



Type: Book Chapter

---

## Chapel, Church, Temple, Cathedral: Lost Parallels in Mormon and Catholic Worship

Author(s): Laurence Paul Hemming

Source: *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*

Editor(s): Gary N. Anderson

Published: Logan, UT; Academy for Temple Studies, 2013

Page(s): 31-41

---

**Abstract:** No abstract available.



BYU Studies is collaborating with Book of Mormon Central to preserve and extend access to BYU Studies and to scholarly research on The Book of Mormon. Archived by permission of BYU Studies.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/>

# Chapel, Church, Temple, Cathedral

## Lost Parallels in Mormon and Catholic Worship

*Laurence Paul Hemming*

It is a great privilege to be with you here today, and I would like to offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to the organisers of this event for the warmth of their hospitality and for putting together such a strong and successful conference.

I want to move a few centuries from Margaret's area to perhaps more contemporary questions. And yet Margaret's paper has illustrated extremely vividly that these, inasmuch as they are questions for us today, concern history. At the bottom of this is the question of history itself. I am speaking today from what has led me to be concerned with the understanding of the Temple among contemporary Christians, and in my case, Catholics. If we want to call ourselves Christians we have to understand ourselves as a historical people. Whose history *is* it that is at stake? If I've learned one thing above all from my many Latter-day Saint friends, it is the overwhelming sense of a continuity of history not, let us say, simply from Joseph Smith's first visions. Not too long ago I received a very gracious invitation from the Mormon Church History Department to spend a day with several of the historians and archivists working on the Joseph Smith papers. I joked on that occasion that whereas our church history begins with papyri, faint images, and icons, yours begins with typed documents and even photographs. And yet in neither case is that really true. For if I have learnt one thing above all from my many friends among Latter Day Saints, it is the overwhelming sense of a continuity of history, *not*, let us say, simply from the early stirrings of Mormonism from the 1820s onwards, but a history understood as itself founded in Adam's expulsion from Eden, in the experience and proclamations of

the prophets, in the wandering and formation of a people who at times have called themselves the children of Abraham, the nation of Israel, the Church that lives through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,

This is not strictly speaking a human history: rather it is itself the history of divine revelation. At the centre of this history is the patriarchal, priestly figure of Adam, and the city of his dwelling place, which has gone under various names, but is always rooted in the meaning of the places we know as The Garden, as Eden, as Jerusalem, as the Temple, but most important of all, as the *city*. It is not without significance that of all modern Christian traditions, only Mormons have self-consciously preserved the very ancient distinction between the temple and other localities of worship. What I mean by that will, I hope, become clear as we proceed.

In contrast to your own tradition, the presence of the Temple appears to modern Catholics quite strange. This strangeness carries with it a sense of distance. When I flew into Salt Lake City the first time, the pilot alerted us to notice the Salt Lake Temple from the air. My friend Bradford Houston met me from the airport, and I asked him, what's this thing "the temple" that you lot have got here? I've come a long way since then. If we non-Mormons think to ourselves that much of what occurs in your temples is hidden from us, yet more hidden is the proximity to the temple of those Christians I am going to call (for want of a better name) "Creedal." (By Creedal I just mean non-Mormon.) This proximity is one for which we have much less reason to feel disbarred—there is no sense in which our access to our churches is nowadays ever limited (except

when they function more as museums or tourist attractions than places of worship—note that in some places in Europe such as Italy you have to pay to enter a medieval cathedral; that is how we limit access to our version of the temples), and yet we are, above all historically, cut off from their meaning and their roots. If Mormons are often, and unjustly, accused of being secretive about the Temple, we are keeping secrets we do not even have the interest or understanding to acknowledge we are keeping. The consequences, I believe, have been, and continue to be, very serious for much of Creedal Christianity. The American Catholic theologian Stephen Webb has said, “The next great phase of ecumenical Christian dialogue with other religions has to begin with the conversation between orthodox Christians and Latter Day Saints.”<sup>1</sup> Over the last years I have come increasingly to believe that statement to be true, because my many Mormon friends and interlocutors have helped me, often unwittingly and despite themselves, to uncover for myself and perhaps for others, the roots of Catholicism, and of Creedal Christianity in the Temple.

In other words, whereas so often dialogue between Creedal and Mormon Christians begins with us believing ourselves to be reaching out to a group with rather surprising views, cut off from “mainstream” Christian belief, in reality it is Creedal Christians who have most become cut off from the mainstream, by which I mean the very history to which I have been referring, the history of God’s unfolding self-revelation, because we have become so detached from the very means by which God unfolds himself not only *in* history, but *as* our history. There is so much I would want to say about this, but time forbids it—about the way contemporary Creedal Christians have taught ourselves to handle and read biblical texts, which Margaret has illustrated so beautifully today, without context, apart from the history of how they have appeared, with what we believe is a literalness that is in fact an interpretation that itself excludes the very possibilities of how these texts have been interpreted historically

1. Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, review of *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate*, by Stephen H. Webb, *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, vol. 15 (2008): 426–429.

or without understanding what the practice of interpretation itself is. Something I point out to my students when I am teaching is that even fundamentalism is an interpretation. There is no such thing, in my opinion, as a literal interpretation of any text. To prove that I showed them the back of a cornflake packet so that they would see that what’s going on needs to be interpreted. That data that constitute the very structure and detailing on the packet is itself situated in a complex web of political ideas, legal ideas—even legal requirements, historical ideas, ideas about self-image, advertising, and so forth. Likewise, there is no such thing as the literal reading of any text, and that means that all fundamentalisms are themselves interpretations. We have to set these things aside today for the sake of perhaps one very simple understanding that I believe has the power to open up the most fruitful possibilities of dialogue between us. That understanding is simply this: we have to understand the meaning of the presence of the temple, both historically and in the present day.

The biographer of Joseph Smith, Richard Lyman Bushman, draws our attention to something that is perhaps not well understood, I suspect, even by many contemporary Mormons, when he begins to discuss the revelation given to Smith in late 1830 in which Christ said, “I will suddenly come to my temple,” a revelation which was followed by a more specific revelation in December 1832 that the early Mormons should establish “a house of God.” While there is no amplification of this revelation in his private journals as far as I can find, the editors of *the Joseph Smith Papers* note that “in June, Joseph Smith and the presidency developed plans for temples in Kirtland and Missouri and for expanded Mormon settlement in each city.”<sup>2</sup> Bushman comments, “Temples were at first an empty form, awaiting content.”<sup>3</sup> When I said earlier that Joseph Smith and other charismatic religious founders such as

2. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin and Richard Lyman Bushman (General Editors), *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2008–), Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee and Richard L. Jensen (Editors), *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839* (2008), 11.

3. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism’s Founder* (New York City: Random House, 2005), 217.

St. Francis or St. Benedict for Catholics have an openness to God, that openness takes concrete form. An empty temple awaiting content is awaiting revelation of God. That's what we have to understand, the concreteness of the way God reveals himself. A lot of modern Christians seem to think that God "zaps" you or that they have a private telephone wire from themselves direct to heaven. This is not how God reveals himself. God reveals himself through concrete things. The temple is the focus of that concretion.

What does Temple mean in this context, in this revelation, and in the history of God's revealing himself in history? Bushman speaks of how Joseph Smith was "characteristically nonchalant about weekly congregational worship" (something other Mormons at the time were uneasy about and set about resolving. The Mormons around Joseph Smith wanted to be in church on Sunday, and my goodness, you Mormons do do church on Sunday. In the Catholic Church we can't get away with it, except in my tradition you can't be sure when you're going to get out).<sup>4</sup> And yet Bushman contrasts this with Smith's energetic determination to build temples wherever Mormons were settled. This was at the risk of the financial ruin of the Mormon Church: Bushman notes of the "disaster" of temple building in the 1830s, commenting "the economic realities gave Joseph no pause."<sup>5</sup> Bushman's account of the appearance of the temple in Mormon life makes clear what is hinted at by the editors of *the Joseph Smith Papers* (of whom Bushman is one). Bushman draws our attention to a comment of the Catholic historian Gary Wills, who, speaking of the history of the United States, says, "There is no more defining note to our history than the total absence of a sacred city in our myths" with the exception of "the Mormon's temple, fetched (like Jerusalem's) from heaven."<sup>6</sup> The Mormon temple has some connection with the American founding myth, and I think that's correct.

4. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 215.

5. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 217.

6. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 220, citing Gary Wills, *John Wayne's America: The Politics of Celebrity*, 304, 349 n. 9.

The temple as the pinnacle and sanctification of the city—of Zion and her satellites—is at the very root of Joseph Smith's foundation of Mormonism. The temple is without content because its content is not realised in human planning. Smith received revelation that said when the Kirtland Temple was complete, "a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord." A later revelation said, "My glory shall be there, and my presence shall be there."<sup>7</sup> God fills the temple. The temple is not primarily concerned with the quotidian worship and instruction of individual Christian souls; for that, a chapel suffices. The temple stands at the centre of the city, as the means by which the glory of the Lord is revealed on the face of the earth, and the means by which the work of the Lord is done. Both the objective and subjective genitives apply here: the work done is the work God does on behalf of humanity. At the same time, whatever work is done in accordance with what God lays down for the life of the temple, is a work that belongs to and is "of" God. This is what Smith called "the work," which is not a work of humanity even when it's done by human hands. It is a work of the Lord. I've written elsewhere about how in Catholic contexts Priesthood is the work of God done by human hands. I think that's a correct understanding, at least by Catholics, of what Priesthood is. It is the means by which the work of the Lord to redeem and sanctify—to renew, to restore—the face of the earth is seen, and understood, and *lived*.

Bushman notes that "only in the New World" could such a scheme have been carried out.<sup>8</sup> Too little has been written of, or made of, Joseph Smith's understanding of the New World as a place of the sanctifying and renewing work of God. This is because of all the religious groups to have set up shop in the New World—including, to a large extent, Catholicism in its public face, only Mormons in recent times have challenged the understanding of religion as a matter primarily of personal assent. In the New World, only Mormons have understood what it means for a nation to have a soul, that is, an

7. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 217; see 605 n. 11 for references.

8. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 221.

inner unity and sense of destiny whose redemption is itself necessarily, and only possible as, a work undertaken by and through the presence of God, the Lord. When commentators comment that Mormonism is a most American of religions, they often fail to understand the extent to which Mormonism, especially through the life and person of Joseph Smith, attempted to address what it meant to *build* America. It is a most American of religions in the sense that Mormonism is a profound engagement with, and expression of, the emerging American soul.

Only this understanding can explain the extraordinary history of persecution and rejection of Mormons in your own land—in a world that from the very outset was established with a founding mythic narrative of providing refuge for religious dissent. You know, that’s a paradox for me, coming from Europe. The New World has been able to provide almost limitless refuge for religious belief of almost any kind, no matter how bizarre or extraordinary, solely on the basis of private belief and practice. If Richard Bushman has correctly identified the New World as a place where it was at least topologically possible for Joseph Smith’s vision of Zion and of the sanctified city, historically the governing metaphysic of the New World was able only with the greatest reluctance, if at all, to yield any place for this vision within its topography.

Bushman begins his biography of Smith with a most extraordinary and prescient parallelism: that of Smith and Emerson. For Emerson’s transcendentalism and deism is the inverse image of the Mormon understanding of the work of the Lord: that is, of a nation “under God,” but in Emerson’s case without any locus, any rite, any priesthood, to make manifest what this being under God means or how it unfolds. Such a being “under God” for Emerson becomes a contentless sense of the divine. This is the inverse of a temple. For Joseph Smith the building of a temple is something else: a temple without content that awaits the presence of the Lord. Transcendentalism claims to understand who God is and therefore declares no temple is necessary because we already know God. It’s a mirror image of Joseph Smith’s view. It becomes at its worst a meaningless and purely formulaic expression found on the

insignia of state and dollar bills. In contrast, and even to a non-Mormon like myself, the Mormon temple is unintelligible except as the diadem of the sanctified city. We must ask, is it for that reason that the establishment of the temples in Kirtland and Missouri was in 1833 inseparable from the plans for expanded Mormon settlement in both cities? The answer has to be yes.

If the first years of the nineteenth century marked the opening of the possibility of the establishment of a temple religion in the New World, it seems to me that they mark the end of a form of a temple religion in the Old World in a way that, again, has been too rarely understood or considered. In Europe the nineteenth century opened with events that signalled the end of one world and the dawn of another, quite different from what went before. This dawn was long in coming: it took centuries to arrive and its arrival is still being completed even now. Napoleon’s concordat with Pope Pius VII of 1801 signalled, and decisively, the end of the Mediæval world, an end that had begun with the unfolding of Protestantism, which, if we wanted to date it, began perhaps in 1517, but whose roots stretch perhaps a full three centuries and more before. The significance of the concordat is this. Whereas, in times past, Catholic Christianity in the whole of Western Europe would call itself the religion of the state, from now on, and in the Napoleonic world which replaced Catholic Christianity in all the non-Reformation states of Western Europe, Catholicism could at the very best claim only to be the religion of the majority of the citizens of the state. It went from being a public religion to being a religion which had public expression but demanded only private assent. This is a fundamentally important thing to understand. Even in the reformed states which still had a state religion, the emphasis was on a *state* religion (so for instance, the state of affairs that pertains in my own country at least in theory, and pertained in much of Lutheran Scandinavia, and even “Catholic” Austria), rather than a universal form of religion to which a particular state subscribed. So for example the Anglican Church is the state religion, rather than Britain (as it was before the reformation) being a Catholic country which subscribed to

a universal understanding of Christianity. It's a fundamental shift.

This marked the end of the actuality of Christianity formally as a temple *practice* anywhere in Northern, Southern or Western Europe. If Eastern Orthodoxy and its connections with nationalism in the East retained the remnants of a temple theology, Communism finished up in those lands the process begun by the Ottoman Empire, namely the process of making impossible the practical reality of Christianity as a temple practice of the city, where the city is understood as the analogue of the New Jerusalem, the city of God.

What Napoleon's Concordat brings to the fore, and at the same time crystallises as the legal basis of the practice of religion across the whole of Europe, is what had already long been the case in the New World (if it ever had not been), from the time when European settlers first arrived on these shores—that religious belief is fundamentally an issue of the assent *and construction* of the will. My students understand believing in God as an assent of the will, but they get it wrong. If you believe in God and God doesn't exist, your assent means nothing. Or if you don't believe in God and God does exist, your assent means nothing. This notion of the assent of the will does not get us off the hook of the question of who God is. Religious people don't struggle with this as much, although increasingly the understanding of God as someone I assent to becomes an understand that there's only certain kinds of God I'm going to assent to. I give an example: a Cardinal Archbishop whom I will not name mentioned in a sermon I once heard that he did not believe hell existed. A priest seated next to me whispered, "I hope for his sake that what he says is true." The point is, it's not up to us to decide who God is going to be or what he is going to be like.

For Catholics to recover for ourselves an understanding of Christianity as a temple religion would require two things. The first is an understanding of how historically the life and practice of Catholicism was itself, and until the eclipse of the Mediæval world, an essentially temple practice. Many of the clues to this are contained in our liturgical life, not as it now is, having undergone a century of the

most aggressive reform that has left not one aspect of it unchanged, but as it was when it formed the heart of urban and country life and when the Catholic Church herself had the power to shape and determine the very face of Europe. The second is to understand what has taken the place of the religion of the temple as the Mediæval world gave way to the modern. In what remains of my time I want to examine both these themes in a way that will, as succinctly as I am able, explain what I mean.

To roam in England, to travel almost anywhere in Western Europe, is to come across time and again cities that have at their heart a capital church building—often built by a river and on a hill, such as Durham and York. The building on a hill represents the temple mount, and the river represents the waters that pass through the temple. (I had to learn that from Mormons and from Margaret.) When you see this, it's obvious. In Cornwall, where some of my family comes from, I see that ancient churches were always built on hills. They were symbolising the temple when they were building these churches. This church building may be an abbey, a cathedral, or what we call in England a "minster"—a principal church administered either by a group of clergy—"canons"—in a religious rule (Augustinians, Praemonstratensions, Norbertines, etc.) or in a secular rule. In the latter case the clergy were not in religious vows (the ones we classically know as poverty, chastity, and obedience), and the church may have been established by the townspeople as an offering to God. In significant cases the communities that ran them could be female rather than male, although the ordained clergy were always male. The point of these churches was that they had the material, musical, and spiritual resources to undertake—in particular, sing—the entire cursus of the sacred liturgy. In the modern Catholic Church, most people will know the Mass. A few people will know the breviary, or the liturgy of the hours, but they won't really, because it's a pale shadow of what it once was. But what went on in the cathedrals, what still goes in abbeys and what went on in these minsters was something huge. It was a vast cycle of prayer. It began in the night with the night office, the singing of what we called Matins which went

on probably for two or three hours. It contained three separate cycles of prayer—the liturgy of the day, the “office” of Mary, the Mother of God, and the office sung for the sake of the dead. The liturgy of the day comprised eight parts: the eight sung offices, beginning with the great night office of Matins, then Lauds at daybreak, Prime, the “little hours” of terce, sext, and none, the great office at day-fall of Vespers, and the service at day-end, of Compline. In the middle of these very often would be one, or two, sung Masses. The Mass of the season, sung after terce, and the Mass of any feast, after sext. The principal offices—Matins, Lauds, and Vespers—would be preceded by the Office of Our Lady, which was always the office of the day of resurrection, because Mary sings as one always present at the right hand of her Son, and on most days followed by the office of the dead, a form of the office sung on behalf of those who have died. Mass for the dead would be offered on these days as well. They didn’t sing the liturgy of the dead on festival days because those days, celebrating the resurrection, already applied for the dead. But on other days there was a whole liturgical cycle for the dead, prayer that was offered for the souls that had gone before us, which is very recognizable to Mormons.

Contemporary public Catholic worship, except in the rarest places, is now almost entirely focused on the celebration of the Mass, most frequently in its said form rather than sung. Except in the monastic tradition, other public celebrations are only otherwise of the sacraments—baptism, marriage, confirmation. The original and underpinning cycle of Catholic worship, the singing of the sacred offices, was overwhelmingly made up of the singing of the psalms, bracketed together with explanatory texts and canticles, especially the canticles of Zachariah, Mary, and Simeon. Accounts of visits to churches at that time report the cacophony of these songs being sung all at once, showing that it was intended not for human ears but for divine. The psalms are above all temple songs, but the classical interpretation of their meaning is that they are to be understood as the eternal conversation between the Father and the Son. As temple songs, they are also priestly songs (this is why they are also understood to be the songs of the Levites), but they at the same time insert those

for whom they are sung *into* the divine life, the life shared by the Father and the Son in the Spirit. That’s why you have to be anointed in the Spirit in the Catholic tradition, to live between the Father and the Son. Many Catholics are unfamiliar with this way of thinking.

This vast cycle, requiring many trained voices, complex ritual, many hours, went by the name of the *opus Dei*, the work of God. It still goes on, in a more limited form, in contemplative Benedictine, Cistercian, and Carthusian monasteries. In our towns and cities it has fallen away, with only relics, principal among which is the practice of sung Evensong in many Anglican cathedrals. Medieval towns would have known that this work was going on. It was like their beating heart. The Dominican theologian Augustine Thompson has described how this works in some of his historical writings. A relic of it is the singing of evensong in Anglican cathedrals, which again I believe many of you many have attended. Wherever it can be found it is a pale shadow of its former self. This is temple worship, in its classical form. It existed in many places for more than a thousand years, using rites almost unchanged over the whole of that time. Relics of it also exist among the Greek, Russian, and other Orthodox churches. While the whole of the work of redemption is accomplished for us by the actions of Christ, the *cursus* which explains and unfolds the meaning of this divine plan and divine action on the earth is too vast by far, and too complex for any *other* individual than Christ ever to undertake alone, which tells you it was never about the work done by a single man or woman, *even when all was accomplished alone by Christ the Son of God*.

The restoration and redemption of the cosmos is the work of God, using the word “work” in the same sense as it is used in the revelations of Joseph Smith. You have at the heart of Mormonism something which is an image of something in mine. It has brought me so close to understanding not just what Latter-day Saints believe, but live. That assenting is a nonsense. You don’t assent to God, you live in God. That’s what I teach my students: don’t believe in God. Even the devil assents to God but he doesn’t live in God. To live in God is to become holy. That is what believing in God really means.

“Credo” means not “I believe,” but “I belong, I am confessed to.”

These huge churches which formed the centers of cities were places of pilgrimage. People went there for very specific purposes, and I think Mormons are familiar with this. The work that went on there was the song of the city, seeking to be and being sanctified. It has its roots in the temple life of Israel. It was supported and reflected in the fragments of it undertaken in satellite chapels and smaller parish churches of which the cathedral, abbey, or minster was the centre. It was never intended to be carried out in full in every place of worship—rather the other way around: whenever you had need of it, you went to where it was practised, either in pilgrimage with others, or in person. The origins of Mother’s Day, or “Mothering Sunday,” come from here. Mothering Sunday was that Sunday in Lent (the fourth, also known as *Gaudete* Sunday, from the first word of the first chant at the Mass of that day) when all went to the mother church of their area to share in the rites that were undertaken there on behalf of all, whether they were present or not.

How can we explain why this temple understanding has ceased? Catholic theologians like Henri Cardinal de Lubac, speaking from around the middle of the last century, began to speak about how Creedal Christianity has been overtaken by a kind of individualism. De Lubac drew far too much attention to what he called the sociological fact of the body of Christ—he meant the gathering, the people who got together on Sunday—as the assembled community of the worshipping community, without understanding that this body is not, strictly speaking, the Church community, so much as the holy city, the divinised *πόλις*, *polis*, which through the activity of the priesthood and the constant realisation of what it is that the temple realises—the abiding of God with the world—is held in the life of God. De Lubac was to a certain extent still enmeshed in the very rationalism that he was seeking to free himself from.

There is a modern resistance of all hierarchy because of the way in which the contemporary world is fundamentally bound to a notion of democracy: you can’t have ranks, which would imply superiority. That idea of superiority has no place in religious life. Being of a different rank in

a Christian tradition is not being better or worse. John Paul II had a profound insight when he argued that the whole structure and order of the Church was ordered to the producing of saints, not the producing of clergy. This idea ought to be familiar to Latter-day Saints.

I hope that I have been able to show that form in which the medieval minster, or major church, functioned as a mother in which the work of God was undertaken. The work was extended out to smaller churches in the parishes that were established for the quotidian, day-to-day instruction of Christian souls. For the important things, like baptisms, marriages, and burials but what you call ordinances, are very often the things that, as I understand Medieval Christianity to have functioned, took place in the minsters. It’s not an exact parallel and I don’t want to overemphasize the parallel. I give one concluding example: when my friend and I went to a confirmation in St. Louis a couple of weeks ago, there is a symbolical act where the bishop, who is Melchizedek, the ruler and the priestly figure in his diocese, comes into the church and enters the sanctuary, which is reserved for the clergy alone. He is then dressed in his formal priestly vestments, which are on the altar. The vestments are brought to him from the altar and the vestments are put on while he is seated, and that takes about twenty minutes. The vestments being brought from the altar means that they are meant to symbolize for us heavenly vestments which come to him from the body of Christ, because for us the altar symbolizes the body of Christ. It was absolutely silent in the church while he was being dressed. He then performed the ceremonies who needed to be done: the anointing of the people who were to be confirmed that day, and then he celebrated holy mass and then he was undressed and the priestly vestments were taken back to the altar. The dressing and undressing is meant to be symbolised as if performed by angels, men dressed in black and white coming down from heaven with this clothing, clothing him and then going back up. This is a temple ceremony if ever I saw one. That, I think, is the heart of medieval religion and it’s the heart of medieval urban life.

I try very hard not to challenge my Latter-day Saint friends when I speak, because you have



enough people to challenge you and I have found only friendship among you. But I will challenge you with this. My friend Bradford Houston is a member of your temple construction group in your church headquarters. He has alerted me to the fact that you are building temples all over the world. I'll phone him and he'll say, "I can't tell you where I am because if I did you might tell someone else and we haven't announced the building of a temple in that city yet." But he's clearly not in Utah. You are as Christians the only people building really major monumental churches around the world. And one thing worries me about that. What you call the London Temple, I call Gatwick Airport. You are building these monumental churches outside cities and not in cities where I believe they belong. And if I were to offer you an entirely fraternal challenge I would say remind the rest of Christianity of how religion lives and is the beating heart of urban life by moving your temples into the centre of the cities where you are building them. If you could do anything to challenge what Pope Benedict has called secularism, it would be to recognise that it is concrete symbols of Christian life and virtue and practice that affect, in my view, the modern world, not arguments. You want to see arguments? Turn on the television and watch political debates: they are horrific, and they convince almost no-one who doesn't already want to hear what they have to say. Whichever side you are on, they make you squirm. But lived virtue in its humble and simple daily practice humbles other people and makes them want to know more.

Returning to the idea of how temple theology has diminished: our modern world has created a restricted, contentless, understanding of the self as a formally and absolutely individuated ego with the potential to act, and to become, whatever it will itself to be. This stands in formal contradiction to any understanding of priestly or angelic ranking before the throne of God—to the divine city not as an aggregate of individual egos, but a structured and ordered hierarchy whose differentiated life and callings order them around the throne of God in order to manifest its glory. In Creedal Christianity, only the monastic tradition (and not even the tradition of priesthood) has been able to preserve any of this ancient sense—that the temple is an ordering of persons which

makes both the need (and so want) of God, and the presence of God, something to be made manifest both organically and in an eternal life of recapitulation that realises through worship the prime meaning and order of the entire cosmos through its motions. These motions are conditioned through the movements of the planets, the rising and passing of the seasons, of the break and fall of day, and so forth.

If the beginning of the nineteenth century saw your own nation, and the Mormon religion through the person of Joseph Smith, both take shape, and saw in the concordat of 1801 and the Napoleonisation of Europe bring to an end the Mediæval world, they also saw flourish the thought of one man who, better than any other, explains the birth of the thought not only of modern Europe, but of the New World as well. That one is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel put into words the way the whole of modernity thinks: nor have we left behind what he brought so thoroughly to description. Hegel did not invent the modern world, he explained it. That is what a phenomenology is—it explains the things that have made their appearance.

Beginning in 1805 Hegel began the lectures at Jena that were to form the basis for his subsequent master-work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. If this work is little read today, it and the ideas associated with it in Hegel's *Logic* and *Philosophy of Right* remain among the most foundational in the whole of the thinking of the West. These works above all represent the overcoming of the purely rational understanding of God, for the sake of a metaphysics that is utterly and entirely materialist in its thrust. The idea can be said to exist, and this means be understood, only in and through its concrete manifestations. There is no ideal realm wherein the idea resides, only the idea's most radical orientation towards its own futurity. Without these founding works of Hegel's thought, with their positing of the way the human being, God, and the state, are each to be thought and materialised (produced—such that they also lay down how thinking itself thinks as the ceaselessly productive activity of the concrete materialisation of *Geist* itself), neither modern liberal thinking, nor modern humanism, nor Marxism and the Marxian states in all their manifestations and with all the horrors that attended them, nor the totalitarianism of

fascism and Nazism, nor what has come after, would have taken the precise forms they did.

If no other thinker can be understood to have thought through and prepared for the end of philosophy and for how that end has been and will go on being carried out, so no other thinker has had a more decisive influence over the course of religion in the West—foremost Christianity, but to no less a degree Judaism and Islam as well. Religion itself is thought as Hegel showed it would be—as a (material) politics.

The lectures that form the foundation for Hegel's phenomenological thought open with a discussion of *Spirit*, in German the word is *Geist*. We can barely translate this word—it can mean variously spirit, mind, soul, intellect, freedom, reason, religion, and can (and is for Hegel) even (as “absolute *Geist*”) at times a synonym for God as such. We can barely hear the Old-English echo of the meaning of this word as “the ghostly,” meaning intellectual or spiritual—and so non-material—being.

In the opening of these lectures Hegel begins by positing *Geist* as “truly universal” because it contains the particular.<sup>9</sup> Spirit is *both* the universal *and* the particular. It is in this sense the *all*. The lectures proceed to oppose to this opening claim an explanation of *how* this is to be. *Geist* is animal, inasmuch as it has freedom, has time for itself, knows itself, knows *things*, and at the same time is free of the thing that it knows and is master of this freedom. *Geist* is human, inasmuch as it knows itself in this knowing: it is more than animal, it reflects on what it knows and so brings not the objects and things that it knows before itself in knowing them, but it brings itself as a spirit, *Geist* itself, before itself in reflecting back on itself *that* it knows that it knows. But it knows itself knowing in a most fundamental way: through language “as name giving power,” such that “in names alone is the intuitive, the animal, and time and place overcome.”<sup>10</sup> He adds, placing

9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III: Naturalphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1987), 171. “Das Bestehen des Geistes ist wahrhaft allgemein; es enthält das Besondere selbst; das Ding ist, es ist nicht im Sein—sondern es ist selbst.”

10. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 174, 176. “Dies ist die Sprache, als die Namengebende Kraft” . . . “In Namen ist erst

in the midst of this most philosophical of texts a surprising name, a name we might least expect to find here, a name whose origin is purely and only from a religious text. Hegel says, “Thus through the name the object as being born from the self. This is the primary creativity exercised by *Geist*. Adam gave all things a name, this is the magisterial right and primary possessive grasping of the whole of nature, or its very creation from out of *Geist*” which is *Geist*'s entitlement.<sup>11</sup>

Anyone familiar with Hegel's thought will recognise in what he describes the very movement of dialectical reason itself: through its positing as absolute *Geist*, to its antithesis, first as emptiness of time and space in which the object appears, then as what grasps the object in freedom (the animal), to what grasps itself grasping, as humanity, thence to the positing of reason as the appearance of the absolute in *Geist* in the power of language, through which self-grasping humanity takes possession of, and overcomes the whole of nature, by which humanity comes into possession of, and grasps, all there is, absolutely. It is a short step—one which Hegel takes at the end of the lectures—to claim that God is *Geist*,<sup>12</sup> but there is an intermediate step that Hegel made which has never ceased to embarrass or discomfort many of his commentators. For Hegel locates the concrete form of God in the idea of the state. In his 1805 lectures Hegel argued “so it is that the reality of the kingdom of heaven is the state”;<sup>13</sup> Eduard Gans reports Hegel as having gone much further, in saying “the state is *Geist* itself, which exists in the world and realises itself as such through *consciousness* . . . it is the path of God through the world . . . the force of reason actualising itself as will.”<sup>14</sup>

eigentlich das Anschauen, das Tierische, und Zeit und Raum überwunden.”

11. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 175. “Durch den Namen ist also der Gegensatz als seiend aus dem Ich heraus geboren. —Dies ist die erste Schöpferkraft, die der Geist ausübt: Adam gab allen Dingen einen Namen, dies ist das Majestätsrecht und erste Besitzergreifung der ganzen Natur.”

12. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 257. “Daß Gott der Geist ist.”

13. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 257. “Eben die Wirklichkeit des Himmelreichs ist der Staat.”

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1986 (1820), 403. “Der Staat ist der

The thinker who radicalised Hegel's thought to the point of penetrating through to the very end both its political and its religious implications is none less than Karl Marx, who interpreted Hegel's extreme intellectual materialism through his own work, by understanding that "in this manner the critique of heaven transforms itself into the critique of the earth, the *critique of religion* into the *critique of right*, the *critique of theology* into the *critique of politics*."<sup>15</sup> Here we concentrate not so much on the Marx of socialist revolution so much as the Marx who understands the materialism of Hegel's thought and drives to its most extreme expression as a thought which is realised through what Marx would call human society, and we would call the city, the πόλις. Not for nothing does Marx engage quite directly in his most theoretical texts with Aristotle's notion of the human being—what Marx calls the "species being" of man, not as an "essence" but as a "social being," a being realised in and through his and her social relations—as the ζῷον πολιτικόν, "political animal."<sup>16</sup>

In English as in German, the words for thinking and perceiving can be brought under the same term: to grasp, *begreifen*. What is the transformation in the understanding that Hegel's philosophy so fulfils and completes, such that this philosophy represents a metaphysical pinnacle and completion, which was amplified and explained in its consequences, and decisively, in the thought of Marx and Nietzsche, and which we are working out even today, a full two centuries later? What is it that Hegel's thought

most fundamentally grasps? Put simply and succinctly (because we do not have the time to do anything else) Hegel's thought is grounded in the most radical individualism of Descartes, of what we call Cartesian subjectivity. It is the thinking subject which is most decisively grasped through Hegel's thought, and whose thinking itself is conceived as a grasping of whatever it comes across. This thinking is not "knowing" in the classical sense of "perceiving," "taking in" (*per-cipio*, which can even mean "to eat"), but a grasping through the exercise of the will, a "productive grasping," which simultaneously posits the subject who grasps and what it is he or she grasps in the same, identical act—the act which constitutes and unveils the identity of the one grasping and the identity of the thing grasped. Hegel's thought shows how thinking and willing are accomplished as an identity.

Hegel shows how this thinking *are at one and the same time* the grasping of the very idea of the divine, but a grasping which we can call a materialisation. Inasmuch as Hegel's thought is understood to be an idealism, it is at the same time a full materialism, since the idea is only ever productively realised *in concreto*, through the concretions it at once knows and produces. First among these concrete ideations is the idea of the state, the unifying social being of man. It is through the being of the state—Adam himself—that the human being as most particular and most universal is (dialectically) realised and synthesised.

Hegel's naming of Adam in his lectures at Jena, is the naming of that Adam whose conceiving of the whole of nature is at the same time Adam's taking possession of the whole of nature. Adam stands here in the full ambiguity of the human person that marks the philosophy, the metaphysics, the history of the last two centuries. For Adam is both "man in general" and "this man here," and it is impossible to tell the difference between them. The only possible corollary from this passage, and one which explains the whole of the development of religion, and of the state, of these two centuries is that through naming and taking possession of the object, through his taking over of himself as a spiritual object (as that object which appears in the knowing of objects),

---

Geist, der in der Welt steht und sich in derselben mit *Bewußtsein* realisiert . . . es ist der Gang Gottes in der Welt . . . sein Grund ist die Gewalt der sich als Wille verwirklichenden Vernunft" (Gans's reported emphasis).

15. Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* in *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 1, edited by Erich Kundel, Roland Nietzold, Richard Sperl, Hildegard Scheibler and others, 1839 bis 1844, 2006 (1981), 379. "Die Kritik des Himmels verwandelt sich damit in die Kritik der Erde, die *Kritik der Religion* in die *Kritik des Rechts*, die *Kritik der Theologie* in die *Kritik der Politik*" (Marx's emphases).

16. Aristotle: *Eudemian Ethics*, 1242 a 23; *Politics* 1253 a 3–8, 1278 b 19. The phrase was taken up by Galen (*De usu partium*, vol. 3, p. 5 and *passim*), Aspasius (*In Ethica Nicomachea commentaria*), Plotinus (*Enneads*, vol. 3, 4.2), and others.

and through this power of naming which is analogous to the creative power of God, Adam himself gives the name to God: put slightly differently, Adam gives himself the name of God.

What is the meaning of the appearance of the name of Adam in this text of Hegel's? For Adam, next to Christ is the *other* figure who is central to any understanding of the temple, precisely because Adam is the unredeemed man, the unredeemed flesh, and Christ the enfleshed God-Man, the redeemer of all flesh is, in the words of St. Paul,<sup>17</sup> the new Adam. Hegel's understanding of God and the state can in one way be understood as a temple theology *without the temple*, that is to say, a temple theology without either the action or the activity of redemption as a priestly activity. Hegel, and Marx following him, press the relentless individualism of Creedal Christianity to its final conclusions: the life of the πόλις, the life of the ordinary city, does not require any revelation of God to assemble it into the hierarchical manifestation of the divine presence because

---

17. See 1 Corinthians 15: 22; 45, Romans 5: 14.

the activity of the will, what Spinoza called the *conatus*, the natural driving-forward of particular *Geist*, has replaced it. If, for Hegel, Adam is the one who names, and so produces, the being of the temple, the history of the temple tells us that Adam can only be constituted as the presence of God, the Christ, the new Adam, because the temple constitutes, and so (in Hegelian and contemporary terms) creates and produces (but we would rather say *restores and completes*) the being of Adam, and locates it not *as* but *within* the presence of God.

The history of the temple is the history of God's unfolding of his divine presence on the face of the earth. This history is constitutive for those peoples whose history it becomes, and who are brought together through God's self revelation, which comes always to ones marked out for prophecy and priesthood—who are given the task of priest and prophet. But the ongoing revelation of God is given in the being of the temple, which is the heart and focus, the nucleus, indeed the very point of the πόλις. Inasmuch as man is political animal, ζῷον πολιτικόν, he is the animal of, and on the basis of, the temple, τό τοῦ ζῷον νεῶς.