocalyptic literature. For example, the Book of Mormon records Lehi experiencing a “throne theophany” or what scholars have also named “the prophetic motif” within the first eight verses of the book’s opening chapter. Nephi records that his father was “overcome with the Spirit, and carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels

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1. Margaret Barker. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: T&T Clark, 2000), xiii.

2. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 201.

in the attitude of singing and praising their God” (1 Nephi 1:8).<sup>3</sup> Following Lehi’s testament, Nephi, the son of Lehi, is shown the same revelation John saw in Patmos. Toward the end of Nephi’s apocalyptic vision, the angelic guide specifically tells Nephi: “And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write are many things which thou hast seen; and behold, the remainder shalt thou see. But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them. . . . And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John, according to the word of the angel” (1 Nephi 14:24, 25, 27).

These early translated chapters (1829) in the Book of Mormon appear to be apocalyptic in nature. Joseph Smith’s interest in the Book of Revelation must have been generated by his translation of the Book of Mormon, where he would have learned about this important and intriguing connection between the roots of early apocalyptic in pre-exilic Israel and the culminating full disclosure of the apocalyptic vision found in the Book of Revelation. In addition, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, while translating the Book of Mormon in April of 1829, had a question as to whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried in the flesh or had died. The revelation they received was a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, Joseph Smith’s early experiences while translating the Book of Mormon and this 1829 revelation regarding John’s status demonstrates Smith’s initial interest in the Book of Revelation, which continued until the end of his life.

### The Sealed Book

In 1843, Joseph Smith preached a sermon interpreting the wild beasts<sup>5</sup> (Revelation 4) and the es-

teric seals<sup>6</sup> (Revelation 6). On that occasion Smith boldly declared, “The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written.”<sup>7</sup> Latter-day Saints somewhat teasingly say, well, it is fine for Joseph Smith to make such a statement because he claimed to have seen the vision,<sup>8</sup> whereas we are left with a bizarre esoteric book of first-century symbolism!

Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith’s major scribe for the translation of the Book of Mormon, recorded a statement which once again associates the Book of Mormon and the Book of Revelation. According to Cowdery, Joseph Smith said, “A part of the book (Book of Mormon) was sealed, and was not to be opened yet. The sealed part, said he (Moroni), contains the same revelation which was given to John upon the isle of Patmos, and when the people of the Lord are prepared, and found worthy, then it will be unfolded unto them.”<sup>9</sup> Toward the end of

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Center, BYU, 1980), 182–190. The Greek word for “Beast” in this verse is ζῷον *Zoan*, which is a tame animal, contrasted with the “Beast” of Revelation 13, which is θηρίον *Therion*, meaning vicious or wild animal. Of course our word Zodiac comes from ζῷον. John then is probably seeing the constellations in the heaven as Jesus did see in Mark 1:13. Dr. Barker says, “The Gospels encode this information in the account of the temptations in the wilderness. Jesus was ‘with the creatures and the angels served him’, immediately recognizable as a Merkavah experience.” Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 211.

6. The opening of the seals of Revelation is another question to be studied by Mormon scholars. D&C 77 records Joseph Smith’s initial work on the his translation of the Bible with fourteen questions and answers regarding the Book of Revelation. In Joseph Smith’s later sermon (1843) on the seals, he appears to teach them in a futuristic mode: “The things which John saw had no allusion to the scenes of the days of Adam, Enoch, Abraham or Jesus, only so far as is plainly represented by John, and clearly set forth by him. John saw that only which was lying in futurity and which was shortly to come to pass.” *History of the Church* 5:340–345.

7. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 290.

8. Similarly, Joseph Smith said, “Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.” Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 324.

9. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989), 1:53–54; see also 2 Nephi 27:7–10 and Ether 4:4–7. Like John, Enoch had a similar vision of the end of times. (See 1 Enoch 14–19) as edited by James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 20–23. An interesting parallel to the visions of Enoch occur in Joseph Smith’s Moses 7–8, which is an expanded

3. Compare John’s Throne-Room vision in Revelation 4–5 as well as Ezekiel’s vision recorded in Ezekiel 1.

4. See Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*. ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–1951), 1:35–36 (D&C 7).

5. Joseph Fielding Smith, ed. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970), 290. See *History of the Church* 5:339–345; and Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo: Religious Studies

the Book of Mormon record, Moroni inscribed on the gold plates the very things which the Brother of Jared, like Nephi, saw in vision. This vision in part is the “sealed portion” of the Book of Mormon. Moroni specifically records, “Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared. . . . And he commanded me that I should seal them up” (Ether 4:4–7).<sup>10</sup> John received a similar command to “seal up his sayings” regarding the seven thunders and write them not (Revelation 10:4).

In review, the vision or unveiling of the revelation of God and future events in earth’s history as partly represented in “apocalyptic writings” such as the John’s Book of Revelation was also delivered to the brother of Jared and Enoch.<sup>11</sup> As previously quoted, Joseph Smith indicated the clarity of the Book of Revelation penned by John. These teachings of Joseph Smith reflect his awareness as well as understanding of these apocalyptic visions. The importance of revelation or inspiration from heaven in interpreting scripture was paramount for Joseph Smith. According to Joseph Smith, “John had the curtains of heaven withdrawn, and by vision looked through the dark vista of future ages, and contemplated events that should transpire throughout every subsequent period of time, until the final winding up scene.”<sup>12</sup>

### An LDS Temple Tradition

Following the ancient prophetic tradition, Joseph Smith, during his short ministry, introduced and

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account of Enoch’s story sketchily recorded in the Bible (Genesis 4–5).

10. This statement by Moroni echoes Nephi’s earlier record wherein he stated that the sealed book contained “a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof” (2 Nephi 27:7).

11. See the section on Joseph Smith and the Latter-Day Zion, a New Jerusalem, herein, for a discussion of the vision of Enoch.

12. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 247. Clement of Alexandria said true teachers enter the tradition of the Lord by “drawing aside the curtain”: “Drawing aside the curtain implies entering the holy of holies, the presence of God.” Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 4.

restored a temple tradition to his people. Like Margaret Barker, Hugh Nibley wrote extensively on this “hidden or temple tradition,” published in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*.<sup>13</sup> The Book of Revelation is, as Mrs. Barker might say, a “temple text.” Joseph Smith thought it was just that. Mrs. Barker posits, “Scholars sometimes wonder how Christianity developed so quickly into such a sophisticated theological system, especially as the first disciples are often portrayed as uneducated fishermen from Galilee. The answer to that question is very clear in the New Testament, if it is read with eyes accustomed to the world of the original temple.”<sup>14</sup> By my count, there are 88 verses out of 404 in the Book of Revelation that have some type of wording or phraseology that alludes to the temple or “hidden tradition.” Examples are numerous throughout the Book of Revelation text such as “washed,” “not defiled their garments,” “the name of my God,” and “kings and priests.” While looking at the white limestone temple on the brow of the hill, the foreman for all of the framework on the Nauvoo Temple said as he was leaving the city, “Farewell to the temple upon which I have labored with so much pleasure, the second temple erected to the only true and living God . . . The order of architecture was unlike anything in existence; it was purely original, being a representation of the Church, the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. . . . This is portrayed in the beautifully cut stone of this grand temple.”<sup>15</sup>

We should note here that when Joseph Smith retranslated the Bible, he changed Revelation 12:1 to read, “And there appeared a great sign [instead of the King James Version’s *wonder*<sup>16</sup>] in heaven, in the

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13. Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1987), 10–44, 391–434.

14. Margaret Barker, “Our Great High Priest, The Church as the New Temple,” address given at Father Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture, St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary, New York, January 29, 2012, 3.

15. Wandle Mace (1809–1890), *Autobiography, 1809–1846*, as told to his wife, Rebecca E. Howell Mace, typescript, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; also at <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/WMace.html>.

16. The Greek word is *σαμεινο* *sameino*, which carries the basic meaning of a sign or distinguishing mark by which something is known. In this context the meaning is “terrifying appearances in the heavens, never before seen as portents of the last days.” Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*



likeness of things on the earth; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." This is instructive as we explore how the earthly temple ritual was mirroring its heavenly counterpart. When Joseph Smith revised the Bible, he interpreted the woman of Revelation 12 to be symbolic of the church. The Joseph Smith Translation reads, "And the dragon prevailed not against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ" (JST Revelation 12:7).

To the Mormon prophet, the Nauvoo Temple symbolized in part the church coming out of the wilderness in the early nineteenth century. In an earlier revelation, Smith declared, "This the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 5:14).<sup>17</sup> At the dedication of the Kirtland temple, Joseph Smith prayed, "That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 109:73). The idea of an "army with banners" suggests a spiritual war. Paul spoke of fighting not against "flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians

6: 12). The Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the war between the sons of light and the children of darkness. We now know that these scrolls were part of the scriptures of the early Christians. Mrs. Barker's research on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the apocalypse suggests:

The warrior who rode out from heaven with the armies of heaven had the same sharp sword in his mouth. The beast and his prophet, who helped Satan in the work of deception, were destroyed, and finally, Satan himself was sealed in a great pit, so that he should not deceive the nations for a thousand years. The struggle was truth against falsehood, and for all the imagery of battle, it was describing a war of words and teaching. When the Lord rode out from heaven, his robe was sprinkled with blood (Rev. 19:13). He was the high priest emerging from the holy of holies after sprinkling the blood, and the battle that followed completed the atonement. Evil was removed from the creation and Satan banished. The Kingdom was established just as the heavenly host had proclaimed in their song: the saints were rewarded and the destroyers of the earth were destroyed (Rev. 11:18).<sup>18</sup>

Mormons commonly interpret the events in chapter 12 of Revelation as the premortal battle which was fought in heaven between Satan and Christ. This war of ideology continues on the earth where the dragon was cast out, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12: 4, 17). Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon described a vision wherein they said, "We beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about" (D&C 76: 28–29).

### **Joseph Smith and the Latter-Day Zion, a New Jerusalem**

Joseph Smith also learned from translating the Book of Mormon that there was to be a New Jerusalem

*of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. William F. Arndt and others, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 747–748.

17. This kingdom is destined to fill up the earth (see D&C 65). Margaret Barker suggests, "In the Book of Revelation John saw the ark restored to the holy of holies (Rev. 11:19), he saw four horses ride out from the temple (Rev. 6:1–8), he saw the Man in the midst of the seven lamps, the menorah (Rev. 1:12), he heard the Spirit promising the faithful that they would receive the hidden manna (Rev. 2:17). John was describing the restoration of the first temple. He also saw the Queen of Heaven in the temple, even though she is not named as the Queen. 'A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (Rev. 12:1). . . The woman's son was taken up to the throne of God. These few verses in the Book of Revelation show the importance of the Lost Lady and the cult of the first temple for understanding Christian origins." Margaret Barker, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?" <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/11/1/7.aspx>.

18. Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (Great Britain: Ashford Colour Press, 2007), 99–100.

built upon the land. Moroni speaking of Ether's prophecy stated, "And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven" (Ether 13:3–4). This Book of Mormon prophecy certainly reminds us of John's vision of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2).

In November 1835, Joseph Smith quoted from one of his own revelations known as the prophecy given to Enoch regarding the New Jerusalem. Joseph said, "First, I shall begin by quoting from the prophecy of Enoch, speaking of the last days: . . . 'I shall prepare, a holy city, . . . for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem [Moses 7:62].'" Interpreting this Enoch prophecy not found in the Bible, Smith connected Enoch's vision to John's Apocalypse: "Now Enoch was in good company in his views upon this subject: 'And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God' (Revelation 21:3). I discover by this quotation, that John upon the isle of Patmos, saw the same things concerning the last days, which Enoch saw."<sup>19</sup> Thus Joseph Smith associated the visions of John and Enoch as being the same in content and language, including that these visions of the last days are the same as the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon previously mentioned.

Joseph Smith's vision of the latter-day Zion included a temple complex of twenty four buildings in Jackson County Missouri: "When this [city] is thus laid off and supplied, lay off another in the same way and so fill up the world in these last days and let every man live in the City of Zion." The City of Zion plat that was to be replicated wherever Church members settled was possibly inspired in part by descriptions of the New Jerusalem in Ezekiel 48 and Revelation 21. At the center of the mile-square city, he envisioned two large blocks containing 24 sacred "temples." These were to be assigned to the various priesthood quorums and were to serve a variety of functions. The Prophet anticipated that the city would have a population

of from 15,000 to 20,000 so that these 24 buildings would be needed as "houses of worship, schools, etc."<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that even earlier, in the first LDS temple at Kirtland, Ohio, there were twenty-four pulpits with Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood purposes.<sup>21</sup> In John's vision the heavenly throne of God was served by twenty-four elders who surrounded it. Margaret Barker says that "the

20. *History of the Church* 1:358–59. See Frederick G. Williams, *The Life of Dr. Frederick G. Williams, Counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2012), 393–396; and Richard Cowen, "The Great Temple of the New Jerusalem," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Missouri*, ed. Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, BYU, 1994), 139.

21. See Lauritz G. Petersen, "The Kirtland Temple," *BYU Studies* 12, no. 4 (1972). The Nauvoo Temple also had a series of pulpits. At the east and west ends of the hall were two sets of similar pulpits. Resembling the pulpits used in the Kirtland Temple and repeated in later temples, they were arranged with four levels, the top three consisting of a group of three semi-circular stands. "The lower level was a drop-table, which could be raised and used for the Sacrament. The pulpits on the east stood between the windows and they were reserved for the Melchizedek Priesthood. Accordingly each pulpit had initials identifying the priesthood officers who occupied that stand: Each of the highest three pulpits bore the initials P.H.P. (President of the High Priesthood); the next lower had P.S.Q. (President of the Seventy Quorums); the next lower had P.H.Q. (President of the High priests Quorum) and table at the bottom P.E.Q. (President of the Elders Quorum). On the wall over the eastern pulpits, in line with the curve of the arched ceiling, the following was painted in beautiful, gilded letters: "The Lord Has Seen Our Sacrifice—Come After Us." The pulpits on the west end were reserved for the Aaronic Priesthood. Each pulpit also had initials identifying the priesthood officers who occupied that stand: Each of the highest three pulpits bore the initials P.A.P. (President of the Aaronic Priesthood); the next lower had P.P.Q. (President of the Priests Quorum); the next lower had P.T.Q. (President of the Teachers Quorum); and the table at the bottom P.D.Q. (President of the Deacons Quorum). Lisle Brown, "Interior Description of the Nauvoo Temple," <http://users.marshall.edu/~brown/nauvoo/nt-parent.html>. Brigham Young, Joseph Smith's successor, commented about the building of the Kirtland Temple, in a sermon given April 6, 1855: "Soon after, the Church, through our beloved Prophet Joseph, was commanded to build a Temple to the most High, in Kirtland, Ohio, and this was the next House of the Lord we hear of on the earth, since the days of Solomon's Temple. Joseph not only received a Revelation and commandment to build a Temple, but he received a pattern also, as did Moses for the Tabernacle, and Solomon for his Temple; for without a pattern, he could not know what was wanting, having never seen one, and not having experienced its use." *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, 6.

19. *History of the Church* 2:260–261.



twenty four elders with their white robes and golden crowns, seated on chariot thrones around the great throne, are probably the angel counterparts of the heads of twenty-four courses of priests." David and Solomon are said to have chosen "twenty-four chief men from the sons of Aaron (1 Chr 24:1–6), and their descendants became the twenty-four courses of priests who took turns to serve in the temple."<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly enough, Joseph Smith designated the names of the twenty-four temples to be laid out in the latter-day New Jerusalem:

The names of the Temples to be built on the painted squares as represented on the plot of the City of Zion which is now about to be forwarded thither. Nos 10, 11, & 12, are to be called, House of the Lord for the presidency of the High and most holy priesthood after the order of Melchizadeck which was after the order of the son of God upon Mount Zion City of the New Jerusalem. Nos. 7, 8, & 9 The Sacred Apostolic Repository for the use of the Bishops. Nos, 4, 5, & 6 The holy evangelical House for the High Priesthood of the holy order of God. Nos 1, 2, & 3 The house of the Lord for the Elders of Zion, an ensign to the nations. Nos 22, 23 & 24 House of the Lord for the presidency of the high Priesthood after the order of Aaron, a Standard for the people. Nos 19, 20, 21 House of the Lord for the high Priesthood after the order of Aaron, the Law of the Kingdom of heaven, Messenger to the people. Nos. 16, 17, & 18 House of the Lord for the Teachers in Zion, messenger to the Church. Nos 13, 14, & 15 House of the Lord for the Deacons in Zion, helps in government. Underneath must be written on each House— Holiness To the Lord 24 June 1833—<sup>23</sup>

These names certainly bring to mind the names of what could be called "courses of Priests" or "orders of Priesthood." In short, it seems to me that there are strong links between the temple and its imagery in the Book of Revelation and the temple tradition brought forth in the early nineteenth century by Joseph Smith.

22. Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 123.

23. Names of the Temples in Zion, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/names-of-the-temples-in-zion-24-june-1833>.

## Joseph Smith and the Angel of the Restoration

On May 12, 1844, just a few weeks before Joseph Smith's death, he spoke to his followers as well as his detractors concerning his calling, which he felt was from God. He began by saying, "I shall read the 24th chapter of Matthew, and give it a literal rendering and reading; and when it is rightly understood, it will be edifying. I thought the *very oddity of its rendering* would be edifying anyhow—'And it will be preached, the Gospel of the kingdom, in the whole world, *to a witness* <sup>24</sup> over all people: and then will the end come.' . . . The Savior said when these tribulations should take place, it should be committed *to a man* who should be *a witness over the whole world*. . . . John the Revelator saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth. *The scripture is ready to be fulfilled* when great wars, famines, pestilence, great distress, judgments, &c., are ready to be poured out on the inhabitants of the earth."<sup>25</sup>

William Weeks, the architect of the Nauvoo temple, designed a horizontal angel to surmount the temple. The angel was a prone figure with a trumpet to his lips and holding a book in his right hand. Perrigrine Sessions, who witnessed the fixture being set in

24. Joseph Smith changed the preposition in Matthew 24:14 "for" a witness," to "to" a witness during this address. The Greek is εις μαρτύριον. Smith was partial to the German reading of this passage during this address including saying the German Bible was the most honest of all the translations. Joseph Smith was a "witness" in the full sense of the word. He boldly declared what he had seen or received from the Lord. Margaret Barker suggests, "Jesus is also described as 'the faithful witness in the clouds' (as in the Hebrew of Psalm 89) or 'in heaven' (as in the Greek of Ps. 89). There may be interpretation here too, since Jesus the faithful witness in heaven would originally have meant Jesus the faithful reporter of what he had seen and heard in heaven, as can be seen in 1.2, 'the witness of Jesus Christ, all that he saw', but it also meant 'martyr' since Jesus was one of the two martyrs described in 11.3–13. 'Witness' came to have the meaning 'martyr' rather than simply 'witness' as can be seen in 2.13, where Antipas, who has died for his faith, is also described as 'my faithful witness'. In his use of Psalm 89, John is paraphrasing, alluding to the Scriptures and interpreting for the new situation: the firstborn 'from the dead', the faithful 'martyr' (see also on 3.14)." Barker, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 94.

25. *History of the Church*, 6:363–367, italics added.

place on January 30, 1846, described it as “an angel in his priestly robes with a Book of Mormon in one hand and a trumpet in the other which is over laid with gold leaf.”<sup>26</sup>

26. Perrigrine Sessions Journal, 30 Jan 1846, Church Archives. The angel, flying in an horizontal position, represented the “angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel” (D&C 133:36; cf. Revelation 14:6). Traditionally, Latter-day Saints have identified this angel as Moroni. This identification is further strengthened because the angel was holding a book (apparently the Book of Mormon) in his hand. Moroni held the keys for revealing the Book of Mormon (D&C 27:5), which has the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The figure wore “priestly robes,” including a round bonnet (its feet are bare without slippers), all similar to the attire worn by the priests in ancient Israel who served in Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem (Exodus 28:40). One source indicated that when Joseph Smith saw Moroni he was wearing temple robes. Matthew B. Brown and Paul Thomas Smith, *Symbols in Stone* (Salt Lake City: Covenant Communications, 1997), 114. The robes suggest the sacral nature of the priestly functions carried on in the Nauvoo Temple.

The trumpet in the angel’s hand symbolizes that the gospel shall be declared “as with the voice of a trumpet, both day and night” (D&C 24:12), and that the Lord has commanded his servants “to declare [his] gospel with the sound of a trumpet . . . unto a crooked and perverse generation” (D&C 33:2).

There exists no account for reason of the placement of the square and compass on the weather vane. One scholar has suggested that since the compass, which is used to draw circles, points towards the bowl of the sky, and that the square, which is used to draw squares, points towards the earth, that the combination of the two symbols represent the powers of God in creating the bowl of the starry heavens and the four corners of the earth (Brown and Smith, *Symbols in Stone*, 105). Since the symbol is associated with “the angel flying through the midst of heaven” (D&C 133:36), it may suggest that the gospel will be “declared by holy angels” (Moses 5:58) from above to the four corners of the earth, even “unto every nation, and kindred, tongue and people” (D&C 133:37). Atop the pole supporting the weather vane is a stylized flame of fire. Tongues of fire are a symbol of the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:3–4)—a fitting symbol resting atop the highest pinnacle of the Nauvoo Temple, where the Spirit of the Lord, even the Holy Ghost, rests down upon those assembled. One account even reported that “a flame of fire” was seen “to rest upon the temple.” Brown and Smith, *Symbols in Stone*, 107.

Bruce R. McConkie interpreted the angel as follows: “Just as many of the Messianic prophecies deal with both comings of the Lord, so this proclamation relative to an angel committing the everlasting gospel speaks of two widely separated occurrences. One is past, the other is future. The gospel has been restored both in word and in power. And yet there is a future day when the angel of the restoration shall fly again.” Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*

Even though we do not have any contemporary explanation of the exact intended symbolism of the weather vane angel of the restoration from William Weeks or Joseph Smith,<sup>27</sup> it has become the symbol of Moroni to all in Mormondom. This is especially true considering the August 1830 Joseph Smith revelation which states, “Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim” (D&C 27:5).<sup>28</sup> It is also highly probable that the Nauvoo Temple angel was representative of all of the angels of the restoration. Reflecting upon his history to the saints in a general epistle, Joseph Smith on September 6, 1842, said,

And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfillment of the prophets. . . The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, . . . declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times! . . . And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys. (D&C 128:20–21)

## Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate that there are parallels between the Book of Revelation and the revelations, translations, and teachings of Joseph Smith. The apocalyptic early Christian worldview of the first temple including visions, angels, messengers,

(Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 3: 528–531. Compare D&C 88:103; 133:36–37; 128.

27. Personal conversation with Glen Leonard, October 25, 2012.

28. John Taylor recorded Joseph Smith saying, “Michael=Adam. Noah. I am Gabriel—Well says I. Who are you? I am Peter, the angel flying through the midst of heaven Moroni Delivered the Book of Mormon.” A footnote adds: “Revelation 14:6–7 apparently refers to several angels conferring their keys and knowledge of the gospel to Joseph Smith.” Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 13, 25.



thrones, sealed books, and a coming of a New Jerusalem was familiar as well as important to the Mormon prophet. The Book of Mormon prophets Lehi, Nephi, and the brother of Jared had apocalyptic visions like John and Enoch of the Bible. To Joseph Smith, the apocalypse John wrote and the temple rites of the early Christians were closely associated. As Margaret Barker states, the priestly writings of the first temple were to replicate heaven on earth. The Mormon prophet tried to build a heaven—a New Jerusalem—on the earth. Joseph Smith's

pattern for the building of the New Jerusalem mirrors the description made by John the Revelator (see Revelation 21). Joseph Smith's own calling began with his announcement of a vision regarding the Father and the Son (Joseph Smith—History). Similarly, John in Revelation 4–5 describes his vision of God and the Lamb. In conclusion, the Book of Revelation's language and theology permeated Joseph Smith's own revelations, experiences, and temple ideas that he introduced to his followers in the early nineteenth century.