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The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple

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Abstract: No religious text has influenced the world more than has the New Testament's Sermon on the Mount, and yet this crucial text still begs to be more clearly understood. Why was it written? What unifying theme or purpose holds it all together? Should it be called a sermon? Or is it some other kind of composition? How would its earliest listeners have heard its encoded allusions and systematic program?

This book offers new insights into the Sermon on the Mount by seeing it in the shadow of the all-pervasive Temple in Jerusalem, which dominated the religious landscape of the world of Jesus and his earliest disciples. Analyzing Matthew 5-7 in light of biblical and Jewish backgrounds, ritual studies, and oral performances in early Christian worship, this reading coherently integrates every line in the Sermon. It positions the Sermon as the premier Christian mystery.

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The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple

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Abbreviations

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AThR	*Anglican Theological Review*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
Bib	*Biblica*
BM	*Bet Miqra*
BR	*Biblical Research*
BRev	*Bible Review*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
Di	*Dialog*
EDNT	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*
EM	*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*
EncJud	*Encyclopedia Judaica*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
Int	*Interpretation*
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBMS	*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*
JBR	*Journal of Bible and Religion*
JBS	*Journal of Biblical Studies*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
NedTT	*Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
*NovT*Supp	*Novum Testamentum* Supplement
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
ScrHier	*Scripta Hierosolymitana*
SE	*Studia Evangelica*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
ST	*Studia Theologica*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
ThEv	*Theologia Evangelica*

TS	*Theological Studies*
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
VE	*Verbum et Ecclesia*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift der neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Preface

This book sets out to show that the Sermon on the Mount is best understood in a matrix of temple themes. Temple vocabulary and allusions saturate every stage of this text. This consistent confluence of temple themes gives the Sermon on the Mount a unified rhetorical voice and a powerful sense of authority that explains what it is that makes and has always made this text so ethically compelling. However, no systematic analysis of Matthew 5–7 has previously attempted to connect the Sermon on the Mount so thoroughly with the Temple. No sustained commentary has ever before suggested that the totality of the Sermon on the Mount is viewed most clearly when seen in the light of the Temple.

The Temple in Jerusalem was an overwhelmingly dominant presence in Judaism during the life of Jesus, as many scholarly studies have recently recognized. No Jewish institution at that time was richer than the Temple in tradition, ritual, and symbolism, in power, wealth, and influence, or as a monument of architectural splendor, as a marker of ethnic identity, and as an awe-inspiring source of spiritual elevation. The Temple tied together all aspects of life, be they religious, economic, ideological, political, or cultic. One may safely posit that temple theology was therefore profoundly influential, whether as type or antitype, in the earliest stages of formative Christianity.

Accordingly, this book assumes that the Temple was likewise of utmost interest to Jesus and his initial followers as reflected in the Sermon on the Mount. All four New Testament Gospels locate the epicenter of Jesus' Judean activities in or around the Temple. Whenever he was in Jerusalem, he was in or about the precinct of the Temple. His self-proclaimed mission was not to tear down or destroy, but to fulfill and to fill full all things, including the Temple. Jesus yearned for the restoration of an earlier, ideal temple-centric culture. Of course, he objected vehemently to the Temple's economic dereliction of the poor, and he prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed; but he prophesied this in tears, wishing that it could be otherwise. For these and other reasons, Jesus' most persistent opponents were not the ordinary Jewish people, with whom he had much in common, but rather the Temple's few entrenched chief priests and their elite professional cohorts, the Scribes.

But at the same time, Jesus' most ardent followers were deeply impressed that he spoke "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:29). Something about what Jesus said, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, drew from deep wells of power and authority that his listeners somehow recognized. This book strives to establish a prima facie case that the Sermon on the Mount's main source of compelling coherence is to be found by hearing its temple register.

Conditions are currently ripe for reading the Sermon on the Mount in a temple context. The recent decade has seen a dramatic rise in scholarly interest in temple studies. The number of books, articles, conference sessions, and academic papers about temples, temple rituals, and temple themes has sharply increased. Yet the Sermon on the Mount has been almost entirely overlooked in these studies.

The prominence of temples has been recognized not only in biblical societies but also in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Southeast Asia, Mesoamerica, and throughout the ancient world. Modern scholars, working in a secular culture that is fundamentally divorced from all the sacral institutions that permeated every ancient civilization, are reawakening to the realization that very little from antiquity can be fully understood without seeing it in relation to temple settings. The same can now be said of efforts to understand early Christian theology, worship, community, and mission, as well as central Christian texts such as the Sermon on the Mount.

For many reasons, a temple reading of the Sermon on the Mount is amply needed. Without a unifying foundation the Sermon on the Mount collapses into a fragmented heap of randomly disjointed sayings. As is shown in chapter 1 below, all previous efforts to digest or explain the Sermon on the Mount completely and consistently have been unsatisfactory. Perhaps a new approach will prove to be more successful.

The approach offered in this book takes its first cue from the setting of the Sermon on the Mount: "Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up into the mountain, and when he was seated his disciples approached him, and he opening his mouth he instructed his disciples" (Matthew 5:1–2). The image evoked here is not one of an ordinary hillside but of "going up into the mountain." The Greek expression here is the same as that used of Moses going up into the mountain with seventy elders. As chapter 2 explains, the imagery of Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, the temple mount, and the cosmic mountain of God all lead into temple realms.

In the Temple, or on the mountain of the Lord, God opens his mouth and is heard. There he reveals his word and teaches his law; there the teachings of the law and the words of the prophets coalesce. As chapters 3–6 thus undertake to show, the Sermon on the Mount then unfolds in a series of twenty-four stages, all related to the Temple or temple themes. Item by item, these stages progress from an initial set of ultimate blessings, to the covenantal formation of a righteous community, to a series of cultic regulations about the proper worship and service of the one true God, and finally to a section of instructions that endow and prepare people to withstand divine judgment and enter into the presence of God.

In seeking to uncover the temple backgrounds of the Sermon on the Mount, these chapters employ several tools. Vocabulary and idiomatic expressions are often very telling. Technical terminology and words or phrases that were predominately used in temple contexts give strong signals of temple implications. These indicators come especially from the Psalms, whose words were well known as hymns strongly associated with the Temple. Whether the Sermon on the Mount was originally given in Greek or Aramaic, the only version of it that has survived

from the first century is in Greek. Thus, I have relied most heavily on the words and phrases of the Greek Septuagint (LXX) version of the Psalms, which is most pertinent in analyzing the Greek New Testament. Septuagint readings that differ significantly from the Hebrew are so marked, but even in unmarked cases the LXX has been consulted. Otherwise, the Revised Standard Version has been used, including its chapter and verse numbers. Whether the Greek text of the Sermon on the Mount preserves its original language or reflects its translation into Greek soon after it was initially given, the pervasive use of expressions from the Psalms in the Sermon on the Mount significantly reflects its originally intended temple orientation.

Using a listener response analysis further exposes the likely rhetorical impact of these coded expressions on its earliest hearers. Most people who hear the Sermon on the Mount today immediately recognize its words as coming from Jesus or from the Gospel of Matthew. One must wonder, however, how its words would have sounded to a person who had never heard the Sermon on the Mount or the Gospel of Matthew before. To a person steeped in contemporaneous Jewish culture, many of the buzz words in the Sermon on the Mount would have had a very familiar ring, and most of that familiarity would have been associated with the Temple. After recognizing the first dozen of these loaded expressions in the first few verses of the Sermon on the Mount, listeners would have been attuned to recognize the many other temple references as they came along.

Anyone who had heard Jesus speak on other occasions would have known of his tendency to speak in veiled language. The parables of Jesus, which were often critical of powerful opponents, masked deeper and more esoteric messages from the gazing crowd. Likewise, his ethical teachings which can certainly be read at one level as ordinary moral statements could just as well have enshrouded holier and more mystagogical instructions that were intended to be fully understood only by those insiders who had been given ears to hear and eyes to see. Insights from Jewish, Hellenistic and early Christian literatures strengthen the consistent temple signals sent by many of the otherwise disparate sayings in the Sermon on the Mount.

Another tool that has proven useful in excavating a stratum of temple discourse in the Sermon on the Mount is ritual theory. Anthropologists and other scholars who study religious rituals from a social scientific point of view have improved our capacity to identify texts that were originally associated with rituals of one way or another. Temples being quintessentially ceremonial and ritualistic, programmatic allusions to temple features alert listeners to possible interpretations and meanings that point beyond mere theoretical discourse to repeated application and ritualistic implementation. These rituals comprise a heavenly model upon which earthly society should be organized.

While the approaches used in this book are somewhat eclectic and variegated, and while the detection of allusions and subtexts is always intriguingly debatable, the cumulative weight of evidence that emerges from this examination—and I emphasize the word cumulative—is more impressive than most people would

think possible at first blush. Even if one discounts some of this evidence or resists some of the assumptions at work here, enough remains to give assurance that this approach is asking the right sort of questions. Often, asking the right question is half the answer.

Following the stage-by-stage examination of the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 7 briefly explores some of the implications and potentialities of this study. If this approach to the Sermon on the Mount is persuasive, it stands to contribute in many new ways to ongoing studies about the sources and authorship of the Sermon on the Mount, as well as about the synoptic question and the historical Jesus. It can also shed light on the extensive use of materials that parallel the Sermon on the Mount in the four Gospels, the epistle of James, and several writings of the apostolic fathers; illuminate the presence of temple themes in Acts, 1 Peter, and in the mysticism of Paul; and help explain early Christian initiation rituals, the formation of utopian societies, and a persistent patristic envy of the Temple. It can also uniquely explain the perceived power and authority of the Sermon on the Mount, answering questions about what kind of text it originally was and what it potentially still can be.

Above all, seeing the Sermon on the Mount in the light of the Temple inseparably situates this text together with its Old Testament background. Thus, I am especially grateful to Margaret Barker for her welcoming invitation and generous encouragement. Her offer to include this book in this series sponsored by the Society for the Study of the Old Testament decisively grew out of her awareness of my book *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount*, written to a Latter-day Saint audience, and of my paper analyzing the Sermon on the Mount in light of ritual theory, presented at the 1999 annual meeting Society of Biblical Literature. I gladly acknowledge her contributions that have sharpened and refined this investigation.

I also acknowledge technical assistance from my colleague John F. Hall, research assistance from Christine Farnsworth Crockett, Brent Schmidt, Carl Cranney, and Grant Adamson, and editorial assistance from Jennifer Hurlbut and Marny Parkin. I hope that our efforts in producing this volume begin to do justice to the incomparable and everlasting Sermon on the Mount.

Chapter 1

The Quest for a Unifying Understanding of the Sermon on the Mount

No text has had greater influence on Christianity than the Sermon on the Mount. It would be hard to overstate the importance of the roles that the Sermon on the Mount has played over the centuries in shaping Christian ethics and in conveying the teachings of Jesus. Known variously as the Great Sermon or the Speech of Speeches, thousands of insightful books and articles have extensively and minutely analyzed its three chapters in the Gospel of Matthew.[1] Without exaggeration, one commentator has rightly noted, "There is no section of the Bible which has been so quoted (by non-Christians as well as Christians), worked over, commented upon, argued about, taken apart and put together, preached and taught, praised and scorned as has the Sermon on the Mount."[2]

The intense fascination generated by the Sermon on the Mount derives from a widely held consensus that it is "one of the main biblical texts on which we ground our view of discipleship"[3] and that it contains "the pure uncorrupted expression of the will of God as it agrees with the law and prophets, i.e., as it always was."[4] Because the Sermon stands close to the beginning of the New Testament and because it is typically among the first biblical passages to be translated into new languages, many people have "their first introduction to the Bible via the Sermon on the Mount."[5]

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[1] Among the general studies of the Sermon on the Mount are Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis, 1995); Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis, 1989); Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O.C. Dean Jr (Nashville, 1988); Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia, 1963); and Harvey K. McArthur, *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount* (Westport, Connecticut, 1978). A valuable annotated bibliography is Warren S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (American Theological Library Association Bibliography Series, no. 3, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1975).

[2] James H. Burtness, "Life-Style and Law: Some Reflections on Matthew 5:17," *Di* 14/1 (1975): 13.

[3] Daniel Patte, *Discipleship according to the Sermon on the Mount: Four Legitimate Readings, Four Plausible Views of Discipleship and Their Relative Values* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1996), p. 1.

[4] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 217.

[5] Kissinger, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. xiii.

Just as this text has long been viewed as critically important to Christian discipleship, its interpretation has been taken up by "an almost endless chain of theologians and philosophers,"[6] and even today, this vast interest in the Sermon on the Mount "shows no sign of diminution."[7] Although entire volumes have been devoted to presenting bibliographies of Sermon on the Mount scholarly materials,[8] the quantity of this scholarly material "exceeds what even computerized bibliographies can handle."[9] The quantity and passion invested into the Sermon on the Mount throughout centuries of study and research caused bibliographer Warren Kissinger to comment:

> Like a mighty mountain, the Sermon on the Mount continues to attract persons of different backgrounds and traditions. There is general agreement that the Sermon offers a compendium of the teachings of Jesus, and that it is one of the most lofty and powerful expressions of the essence of the moral life. Gandhi was much impressed by it, and its impact upon him was second only to that of the Bhagavad Gita. Tolstoy came to a new *Weltanschauung* through his reading and study of it. Claude Montefiore, writing from a liberal Jewish perspective, spoke of the Sermon's great nobility, significance, and power. Nietzsche was one who did not share this almost universal admiration. For him the Sermon on the Mount represented a significant part of Jesus' ethics, which was a "slave morality."[10]

Yet, in spite of the Sermon on the Mount's acclaimed preeminence and apparent simplicity, it has still remained paradoxically inscrutable. What kind of a text is this so-called "sermon"? In fact, the New Testament never calls Matthew 5–7 a "sermon," and indeed it does not read much like a typical preacher's sermon. This all leaves readers wondering, What was the original function or purpose of this text? Does it have a unifying coherence, or is it a scrapbook of disjointed sayings? How was it able to generate binding spiritual power, unlike the teachings of the scribes (Matthew 7:29)? Persistent questions such as these have continuously fueled Sermon on the Mount research, powering the relentless and seemingly endless barrage of interpretations and studies. Joachim Jeremias, the renowned Lutheran New Testament scholar from Göttingen, referred wistfully to "the long-debated question of the aim of the Sermon on the Mount,"[11] and Georg Strecker, who succeeded him as holder of the Chair of New Testament Studies, struggled to find a solution to what he termed the "problem of the proper exegesis of the

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[6] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 1.

[7] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 3.

[8] For example, Kissinger, *Sermon on the Mount*; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 643–63.

[9] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 3.

[10] Kissinger, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. xi.

[11] Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. vii.

Sermon on the Mount."[12] The work of Warren Kissinger readily recognized "a cluster of problems" surrounding the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.[13] Despite a long history of complicated analysis, the Sermon's most recent premier commentator, Hans Dieter Betz, observes, "The texts themselves did not put the historical questions to rest, but the facts continued to keep scholars busy."[14]

Indeed, every possible tool of critical scholarship has been brought to bear on the Sermon on the Mount, and yet it still eludes and transcends explanation.

In some circles, the Sermon on the Mount has been examined in great detail by textual critics who specialize in comparing the early New Testament manuscripts in their variant forms. For example, scholars such as Julius Wellhausen, Rudolf Bultmann, Karel Klostermann, C.H. Dodd, and others have asserted that the third beatitude (Matthew 5:5) was not originally part of the text of the Sermon on the Mount since it switches places with the second beatitude in some early Greek manuscripts, while others argue that such a conclusion is unwarranted.[15] Textual variants, even if perhaps insignificant or inconsequential, have been duly noted and exquisitely scrutinized. Was "falsely," a word which is absent in some manuscripts, a later editorial addition at the end of the phrase "and utter all kinds of evil against you" (Matthew 5:11), or was it originally present? Did the Lord's Prayer originally end with "deliver us from evil," or did it go on to end with a doxology, "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever, amen" (Matthew 6:13)? Given the oral tradition that ran concurrent with the reduction of the four New Testament Gospels to writing, can one even rightly speak of an original text?

Likewise, source criticism has yielded a kaleidoscope of possible structural designs[16] and theories of authorship for the Sermon on the Mount. Nevertheless, it remains quite uncertain how, when, why, or by whom this text was written or assembled. For example, some have proposed that Matthew, not Jesus, was personally responsible for writing the five beatitudes in Matthew 5:5, 7–10 that happen to be absent from Luke 6:20–22.[17] Searching for literary and religious influences on this text, the Sermon on the Mount has been combed for traces,

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12 Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 7.

13 Kissinger, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. xi–xii.

14 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 24.

15 Robert A. Guelich, "The Matthew Beatitudes: 'Entrance Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" *JBL* 95/3 (1976): 423 n. 46; see also McArther, *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 85.

16 Neil J. McEleney, "The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain," *CBQ* 43/1 (1981): 1–3; and C.M. Tuckett, "The Beatitudes: A Source-Critical Study," *NovT* 25 (1983): 193–216.

17 J. Dupont, *Les Béatitudes: Le problème littéraire—Les deux versions du Sermon sur la montagne et des Béatitudes* (2nd edn, Paris, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 250–64; Hubert Frankemölle, "Die Makarismen (Matt 5:1–12; Luke 6:20–3): Motive und Umfang der redaktionellen Komposition," *BZ* 15/1 (1971): 52–75; and N. Walter, "Die Bearbeitung der Seligpreisungen durch Matthäus," *SE* 4 (1968): 246–58.

however faint, of Jewish or Hellenistic thoughts or idioms. For example, David Flusser, an Orthodox Jewish scholar of Christian origins at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, points out parallels between the *Thanksgiving Scroll* 18:14–15 from the Dead Sea community and Matthew 5:3–5.[18] Erik Sjöberg expounds at length on the Judaic backgrounds of Matthew 6:22–3, while Betz finds in those same two verses Hellenistic ideas and ancient Greek theories of vision.[19]

Related to source criticism is form criticism, by which other scholars have hypothesized that during the centuries between the original speaking and the actual transcribing of the Sermon (or its parts), the Church and its traditions significantly influenced the Sermon's content and form.[20] Altogether, explorations of the Sermon on the Mount's authorship frequently conclude by expressing the opinion that "the whole section is merely a collection of unrelated sayings of diverse origins, a patchwork, which cannot possibly retain the pre-eminence once accorded to it as the authoritative source for the teaching of Jesus."[21]

Alternatively, oral analysis of the Sermon on the Mount focuses on this body of teachings more as a harmonic discourse, delivered and received as a speech or performance. This type of analysis recognizes that although the Sermon on the Mount is known today as a written text, it was originally "oral in nature and function," and thus might have been used to communicate not only through words but through "sense perception."[22] As described by Richard Horsley, Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and the Study of Religion at the University of Massachusetts, this type of analysis seeks to find and appreciate "the *register* in which the discourse was recited,"[23] and thereby opens the door for viewing the Sermon in the context of the oral traditions ubiquitous throughout the ancient world. In particular, Horsley and his coauthor Jonathan Draper conclude that, when considered as a single speech or performance, the various pieces of the Sermon on the Mount come together in a manner reminiscent of a "covenantal" structure, the Beatitudes having "the form and function of covenantal blessings, not sapiential macarisms."[24] Rhetorical and literary critical approaches per se, however, have not satisfied everyone. Donald Senior, for example, insists that this type of analysis must be employed with caution, since "attempting to decipher

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18 D. Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit," *IEJ* 10/1 (1960): 1–13.

19 Erik Sjöberg, "Das Licht in dir: Zur Deutung von Matth. 6,22f Par," *ST* 5 (1952): 89–105; Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 71–87.

20 W.D. Davies gives an overview of form criticism in *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1964): p. 2–3.

21 Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 1.

22 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 83, 84.

23 Richard A. Horsley with Jonathan Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1999), p. 201.

24 Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, p. 197, pp. 216–25.

Matthew's literary and rhetorical strategies without fully engaging the Gospel's theological convictions will lead interpreters in the wrong direction."[25]

Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount has been interpreted typologically. One such view, developed by Karlmann Beyschlag, sees the Sermon as reflecting the five dimensions of the early Christian church and the five main themes of its ecclesiastical history.[26] These five themes were initially formulated by Gerhard Ebeling, who styled them as being exhaustive of early church history; these themes account for several parts of the Sermon on the Mount, namely (1) the mystical ("seeing God," "seeking and finding"), (2) the building of faith and the teaching of theology, (3) differentiating orthodoxy from heresy, (4) withstanding persecution and accomplishing mission, and (5) defining Christian sin and implementing ecclesiastical repentance. Going off in another intriguing typological direction is Duke University's W.D. Davies, who suggests that the Sermon on the Mount is none other than the new law of God given at a mountain, replicating the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, set in a five-part structure that mirrors the five books of the Pentateuch.[27] Aternatively, John Hellerman argues that the Sermon on the Mount should be seen as a type of charter for a close-knit community, inasmuch as it defines "interpersonal behavior appropriate for Mediterranean siblings in [a] newly forming community."[28]

Questions have also been raised about the intended audience of the Sermon,[29] with some readers suggesting that Jesus addressed himself only to the disciples, not to mankind in general.[30] Swiss professor Ulrich Luz simultaneously offers the hypotheses that the Sermon on the Mount "presupposes the calling of the disciples" and is directed at them, while at the same time affirming that it also "makes a demand of the whole world through the proclamation of the disciples."[31] Others have puzzled over which early Christian communities might possibly have played a role in producing or shaping the final versions of the Sermon on the

[25] Donald Senior, "Directions in Matthean Studies," in David E. Aune (ed.), *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2001), p. 17.

[26] Karlmann Beyschlag, "Zur Geschichte der Bergpredigt in der alten Kirche," *ZTK* 74 (1977): 291–322.

[27] Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 6–27.

[28] John H. Hellerman, *Jesus and the People of God: Reconfiguring Ethnic Identity* (Sheffield, 2007), p. 285.

[29] Jack D. Kingsbury, "The Place, Structure, and Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount within Matthew," *Int* 41 (1987): 131–43; J.R.C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Boston, 2002), p. 243.

[30] T.W. Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel* (New York, 1960), p. 50.

[31] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 216.

Mount,[32] as well as wondering about the potential targets against whom its critical statements may have been aimed.[33]

Regarding the literary structure of the Sermon as a whole, "there is no agreement . . . with regard to the structure of the Sermon on the Mount."[34] Dale Allison, a leading scholar on the Gospel of Matthew, focuses especially on triadic structures in the Sermon and finds similar three-part structures in the Mishnah.[35] Joachim Jeremias sees basically a three-part structure in the Sermon (covering issues regarding the manner of interpreting scripture, controversies concerning the righteousness of the Pharisees, and instructions about the new righteousness of the disciples).[36] Luz sees the structure of the Sermon on the Mount centering on the Lord's Prayer.[37] Then again, there may be value in seeing the body of the Sermon on the Mount as a chiastic elaboration on the eight beatitudes, taking them one by one in the reverse order from that in which they are initially introduced,[38] or as an overall chiasm centered on the Lord's Prayer, or first seeking God's righteousness and his kingdom,[39] but these suggested structures have their weaknesses and difficulties.[40] Dan Lioy discusses at length several notable attempts by Nils Lund, John Breck, and others, and advances his own proposal to see the Sermon on the Mount as an overall A-B-C-B-A chiasm (with all of 5:17–7:12 as the single centerpiece),[41] but in the end Lioy candidly acknowledges that his "comparison of the chiastic structures overviewed indicates that there are some areas of agreement

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32 Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 19–22, 65–9; and Krister Stendahl, *The School of Matthew and Its Use in the Old Testament* (Ramsey, New Jersey, 1990), pp. 13–35.

33 Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 125–51; and David Hill, "False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7:15–23," *Bib* 57 (1976): 327–48.

34 Dale C. Allison Jr, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *JBL* 106/3 (1987): 424.

35 Allison, "Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," 423–45; developed further in Glen Stassen, "The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:2–7:12)," *JBL* 122/2 (2003): 267–308.

36 Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 23; see also Alfred M. Perry, "The Framework of the Sermon on the Mount," *JBL* 54 (1935): 23.

37 Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 215.

38 John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the New Testament," in John W. Welch (ed.), *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim 1981; reprint, Provo, Utah, 1999), pp. 236–7; see also H.W. Hernandez, *The Chiastic Structure of the Sermon on the Mount* (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1994).

39 Jonathan A. Draper, "The Genesis and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount," *JSNT* 75 (1999): 33–4.

40 Dan Lioy, *The Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount* (New York, 2004), pp. 96–7.

41 Lioy, *Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 97–103.

and some significant areas of disagreement among them. In fact, 'no consensus has been reached as to [the] precise shape' of the Sermon's chiastic arrangement."[42]

Efforts to find the contextual meaning of individual sections of the Sermon on the Mount have proven just as frustrating, as have attempts to configure its overall structure. Speaking of Matthew 5:21–47, Betz concedes, "There clearly appears to be a rationale behind the six antitheses and their arrangement in the SM, but that rationale has so far eluded scholarship."[43] Similarly, the organizing principle behind Matthew 6:19–7:12 has been declared "most difficult to explain,"[44] even seemingly nonexistent.[45]

While all of these studies have contributed valuable perspectives and significant insights into various dimensions of the Sermon on the Mount, this text still stands in need of further attention. Especially lacking in all previous approaches to the Sermon on the Mount is a theory capable of successfully unifying all of its elements. Thus, some commentators have simply concluded that the Sermon on the Mount is an eclectic collection of isolated sayings of Jesus, which Matthew or early followers of Christ gathered together without a single theme or organized development. Such arguments mainly rely on the fact that certain verses in the Sermon on the Mount are also found in the gospels of Mark or Luke but are presented on those occasions as separate sayings of Jesus in different settings. Other exegetes, unsatisfied with that assessment, for it fails to explain the obvious strength of the Sermon as a whole, have attempted to bring all the disparate parts of the Sermon on the Mount under unifying main themes, such as Jesus' fulfillment of the law of Moses, the golden rule, freedom,[46] prayer,[47] love,[48] the attainment of greater righteousness,[49] or overcoming the fear of death.[50] The main problem with the unifying approaches offered so far, however, is that no one of them can account completely for all of the text, for each of these suggested distillations selectively ignores many parts of the Sermon that do not happen to fit its particular theme, scheme, or constraints.

Turning from thematic or theory-based analyses to practice-driven readings has produced no clearer results. The Sermon on the Mount has been given an astonishingly wide variety of practical applications and moralistic interpretations in contemporary theology and religion. For some, the Sermon on the Mount makes

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[42] Lioy, *Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 102, quoting John Breck.

[43] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 201.

[44] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 423.

[45] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 426.

[46] Peter Stuhlmacher, "Jesu vollkommenes Gesetz der Freiheit," *ZTK* 79 (1982): 283–322.

[47] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 215.

[48] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 205.

[49] Kingsbury, "Place, Structure, and Meaning," p. 136.

[50] Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin, 1986), pp. 51–2.

nothing less than a divine demand for ethical perfection.[51] For others, it proclaims a set of ideals so impossible to fulfill that it should be understood as "a call to the Mercy Seat."[52] Along this line, David Greenwood argues that the imperatives in the Sermon should not be thought of as law, for "a good law should be worded in such a way that at least the majority of those on whom it is imposed are capable of obeying it in all normal circumstances," and the high demands of the Sermon on the Mount do not meet this criterion.[53] Similarly sobered, J. Duncan M. Derrett, professor of comparative law and religion, sees the Sermon as nothing short of an ascetic discourse—somber, austere, and even "masochistic."[54] For still others, it preaches an urgent and expedient interim ethic relevant only to the supreme apocalyptic crisis of the world at hand.[55] No wonder Joachim Jeremias has asked:

> What is the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount? This is a profound question, and one which affects not only our preaching and teaching but also, when we really face up to it, the very roots of our existence. Since the very beginning of the church it has been a question with which all Christians have had to grapple, not only the theologians among them, and in the course of the centuries a whole range of answers has been given to it.[56]

In short, the Sermon on the Mount provokes many questions about its overall purpose and meaning; yet, traditional approaches have failed to answer these questions satisfactorily. As Hans Dieter Betz has summarized, "New Testament scholarship up to the present has offered no satisfactory explanation of this vitally important text."[57] Such scholarship has presented a multitude of hypotheses focused on the questions of authorship, purpose, meaning, structure, historical setting, and others, but has resulted in no consistent understanding. Some studies of the Sermon on the Mount include histories of interpretation which reveal that from the time of Augustine through the Reformation and Enlightenment and

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[51] Hans Windisch, *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt* (Leipzig, 1929).

[52] This is the view of Robert Frost in McArthur, *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 18.

[53] David Greenwood, "Moral Obligation in the Sermon on the Mount," *TS* 31/2 (1970): 304; see 301–9.

[54] J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Ascetic Discourse: An Explanation of the Sermon on the Mount* (Eilsbrunn, 1989), p. 14.

[55] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, trans. W. Lourie (New York, 1914), pp. 97–9; see the views summarized by Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, 1–12. McArthur identifies twelve ethical approaches in *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 105–48; Georg Strecker discusses other types of exegesis in *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 15–23.

[56] Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 1.

[57] Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, p. ix.

beyond, the Sermon on the Mount has been variously interpreted,[58] and Betz comments that during the entire history of all biblical interpretation "almost every author . . . had one thing or another to say on the subject" of the Sermon on the Mount.[59] It has been viewed practically, idealistically, ethically, legally, spiritually, ecclesiastically, personally, and ascetically. The principles taught in the Sermon have been theologically applied as an "obedience ethic" constituting actual legal requirements, and simultaneously it has been hailed as an "impossible ideal."[60] In modern times, it still remains possible to "understand and interpret the Sermon on the Mount in a thousand different ways."[61] "Even in the twentieth century, philosophers and political theorists, for whatever reason, find themselves challenged by these teachings."[62]

This expansive variety of approaches to the Sermon on the Mount is daunting. This state of diffusion, if not confusion, is also prescriptive, for most of these interpretations reveal more about the beliefs of the interpreters than about the meaning of the Sermon itself: "Interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount from the time before the Enlightenment were always an expression of the relevance of the Sermon on the Mount for its interpreter, i.e., they reflected always his or her church situation and his or her own approach to interpretation."[63] This is true of modern interpretations as well: "What each believes Jesus was, did, and said, determines the method by which each interpreter builds his bridge between Jesus and the twentieth century."[64] Perhaps it is for this reason that some, such as Daniel Patte, have concluded that even conflicting interpretations should be considered as "equally legitimate and plausible."[65] Consequently, little consensus has emerged out of this diversity about the original purpose and organization of the Sermon on the Mount: "When one turns to questions about the Sermon's meaning and relevance, there is far from unanimity of opinion."[66]

The following book may simply add to this proliferation of interpretations, but I hope that it will do more than that. In an effort to discover some sense of form and meaning in this seemingly unorganized matter, this book proposes a stronger,

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[58] Robert M. Grant, "The Sermon on the Mount in Early Christianity," *Sem* 22/1 (1978): 215–29; see examples of histories of interpretation in Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 6–44; bibliographic classifications of interpretation in Kissinger, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 1–122; and discussion in Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, pp. 218–23.

[59] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 3.

[60] Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 2, 6.

[61] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. E. Mosbacher (New York, 1970), p. 115.

[62] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 2.

[63] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 218.

[64] Irwin W. Batdorf, "How Shall We Interpret the Sermon on the Mount?" *JBR* 27 (1959): 213; see generally 211–17.

[65] Patte, *Discipleship according to the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 14.

[66] Kissinger, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. xi.

more unifying approach. Its analysis turns to the Temple. I propose that temple theology and ritual studies offer new leverage in opening the power and meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, giving place and meaning to the Sermon seen as a whole as well as to each of its parts taken individually.

Reading the Sermon on the Mount in the light of temple imagery, symbolism, functions, and significance is long overdue. It almost goes without saying that the temples of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome were the most prominent buildings and important cultural features of Luxor, Nippur, Athens, and Rome. Temples were pervasive. "Egypt can truly be called a land of temples"; there they "pervaded every aspect of society and culture."[67] In Mesopotamia, "no institution played a more significant or enduring role in ancient Mesopotamian society than the temples of the great urban centers of Babylonia and Assyria," and "just as the temple dominated the city architecturally, . . . the temple's household dominated—or at the very least, played a vital role in—the city's economic life."[68] Greek and Roman temples served an equally wide array of crucial functions, including the worship of patron gods and goddesses, the performance of public offerings, divination, civic meetings, trials, healings, dedications, vows, and rituals of sacred instruction. On this last point, for example, "because mysteries were secret ceremonies, the rituals were sometimes performed inside the temple. The Telesterion of Demeter at Eleusis [near Athens], for instance, . . . could accommodate hundreds of worshippers standing in rows at the annual celebration of the mysteries. At Samothrace the sanctuary of the Theoi Megaloi [in the northern Aegean] had two buildings for the two separate stages of initiation, *muēsis* [teaching, initiation] and *epopteia* [attaining the highest grade of initiation, vision, and happiness]. Both buildings had seats for spectators at the ceremonies."[69] All aspects of life—whether personal, familial, economic, or civic—were unthought of independent of some aspect of temple ideology and sacral infusion.

The same general points apply to the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was overwhelmingly the dominant religious institution of Jerusalem in Jesus' day.[70] The Temple gave context and meaning to nearly every part of the religious life of all Jews at that time. All Jews and every Jewish group felt strongly about the Temple. For the Pharisees, purity was of utmost importance; every Pharisee strived to live temple-ready, even if he or she lived in a land or village far removed from the Holy City.[71] For the Sadducees and chief priests, the Temple was their main

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67 William A. Ward, "Temples and Sanctuaries: Egypt," in *ABD*, vol. 6, p. 369.

68 John F. Robertson, "Temples and Sanctuaries: Mesopotamia," in *ABD*, vol. 6, p. 375.

69 Susan Guettel Cole, "Temples and Sanctuaries: Greco-Roman," in *ABD*, vol. 6, p. 381.

70 Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple* (Downer's Grove, Illinois, 2002) pp. 87, 93–8; Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period, 538 B.C. – A.D. 70* (Philadelphia, 2002), p. 258.

71 Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 257.

source of political, economic, and religious influence and power.[72] The Essenes felt so strongly about the idea of the Temple that they separated themselves from the Temple of Herod, which they considered to be defiled and unrighteous, and took up their desert vigil, anticipating the time when God would reign in a massive new temple at the end of time.[73] Jews of the Diaspora, scattered around the Roman Empire and beyond, felt so deeply about making their temple oblations that they obtained extraordinary privileges from the Romans that allowed them to send their annual temple taxes and other dedications to the Temple in Jerusalem.[74] Being worthy to enter the Temple precinct was the ultimate behavioral goal common to most Jews in the first half of the first century, and all purity laws and moral requirements functioned as requisites and conditions of temple participation. Various Jewish groups certainly differed in how they defined purity, holiness, and righteousness; but they all agreed (along with all ancient peoples) that one had to be clean, however that state of cleanliness was defined, in order to enter sacred space.[75] Richard Bauckham has rightly said that the Temple was "central [to] Jewish self-identity"; and even if Jews of all types held a wide variety of opinions about it, each group had deeply-grounded, distinguishing feelings about the Temple, one way or another.[76]

Inasmuch as the Temple directly or indirectly gave meaning, coherence, and unity to the most salient aspects of religious experience for Jews in Jesus' day, the Temple is the most promising place to seek the highest degree of unity, coherence, and meaning in the Sermon on the Mount. Accordingly, the chapters that follow strive to show how each element in the Sermon on the Mount relates to temple themes and to the temple view of divine order.

Seeing these connections is not second nature for modern readers, who have rarely seen a temple, let alone have witnessed any ancient temple in operation. Nevertheless, as the works of Margaret Barker and others have insightfully shown, temple themes are readily recognizable, once a person knows what to look for.[77] Allusions to the Temple are more common in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout the entire New Testament than casual, modern readers usually realize. As a sampler of temple features, consider the following, all of which were not just ordinary, everyday-life words in the first century, but also had conspicuous temple

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72 Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 180, 228–9.

73 Andrew M. Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile, and Identity in 1 Peter* (New York, 2007), pp. 18–20.

74 Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2006), pp. 109–10.

75 Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1985), pp. 175–88; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* (New York, 2000), pp. 1398–400.

76 Richard Bauckham, "The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why?" *ST* 47 (1993): 141.

77 See, for example, Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London, 2007).

connections in Second-Temple Judaism and early Christianity (many of which will be discussed subsequently below): creation, light, sun, stars, fire, waters, life, cloud, pillar, covering, tent, tabernacle, mountain, rock, humility, fasting, washing, anointing, veil, garden, tree of life, vine, gates, glory, holiness, purity, angels, the name of God, entrance, presence, vision, unity, throne, sonship, kingship, priesthood, garments, bread, sacrifice, lambs, incense, smoke, prayer, forgiveness, absorbing evil, covenant, law, commandments, oaths, secrets, mysteries, ascending, resurrection, Heaven, atonement, healing, treasures, revelation, wisdom, power, judgment, triumph, deification, avenging evil, harmony, communion, eternity, and peace.

Thus, for example, without focusing on the features and functions of the long vanished Temple, it will not likely occur to modern readers to think of the vine as being connected significantly with the Temple, but Josephus let us know that on the gate of the Temple was a huge representation of a vine; visitors to the Temple would bring gold leaves and hang them on this vine,[78] expressing their uncompromised willingness to be included as a leaf on the "choice vines" that the God of Israel planted "on a very fertile hill" and looked that it should bring forth good fruit—grapes, not thorns (Isaiah 5:1–3, 6). While not all of the temple elements listed above are present in the Sermon on the Mount, many of them are. Indeed, temple imagery pervades the Sermon on the Mount, when one "seeing sees" and "hearing hears" these things of the Temple.

Fortunately, New Testament scholars have begun to realize, more than previous generations of biblical scholars have done, the importance of the Temple to the earliest Christians.[79] From archaeological and other discoveries, "there has been a radical rethinking in the last half of the twentieth century about the functioning of the Temple in Jewish society. . . . Temple concerns, such as the priests, purity, and the sacrificial cult, have been designated as central to the Jewish religious agenda of pre-70 Palestine—so much so that the various sects and ideologies of the period all sought to define themselves in contradistinction to this central Jewish institution."[80]

Today, everyone would agree that the Temple is part of the background of early Christianity, and most would insist that the Temple is much more than a faint piece of passing background or marginalia. Indeed, the Temple is in the foreground of that background. The Temple is much more than a blank scroll in the background on which Christian experience is written as it unfolds. The Temple aggressively provided much of the powerful language and many of the symbols, meanings, purposes, and values in which the earliest Christian messages about the presence of God and of his kingdom were originally veiled and, still today, wait to

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[78] Josephus, *War*, 5.210; compare Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.395.

[79] Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, p. 14; Margaret Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp. ix–xii.

[80] L.I. Leving, "Archaeology and the Religious Ethos of Pre-70 Palestine," in *Hillel and Jesus* (Minneapolis, 1997), p. 112.

be unveiled. Thus the time has come to consider the Temple context of the Sermon on the Mount.

In most regards, nothing is more important than context in determining the meaning of any expression.[81] And yet, the lack of information about the original context of the Sermon on the Mount has long been recognized as a crucial problem in trying to understand this text. As Jeremias has lamented, "The instructions of the Sermon have been torn out of their original context,"[82] and thus he and others have sought to supply the needed context. Some have sought to find such contexts by importing into the Sermon on the Mount the settings of other New Testament passages that parallel the Sermon. But this approach inevitably produces a dither of contexts, not anything close to an original context for the Sermon on the Mount itself.

A few others have productively hypothesized that the early Christians developed the Sermon on the Mount for use in their cultic teachings. Moving in a direction concurrent with ritual and, therefore, gravitating toward the Temple, which is inseparable from ritual, these studies have suggested possible cultic or ritualistic functions for the Sermon in early Christian piety. For example, Jeremias sees the Sermon on the Mount as an early Christian *didachē,* or set of instructions, that was taught to all new Christian converts as a part of their initiation or induction into the true way of Christian righteousness. In his view, the Sermon may have been used to instruct baptismal candidates or to complete or perfect newly baptized Christians.[83] If this is so, Jeremias argues, the context for the giving of the Sermon was still relatively preliminary; it was only "preceded by the proclamation of the gospel and it was preceded by conversion, by a being overpowered by the Good News."[84] Ulrich Luz has advanced a related argument, suggesting that the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount constituted the entrance requirements for admission into God's kingdom.[85]

Somewhat similarly, others have focused on the locus of the Sermon on the Mount in subsequent Christian exhortation, reminding disciples of the pledges they made at the time they converted to Christianity and were baptized. Betz classifies the Sermon on the Mount as an *epitome,* or summary, which implies that what it summarizes was more complex and that its original context was more advanced. Thus the Sermon on the Mount was "not intended for outsiders or beginners, but for the advanced students [to help] 'those who have made some advance in the survey of the entire system . . . to fix in their minds under the principal headings

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[81] Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, pp. 1–2.

[82] Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 30.

[83] Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 55–69; Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 22–3.

[84] Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 23.

[85] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 217.

an elementary outline of the whole treatment of the subject.'"[86] As a Harvard Professor and later the Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm, Krister Stendahl has somewhat similarly concluded that the Gospel of Matthew was produced for use in "a school for teachers and church leaders" and that, for this reason, the Sermon on the Mount "assumes the form of a manual for teaching and administration within the church."[87] Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount can be readily seen as a text whose purpose was to give distinct instructions for developing Christian discipleship among the members of the church,[88] and thus this text served as the Christian counterpart to the laws given by God to Moses on another mount in stipulating the conditions of covenant between the God of Israel and his people.[89] In all these cases, the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is necessarily seen as not far removed from the initiation rituals and ecclesiastical retention practices associated with becoming a follower of Jesus Christ in earliest Christianty.

If the Sermon on the Mount can be seen in these ways, as Jeremias, Luz, Betz, Stendahl, and others have suggested, in the context of preparing candidates for baptism, and of teaching neophyte converts, or in perfecting committed disciples, training leaders, and forming a community unified in Christ, then the domain and context of ritual cannot stand very far beyond. And if these Christian concepts and practices owe anything to Jewish ritual antecedents, the Temple is immediately implicated, as it was the fountainhead of ritual in first-century Judea. Indeed, as will be argued below, just as ritual theory has recently been used to illuminate many New Testament passages and other religious texts, viewing the Sermon in the context of temple theology and ritual theory offers answers to many pressing questions about the original context, structure, and function of the Sermon on the Mount.

Thus the aim of this book is to answer, in light of the Temple, questions such as, Why was the Sermon on the Mount composed? What words, phrases, images, and recognizable precedents does it draw on? What is the nature of this text? How does its context give meaning to what is actually being said? How do all of the pieces of the Sermon fit together? What unifies this sublime and supernal text? The first and most salient clue in finding an answer to these questions is that the Sermon on the Mount was presented precisely upon "a mountain" (Matthew 5:1).

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86 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 79, arguing that the Sermon can be matched with Diogenes' description of a philosophical *epitome.*

87 Stendahl, *The School of Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, p. 35.

88 Patte, *Discipleship according to the Sermon on the Mount.*

89 Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 6–27.

Chapter 2
The Temple on the Mount

One thing indicated for sure is that the Sermon on the Mount was given on a "mountain" (Matthew 5:1). The possible significances of this detail are expansively intriguing. In the sign language of religious symbolism, the "mount" evokes images such as Sinai, Moses, the Temple, the heavenly seat, and the domain of God. These images link Jesus' Sermon on the Mount potently and vibrantly to the very heart of the central traditions of Israel, the Temple on the Mount.

Jesus had been active in Galilee, and his fame had quickly spread into the neighboring Roman province of Syria; large crowds of people had followed him from Galilee and the ten cities of the Decapolis, as well as from Jerusalem, Judaea, and east of the Jordan (Matthew 4:23–5). Seeing "the crowds"—apparently there were several crowds on several occasions—Jesus retreated up into a mountain, taking with him some of his *mathētai* (pupils, learners, disciples). There Jesus sat down, opened his mouth, and instructed his devotees (Matthew 5:1–2). This is all that Matthew says about the location or setting of the Sermon on the Mount.

For all that the text offers, this particular mountain could have been anywhere in the entire region. But the mere fact that Matthew wanted his readers to see the Sermon on the Mount as having been presented on "a mountain" is itself already amply freighted with meaning. The mountain setting of the Sermon is no trivial, romantic or pastoral aside. This singular piece of revealing information is crucial for many reasons and in many ways to our reception of this text.

Most of all for present purposes, the narrative setting of the Sermon on the Mount on a mountain invites readers to consider this text as ritual-related—perhaps even ritual-laden—and to view these words of Jesus as having been delivered in a surrogate temple setting. This interpretive invitation arises not only as a hermeneutical hypothesis but carries with it a presumption of plausibility, for sacred instructions are often dispensed in a ritualized setting, and introductions or inductions into religious groups are typically performed and solemnized in holy environs: in temples, at cultic sites, or in spaces separate from profane, worldly surroundings. Inconvenient excursions and strenuous pilgrimages to get up into high places for religious purposes are driven not only by a desire to get away from the press and corruption of the secular world but also to draw closer to God[1] and to make contact with the heavenly realms above. And thus, as the following brief survey of literature on this subject amply shows, deep-seated traditions both in Israel and also throughout the ancient world associated theophanies, divine

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[1] Jewish thought associated "the mountain with a sense of God's nearness." See Werner Foerster, "*Oros*," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, p. 481.

councils, and contacts between mortals and immortals with experiences on the tops of mountains.[2] These deeply engrained traditions should not be, and perhaps cannot be, disentangled from the intended meaning and the hearer's response to the Sermon on the Mount.

The general significance of the Sermon's mountain setting has not gone unnoticed by scholars, even though they do not always agree on its specific meaning. Envisioning the quiet and solemn setting, Hans Dieter Betz imagines its naturalistic, psychological impact: "The whole appearance [of the Sermon on the Mount] had the aura of the familiar and sincere, the attractive and the dignified. The open sky above him, the rural surroundings, all that formed a natural temple. No synagogue, not even the Temple in the capital, could make a solemn impression such as this."[3] Indeed, Jesus would not have been welcome in the Temple of Jerusalem to conduct any such instruction or unconventional gathering there. His choice of a mountain setting was undoubtedly the most sacred environment available to him. Emphasizing primarily the religious responses of listeners in this setting, Emmet Fox states that "'hill' or 'mountain' always means prayer or spiritual activity."[4] Focusing more on the divine manifestation in this setting, Georg Strecker sees the mountain as most significant, emphatically declaring, "The concept *mountain* signalizes that here is a suitable place for an epiphanous event! Here God's revelation makes itself known! Here Jesus appears as the revealer!"[5] Thinking of historical antecedents and literary allusions, Werner Foerster of the University of Münster insists that "it must be seriously asked" whether "the choice of a mountain by Matthew, and indeed by Jesus Himself, was intended as an antithetical reference to the mount of the Law in the Old Testament."[6] In fact, each of these meanings has much to offer. The mountain setting of the Sermon on the Mount not only provided a peaceful environment for the delivery of Jesus' unparalleled instruction, but it also engenders a prayerful search, a divine disclosure, and calls to mind the rich symbolism of sacred mountains in Israelite and ancient religious traditions.

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[2] For a general discussion of such religious notions as the world mountain, cosmic mountains, and Israel's "Mountain God," see S. Talmon, "*Har*," in *TDOT*, vol. 4, pp. 436–45; Foerster, "*Oros*," vol. 5, pp. 475–83.

[3] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis, 1995), p. 20.

[4] Emmet Fox, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938), p. 52.

[5] Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O.C. Dean Jr (Nashville, 1988), p. 24.

[6] Foerster, "*Oros*," vol. 5, p. 485.

Mount Sinai and the Mount

Most directly, the mountain setting of the Sermon on the Mount transports its participants to Mount Sinai and brings into the picture all which that holy mountain symbolizes. Indeed, key language at the beginning of this text in Matthew 5:1 is precisely the same as certain wording in the Septuagint text of Exodus 19:3 and 24:12 that introduces Moses and his people into the sacred mountain domain. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the words "And Jesus went up (*anebē*) into the mountain (*eis to oros*)." Because this expression is rightly translated as describing more than going out onto a gently sloping hillside above Capernaum a few feet above the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, the fictive title "Sermon on the Mount" conveys an incorrect impression.

Indeed, Jesus "went up (*anebē*)," just as Moses had gone up (*anebē*, Exodus 19:3 and 24:12) "into the mountain (*eis to oros*)," first by himself and then with the elders of Israel (Exodus 19:3, 20; and 24:9). Foerster wrongly diminishes Matthew's allusion to Moses in the wording of Matthew 5:1, thinking that one would expect to find some reference to Jesus going up "to *the top* of the mountain (*epi tēn koruphēn*)" as in Exodus 19:20,[7] but the Matthean verbiage is identical to the first time that Moses went up into the mountain by himself in Exodus 19:3 and, more significantly, to the time when Moses took others with him up "into the mountain" (not necessarily to the top) in Exodus 24:12.

Thus, Jesus going up on the Mount with his disciples is significantly reminiscent of Moses going up into the mountain with the seventy elders (Exodus 24:9–11).[8] There "they saw God" (Exodus 24:11) and the law was given (Exodus 24:12), just as Jesus promised his disciples who are pure in heart, "for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8), and then dispensed the law, beginning with the Ten Commandments. Noting the Sinai symbolism in the Sermon on the Mount's setting, Dan Lioy

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[7] Foerster, "*Oros*," vol. 5, p. 485 (emphasis added), where Foerster was overly influenced by Dalman in claiming ex cathedra that "to a Palestinian *anebē eis to oros* could hardly mean any more than that He went up into the mountains." This view disregards numerous biblical and extra-biblical Jewish texts that see mountains are more than just that.

[8] Ulrich Luz discusses the potential meaning of Jesus' various mountain ascents (for the SM as well as on other occasions) described by Matthew, noting the potential connection to Moses. He writes: "The mountain in Matthew is a place of prayer (14:23), of healings (15:29), of revelation (17:1; 28:16), and of teaching (24:3). It does not have a fixed meaning. But it is probable that the association with the ascent of Moses on Mount Sinai is connected with the phrase *anabainō eis to oros* (Exod. 19:3, 12; 24:15, 18; 34:1f., 4). The conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, 7:28f., again recalls these texts." *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis, 1989), 224. Dale Allison also notices the parallel; he writes: "Jesus 'goes up' on the mountain. The Greek is *anabē eis to oros*. Now in the LXX, *anabainō* + *eis to oros* occurs twenty-four times. Of these, a full eighteen belong to the Pentateuch, and most refer to Moses." *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, 1993), pp. 174–5.

observes that from the mountain, Jesus might have intended to offer "a parallel to the giving of the law on Sinai,"[9] especially as he gave his interpretations of three of the Ten Commandments, "you have heard it said of old . . . ," concerning murder, adultery, and the swearing of oaths. On another occasion that is mentioned in Luke 6:12, Jesus likewise went up "into the mountain (*eis to oros*)" to pray, and there he commissioned the twelve apostles before Jesus came down with them off the mountain to teach the masses. According to Richard Horsley and Jonathan Draper, this too was "reminiscent of Moses on Sinai."[10] As W.J. Dumbrell rightly states, while these "points of parallelism with Sinai are not to be overstressed," the import of these connections "clearly cannot be ignored."[11] These parallels suggest that the Sermon on the Mount was not positioned conceptually on any ordinary, mundane hill. For reasons such as these, many Christians from the earliest generations to modern times have viewed Moses as a foreshadowing type of Jesus.

Moses and Jesus on the Mount

Seeing Moses as a type of Christ in connection with the Sermon on the Mount receives additional support and expansion from other parallels between the lives of Jesus and Moses. Besides the point that the law of Moses and the Sermon on the Mount were both given on mountains, the settings for several other stories about Jesus recall sacred settings strongly associated with events in Israel's history. For example, Mark McVann notes that the sequence of scenes in Jesus' own ritualistic transformation in Luke 3–4 from a private man to a public figure appropriately taking place over forty days "in settings which recall adventures in Israel's experience where uncompromising loyalty to God is demanded" for forty years, namely in the desert, on a high mountain, and finally in the Temple (Luke 3:1–13).[12] Likewise, W.D. Davies finds "new exodus" symbolism in many of the events in the life of Jesus, ranging from his flight into Egypt as an infant (Matthew 2:14), to his ten miracles in Matthew 8–9 (which may echo the ten plagues that Moses set upon Pharaoh and the land of Egypt), to the radiant glorification of Jesus, complete with three tabernacles, on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–5), reminiscent of the face of Moses that shone after conversion with Yahweh (Exodus 34:29–30).[13]

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9 Dan Lioy, *The Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount* (New York, 2004), p. 90.

10 Richard A. Horsley and Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1999), p. 200.

11 W.J. Dumbrell, "The Logic and the Role of the Law in Matthew 5:1–20," *NovT* 23/1 (1981): 5, cited in Lioy, *Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 91.

12 Mark McVann, "Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke–Acts: The Case of Jesus the Prophet," in Jerome H. Neyrey (ed.), *The Social World of Luke–Acts* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991), pp. 346–7.

13 W.D. Davies, *Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 20.

These similarities served only to heighten the fact that both Jesus and Moses were viewed by early Christians as figures of unparalleled importance. Linking them in every way possible solidified that connection in their minds and enhanced the belief that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by the Lord through Moses, that "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). John Lierman's recent treatise *The New Testament Moses* discusses in considerable detail the cultural and religious importance of Moses to the people of Jesus' day and shows how the early Christians ascribed to Jesus numerous terms and titles that had been previously used primarily or saliently to describe Moses.[14] Known as a king,[15] priest,[16] lawgiver,[17] revealer,[18] and saliently the prophet of all prophets,[19] Moses was a uniquely important figure in Jewish consciousness, yet "ancient Judaism looked for deliverance in the form of a second Exodus. This included the expected repetition of the blessings of the Exodus, among the most prominent and significant of which was the provision of food."[20] Actions such as feeding the 5,000 in the wilderness echoed the miracle of the manna in the wilderness, thereby inviting a general recognition of Jesus as a new Moses.[21] Indeed, this view of Jesus as the new Moses was predominant among first-century Christians: "'The conception of Jesus as the new Moses . . . has left behind it manifold traces in the New Testament. Though indeed, in most contexts, its role is only minor, the conclusion is easily drawn that it is an old view, which at an earlier stage dominated the scene.'"[22] Indeed, Bernard Jackson has argued that when Jesus says in Matthew 5:17 that he has come to fulfill (or complete) "the law and the prophets" he was claiming to fulfill the law *of* the prophet in Deuteronomy 18:18, and thereby claimed "precisely the authority of a prophet-like-Moses."[23] Early Christians, such as Peter in Acts 3:20–24, used the many-nuanced idea of

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[14] John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of the Jewish Religion* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament Series 2, Tübingen, 2004).

[15] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 79.

[16] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 65.

[17] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 124.

[18] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 44.

[19] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 44.

[20] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 107 (citations omitted).

[21] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 107.

[22] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 261, n. 19, quoting Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (Göttingen, 1963), p. 404.

[23] Bernard S. Jackson, "The Prophet and the Law in Early Judaism and the New Testament," in Bernard S. Jackson, *Essays on* Halakhah *in the New Testament* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 20–21.

the prophet-like-Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18 as one of their principal scriptural evidences that Jesus was the messiah appointed for Israel.

Although there is no question that Jesus came to be viewed as a new Moses at least to some degree, the debate is still open over the degree to which (and by whom) Jesus was consciously understood as representing a new Moses. The question is particularly engaging with respect to the Gospel of Matthew. The idea that the Gospel of Matthew clearly makes unique reference to Moses and to the Exodus rests in part on B.W. Bacon's structural analysis linking the five discourses in Matthew to the five books of the Pentateuch.[24] Dale Allison argues that, of the four gospel writers, Matthew particularly presents Jesus as the new Moses, but suggests that in doing so, Matthew reflects an already-common perception since "it is unquestionable that early Christians regularly compared Jesus and Moses."[25] A common argument against viewing Jesus as a "new Moses" is the idea that Jesus' role was surely much greater than that of the prophet and lawgiver Moses.[26] This point, however, does not preclude a Matthean intent to draw parallels between these two great leaders. Allison imagines that Matthew "composed a book in which Moses, while remaining normative, becomes a symbol of someone greater, a promise awaiting fulfillment, a book in which the exodus becomes history anticipating eschatology."[27] Given Moses' role as the one who led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt and gave them a new life, the idea was easy to embrace that Moses foreshadowed Jesus, the one who delivers mankind from the bondage of sin and offers the new birth of eternal life.

All of this brings us back to the connection between the Sermon on the Mount and the mountain of the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai, for of all the events in Jesus' life that tend to recall specific events of the Exodus, the giving of the Sermon on the Mount has provided the most readily and widely recognized parallels. While New Testament scholars fall on all sides of the "new Moses" debate, few of them fail to notice the potential comparison between Moses on Sinai and Jesus on this Mount, and for good reason. Although Strecker insists that "the mountain motif . . . is not set up as a parallel to Sinai as the mountain of the old covenant and the law of Moses," he nevertheless concludes, "the teaching of Jesus on the mountain means: in his speech divine epiphany occurs."[28] Ulrich Luz similarly understands the parallel as demonstrating that "God, through Jesus,

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24 Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York, 1930).

25 Dale C. Allison Jr, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, 1993), p. 97.

26 See, for example, Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 14.

27 Allison, *New Moses*, p. 273. See also Lioy, *Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 91 (recognizing the debate over the "new Moses" idea and concluding that the parallel at least cannot be ignored).

28 Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 24–5.

will again speak in a fundamental way to Israel as at that time on Mt. Sinai."[29] Allison includes an extensive discussion of Matthew 5:1–2, writing of "an old Christian proclivity to associate the speaker of Matthew 5–7 with Moses and Sinai."[30] Jonathan Draper comments that the "location on a mountain surrounded by the waiting people suggests Moses, Mount Sinai and the giving of the Torah to Israel."[31] Davies concludes his thought about the mountain setting of Matthew 5–7 stating that "probably no simple geographic mountain is intended. The mountain is the mountain of the New Moses, the New Sinai."[32] K.C. Hanson, one of the early members of the Context Group of New Testament interpreters, similarly asserts, "Like Sinai, this mountain is the place where revelation will proceed from God to the community via a mediator."[33]

In short, when Matthew reports that Jesus "went up (*anebē*)" into the mountain, thereby conspicuously echoing the story of Moses on Sinai, the evangelist may well have intentionally presented a parallel that was already commonly recognized in the early Christian community. The text assumes as much. This parallel would have lent high significance and great solemnity to the reading of the great Sermon. Whether or not the Gospel of Matthew is, as Bacon suggests, structurally designed to echo the Pentateuch, and while one may wish to allow for the point that Jesus' role was greater than that of Moses, the giving of the Sermon on the Mount on the mountain offers one of the clearest verbal parallels between the two great figures, pregnant with sacred symbolism and connotation.

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[29] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 224.

[30] Allison, *New Moses*, pp. 172–3.

[31] Jonathan A. Draper, "The Genesis and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount," *JSNT* 75 (1999): 25–48, quote on p. 30, citing W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, "Reflections on the Sermon on the Mount," *SJT* 44 (1991): 297–8; J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis, 1990), pp. 77–8. Draper further hypothesizes that the SM was taught directly to four disciples, with the multitude as a secondary audience; and he notes a symbolic connection between this setting and the setting on Mount Sinai, where Moses was joined by four followers Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and Joshua (see Exodus 24:1, 13), pp. 30–31, thus drawing on "the Sinai symbolism to legitimate the teaching and to indicate its continuity with the Torah," p. 32.

[32] Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 17, acknowledges that "not all scholars accept this view, but it is not to be dismissed cavalierly." Some scholars suggest that there are ten beatitudes, echoing the Ten Commandments of the covenant at Sinai; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 109.

[33] K.C. Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain: Ritual Analysis and the Gospel of Matthew," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 160. "The Gospel of Matthew depends on this [Sinai/ Mountain] tradition when it has Jesus deliver his new Torah from a mountain." Robert L. Cohn, *The Shape of Sacred Space* (Chico, California, 1981), p. 61.

Indeed, Moses-Jesus parallels were remembered for several centuries, as can be seen in the artwork of early Christians. Significant among these remembered parallels were the images of law-giving on a mountain. Lierman explains:

> The Lawgiving element of Moses Christology persisted into the second century AD in the Christian comparison of the teaching activity of Jesus to the Mosaic Lawgiving. The view is not mentioned as such in the New Testament, but Christians in the second century certainly taught that Jesus had delivered a new Law, and early Christian sarcophagi feature the *traditio legis* motif, which depicts Jesus standing on a mountain (or being otherwise elevated) handing down the scroll of his heavenly "new Law" to Peter and Paul, who stand on either side. Extant remains of this kind go back to the fourth century AD.[34]

Most impressively, sixteen large, masterful frescoes to this same effect are on the walls in the Sistine Chapel (which are so completely overshadowed by Michaelangelo's awe-inspiring ceiling that they are usually ignored by tourists and are rarely discussed even by art historians). On the south half of the famous chapel, seven paintings depict events in the life of Moses; and on the north half of the chapel, seven frescoes show events from the ministry of Jesus in parallel.[35] Painted by such artists as Perugino, Botticelli, and Rosselli, these scenes counterpose, for example, the finding of Moses in the bulrushes with the nativity of Christ, the circumcision of Moses' son with John baptizing and preaching, and the last testament and death of Moses with the Last Supper and crucifixion of Jesus. Near the center of these long walls, the fourth fresco on the north side depicts Jesus giving the Sermon on the Mount and, in parallel on the south wall, Moses giving the Law on Sinai, both painted by Rosselli.[36] The superscriptions over these frescoes face each other and read, "Promulgatio Evangelicae Legis Per Christum" and "Promulgatio Evangelicae Legis Per Moisem."[37] Altogether, these two parallel rows show the durability of the Jesus-as-Moses typology down through the centuries and well into the time of the Renaissance. Carol Lewine sees in these two sets of frescoes a long "forgotten liturgical scheme" which recognizes a typological parallel between Moses and Jesus.[38]

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[34] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 276 (citations omitted).

[35] The two fresco cycles are no longer complete, as some of the frescoes have been covered by other works. In *The Sistine Chapel Walls and the Roman Liturgy*, Carol F. Lewine discusses these parallel frescoes in detail and includes black and white pictures of them (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1993).

[36] Shown as Plates IV and XI in Lewine, *The Sistine Chapel Walls and the Roman Liturgy*.

[37] Lewine, *Sistine Chapel Walls and the Roman Liturgy*, pp. 60–61.

[38] Lewine, *Sistine Chapel Walls and the Roman Liturgy*, p. 19. In the nineteenth-century murals high on the walls of the chapel of St. Germain des Près in Paris, ten Old Testament scenes are similarly set forth in parallel with ten New Testament scenes, including

Thus, the view that Jesus was a "new Moses" and the fulfiller of the Law of Moses, with Moses as a foreshadowing type of Jesus, was recognized in early Christianity and cannot be casually ignored. On several grounds, parallels connect the Christian experience in the Sermon on the Mount and the Israelite experience on Mount Sinai, and that connection invites a further consideration of the nature of Moses's experiences on Mount Sinai and especially the direct connections between those experiences and the Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, and the Temple of Herod.

The Temple and the Mount

No mere mountain, Mount Sinai was a sacred, temple-like space which served as a natural temple during the events of Exodus 19 and 24. Indeed, in Israelite thought, "'sanctuary' and 'mountain' became conceptually identical,"[39] providing a temple framework and rarified mountain setting for Jesus' Sermon.

The ceremonial activities as the Israelites prepared to enter the holy mountain on the third day synchronize fully with rituals of preparation associated with the Temple. Moses, under God's direction, told the people to wash themselves and their garments in preparation to going to the mountain (Exodus 19:10, 14),[40] as one would do before entering the Temple. During the three days of preparation at the base of Sinai, the people also abstained from sexual relations (Exodus 19:15), another common prerequisite for entrance to ancient temples.[41] The purpose of these purifications was to prepare the people to enter into the presence of the Lord, an admittance normally reserved for those entering the holiest parts of temples. As would occur ritually at the Temple of Jerusalem, "the voice of the trumpet sounded long" (Exodus 19:19) to announce the coming of the Lord upon the top of the mountain. "The God who has the mountain as a dwelling place 'meets' people there: 'the God of the Hebrews has met with us.'"[42] The meeting between the people and

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Balaam's blessing of the Hebrew people paralleling the adoration of the Magi, the crossing of the Red Sea paralleling the baptism of Jesus, and Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine paralleling Jesus's institution of the eucharist; but apparently the parallel between the Sermon on the Mount and giving the law on Mount Sinai had become less recognized then.

[39] S. Talmon, "*Har*," in *TDOT*, vol. 4, p. 444.

[40] Lierman notes that other sources besides Exodus (such as Pseudo-Philo) mention this preparatory sanctification, in *New Testament Moses*, p. 68.

[41] Susan Guettel Cole, "Temples and Sanctuaries: Greco-Roman," *ABD*, vol. 6, p. 381, states, "Inscriptions at the entrance to sanctuaries often prohibited from entry those who had recently participated in a funeral, assisted at a childbirth, or engaged in recent sexual intercourse."

[42] Thijs Booij, "Mountain and Theophany in the Sinai Narative," *Bib* 65 (1984): 1–26, 11.

God on Sinai involved fire, thunder, cloud, and smoke; from the presence of these elements, Thijs Booij has concluded that "the mountain-of-God tradition was united with a very specific theophany conception," whose manifestations were only seen in sacred spaces such as the tabernacle or Temple.[43]

Down below at the base of Sinai, Moses set up a boundary to delineate between the assemblage of Israel at the foot of the holy mountain and the holy upper region where God would personally instruct Moses (Exodus 19:12, 24). Crossing this boundary without permission would cause the people to perish or die (Exodus 19:21). This type of boundary is typical of a temple-setting, for as Jon D. Levenson explains, "between the Temple and ordinary reality lies a barrier of *holiness*, a palpable energy or force which resists the intermingling of the two modes of reality. The sanctuary itself . . . is a place that guards the perfection of the divine presence."[44] Likewise, protecting the Temple of Herod from improper entrance in Jesus' day were prominent signs chiseled in stone, warning that "no man of another nation is to enter within the barrier and enclosure around the temple. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which follows."[45]

In this natural temple on Mount Sinai, Moses and seventy of the elders presented themselves before God. Accordingly, in temple-psalms, "the expression 'to behold the face of God' is rendered in the Septuagint as 'to appear before God' (Pss 16 [17]:15; 62 [63]:3; etc.)," as Othmar Keel notes in his visually compelling volume.[46] In the sacred space high on Mount Sinai, Moses and seventy of the elders "saw God" (Exodus 24:11). Thus, rabbinic literature asserts that "in his ascent of Mt. Sinai Moses *entered into heaven* for an audience before God."[47] There he not only received the law giving Israel its identity as a holy, or "sacral," state,[48] but he also experienced great visions in which "God told Moses 'many wondrous things, and showed him the secrets of the times and declared to him the end of the times.'"[49] In a corresponding way, Jesus took his disciples with him up into the mount and prepared them to "see God" (Matthew 5:8) and stand in the presence of the Lord (Matthew 7:23).

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43 Booij, "Mountain and Theophany," 14.

44 Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, 1985), p. 127.

45 Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3rd edn, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2003), p. 562, illustration on p. 564.

46 Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett from the first, 1972, German edition (London, 1978), p. 176.

47 Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 148 (emphasis added); see also p. 94.

48 Levenson argues that because of the "essential identity conferred at Sinai" at the giving of the law to the prophet Moses, Israel became a "kingdom of priests." Thus, the law was viewed as sacred and holy and pertaining to something higher than a mere political state. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, pp. 74–5.

49 Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 43, quoting 4 Ezra 14:5.

Deification on the Mount

In addition, there is even the image of Moses having become an angelic or deified being on the holy mount. Lierman mentions various texts which point to Moses being raised to an "angelic" status on Mount Sinai.[50] For example, in the allegory of *1 Enoch* 89:36, "the sheep (Moses) who leads the other sheep (Israel) is transformed into a man at the point in the allegory corresponding to the Sinai revelation. Fletcher-Louis argues, 'In this apocalyptic allegory . . . angels are anthropomorphic and humans zoomorphic. Moses' transformation is thus an angelization.'"[51] Fletcher-Louis likewise points to a Qumran fragment which "in the midst of a description of the mediation of the Law at Mount Sinai, describes Moses the man of God . . . speaking as an angel from his mouth."[52] Thus on Mount Sinai, as many texts agree, Moses became, in some sense, an angel, not unlike the beings that inhabit the inner rooms of sacred temples.

Angelic status drew with it a clear sense of eventual exaltation and apotheosis. This effect is portrayed in Jewish literature from the Second Temple period, particularly in the *Exogage* by Ezekiel the Tragedian, as Lierman describes:

> In one scene (lines 68–89), Moses dreams of a great throne on the peak of Mt. Sinai (68). On it Moses sees a "man" with a crown and a scepter (70–71). On Moses' approach, the man hands over to Moses the crown, scepter, and throne, and then withdraws (74–76). From the throne Moses beholds the entire world, and a host of stars does obeisance to him (90–91). The undoubted highlight of the passage is clearly the moment when the figure on the throne gives his place entirely over to Moses. The pointed royal symbolism may be taken to establish that Moses is depicted as a surrogate ruler for God, a divine king. But how divine is the divine king? Is it Ezekiel's intent not merely to portray Moses as (even a very grand) king but as a god? (91)

This passage suggests a concurrent coronation and glorification of the prophet Moses on Sinai.[53] Even considering the later monotheism of Judaism, Lierman argues, "among Jews it was acceptable to speak of men as 'gods,' or 'angels,' which amounts to the same thing."[54] Moses' beatific elevation corresponds with his ascent of Mt Sinai, when he "approached God."[55] Moses' shining face was associated in some traditions with God's "crown of light," which furthers this

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[50] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 244.

[51] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 244.

[52] Cited in Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, pp. 244–5.

[53] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 232. In a later chapter, Lierman cites additional sources besides the *Exagoge* which appear to refer to the deification of Moses, including Ecclus. 45:2 and Qumran fragments.

[54] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 246.

[55] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 94.

understanding of the Sinai theophany.[56] In support of this analysis, Lierman enlists the further insights of Wayne Meeks:

> Meeks identifies the "coronation on Sinai" motif in *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, which interprets the expression "Moses, the man of God" in Deut. 33:1 as, "A man when he ascended on high; a god when he descended below." Meeks interprets, "Thus it was in heaven that Moses was made 'god' (and therefore king), which meant that Moses . . . was crowned . . . as the heavenly King's earthly vice-regent." Despite Meeks' placement of the word "god" in scare quotes, and his insistence that Moses remained "earthly," he immediately goes on to interpret the passage in *Pesiqta* as implying that Moses "became imbued in some sense with God's fiery substance," etc. or, in other words, became divinized. Meeks himself calls attention to *Midr. Pss.* 90.1: "When a mortal goes up to the Holy One, blessed by He, who is pure fire, and whose ministers are fire—and Moses did go up to Him—he is a man. But after he comes down, he is called God." *Deuteronomy Rab.* 11.4 . . . seems in touch with a similar tradition when it says, "When he went up to heaven he was a man. And in which respect was he a man? Compared with the angels who are made entirely of fire. But when he came down from heaven he was as God."[57]

Along these lines, Dale Allison also discusses the tradition that Moses was enthroned and deified on Mount Sinai, likewise citing Ezekiel's *Exagoge*, rabbinic tradition, and other ancient sources referring to Moses becoming a god on Sinai.[58] Most interestingly for our interpretation of the words and events relative to the Sermon on the Mount, Allison's discussion of this theme arises specifically as he aims to demonstrate the existence of a tradition that Moses "sat" on the mountain, much as Jesus sits on the mount to deliver his sermon (Matthew 5:1). Allison hastens to assert that he is not "proposing that Matt. 5:1–2 be directly related to the traditions of Moses' *enthronement* on Sinai,"[59] for Allison's intent is simply to show that Matthew may have been recalling a Moses tradition when he wrote of Jesus sitting on the mount. However, Allison's discussion of this Moses theme directly in the context of the Sermon on the Mount is fascinating, for he notes that "it may be worth recalling that some commentators have dimly sensed a royal motif in Matt. 5:1–2."[60] When Jesus sat, was he symbolically taking his place on his throne in a sacred, heavenly setting? Especially in conjunction with the metamorphosis of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration it may be understood that,

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[56] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 96.

[57] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 96, citing Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 14, ed. W.C. van Unnik and others, Leiden, 1967), p. 195.

[58] Allison, *New Moses*, pp. 175–9.

[59] Allison, *New Moses*, p. 179.

[60] Allison, *New Moses*, p. 179.

through these traditions of Sinai, Matthew wants his readers to understand that Jesus too, when he descended from the heavenly mount, was likewise to be seen as a god and as God's holy representative who came down "having authority (*exousian*)" and not speaking as the Scribes (Matthew 7:29).

The Cosmic Mountain

The concept of divine regulation of the world from a mountain venue was universal enough that alert participants or later hearers would probably have been struck by the cosmic importance of the words handed down in the Sermon on the Mount. People all over the ancient world readily connected the idea of the gods dwelling in local temples with the idea that each god resided on the top of his or her favorite mountain.[61] Most ancient cultures considered their mountain-like temples to be nearby houses or palaces for their gods, and the ancients commonly recognized mountains as cosmic dwelling places of gods. For example, various Ugaritic texts feature gods as inhabitants of mountains.[62] Baal, the Canaanite god, lived on a mountain, as did El, whose name was later applied as one of many names for the God of Israel. El "presides over the council of the gods" on his mountain.[63] Keel describes statues which represent a "mountain god."[64] These statues are "identified by the scale-pattern on his robe and cap,"[65] and also include depictions of trees and streams in paradise, "thought to be located on a mountain."[66] Similar things can be said of Zeus on Mount Olympus in northern Greece or on Mount Ida south of Troy.

These ancient cultures likewise recognized these mountains (or their temple surrogates) as sacred places where humans could meet the gods. Egyptian pyramids and Mesopotamian temples and other sacred edifices were either built on mountains or otherwise incorporated the idea of mountains into their architecture.[67] The temples which rested atop these holy mountains were "the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain."[68] That sacred place was thought to be

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61 For a bibliography concerning temples as mountains, see Donald W. Parry, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch, *A Bibliography on Temples of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World* (Lewiston, New York, 1991), pp. 120–24.

62 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 112.

63 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 112.

64 Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, pp. 116–18.

65 Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 116.

66 Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 118.

67 Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 113.

68 John M. Lundquist, "What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," in H.B. Huffmon and others (eds), *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1983), p. 207; Donald W. Parry, "Sinai as Sanctuary and Mountain of God," in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (eds), *By Study and*

protected from all evil enemies, who were powerless against that spiritual fortress, and life was said to flow forth from it in fertilizing streams.[69] In this image of the idealized temple, things in heaven (where God sat upon his throne surrounded by his celestial council) and things on earth (his footstool) came together for the ancient mind. It was a place set apart, and there the divine presence related to the world of man—ordering and stabilizing that world and acting upon it through natural and spiritual forces. At that point, the earth touched the divine sphere, just as mountain peaks reach the sky.[70]

The concept of "cosmic mountain" permeated these and other ancient cultures, lending potential sacred significance to all mountain settings. Viewed as the center or navel of the universe, as the highest place in the world, the point of the creation, and the only peak not covered by the great deluge, the idea of "cosmic mountain" was attached to mountains and temples of various cultures including the Babylonians, Canaanites, Tibetans, Buddhists, Finns, Japanese, Indians and others.[71] In *1 Enoch* 13:7–8 and *Testament of Levi* 2:5–6, Mount Hermon is the high mountain that becomes "the gates of Heaven. . . . It is used here as the site of a special revelation of God."[72] Besides ascending natural mountains to commune with God, individuals and communities built structures which symbolically reached toward the heavens. Altars and towers, like the mountains they represented, gave the people who used them pious "hopes of establishing contact with heaven."[73]

And thus it was on the cosmic mountain that God communicated in various ways back with humans. As Theodore Mullen has shown with respect to Ugaritic and early Israelite literature, "The god 'El controls rulership over the cosmogonic deities through his decree, which comes either from his mountain . . . or from his ten-shrine located at the sources of the rivers."[74] From his mountain, the god issued imperatives, instructions, and judgments.[75] Levenson concurs: "The base of the mountain lies in the chaotic underworld, and its head reaches into the heavens.

Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley (Salt Lake City, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 482–500. See also Carol Myers, "Temple, Jerusalem," in *ABD*, vol. 6, p. 360.

[69] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 131 (discussing the holy or "sacramental" nature of "the cosmic stream which issues from that mountain and sheds its fertilizing waters upon the face of the whole earth"); R.E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 10, 107.

[70] Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 7–8.

[71] Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York, 1961), pp. 42–3; Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1974), pp. 5–16; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, pp. 113–8.

[72] E. Theodore Mullen Jr, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, California, 1980), p. 158.

[73] Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Provo, Utah, 1987), p. 360.

[74] Mullen, *Divine Council*, p. 140.

[75] Mullen, *Divine Council*, pp. 132, 144, 146.

On it, messages can be passed from heaven to earth and *vice versa*. It is the prime place of communication between transcendent and mundane reality."[76] The cosmic mountain is thus identified as "the battleground of conflicting natural forces," "the meeting place of heaven and earth," and "the place where effective decrees are issued."[77] These functions were domesticated and brought into the mountain-like temples of Sumeria as early as two millennia BCE with the restoration in Nippur of the Ekur, the massive temple that embodied the mountain of divine judgment, that brought dread into the hearts of the wicked but held forth the tablet of life to the innocent.[78]

This mountain and temple typology was not limited to certain cultures but was widespread, spilling over into ancient Israel. Israelite religious history is replete with instances of God meeting men on mountains. Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah and his obedience was rewarded by a visit from an angel on the mountain (Genesis 22). No mundane mountain, Mount Moriah was equated with the temple mount, as the sacred sanctuary was said to have been built on the exact spot that Abraham saw the angel.[79] On this holy mountain as on others, "the theophany authenticates the sanctuary."[80] Other mountains, though of less enduring significance, were also places of divine contact. Elijah ascended Mount Carmel to call upon God and was rewarded with much-needed rain (1 Kings 18:42); then later on another mount, Mount Horeb, the same prophet heard the still small voice of God (1 Kings 19:8–12). Moses experienced the divine not only on Mount Sinai, but also on Mount Nebo as God showed him the promised land which he would not live to see Israel obtain (Deuteronomy 34:1–4). Various rabbinic sources, interpreting Deuteronomy 3:27, suggest that Moses saw "the whole world and the secrets of all ages" as a part of this mountain vision.[81] The Samaritans worshiped on a mountain (John 4:20) called Mount Gerizim, significant in that it was the mountain designated by Moses to receive a declaration of blessings (Deuteronomy 11:29; 27:12). Mount Gerizim was likewise believed to be "a connection between heaven and earth."[82] Mount Tabor was recognized as a place of worship where the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar were directed to offer sacrifices (Deuteronomy 33:18–19).[83] In Jerusalem, "many of [the Canaanite] traditions came to be associated with the mountain of Yahweh, Mount Zion, the ancient fortified hill between the Kidron and Tyropoeon Valleys. It was on this

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[76] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 122.

[77] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, pp. 111–12 (quoting Clifford).

[78] Samuel N. Kramer, "The Temple in Sumerian Literature," in Michael V. Fox (ed.), *Temple in Society* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1988), pp. 9–11.

[79] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, pp. 94–5.

[80] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 95.

[81] Birger Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son: An Analysis of Early Christian Midrash* (New Testament Series 2:1, Sweden, 1966), pp. 62–3.

[82] "Gerizim, Mount," in *ABD*, vol. 2, p. 993.

[83] "Tabor, Mount," in *ABD*, vol. 6, pp. 304–5.

mount that Yahweh dwelt. Life-giving streams flowed forth from its base."[84] Solomon's Temple was dedicated, above all else, as the place where people could pray to God and where he would have respect for their supplications for rain, food and victory and where he would forgive them of their sins against God and their trespasses against their neighbors (1 Kings 8:28–50). Another mountain, Mount Hermon, is mentioned in various psalms (Psalms 42:6, 89:12, 133:3) as another place of divine contact.

The Mountain of the Lord in Jerusalem

Nowhere was this mountain imagery closer to home than in Israel. In early eras, many neighboring mountains and several regional temples were recognized as points of contact between heaven and earth in Israel, and so, by delivering the Sermon on the Mount and later experiencing the Transfiguration on outlying mountains, Jesus reclaimed the older tradition of multiple mountain venues for divine revelation and intervention. But as political and priestly pressures played out in the kingdom of Judah, some sought to focus the worship of Jehovah exclusively on the temple mount in Jerusalem, and that place became known pre-eminently as the Mountain of the Lord. Most notably, Josiah's condemnation of "high places" in the late seventh century BCE was an attempt to ban the ritual use of all other mountain locations (2 Kings 23). In Jerusalem, Josiah's reforms effected "changes at the very heart of the temple,"[85] leading Judah into its Second Temple period following the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 587–86 BCE. Whether Josiah's actions are viewed positively, as "pav[ing] the way for the reunification of the people,"[86] or negatively, as a loss of the true "faith of the first temple,"[87] one clear effect of these actions was that one mountain, which came to be recognized exclusively as the Mountain of the Lord, became pre-eminent among Jews in Jesus' day.

Just as God had spoken to Moses from Mount Sinai, he continued to speak and act in Israel from his temple-palace on his chosen mount in Jerusalem, the holy mount, the mount of God's revelation, "the mountain of the Lord" (Psalms 24:1). Thus Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1 refer to the Temple as "the mountain of the Lord's house." In Israel the Temple itself became synonymous with God's mountain. Indeed, in its construction on a prominent hill, the Temple "resembled a mountain, for

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[84] Mullen, *Divine Council*, p. 154.

[85] Margaret Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?," in John W. Welch, David R. Seely, and Joann Seely (eds), *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* (Provo, Utah, 2004), p. 526.

[86] Marvin A. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel* (New York, 2001), p. 176.

[87] Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?" p. 537.

'the mountain itself was originally such a place of contact between this and the upper world.'"[88]

The traditions surrounding Sinai, the mountain on which Israel had received its identity, had "not so much been forgotten as absorbed" by the temple mount in Jerusalem.[89] As Levenson observes, "The assumption by Zion of the themes of Sinai was so thoroughgoing that even the location of the latter came to be forgotten. Zion became *the* mountain of Israel."[90] Mount Zion in Jerusalem became the most important mountain in the world for the Jews and was viewed as the center of the world, the starting point of the creation.[91] Though a relatively low and undistinguished mound, it was nonetheless called, in the Bible, the world's tallest mountain, because God dwelt there.[92] Lending deep significance to the temple mount was a famous rock, considered to be a capstone of the earth's creation:[93]

> The hill Zion is identified with the primeval hill, paradise, the cosmic mountain and mountain of the gods. But this identification depends less on Zion's relative merits as a mountain than on its *Holy Rock*. The rock, with its solidity and strength, constitutes the antipole to the bottomless, slimy, sluggish floods of Chaos, which threaten the ends of the earth (Pss 18:2–5; 61:2; Isa 28:15–16; Mt 16:18).[94]

Endowing his holy house on the mountain with his "'name'—i.e., his essence, his nature, his signature,"[95] the God of Israel there, as on the mountain, engaged in divine communication with man. In a vision, Isaiah experiences this communication and sees God enthroned in the Temple. Levenson notes, "The relevant point about this justly famous passage is that it occurs in the Temple, in other words, on the cosmic mountain, Zion."[96] He concludes, "[Isaiah's] vision is not different in essence from what was held to take place at the Temple all along—the enthronement and glorification of YHWH in his cosmic abode, the pilgrimage of his worshipers, and his instruction of them in his sacred law, which transforms and elevates them."[97] In many details such as these, Jesus' vision of righteousness projected through the Sermon on the Mount is not unrelated to these holy mountain templates, whether in the tradition of the law or of the prophets.

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88 Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 360 n. 28, citing Contenau, *Le Deluge babylonien*, p. 246.

89 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 91.

90 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 187.

91 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 118.

92 Clements, *God and Temple*, p. 106, n. 3.

93 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 133.

94 Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 118 (internal cross-reference omitted).

95 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 125.

96 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 122.

97 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 126.

Discussions of Moses typology generally overlook temple symbolism, perhaps because Moses himself predated the Temple. Typical Moses typology is based on going to Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, being tried in the wilderness for forty years and giving the law. However, although there is no actual temple edifice at Sinai, many elements of temple ideology are clearly present in the narratives of the Pentateuch. For example, the physical symbols of the archetypical temple find striking parallels to their antecedents on Mount Sinai. The Lord revealed himself amidst fire and smoke to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18) and similarly to Isaiah in a vision set in the Temple (Isaiah 6). Fire and smoke were common temple images, since the burning of sacrifices occupied a significant portion of the Israelite temple experience. The Temple's menorah, a candlestick in the form of a stylized tree, is reminiscent of God appearing to Moses in a burning bush on a mountain (Exodus 3:2). Although this particular event occurred on Horeb rather than Sinai, Levenson observes a linguistic connection between the bush (*sĕnê*) and Sinai (*Sînay*), and a "popular association" of them, even noting the Israelite belief that "the emblem of the Sinai deity was a tree of some sort."[98] Trumpets are also present in both locations, heralding the coming of the Lord to Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:13, 16, 19) and in recognition of him at the Temple (see Leviticus 25:9; Numbers 10:8; Hosea 8:1; Joel 2:1).

The holy experiences of Mount Sinai and of the tabernacle/temple also parallel each other in significant ways. In each location, the humble servant of the Lord was able to receive instruction, make covenants, and obtain greater knowledge of God. There, both on the mountain and later in the Temple, decrees were issued to Israel through a prophet-priest. In both locations, covenants, vows and oaths were made or renewed. The identity-conferring covenant inaugurated on Sinai was perpetuated through the Temple. Just as Moses appeared before God and saw Him on Sinai, so the Psalms of the Temple recognized this type of theophany; as Alan Kerr explains, "The expression 'before the Lord' signifying the presence of the Lord, indicates a temple site."[99] In short, the Temple and the mount shared the experiences of seeing God, defining the relationship existing between the deity and mankind.

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[98] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 20. Lierman recognizes this connection between Sinai and the burning bush on Horeb and then states: "In the encounter of Moses and the burning bush, two of YHWH's emblems—tree and fire—clash, and neither overpowers the other. The two will appear again in tandem in the *mĕnōrâ*, the Tabernacle candelabrum which is actually a stylized tree . . . . This arborescent lampstand appears not only in the Tabernacle which served as Israel's central sanctuary in the period of wandering in the wilderness, but also in the Temple that was to be built by Solomon in the early monarchical era (1 Kgs 7:49). The Temple at Jerusalem was lit by the fires of the burning tree." pp. 20–21.

[99] Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: A Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supp. 220, New York, 2002), p. 35, n. 2, citing Lundquist, "What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," p. 207.

Indeed, the very nature of the mountain setting of the Sinai theophany parallels the Mountain of God tradition of the Temple situated on Mount Zion. Both Mount Sinai and the Temple bring to mind the tradition of the cosmic mountain,[100] and each location signifies a point of contact and even overlap between heaven and earth, a place where "spatial dimensions are transcended,"[101] because God dwells there in a holy space which belongs simultaneously to heaven and earth. God's presence both on the mountain and in the Temple was carefully guarded against the introduction of impurity. Thus the concepts of cleansing and sanctification before approaching God, of a holy barrier separating the world from the sacred interior, and of a physical and spiritual ascent in order to reach the divine Presence are common to both spaces.

Furthermore, Mount Sinai and the Temple are integrally linked because it was on Sinai that Moses received instructions for the building of the tabernacle, or portable temple. The prophet directed the building of the tabernacle "on the basis of a glimpse of the 'blueprint' or 'model' of the heavenly shrine which he was privileged to behold upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:9, 40)."[102] Upon completion of the tabernacle's construction, the sacred edifice took the place of Mount Sinai as the designated location for communication between God and his prophet Moses. "'Desisting from further ascents of Sinai, he now entered the tabernacle and there received responses on all that he besought from God' (*Ant.* 3.212)."[103] In short, the special role of Moses as a prophet and priest among the people of Israel began on Sinai and then continued in the tabernacle,[104] showing that the mountain served as a substitute temple when no sacred edifice was available. These elements likewise provided durable precedents that coalesce with Jesus' use of mountain and temple themes at the outset of his dispensation of salvation.

The tabernacle itself was the conveyance of the "temple" of Sinai to the temple mount in Jerusalem. The tabernacle first replaced Mount Sinai, and later the Temple replaced the temporary tabernacle. The connection between these sacred places was not soon forgotten, for "the Sinaitic experience was re-enacted in the Temple in Jerusalem, which was not built until hundreds of years later."[105] In the Jewish consciousness, therefore, the significance of the Sinai experience, complete with God's giving of the Ten Commandments, cannot be overstated. To an Israelite

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[100] Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19–24* (Atlanta, 1989) pp. 13, 19.

[101] Dozeman, *God on the Mountain*, pp. 33–4.

[102] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 140.

[103] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 75 (quoting Josephus).

[104] "While he lived, it was Moses who in the tabernacle (Exod. 25:22; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.212, 222) received the continuation of the Sinai oracles through an access to the divine presence that even exceeded the priestly privilege of Aaron and his successors (Lev. 16:2)." Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 66 (citation omitted).

[105] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 17.

mind, that mountain in the wilderness and the Temple of Jerusalem would have been inherently linked.

The Temple, positioned on the "mountain of the Lord" in Jerusalem, thus served as a "meeting place" between heaven and earth. It was viewed as "an institution common to the heavenly and the terrestrial realms; they share it."[106] To ascend the holy temple mount was, therefore, to enter into a different and holier reality: "The ascent into the Temple and participation in the liturgy that took place there were thought to endow the worshiper with a higher self."[107] Because of the sacred Presence in the Temple, the edifice was to be carefully guarded against impurity, reminiscent of the boundary set around Sinai. For this reason Psalm 24 asks, "Who shall ascend into the hill (*anabēsetai eis to oros*) of the Lord?" and responds with a list of requirements including both purity and cleanliness.

Temple and Covenant

At the Temple, people needed to present themselves in a holy state because the mountain and by extension the temple mount were places of covenant making and covenant renewal in the biblical tradition. On Mount Sinai God met with man to create the sacred covenant which was central to Israel's identity. On Sinai, God defined his relationship with his people Israel as covenantal,[108] for which reason that mountain was viewed as "*the* place of Torah and covenant."[109] As a result of the covenant made on Sinai, "the format of covenant served as the controlling metaphor for Israel's relationship to God through most of biblical history. . . . The literary legacy of ancient Israel is incomprehensible apart from covenant theology."[110] Such covenant theology is inextricably linked to the mountain and then, by extension, to the Temple, for "as important as the ideas of cosmic center and divine accessibility are for understanding the role of the Temple, so too is the association of sanctuary with covenant."[111] John Lundquist goes so far as to incorporate the concept of the ancient temple directly into his definition of *covenant* as "a formal, ritually enacted ceremony mediated by a prophet or king *in* (more exactly 'in front of,' or 'on,' in the case of a mountain) *the temple*, a ceremony in which the community is founded through the people's . . . acceptance of the revealed law."[112]

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[106] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 123.

[107] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 175; see also p. 142.

[108] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, pp. 26, 35.

[109] Booij, "Mountain and Theophany," p. 17.

[110] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 36.

[111] Meyers, "Temple, Jerusalem," 360.

[112] John M. Lundquist, "Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament," reprinted in Donald W. Parry (ed.), *Temples of the Ancient World* (Salt Lake City, 1994), p. 275 (emphasis added).

For this reason, in the Temple rested the ark of the covenant, containing the two tablets of stone (the "covenant document") on which were written the covenant and which symbolized God's presence in the Holy of Holies.[113] Delbert Hillers describes this holy temple furnishing as "the point at which the heavenly sphere touched the earthly."[114] From Mount Sinai to the tabernacle, and then finally to the Temple, the covenant was at the center of Israel's most sacred spaces, making such spaces "the focus of Israel's religious life."[115] Thus, the Temple in Israel was a shrine of the covenant, the home of the ark of the covenant, and the place where the covenant was renewed and perpetuated. There the priest acted as a mediator between God and his covenant people Israel, offering the sacrifices of Israel up to God and instructing the people in God's name.[116]

The tables of the Ten Commandments served "as a formulation of conditions for membership in the community."[117] The Sinai covenant was frequently renewed, as scholars have become increasingly aware. As Hebrew University's Moshe Weinfeld correctly notes, "In the last fifty years the view has become increasingly accepted that the event at which God pronounced his words at Sinai was not regarded as a once and for all event but as an occurrence that repeated itself whenever the people of Israel assembled and swore allegiance to their God."[118] Certain rites and ceremonies of the Temple involved, above all, covenant commemoration and renewal;[119] in this connection, "in Second Temple times, the Decalogue was read daily in the Temple, together with the *Shema*ᶜ prayer, close to the time of the offering of the Daily Offering. . . . Josephus testifies in regard to the Decalogue: 'These words it is not permitted us to state explicitly, to the letter' (*Ant.* 3:90), . . . because of their sanctity."[120]

Seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a text grounded in such an ethic of obedience has not always been popular, but its mountain setting and its explicit inclusion of three of the Ten Commandments make its genre presumptively covenantal, and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount support the idea that its provisions were given by way of commandment and accepted through the formation of a covenant. Just as the commands and laws promulgated in the making of the covenant at Sinai

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[113] Meyers, "Temple, Jerusalem," 360.

[114] Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, 1969), p. 74.

[115] Hillers, *Covenant*, p. 74.

[116] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 126.

[117] Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in Edwin R. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (eds), *Religion and Law: Biblical Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1990), p. 15.

[118] Weinfeld, "Decalogue," pp. 26–7.

[119] See Joshua Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (Northvale, New Jersey, 1995), pp. 126–45.

[120] Weinfeld, "Decalogue," p. 34.

formed the basis of the Old Testament, the commandments and teachings of the Sermon on the Mount form the basis of the new covenant (or new "testament," *diathēkē*). Scholars have long debated the basic character of the injunctions of the Sermon: Do they form a new public order, a set of ideals, a set of commands, a law of the future kingdom, an existential claim of God on the individual, or general conditions of discipleship?[121] Seeing the Sermon on the Mount essentially as a set of commandments issued in connection with the making of a new covenant is not the normal approach taken by most interpreters, though this view has been proposed by some ruthlessly candid commentators.[122] Interestingly, this view has the support of the early Christian Didache 1:5, 4:13, and 13:7. For example, this so-called Teaching of the Twelve Apostles tells early members of the church to follow Jesus' instructions to give generously (compare Matthew 5:41–2) and thereby not to "abandon the *commandments* of the Lord"; it promises that "blessed is the man who gives according to the *commandment*, for he is without blame" (Didache 1:5; emphasis added).

It remains unpopular, though, to see Jesus' words here as commandments figuring prominently in his message of righteousness. This is especially the case among many Protestant scholars who see salvation by grace as primary, if not exclusive. Thus Martin Luther relegated the epistle of James (which declares that "faith without *works* is dead," James 2:26; emphasis added) to the straw pile[123] and called the Sermon on the Mount "the devil's masterpiece"[124] because in his opinion "the devil so masterfully distorts and perverts (*verdrehet und verkeret*) Christ's true meaning through his Apostle [Matthew] especially in the fifth chapter."[125] To this, Hans Windisch answers, "Let us be honest; let us free ourselves once and for all from that idealistic and Paulinizing exegesis! We must admit that the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount is every bit as much an obedience-ethic as is the ethic of the Old Testament."[126]

Not only is the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount an obedience-ethic, this text belongs every bit as much to the mediation by Jesus of a sacred covenant relationship between God and his people as to the covenant mediated by Moses between Jehovah and the children of Israel. Davies refers to the law given by Jesus

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[121] B. Friesen, "Approaches to the Interpretation and Application of the Sermon on the Mount," *Direction* 10 (1981): 19–25; Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 1–12.

[122] Hans Windisch, *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt* (Leipzig, 1929), discussed in Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 2. See Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 187; and Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 208.

[123] Martin Luther called the Epistle of James "ein rechte stroern Epistel" (a right strawy epistle) because it has "no Gospel quality to it." *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar, 1906), vol. 6, p. 10.

[124] "Das heißt ein Meister Stuck des Teuffels." *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 32, p. 300.

[125] *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 32, p. 300.

[126] As paraphrased by Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 2.

in the Sermon on the Mount as "the Messianic Torah,"[127] and Lierman asserts that "the wonder-struck marveling of the people [to Jesus' giving of this law] is best explained as a reaction to Jesus' display of Moses-like authority."[128] The law-making authority of Moses on Sinai was a part of the covenant formed there, and thus Jesus' demonstration of unprecedented authority in interpreting and making law signifies that his commandments fall within a new covenant.

Furthermore, just as the Sinaitic covenant was renewed by ceremonies designed to remind Israel of the Sinai experience, so it becomes increasingly evident that the Sermon on the Mount and its regeneration of the Decalogue would not have been regarded by early Christians merely as an ordinary historical event but as a new dispensation of God's commandments from a new mount. Such words are to be remembered, rehearsed, and perpetuated. Much as the Decalogue was repeated daily in the Temple of Jerusalem, the Sermon on the Mount may well have been rehearsed on many occasions by early Christians. Indeed, as Richard Horsley has argued, the use of the presumed New Testament source Q 6:20–49 as an oral "covenant renewal discourse" probably began very early in Christian communities.[129] In this light, it would have been completely natural for Matthean Christians likewise to rehearse the entire Sermon on the Mount in their congregations, synagogues, or sanctuaries, especially as part of initiation rituals such as baptism, or in connection with renewal ceremonies such as the Eucharist, more than has been usually even entertained as a possibility.

Alternative Holy Mounts

All of this raises the possibility that the Sermon on the Mount should be seen as being deeply rooted in the foundational Israelite tradition of the mountain of the Lord. Exploring and testing this hypothesis will be the burden of the remainder of this book. But at the outset, this theory brings with it a number of inviting prospects that draw upon cosmic mountain imagery in general, seeing connections between Moses and Jesus as lawgivers, transporting the imagery of Sinai, the tabernacle and the Temple, as the Sermon on the Mount functions in the process of covenant making and community formation.

The way for seeing these holy mountain traditions as the setting for the Sermon on the Mount is certainly feasible, for these traditions were too deeply rooted in essential Israelite perceptions to be suppressed or restricted successfully.[130] Margaret Barker argues that, even after the reforms of Josiah and down through Second Temple times, large numbers of people continued to worship according to

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[127] Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 27.

[128] Lierman, *New Testament Moses*, p. 275.

[129] Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, pp. 195–227.

[130] For descriptions of King Josiah's reform and two very different viewpoints on its merits, see Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, and Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?"

their old customs in new places, leaving records in which they declared their belief that the older faith and its vital implements in the First Temple would one day be restored.[131] Josiah's reforms may even have had the unintended effect of elevating all mountain imagery by exalting one mountain above the others, as a rising tide raises all ships.

This mountain ideology was still potent in first century Palestine during the New Testament formative era. In the surrounding culture, it is only appropriate that the vision of Levi—to whom the rights of the temple priesthood were entrusted—took him into heaven from the top of a mountain: "Then sleep fell upon me, and I beheld a high mountain, and I was on it. And behold, the heavens were opened" (*Testament of Levi* 2:5–6).[132] The same phenomenon is also true of several key events in the New Testament. The mountain setting demonstrated the sacred nature of these events for Jesus and his followers. Jesus ascended mountains to teach (Matthew 24:3), to pray (Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12), to perform healings (Matthew 15:29), and to formally call his twelve apostles (Mark 3:13–14, Luke 6:12–16). On a mountain, Jesus overcame the temptation of Satan (Matthew 4:8–10). On the Mount of Transfiguration, three apostles witnessed a heavenly transformation of their Lord as well as the glorious appearance of prophets Moses and Elias (Matthew 17:1–3, Mark 9:2–4). The final verses of Matthew depict the resurrected Jesus appearing to his disciples on a mountain and instructing them to carry the Gospel from there to "all nations" (Matthew 28:16–20).[133]

Given all of these points of signification, we can suspect that the mount on which the Sermon was delivered was thought of as an extraordinary place. As Jesus prepared to give the Sermon on the Mount by ascending a mountain apparently somewhere in Galilee, his disciples and listeners may readily have seen in this ascent a greater purpose than simply becoming more "visible and audible to the people when he speaks."[134] Being unsettled by the state of affairs at the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus inaugurated his own divine order from this new mountain, apparently with the inspiration of the Temple in mind.

But the old traditions and symbols were not destroyed or rejected; rather they were infused with new meaning: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). In reading the Sermon on the Mount, one should not assume that it was created out of thin air. "It is a good general rule that all religions in history do not usually create their institutions *ex nihilo*, but inherit them from earlier stages and

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[131] Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?" pp. 533–7.

[132] James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols, Garden City, N.Y., 1983), vol. 1, p. 788.

[133] Georg Strecker notes many of these NT mountain settings, using them to demonstrate that mountains were the sites of significant revelatory events in Jesus' lifetime. *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 24.

[134] Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 25.

mostly only infuse them with a new spirit or afford them a special meaning."[135] If the Sermon on the Mount is understood as emanating from or in relation to the imagery of Sinai and the institutions of the Temple, the details of that sacral context should prove crucial in construing its deepest meanings.

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[135] Menachem Haran, "Temple and Community in Ancient Israel," in Michael V. Fox (ed.), *Temple in Society* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1988), p. 20.

Chapter 3
Hearing a Temple Register in the Beatitudes

So far, the mountain clue is still merely a hypothesis waiting to be tested. In the next four chapters, the words of the Sermon on the Mount will be examined to test and explore the idea that the Jewish audience hearing these words would have recognized temple-related language scattered throughout this text from beginning to end. The Sermon on the Mount draws masterfully on many traditional Jewish images, especially those related to the Temple. Following a few introductory observations, this chapter will focus on temple themes and elements in the Beatitudes.

From the outset, it is important to recognize that a strong consensus has emerged that Jesus in general and the Sermon on the Mount in particular were not separatist. Hans Dieter Betz firmly states that the origins of this text should be dated to "a time when the addressees were a group of Jesus' disciples within Judaism. They regarded themselves as something of an avant-garde within the Jewish religion, intended to fulfill its highest aspirations."[1] Brad H. Young argues that, rather than withdrawing immediately from the Jewish sphere, Jesus "offers heart-felt criticism of a movement with which he identifies;" those leaders who were responsible especially for the Temple were challenged by Jesus, not as a hostile opponent, but as "an insider" trying to make needed reforms and restorations.[2] After a careful examination of the evidence, John Nolland concludes that the Gospel of Matthew is not anti-Judaic: "Anti-Semitism as classically understood is something that, while the church has been far from free of it, the Gospel of Matthew does not, so far as I can see, fall into."[3] This all being the case, it follows that Jesus was not opposed to the Temple as such, for the Temple, Torah observance, and Sabbath keeping were the "three central pillars" of Judaism in the first-century.[4] Indeed, Matthew gives a "remarkably consistent and positive portrayal of the Temple. No negative word is uttered by either the evangelist or his Jesus about the Temple *itself*."[5] Since the city

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[1] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis, 1995), p. 156.

[2] Brad H. Young, *Meet the Rabbis: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2007), pp. 35–6.

[3] John Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism," in Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (eds), *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007), pp. 154–69, quote on 169.

[4] Daniel M. Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple and the 'Parting of the Ways,'" in Gurtner and Nolland, *Built upon the Rock*, pp. 128–9.

[5] Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple," p. 130.

of Jerusalem, and above all the Temple, "had been the focus of [Jewish] national and religious experience and aspirations for a millennium,"[6] Jesus' ambitions were not to destroy but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17), and this intention would apply not only to the Law and to the Sabbath but also to the Temple.

Once hearers had begun listening to the Sermon on the Mount through a register of temple-related signals and meanings, they would have caught on to the idea that something more than a plain ethical discourse was being presented. Indeed, Matthew's statement about the response of these hearers indicates that they received this experience as something quite extraordinary. Just as Matthew introduces this text in Matthew 5:1 in a meaning-suggestive mountain context, he concludes the Sermon with an equally provocative comment about the response of the amazed listeners. They were astonished, amazed, or overwhelmed at his teaching *(exeplēssanto . . . epi tēi didachēi autou)* (Matthew 7:28), and in addition they were impressed that "he taught them as one having authority (*exousian echōn*), and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29). Something more was involved in this presentation than ordinary, descriptive words alone. How Jesus taught and communicated was different from how others taught. He typically spoke in parables or in aphorisms with multiple, symbolic meanings (Matthew 13:11), out of which grew "an *oral* esoteric tradition, deriving from the apostles and having Jesus as the center of its secret teaching."[7] There may well have been many levels and types of intended meaning in each of his sayings, and thus there is every reason to assume that the sayings presented in the Sermon on the Mount also followed this characteristic.

At one level, of course, the Sermon on the Mount can be read as an ordinary ethical discourse or simple summary of the main teachings of Jesus, but to read it that way may be akin to reading the parable of the sower as if it is all about agriculture. At another level, however, the Sermon on the Mount can also be read as a symbolic, anagogical, or coded text that has much to do with the rituals of transformation and initiation, the making of covenants with God, the formation of community, and obtaining all the promised blessings traditionally afforded by temples as places of contact between God and man. In order to lay the groundwork for such a reading, my endeavor in the following chapters is to go through the Sermon on the Mount, verse by verse, to identify all of its elements that may relate to the Temple in general and to ritual in particular. Because the Temple was the most powerful, authoritative religious institution in Judaism at the time of Jesus, it is incumbent on modern readers to consider the possibility that the Sermon on the Mount struck its original listeners and readers as authoritative precisely because it drew heavily on words, phrases, quotations, imagery, and rituals related to the Temple.

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[6] R.T. France, "Matthew and Jerusalem," in Gurtner and Nolland, *Built upon the Rock*, p. 108.

[7] Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden 1996), p. 34 (emphasis in original).

Indeed, a surprising number of words in the Sermon on the Mount make good sense in a temple context. Its vocabulary is consistently at home in the Temple. There are about 383 Greek words in the total vocabulary of the Sermon on the Mount. Most of these words are everyday words, and thus the translation of these words is generally straightforward. What person does not understand such basic words as *mercy*, *the poor*, *peacemakers*, *salt*, *light*, *sun*, *secret*, *treasure*, *heart*, *bread*, *serpent*, *tree*, *fruit*, *blossom*, *rock*, *sand*, *brother*, *love*, *hate*, *enemy*, *marriage*, *divorce*, *pearls*, *pigs*, *dogs*, *grass*, *power*, *glory*, *rejoice*, *ask*, *seek*, *knock*, *clothing*, *evil*, *debts*, *forgive*, *obey*, *swear*, *kill*, *prophet*, *wide*, *narrow*, *father*, *children*, *holy*, *judge*, *fast*, *pray*, *law*, and so forth? Their overt meanings can hardly be mistaken, whether they are expressed in English, Latin, Greek, Aramaic, or any other language. Behind these words, however, may stand much deeper meanings. Simple words, such as *bread*, *garment*, *wash*, or *ask*, may have reference to religious objects, temple vestments, or ritual functions.

In addition, a significant number of phrases in the Sermon on the Mount quote from or allude to passages in the Old Testament, and many of them, especially those that come from the Psalms, evoke strong memories of the Temple in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, Jesus' listeners would have recognized the Old Testament sources behind these words and phrases much more readily than modern readers do. In response to hearing these temple-related words and phrases, listeners would easily have thought to themselves, "I am listening to a holy man of God. He is speaking about holy things. He is drawing heavily on temple imagery. He is making the Temple come to life in an invigorating new way."

More than is usually noted, the Sermon on the Mount is steeped in phraseology of early biblical literature. Although modern Christian readers might well assume that Jesus' words were completely original, in fact many of the words and phrases in the Sermon on the Mount were taken directly or proximately from Old Testament scriptures. These expressions would have had a familiar ring to his audiences in Galilee and Judaea. Some are direct quotes; others are paraphrases or closely related expressions. Some have direct connections with the Temple, explicitly mentioning the Temple, an event or practice that occurred in the Temple, or some object or person directly associated with the Temple. Others have indirect connections. Many of the Psalms, for example, though also sung at home or in the synagogue or used as a "book of life" at any time and in any place during the Second Temple period,[8] were originally designed or later adapted for use in (or in connection with) the Temple, and the words of the Psalms derived much of their power in local use or private meditation because they were deeply associated in the first instance with public worship.[9] Thus it is noteworthy that several phrases in the Sermon on the Mount echo phrases from the Psalms that were particularly at home in the Temple. As Sigmund Mowinckel explains, "The title of the book of Psalms

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[8] Georg Braulik, "Psalms and Liturgy: Their Reception and Contextualization," *VE* 2 (2003): 309–32, quote on 325; Amos Hakham, *Psalms* (Jerusalem, 2003), pp. xvii–xviii.

[9] George S. Gunn, *Singers of Israel: The Book of Psalms* (New York, 1963), p. 18.

in Hebrew is *Tĕhillîm*, which means 'cultic songs of praise.' This tallies with the indications we have that the songs and music of the levitical singers belonged to the solemn religious festivals as well as to daily sacrifices in the Temple."[10] Mowinckel rejected the idea that the Psalms were created for synagogue worship, since "the synagogue is on the whole later than the period of biblical psalmody,"[11] and argued that the Psalms were an important part of temple worship, composed for and in that holy place:

> There can hardly be any doubt that [the Psalms] contain some features showing that most of them were composed at the Temple of Jerusalem. . . . As we have seen, the psalmists time and time again speak of their internal and external relations with the Temple and its orderings and the service there. They are living in the Temple, they are thinking and expressing themselves in the notions of Temple and cult. Very often we are told about the Temple of Zion and the temple mountain, about the temple courts and the holy city, about the altar and about sacrifices. . . . The authors, moreover, even have their daily home in the sacred place. . . . Through good and evil times the longing of the psalmists is for the Temple. Again and again they disclose their knowledge of the cultic life that went on at the Temple, and not infrequently they allude directly to the different ritual functions taking place there.[12]

Although disagreeing with Mowinckel about the dating of the Psalms, Raymond Jacques Tournay agrees that the Psalms can only be properly understood in the context of the "liturgical celebrations, sacrifices, fasts, vigils, pilgrimages, etc., in Jerusalem," for the "whole liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple [was] the setting for cultic theophanies" that were reflected extensively in the Psalms during the Second Temple period.[13] Although the precise cultic context originally associated with each psalm remains debatable, there can be little doubt that most of the Psalms had cultic, liturgical or festival connections of some sort, and that they were sung (or easily could have been sung) in the Temple precinct, while entering the Temple, or turning toward it. Thus, "the Psalms were the hymns of the temple."[14]

Even after the destruction of the Temple of Herod, the rabbis remembered (and sometimes argued over) specifically which psalms were sung on certain occasions in the Temple. For example, the Levites would usually chant the daily psalms

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[10] Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (New York, 1962), vol. 1, p. 2.

[11] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 4.

[12] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 2, pp. 89–90 (citations omitted).

[13] Raymond Jacques Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield, 1991), pp. 27, 85.

[14] Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven* (London, 1991), p. 45.

"while the drink-offering accompanying the daily sacrifices was being offered."[15] These daily psalms were thought to consciously revisit each of the seven days of the Creation: on the first day they sang "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalms 81:2); on the second day, "Great is the Lord and highly to be praised" (Psalms 98:2); on the third day, "God standeth in the congregation of God" (Psalms 82); on day four, "O Lord, thou God, to whom vengeance belongeth" (Psalms 94); on day five, "Sing aloud to the God of our strength" (Psalms 81); day six, "The Lord reigneth, He is clothed in majesty" (Psalms 93); and on the seventh day, "A song for the Sabbath day" (Psalms 92).[16] On Rosh Hashanah, the rabbis remembered, they normally sang from Psalm 81 at the time of the additional morning sacrifice unless that feast fell on Thursday, while Psalm 29 accompanied the afternoon sacrifice.[17] On the six intermediate days of the Feast of Tabernacles, when additional sacrifices were also offered, other psalms were used: Psalm 29 on day one; Psalm 50 on day two; Psalm 94:16–23 on day three; Psalm 94:8–15 on day four; Psalm 91 on day five; and Psalm 82 on day six.[18] The fifteen psalms in Psalms 120–34 have been identified as songs that were possibly sung by pilgrims as they went up to the Temple and perhaps were related to the fifteen steps between the Court of the Women and Court of the Priests.[19]

For these reasons connecting the Psalms to the Temple, particular emphasis is given to words and phrases from the Psalms in the analyses below, and as the following will show, much has been and yet can be said about the use of material from the Psalms in the Sermon on the Mount. By going step by step through the Sermon on the Mount, many of its features are seen to have strong connections with the Temple, its orderings, and its functions. Jesus thinks and expresses himself in terms of the Temple and its generative powers.

Stage 1. Blessings Are Promised (5:3–12)

At the outset of the Sermon on the Mount, a series of blessings are promised to the people—blessings well known as the Beatitudes. As candidates for entrance into the celestial kingdom, the people are typified as humble, compassionate, and long-suffering peacemakers, who love righteousness, who will see God's face, and who will be his eternal children. This initial segment at the entrance to the Sermon on the Mount consists of ten pronouncements:

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[15] TB, Rosh Hashanah 30b (Soncino), p. 144, n. 3.

[16] TB, Rosh Hashanah 31a.

[17] TB, Rosh Hashanah 30b.

[18] TB, Sukkah 55a.

[19] Loren D. Crow, *The Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120–134): Their Place in Israelite History and Religion* (Atlanta, 1996), pp. 18–24. See, further, the lengthy list of Psalms summarized in T. Worden, *The Psalms Are Christian Prayer* (New York, 1961), pp. 37–8, n. 25.

(1) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(2) Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
(3) Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
(4) Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be satisfied.
(5) Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
(6) Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
(7) Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.
(8) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(9) Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
(10) Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:3–12)

The number of the Beatitudes, whether seven, eight, or ten, has long been a matter of speculation and fascination.[20] The number seven would echo the days of the week and the frequent use of that number in the priestly temple texts of Leviticus. The number ten would in turn echo the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5, and the "ten words" in Exodus 34:9, but also with several other lists of holy tens in Jewish numerology, including ten trials of Abraham; ten plagues of Egypt; ten rebellions in the wilderness (Numbers 14:22); ten elders at the gate in Ruth 4:2; ten generations from Pharez to David (Ruth 4:18–22); ten days of penitence between New Year and the Day of Atonement; ten utterances of the divine name on the Day of Atonement; ten sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; ten powers in Romans 8:38–9; ten heavens in the Enoch literature; and ten degrees of holiness or *sefirot* in Jewish mysticism radiating from the Holy of Holies.[21] Many dimensions in the Temple were ten cubits in length or height (Exodus 26:1; 1 Kings 6:23–5; 7:23–4), including the Holy of Holies, which was ten cubits by ten cubits by ten cubits (1 Kings 6:20), thus, as Philo said, embracing "the whole of Wisdom."[22] In the Talmud, God was said to have taken his leave from the Temple in ten stages: (1) from the ark-cover, (2) to the cherubim, (3) to the door out of the Holy of Holies, (4) to the door out of the great hall, (5) to the altar in the court of the priests, (6) to a corner on the Temple roof, (7) to the wall of the Temple precinct, (8) to the city of Jerusalem, (9) to the Mount of Olives east of

[20] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 105–9.

[21] For references, see John W. Welch, "Counting to Ten," *JBMS* 12/2 (2003): pp. 40–57, esp. 42.

[22] Philo, *Preliminary Studies*, 116.

the city, and finally (10) into the wilderness where he abode in his own place.[23] Presumably, God would retrace these ten steps when he returned to the Temple. For this reason, suggestions such as Delitzsch's that an echo of the Decalogue might be heard in the ten Beatitudes should not be discounted.[24] Associating the Sermon on the Mount with the Temple and its frequent attraction for things that occur a perfect number of ten times would add strength to Delitzsch's insight and other such possibilities.

The initial blessings extended in the Beatitudes identify and promise the ultimate benefits that the faithful will receive if they obey in righteousness the principles that Jesus is about to deliver to them. These benedictions are usually translated in the present tense, "blessed *are* the . . . ," and to some extent these assurances have immediate currency; but the verb *are* is unexpressed in the Greek.[25] These assurances may just as well be translated, "blessed *will be* the . . . ," coinciding with the future tenses in each of the *hoti* clauses in Matthew 5:4–9.

All of the first nine lines begin with the word *makarioi*, a word that already places the hearer in a temple frame of reference. On numerous occasions, the Psalms declare that the righteous are *makarioi*, beginning with the very first word in the Septuagint version of the Psalms: "Blessed (*makarios*) is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked" (Psalms 1:1). This word appears repeatedly throughout the Psalms: "Blessed are all who take refuge in [the Lord]" (Psalms 2:12); "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Psalms 32:1–2); "blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud" (Psalms 40:4); "blessed is he who considers the poor" (Psalms 41:1); "blessed are those who dwell in thy house" (Psalms 84:4); "blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times" (Psalms 106:3); "blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart" (Psalms 119:1–2); "blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways" (Psalms 128:1), to list only a few. The most common place where one would have heard and with which one would have associated the word *makarioi* would have been in the Psalms of the Temple. In several of the Psalms, this is the opening word.

Jesus promises his followers blessings in eight different respects. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven (1 and 8); they will inherit the earth (3), receive comfort (2) and

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[23] TB, Rosh Hashanah 31a.

[24] Franz Julius Delitzsch, *Neue Untersuchungen über die Entstehung und Anlage der kanonischen Evangelien* (Leipzig, 1853), vol. 1, p. 76, cited in Betz, *Sermon on the Mount,* p. 109, where he points out that, though Delitzsch's idea may seem fanciful to some, "one must still explain why there are ten."

[25] Except in Matthew 5:11, "blessed are you when . . . ." But even here, the sense of the promised blessing is in the future, "for your reward is [will be] great in heaven."

mercy (5); they will also be filled with the spirit (4),[26] see God (6), be called the sons of God (7), and have a great reward reserved for them in heaven (10). As will be discussed below, each of these blessings pertains to the realm of the Temple, which represented heaven on earth, and housed the mercy-seat, and was filled with the spirit of God. The Temple was where priests and prophets saw God,[27] surrounded by the heavenly train of the sons of God. The Temple, "a tabernacle for the sun" (Psalms 19:4), was the conveyer of God's great rewards, for "in keeping [all of God's laws, ordinances, statutes and judgments] there is great reward" (Psalms 19:11). These blessings have the effect of separating the sacred from the secular; they separate the followers of Jesus from the rest of the world and free them from the fear of death.[28] Such blessings—overcoming the shadow of death, fearing no evil, and finding comfort in the rod and staff of the Lord—were emphatically associated with the Temple, with one's dwelling "in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalms 23:6). These defining blessings, as Jonathan Draper points out, are also "linked to the blessings and curses of the Covenant,"[29] all of which were maintained and sustained by the ordinances and observances of the Temple.

The attitudes extolled in these beatifications are also related to the Temple. It was at the Temple that these expressions of piety and spirituality were most strongly pronounced, and thus many of the Psalms praise and exalt those who

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[26] For the use of *chortasthēsontai* in describing the full spiritual satisfaction of awakening with the likeness of God, see Ps 17:15 (LXX).

[27] Discussed in connection with Matthew 5:8 below.

[28] Andrej Kodjak observes: "Those who are poor, who mourn, who are meek, who seek righteousness above all, who are merciful, pure in heart, and seek peace, as well as those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake—all have one thing in common: not conforming out of fear, they preserve their fearless attitude towards the dangers and threats of the temporal world. This common denominator separates such persons from the mass of humanity on a deeper level as well. . . . It is the fearlessness of death that all the blessed ones share that constitutes their bliss, their ability to realize the kingdom of heaven." Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin 1986), p. 52.

[29] Jonathan A. Draper, "The Genesis and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount," *JSNT* 75 (1999): 35. Draper addresses the Beatitudes as part of his analysis of the Sermon on the Mount's literary structure. See pp. 25–48, 35–8. His discussion of the Beatitudes emphasizes the Sermon on the Mount's theme of more perfect compliance with the principles of the Torah. Each blessing helps to demonstrate the attitude of a true follower. On page 35, he writes:

> Jesus begins his teaching with a characterization of the leadership of his new community couched in terms of blessings. They serve the same rhetorical function as the traditional lists of virtues and vices, [fn omitted] although only a list of virtues is given here, unlike Luke's parallel account which includes matching woes (probably because Matthew's list is directed towards the four disciples and not everyone). That is, they serve to define the ethic of the community and to differentiate it from its opponents. In a Jewish community, the device is linked to the blessings and curses of the Covenant, though it is not identical.

come to the Temple with these spiritual feelings and thoughts in their hearts and minds. The devout are to cultivate these spiritual attributes throughout their lives, but especially when they enter the temple precinct and its holy courts. Each of the Beatitudes is most strongly understood in a temple context.

(1) "Blessed will be the poor (*ptōchoi*) in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [or of the heavens] (*tōn ouranōn*)" (5:3). Who are "the poor" mentioned in the first beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount? More than just beatifying those who are involuntarily poor materially, as the Latin *pauperes* implies, the Greek *ptōchoi* evokes those who have willingly diminished themselves. This word is directly related to the noun *ptōsis,* meaning a fall or calamity, and to the verb *ptōssein,* which means to fall down, or to bow down timidly, and also to cringe or beseech like a beggar. Those who are poor in respect to the Spirit of God begin by recognizing their empty and fallen state, sometimes falling down prostrate before God, pleading for his gifts and blessings.

To be a destitute *ptōchos* is to be even poorer than a peasant or *penēs*. While both the totally impoverished pauper and the ordinary member of the peasant class typically have no significant property, at least they can work for their livelihood, whereas "*ptōchos* denotes the complete destitution which forces the poor to seek the help of others by begging."[30] This condition vividly calls to mind the pleading of those entering the Temple begging for God's blessings especially in times of dire calamities. Being empty, their greatest hope is to be filled.

The first and second beatitudes can thus be related to the tabernacle in Exodus 33. The reference to the "poor in spirit" and "those that mourn (*penthountes*)" in Matthew 5:3–4 is reminiscent of the Israelites entering the tent of the tabernacle humbly and in a mournful state (*katepenthēsen*), voluntarily stripped of their ornaments and glorious apparel in Exodus 33:4–6. This practice dramatically symbolized repentance and mourning.[31] The first beatitude, therefore, implicitly promises redemption from the fall and an ascent "from the earthly and lowly thoughts to the spiritual mountain of higher contemplation."[32]

This beatitude may also be related to Psalms 69:32–3, the Septuagint version of which clearly connects these "poor" with those who seek God in the Temple: "Let the impoverished (*ptōchoi*) see and rejoice; seek God, and find. For the Lord listens to the poor (*penētōn*) and sets not at naught those who are shackled."[33] As Mowinckel states, "It is 'the zeal of Yahweh's house' that has roused the worshipper of Ps. 69."[34] More than referring to people who are economically poor, the Psalms in general and this Psalm in particular have in mind those who

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30 Ernst Bammel, "*ptōchos,*" in *TDNT*, vol. 6, p. 886.

31 R.E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford, 1965), p. 36.

32 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 106, discussing a conception of the Beatitudes offered first by Gregory of Nyssa.

33 The link between Psalm 69 and Matthew 5:3–4 is noted by Herman Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1984), pp. 19–20.

34 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 20.

approach God with a "broken and contrite heart" (Psalms 51:17). Accordingly, Robert Guelich, in discussing the religious meaning of "the poor," observes that the "humble posture of *the poor* devoid of pretension before God reflects the religious dimension and comes out frequently in the Psalms." In his discussion of Matthew 5:3, Guelich cites several verses from the Psalms which he argues reflect the type of "poverty" that is intended here in Matthew 5:3. Those texts include Psalms 10:8 ("his eyes look upon the poor [*ton penēta*])"; Psalms 14:6 ("ye have shamed the counsel of the poor [*ptōchou*]); Psalms 22:24 ("he has not been angry at the supplication of the poor [*ptōchou*])"; Psalms 25:16 ("for I am an only child and poor [*ptōchos*])," and so on in Psalms 34:6; 35:10; 37:14–15; 40:17; 69:29; 72:2, 4, 12; 86:1; 88:15.[35] In these psalms of humble piety, it is in the house of the Lord that one finds the strongest antecedent to the relatively odd concept in Matthew 5:2 of being "poor in spirit," or in other words "beggars with respect to the spirit" (*hoi ptōchoi tōi pneumati*).[36] In the context of the Temple, the beggar comes into the house of God. There, the Lord blesses these prostrated, beseeching, poor through the ordinances, sacrifices, prayers, and instructions of the Temple. At this place, the kingdom of the heavens is theirs. There, they praise God and "speak of the glory of thy kingdom" and reveal "the glorious splendor of thy kingdom," a kingdom "of all eternal beings (*pantōn tōn aiōnōn*)" whose "dominion endures throughout all generations" (Psalms 145:11–13).

(2) Who, then, is contemplated in the second beatitude? "Blessed will be those who mourn (*hoi penthountes*): for they shall be comforted (*paraklēthēsontai*)" (5:4). In the early parts of the Old Testament, mournful sorrow is often accompanied with "tears, lamentations, and rites, especially mourning for the dead," but it also plays a role "in prophecies of disaster."[37] Although *pentheō* can mean to be sad, to grieve, or to mourn in general, it clearly includes a more specific weeping and sorrow for sin. Bultmann comments, "One cannot fail to include penitent sorrow for sin in this *penthein*."[38] The Hebrew counterpart, *'abhal*, likewise denotes outward lamentation for the dead but also, especially in the Second Temple period, mourning for sinners: "The latter idea is particularly prominent in later texts in connection with the concept of repentance and returning to God."[39]

Mourning and repentance for sin, especially for the breaking of the covenant by the nation, was strongly associated with the Temple. Most notably, Ezra "mourned (*epenthei*) because of the covenant-breaking (*epi tēi asunthesiai*) of the exile" (Ezra 10:6); he observed a three-day fast, after which he convened an assembly of

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35 Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount—A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, Texas, 1982), p. 68.

36 The preposition "in," being unexpressed in Greek, may be rendered in other ways.

37 R. Bultmann, "*Penthos, pentheō*," in *TDNT* vol. 6, p. 41–2; A. Baumann, "*'abhal*," in *TDOT*, vol. 1, pp. 45–6.

38 Bultmann, "*Penthos, pentheō*," vol. 6, p. 43.

39 Baumann, "*'abhal*," vol. 1, p. 47.

all the men of Judah at the Temple where he took their confession, recommitment, and averted the wrath of God (Ezra 10:6–14). In general, those who came to the Temple sought, above all, forgiveness for sin. In remorse, they brought their sacrifices and went away with a feeling of expiation and reconciliation with God, not only for their own sins (Testament of Reuben 1:10) but also the sins of others (1 Esdras 8:69; 9:2; 2 Esdras 10:6). On the Day of Atonement, in particular, rituals at the Temple emphasized sorrowful penitence, afflicting one's soul, confession, sincere repentance, and divine forgiveness (see Leviticus 16:7–10, 29–31; 23:27–32; Numbers 15:27–31; Jubilees 34:17–18).

In Matthew 5:4, those who mourn are promised comfort. The word "comfort" (*paraklēsis*) includes the meanings of encouragement, exhortation, assurance, acceptance, and consolation; one who gives such comfort is a comforter (*paraklētos*), a helper, mediator, intercessor, advocate, or adviser. Those who "mourn" spiritually in a temple setting are promised that they shall be helped, encouraged, advised, and accepted; they shall have a mediator or intercessor covering their sins. They shall also enjoy unspeakable relief and joy in the House of the Lord: "When the cares of my heart are many, thy consolations (*hai paraklēseis sou*) cheer [love or comfort (*ēgapēsan*)] my soul" (Psalms 94:19). Above all, the Day of Atonement rituals performed by the High Priest brought about an exceptional time of "true joy."[40] Joyous offerings now supplant the tears of sorrow: "May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy! He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves" (Psalms 126:5–6).[41] The archetypal intercessor is, of course, the High Priest, which role anticipates the identification of Jesus as the Great High Priest in Hebrews 10; and the idea of being comforted that is present in Matthew 5:4 is a prelude to the comforter or advocate (*paraklētos*) in John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7 and 1 John 2:1. Whether this intercession occurs in the Temple or in heaven, it is conceptually the same, for the one is simply a counterpart of the other. Thus Bultmann was on the right track when he said that "the blessing of the *penthountes* in Mt. 5:4 is to be taken eschatologically."[42] The blessing of those who mourn will indeed take its full effect eschatologically in the heavenly kingdom, but it also is found in the blessings of the Temple, which represents and anticipates that celestial realm.

(3) Is there a connection between the Temple and the "meek" mentioned in the third beatitude? "Blessed will be the meek (*praeis*): for they shall inherit the earth (*klēronomēsousin tēn gēn*)" (5:5). In classical Greek, the word "meek"

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[40] Moshe D. Herr, "Day of Atonement," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2nd edn, Detroit 2007), vol. 5, p. 491, citing Philo.

[41] Guelich draws this parallel but sees Psalm 126:5–6 as related more closely to the Lucan Beatitude (Luke 6:21—"blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" than to the Matthean Beatitude. Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 80, 100, 116.

[42] Bultmann, "*Penthos, pentheō*," vol. 6, p. 43.

(*praüs*) means mild, soft, gentle, friendly, pleasant, quiet, or (of a horse) tame.[43] In Hellenistic Jewish thought and in the Septuagint, it takes on the meanings of being in the position of a servant, accepting hardships without objection, and (perhaps ironically) it becomes one of the ideal qualities of the righteous leader, especially having reference to Moses (Numbers 12:3).[44] As one of the key virtues that characterizes greatness of the soul, "meekness" is deeply rooted in patiently waiting on the Lord:

> Triumphant waiting on God rather than the superior aloofness of the sage is the correlate of mild acceptance, Is. 26:6. OT *praütēs* is based on the eschatological hope (Ps. 76:9) that God will judge (147:6; 149:4) and give the land to the lowly, i.e., to those who wait (37:9). Ps. 37:9–11 connects with this the promises of the land which were originally given to Abraham and his descendants.[45]

Thus, the blessing of the meek was a frequent theme of the psalms sung in the Temple: The direct source of the blessing in the third beatitude is Psalms 37:9, 11, 18, "They who keep waiting for the Lord, they shall inherit the land (*klēronomēsousin tēn gēn*). . . . The meek shall inherit the earth (*praieis klēronomēsousin gēn*) and shall delight in the fullness of peace, . . . and their inheritance shall be eternal." Other hymns promise that when God stands "in his dwelling-place" on the "everlasting mountains" to judge the world, he will "save all the meek (*praieis*) in heart" (Psalms 76:2, 4, 9; see also 25:9; 34:2; 45:4; 90:10; 132:1). Their response will be to give thank-offerings, to hold a sacred feast in God's honor, to make vows and pay for them in the Temple, and for all those in a circle around him (or his altar) to bring gifts to God (Psalms 76:10–11). Likewise, the words of Psalms 147 and 149, and others identified by Mowinckel as hymns of praise that were probably used in the Temple,[46] sing forth: "The Lord lifts up (i.e. to heaven, or takes back, or adopts, *analambanōn*) the meek (*praieis*), while he humbles the sinners to the earth (*heōs tēs gēs*)" (Psalms 147:6 LXX); "for the Lord is well pleased in his people, and he will exalt the meek (*praieis*) in salvation" (Psalms 149:4). The first of these temple-psalms recalls the names and numbers of the stars; it praises God for the clouds of heaven that bring rain to the grass of the earth and to the young ravens that call upon him (Psalms 147:4, 8–9), and the latter hymn appears to have been sung in the Temple while the sons of Zion shouted alleluia (compare Matthew 5:12), danced in chorus, and made music (Psalms 149:2). The meek and the poor, according to David Flusser, are the ones who will be "endowed with the supreme gift of divine bliss, with the Holy

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[43] Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Stuart Jones, *Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1968).

[44] F. Hauck and S. Schulz, "*Praüs, praütēs*," in *TDNT*, vol. 6, pp. 645–7.

[45] Hauck and Schulz, "*Praüs, praütēs*," vol. 6, p. 648.

[46] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, pp. 81, 83.

Spirit."[47] Through the Temple, these blessings are both present and future, and such realizations call for jubilation.

Accordingly, this promise extended to the disciples of Jesus is again related to the Temple. The realization of God's promise is based on holy conduct, tamed submission to the will of the Lord, leading others with mildness and gentleness, accepting difficult tasks or eventualities, and patiently anticipating God's fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

(4) The fourth beatitude reads, "Blessed will be they who hunger and thirst for righteousness (*tēn dikaiosunēn*): for they shall be filled (*chortasthēsontai*)" (Matthew 5:6). Here again one finds a similar confluence of vocabulary in the Psalms: "But I shall appear in righteousness (*en dikaiosunēi ophthēsomai*) before thy face: I shall be filled (*chortasthēsomai*) in beholding thy glory" (Psalms 17:15 LXX). According to Mowinckel, this verse indicates that Psalm 17 was an oracle received at night in the Temple or some sanctuary.[48] Other parallels to the fourth beatitude can also be found in the Psalms: "The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord! May your hearts live for ever!" (Psalms 22:26); "the Lord knows the ways of the perfect, and their inheritance shall be forever; they shall not be ashamed in an evil time, and in days of famine they shall be satisfied (*chortasthēsontai*)" (Psalms 37:18–19 LXX); "he satisfies (*echortase*) him who is thirsty [the empty soul, LXX], and the hungry he fills with good things" (Psalms 107:9). In Psalms 42:2, the worshipper "is looking back on all the times he used to lead the pageant up to the Temple of Yahweh"[49] and cries out: "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." Likewise in Psalms 63:1, the singer whose "soul has thirsted for" God, seeks the Lord at the Temple.[50] In this connection, Guelich notes other expressions of being hungry in Psalms 107:36[51] and of being filled or to "abundantly bless her provisions" in Psalms 132:15 and 146:7.[52] In all of these cases, being filled or satiated epitomizes the overflowing fullness of joy and ecstasy of beholding the Lord in his holy Temple, together with which the Lord promises, "Her priests I will clothe (*endusō*) with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy" (Psalms 132:16).

(5) "Blessed will be the merciful (*hoi eleēmones*): for they shall obtain mercy (*eleēthēsontai*)" (5:7). Receiving mercy is one of the most common yearnings of the Psalmist as he contemplates and sings about the Temple. With little comment, Guelich readily offers several references to mercy in the Psalms in his discussion

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47 D. Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit," *IEJ* 10/1 (1960): 6.

48 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, p. 254.

49 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 42.

50 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, pp. 6, 226, vol. 2, p. 101. The connection between Psalms 63:1 and Matthew 5:6 has been pointed out by Hendrickx, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 6.

51 Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 83.

52 Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 88. Psalms 132:15 continues, "I will satisfy (*chortasō*) the poor (*ptōchous*) with bread."

of this beatitude, including Psalms 86:15–16; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 116:5; 145:8.[53] It bears clearer articulation that one of the dominant qualities of the Temple was its role as the primary source of mercy: "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy (*eleous*)" (Psalms 5:7). People came to the Temple hoping and praying for mercy. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalms 23:6). The Temple has everything to do with obtaining mercy.

More precisely, the Temple was the spring of God's waters of mercy because it was the enshrinement of the covenant between God and his people. Robert H. Mounce states: "Behind the Greek word is the rich Hebrew term *hesed*, 'loving kindness' . . . or 'steadfast love.' To be merciful means to maintain the fidelity of the covenant relationship. It is not a surge of emotion but intentional kindness."[54] Thus he rightly characterizes the fifth beatitude of mercy in terms of a "covenant relationship,"[55] which relationship draws this promised blessing into the ambit of the beneficence normally associated with the Temple.

(6) One of the clearest connections between the Beatitudes and the Temple is found in the sixth beatitude: "Blessed will be the pure in heart (*hoi katharoi tēi kardiai*): for they shall see God (*autoi ton theon opsontai*)" (5:8). The most obvious and direct parallel to this beatitude is found in Psalm 24, which sets for the requirements for entry into the Temple. It reads, "Who shall ascend into the hill [the Temple] of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands, and a pure heart (*kathoros tēi kardiai*)" (Psalms 24:3–4). The words *clean* and *pure* have obvious temple connections. Although the word *katharos* populates the vocabulary of most Old Testament books, it appears saliently over one hundred times in the concluding chapters of Exodus and throughout Leviticus in connection with the Tabernacle and temple sacrifices or rituals. Guelich also connects the "pure in heart" of this beatitude to Psalms 11:2 and 32:11 (see also 73:1), both of which refer to the "upright in heart,"[56] a similar although not identical expression. Those who are pure in heart are more than upstanding and morally correct; they are cleansed from all uncleanness in the sense of ritual purification. The word *katharos* is a leading theme in both the law and the prophets and in the New Testament,[57] for without being purged of all uncleanness access to or association with that which is holy is precluded.

The promise that "they shall see God" also has unmistakable temple bearings.[58] Margaret Barker describes these words of Jesus as "his comment on the purity of the priesthood, those who claimed the right to enter the holy of holies and look

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[53] Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 88.

[54] Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 88.

[55] Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 40.

[56] Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 72.

[57] F. Hauck and Rudolf Meyer, "*Katharos*," in *TDNT*, vol. 3, pp. 413–31.

[58] See, generally, Raymond Jacques Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield, 1991).

upon God."[59] Psalm 24 continues, "Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob" (Psalms 24:6), and the words in Psalms 24:7–10 about "the king of glory coming in should probably be understood as referring to God's arrival in the temple."[60] Seeking and seeing the face of God was an experience connected with the tabernacle or Temple on several occasions. For example, Psalms 63:2 makes a cultic reference to seeing God: "So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary, beholding thy power and glory."[61] Yet again, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness" (Psalms 17:15). Of this verse in the Psalms and citing Matthew 5:8, James Luther Mays writes, "Communion occurs in the experience of the presence. . . . The vision will convey justification; it will be a sign of the acceptance that makes the relation to God right."[62] The famous Priestly Blessing extended to the righteous the prospect that the Lord would "lift up his countenance upon" them (Numbers 6:26), that they would see his face. Strack and Billerbeck state that in the rabbinic literature, "one speaks of 'seeing God' in a dominant and literal sense; . . . one encounters the Shekhinah, when one arrives there, where God dwells in his mercy-presence in the Temple, in the synagogue, or in the house of instruction."[63]

These parallels with Psalm 24 and these other factors have rightly led some commentators to see all of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 as the "entrance requirements" for the Kingdom[64] and as what Georg Strecker calls "the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to gain entrance to the holy of holies."[65] If Jesus is alluding here to those who are worthy to enter the Temple and there may see God, then, as Betz states, "In terms of the history of religions, the concept implies critical reflection about purity and related rituals."[66] Strecker hastens to qualify his point, however, with the assertion that Jesus "teaches not cultic but eschatological virtues. They refer to entrance not into the earthly temple but into the kingdom of

59 Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London, 2007), p. 56, see also pp. 147, 154–60.

60 John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005), p. 204.

61 Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 91, 105.

62 James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville, 1994), p. 89.

63 Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich, 1922), vol. 1, p. 206.

64 Hans Windisch, *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. S. MacLean Gilmour (Philadelphia, 1951), pp. 26–7, 87–8. Robert A. Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" *JBL* 95 (1976): 415–34, argues that both factors are present in the Beatitudes, which presuppose the creation of a new relationship between man and God, implicit to which is an eschatological dimension, especially in connection with Isaiah 61. See also Mays, *Psalms*, pp. 19–20, 119–24.

65 Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O.C. Dean Jr (Nashville, 1988), p. 33.

66 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 134.

God,"[67] but even Strecker's qualified assessment should not be read too narrowly. The cultic and the eschatological go hand in hand: To discard the efficacy and the present significance of the Temple in earliest Christianity ignores the fact that all aspects of the old were not destroyed, but they simply were fulfilled and became new in Christ.

Entering into temples was connected quite ubiquitously with looking forward to entering God's presence in the hereafter, having been prepared to see God by the ordinances and accouterments of the Temple. In this regard, the evidence of several Greek Orphic gold leaves is instructive. As Betz points out, following Zuntz,

> The inscriptions on the gold leaves contain quotations of brief sentences, among them a beatitude . . . : "Happy and blessed are you, you will be god instead of human."
>
> One can reach some conclusions about the purpose of these gold leaves and their inscriptions. They were apparently placed into the tombs of deceased mystery-cult initiates, put in the initiates' hand or near their ears. The inscriptions provide the deceased with the decisive formulae that as initiates they have to know as passwords on their way to the Elysian Fields. These formulae were, one may suppose, revealed to the initiate during an initiation ceremony, and they contain the essential message of salvation that the cult conveys. . . . For the initiate these statements contain indispensable knowledge. . . . They identify their bearer as a beneficiary of the mysteries.[68]

This inscription points to deification ("you will be god instead of human"), and in a similar fashion, all of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 point out attributes of divinity. In this context, David Daube sees an affinity between the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount and those in the following rabbinic hymn from the Gaonic era (sixth to tenth centuries CE) with its ten makarisms:

> Blessed be he who spake and the world existed, blessed be he.
> Blessed be he who was the maker of the world in the beginning.
> Blessed be he who speaketh and doeth.
> Blessed be he who decreeth and performeth.
> Blessed be he who hath mercy upon the earth.
> Blessed be he who hath mercy upon his creatures.
> Blessed be he who payeth a good reward to them that fear him.
> Blessed be he who liveth for ever and endureth to eternity.
> Blessed be he who redeemeth and delivereth, blessed be his name.
> Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe. . . .[69]

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67 Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 33.

68 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 95–6.

69 David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1956), p. 198.

Through the inculcation of the heavenly virtues set forth in these beatitudes, traits of divinity are established. Adherents must first approach the throne of God, passing the tests of the Beatitudes, after which they may see and become like God (compare 1 John 3:2).

(7) In an important temple sense, the Beatitudes culminate in the seventh: "Blessed will be the peacemakers (*eirēnopoioi*), for they shall be called the sons of God (*huioi theou*)" (5:9). No word is richer in the biblical vocabulary than peace, both *shālom* and *shālēm* in the Old Testament and *eirēnē* in the New. In its basic sense, the biblical concept of peace includes making peace between two warring parties (Joshua 10:1, 4), but the word has a "broad range of meanings,"[70] and as von Rad concisely summarizes, "seldom do we find in the OT a word which to the same degree as *shālēm* can bear a common use and yet can also be filled with a concentrated religious content far above the level of the average conception," and the "religious use must not be regarded as a deduction or a later development. . . . It is more likely that an original religious significance was to some extent lost in the course of time than the reverse."[71] Among the religious meanings of the words *shālom*, *shālēm* or *eirēnē* are friendliness, submission, safety, well-being, "the right order of the world," "wholeness," settlement or "restitution," payment of a vow, the gift of God, the eschatological "eternal peace," "the portion of the righteous," "love," the "salvation of the whole man," "peace with God," and "peace with all men."[72] In the Psalms, above all, "*shālom*" is "the quintessence of blessing (Psalms 147:14)" and constitutes "in the most comprehensive sense the epitome of the successful, undisturbed, and salvific effectiveness."[73] More than anything else, the petitions of the Psalms offered in the Temple and reinforced especially in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah seek to acquire all that comes from this dynamic, divinely interrelational condition of peace.

The question then becomes, in what sense (or senses) does Jesus promise a blessing to those who are peacemakers (*eirēnopoioi*)? What meanings and associations might the word *peacemaker* have brought to mind? Betz is certainly correct: "It is evident that the SM deals with acts of peacemaking at several levels," including "in the context of family and friendship ethics," perhaps drawing upon "the language of ruler-cult notions" (where the term *eirēnopoios* appears as an honorific title) or also "in imitation of God," he being "the principal peacemaker."[74] But it is also possible that the term encompasses those who make peace, not only in imitation of God, but also between God and his wayward people, especially in a temple context. In addition, the idea of peacemaking in Matthew

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[70] F.J. Stendebach, "*shālom*," in *TDOT*, vol. 15, p. 15.

[71] Gerhard von Rad, "*eirēnē*," in *TDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 402–3.

[72] Stendebach, "*shālom*," vol. 15, p. 40; Illman, "*shālēm*," in *TDOT*, vol. 15, pp. 97, 99, 101, and Gerhard von Rad and Werner Foerster, "*eirēnē*," in *TDNT*, vol. 2, pp. 403, 405, 409, 412, 415, 416.

[73] Stendebach, "*shālom*," vol. 15, pp. 40–1.

[74] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 138.

5:9 may also be grounded in the rabbinic expression of "making or accomplishing peace" (*ᶜāsha shālēm*), referring to "those who disinterestedly come between two contending parties and try to make peace," as Werner Foerster concludes.[75] The peacemakers of Matthew 5:9 may just as well be those who proclaim peace by serving as intercessors of reconciliation between God and man, as between man and man. Thus several meanings of peacemaking can be understood in the seventh beatitude.

Strength is added to this temple-connected interpretation by the wording of the promised blessing: "They will be called sons of God." This language employs a powerful term that has a rich history in Jewish literature and also is used to describe the relationship between the Father in Heaven and his children that is affirmed throughout the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:9, 45; 6:9; 7:9–11). This sonship language adopts the language of the divine council of heavenly beings whose train filled the Holy of Holies in the Temple; it also echoes the language of kingship, adoption, deification, or apotheosis of the Psalms; and it reinstates the language of covenant-making that looks back to the covenant-making in Sinai, as the following instances demonstrate.

The phrase "sons of God" immediately casts the mind back to the time when "the sons of God sang together as they witnessed the creation."[76] On that day, "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job 1:6; 2:1), and "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). According to an old biblical account of the creation, at this time the Most High divided up all the nations and set their boundaries "according to the number of the sons of God" (Deuteronomy 32:8).[77] Enveloping this early tradition, the liturgy of the Temple apparently had certain people stand in the "hidden place, or 'in the beginning,' both descriptions of the holy of holies/Day One. [There] they learn[ed] about the angels, known as the sons of God."[78] Wisdom, the Four-fold Living One, "was the Mother of the sons of God, the angelic powers."[79]

Sonship language was also employed in the psalms of kingship. Best known is the declaration of royal adoption: "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. . . .You are my son, today I have begotten you" (Psalms 2:6–7). Enoch too was transformed into the great angel Metatron, with this same affirmation from Psalm 2, a tradition which Barker, following Idel, says "may even be as old as it claims

[75] Foerster, "*eirēnē*," vol. 2, p. 419.

[76] Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest* (London, 2003), p. 264.

[77] Barker, *Great High Priest*, pp. 278, 302. The textual evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls in 4QDeut[j] = Deut 32:8 LXX confirms that this text should be read "according to the number of the sons of God," not as the "angels of God" as in the MT; see "sons" also in 4QDeut[q] = Deut 32:43 LXX, unlike "servants" MT. See Immanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, 1992), p. 269 on Deut. 32:8, and p. 365 on Ps. 29:1 and 89:7.

[78] Barker, *Great High Priest*, p. 164.

[79] Barker, *Great High Priest*, p. 267.

to be, and have its roots in the temple."[80] Likewise, the Psalms celebrate the time when the Lord declared, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your descendants for ever," asking if anyone can doubt or challenge this promise, for the Lord is "a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and terrible above all that are round about him" (Psalms 89:3–4, 7).

Just as it was the case that a covenant created the relationship of sonship between God and his king, God's covenant with Israel resulted in them all becoming his sons and daughters as well. The term "son" (*ben* or *bar*) is often used in the Old Testament and in the intertestamental literature "far more often" to describe the relationship between God and his people than to denote his relation to the king.[81] As Betz observes, the promise of becoming sons of God "was first made by God to Israel,"[82] as is evident from Deuteronomy 14:1, "You are the sons of the Lord your God (*huioi este kuriou tou theou*)"; from Deuteronomy 32:19, "The Lord saw it, and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters"; Isaiah 43:6, "bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth"; and Isaiah 45:11, "Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Will you question me about my children?" This covenant relationship is clearly reflected in the book of Jubilees: "And they will not obey until they acknowledge their sin and the sins of their fathers. But after this they will return to me in all uprighteousness and with all of (their) heart and soul. And I shall cut off the foreskin of their heart and the foreskin of the heart of their descendants. And I shall create for them a holy spirit, and I shall purify them so that they will not turn away from following me from that day and forever. And they will do my commandments. And I will be a father to them, and they will be sons to me. And they will all be called 'sons of the living God.' And every angel and spirit will know and acknowledge them" (Jubilees 1:22–5).[83]

That divine sonship relationship depended for its existence on the covenant of peace, the "everlasting covenant (*berit*)," maintained in the ancient Temple of Jerusalem. In Isaiah 54:10, "Yahweh declares that his steadfast love (*hesed*) will not depart from Israel and that the *berit* of his *shālom* will not be removed."[84] As Margaret Barker explains, this covenant of peace will not be removed because of its sustenance in the Holy of Holies:

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80 Barker, *Great High Priest*, p. 112.

81 Eduard Schweizer, "*huios*," in *TDNT*, vol. 8, pp. 347, 351, 359. For the notion of Israel being sons of God, see Ben Sirach 36:11–12; Pseudo-Philo 32:10; Test. Judah 24:3; Test. Isaac 1:2; Test. Levi 4:2.

82 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount,* p. 141, citing Deuteronomy 14:1; 32:5, 19; Isaiah 43:6; 45:11; Hosea 2:1.

83 James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols, New York, 1983–85), vol. 2, p. 54.

84 Stendebach, "*shālom*," vol. 15, p. 34. For "covenant of peace," see also Numbers 25:12; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26.

> The Hebrew dictionary offers two meanings for the consonants translated "everlasting"; it can be either [1] ancient, perpetual, the remote future and eternity, or it can be [2] hidden, secret. In fact these should not be distinguished as two meanings, because in the world of the temple the hidden, secret place was the eternal state outside time, and so this everlasting covenant would have been connected to the holy of holies. This explains why the everlasting covenant was also described as the 'covenant of peace,' *šalom*, another word associated with the state beyond the veil.[85]

Barker explains further that "the covenant of peace was therefore linked exclusively to the high priesthood, and entailed making atonement to repair any breach in the covenant which exposed the people to danger."[86] In performing and announcing such covenant renewals, in establishing and proclaiming peace, the feet of God's messengers become beautiful upon the holy mountains (Isaiah 52:7). It was these sons of God who were "to restore the original covenant, thus producing the paradisiacal state of the earth, which was represented by the holy of holies."[87]

Thus the seventh beatitude includes the promise that "peacemakers," who can be understood as including those who make and maintain the covenant of peace with God, will truly be the sons of God. For Christians, that covenant of peace was effectuated through the sacrifice of the atoning blood of the new High Priest, Jesus Christ:

> For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace (*eirēnopoiēsas*) through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself . . . things in earth or things in heaven, and you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight (*katenōpion autou*). (Colossians 1:19–22)

Christian disciples accepted that covenant by manifesting their faith: "for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). Brought along in this path, they become sons of God: "All who are led [guided, brought along] by [or to] the Spirit of God (*pneumati theou agontai*) are sons of God, . . . [and] have received the spirit of sonship (*pneuma huiothesias*), in which we cry, 'Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:14–15).

While this sonship may be fully "actualised only eschatologically,"[88] the conduct necessary to make that ultimate blessing possible begins in this life, with an eye toward the world to come. Thus, even in the here and now, the Psalmist can pronounce in temple environs, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you" (Psalms 82:6). And while "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of

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85 Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London, 2004), p. 34.

86 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 35.

87 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 48.

88 Schweizer, "*huios*," vol. 8, p. 390; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 141.

God" (Romans 8:19), in the 40-day literature the resurrected Jesus as High Priest can already reveal to twelve men and seven women "the relationship between the Lord of the universe and the heavenly beings known as the sons of God."[89] This sacred status of divine sonship, which was reserved in earlier temple eras for the king alone (Psalms 2:7), is now transcendently extended by Jesus to his faithful.

With the seventh beatitude, the Sermon on the Mount completes a full cycle of qualifications bringing the disciple into the presence of God and into divine status. Seeing the Beatitudes "as stages in the ascent of the soul," Augustine explained, "Seven in number, then, are the things which bring perfection; and the eighth illuminates and points out what is perfect, so that through these steps others might also be made perfect, starting once more, so to speak, from the beginning."[90] Friendly amendments to Augustine's insightful commentary would point out, first, that the ascent of the soul in Isaiah 6 and in Jewish literature generally is closely associated with the ritual cycles of the Temple; and second, that the eighth beatitude can be easily combined with the ninth and tenth to accommodate both the priestly number seven and the wisdom number ten.

As the last three beatitudes are closely linked together, they are best considered as an ensemble. In these final three of the ten statements, the focus shifts from the previous emphasis on individual righteousness to the proper response of the initiate to the social problems and persecutions that are sure to follow in the wake of the transformation that the Sermon on the Mount will both require and make possible:

(8) "Blessed are those who are persecuted (*diōxōsin*) for righteousness' sake (*heneken dikaiosunēs*), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:10).

(9) "Blessed are you when men shall revile you (*oneidisōsin*) and shall persecute you and shall utter all manner of evil (*pan ponēron*) against you [falsely], because of me (*heneken emou*)" (5:11).

(10) "Rejoice and be glad (*chairete kai agalliasthe*), for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets which were before you" (5:12).

At this juncture in the Sermon on the Mount, after hearing these three pronouncements, the disciple would clearly understand that suffering persecution is an essential part of the life of righteousness.[91] Are there connections between persecution and temple imagery?

At one level, the Psalms frequently express prayers of the righteous hoping to be rescued from those who pursue or persecute them. For example, "Save me from all them that persecute (*tōn diōkontōn*) me" (Psalms 7:1 LXX); "deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors!" (Psalms 31:15). "Stop the way against them that persecute me: say to my soul, 'I am thy salvation'" (Psalms 35:3 LXX; see also 69:4). In the Temple, which also served as a place of refuge, the

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89 Barker, *Great High Priest*, p. 22, citing *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, pp. 98–100.

90 Augustine, *De serm. dom. in monte* 1.3.10, quoted in Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 107.

91 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount,* pp. 142–6.

righteous sought to find deliverance from their persecutors and pursuers. Thus, when the Sermon on the Mount promises the blessings of heaven to the righteous who are persecuted, even if that blessing is to be deferred until the time of reward in the kingdom of heaven, it fills the vindicating role traditionally served by the Temple.

Furthermore, it would not have been uncommon for a Jewish person to expect to be persecuted if he had received some higher level of instruction or had attained a higher status than ordinary people. In the Wisdom of Solomon, the godless are said to lie in wait to test and torture the righteous man because "he professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord, . . . and boasts that God is his father" (Wisdom of Solomon 2:13, 16). First and foremost, the cause of persecution is the claim to have received some esoteric or special knowledge about God. Such knowledge and filial relationship would have come, at least to some significant degree, from the rituals and liturgies of the Temple. Thus, after hearing the language of the first seven beatitudes, all disciples would already have understood that the teachings revealed, the demands imposed, and the relationships created by the Sermon on the Mount would set them apart from the rest of society and would set them up for inevitable persecution.

At yet a deeper level, the disciples are told that this persecution will not be because of their own righteousness, but "because of me" (Matthew 5:11). The meaning of "for righteousness' sake" must have less to do with the disciple's righteousness than, in some way, "because of the Righteous One."[92] Indeed, the parallel beatitude in Luke explicitly traces the source of persecution to one's connection with the Son of man: "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you (*aphorisōsin*) and revile you, and cast out your name as evil (*ponēron*), on account of (*heneka*) the Son of man!" (Luke 6:22). Similarly, the Servant of the Lord is "described as the Righteous One, *sadiq*," in Isaiah 53:11.[93] Thus the burdens to be borne must have something to do with the disciple's identification with Jesus as the Lord. While "no attempt is made [in the Sermon on the Mount] to connect the theme [of persecution] with the life and death of Jesus,"[94] the connection between Jesus and his disciples will spawn hatred and extreme rejection. Accordingly, the relationship between Jesus and the disciple is not a casual one, not even one of master-teacher. The relationship entails complete ownership and identification, which is the kind of relationship created by the Covenant and maintained in the Temple.

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[92] Samuel T. Lachs argues that the word *saddiq* (righteous one) was in the original form of Matthew 5:10 but that it was wrongly understood as *zedeq* (righteousness), in "Some Textual Observations on the Sermon on the Mount," *JQR* 69/2 (1978): 101–2; Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 42.

[93] Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London, 2007), p. 49.

[94] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 145.

The nature of the persecution also indicates more than mere social rejection or economic ostracism. Luke 6:22 preserves the formula that these confederates of Jesus would be "excluded" (*aphorisōsin*). This term is predominantly associated with cultic separations: declaring something literally out of bounds, "dividing out of the unclean or unholy," or being cast out from the community (Numbers 12:14–15; 2 Esdras 10:8).[95] Thus, the expectation is that the Christian will be excommunicated, not allowed to enter the assembly or Temple. Identifying with Jesus will have cultic ramifications. Such confederates or unrighteous ones are to be cast out (*katebales*, Psalms 72:18; 105:26; 139:10); their names will no longer be numbered in the book of life (Psalms 69:28; 109:13).

Beyond simple exclusion, curses will be inveighed against those who have bound themselves to Jesus. People will pronounce every kind of evil (*pan ponēron*) upon them (Matthew 5:11). To be certain, one must fight fire with fire. Evil enemy spirits must be defeated by ritually calling upon stronger powers, and so the Sermon on the Mount fully expects that Christians will be reviled (*oneidisōsin*), insulted, blasphemed, and cursed by some (compare Exodus 22:28). Only a greater spiritual power can withstand these assaults, and that power must be derived through channels that are connected to an even more potent source of strength.

If these curses and persecutions are falsely and unjustly based (Psalms 119:86, 161), the Lord will bestow a great reward in heaven, "for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." Wisdom of Solomon continues that on the final judgment day,

> the righteous man will stand with great confidence in the presence of those who have afflicted him, . . .When they see him, they will be shaken with dreadful fear, and they will be amazed at his unexpected salvation, . . . and in anguish of spirit they will groan, and say, 'This is the man whom we once held in derision and made a byword of reproach—we fools! . . . Why has he been numbered among the sons of God? And why is his lot among the saints? (Wisdom of Solomon 5:1–7)

Anticipating that future day of total vindication, the present response of this band of righteous followers seems to bespeak the Temple. Rejoicing is doubly characteristic of the experience in the Temple: "Be glad (*euphanthēte*) in the Lord, and rejoice (*agalliasthe*), O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Psalms 32:11). The "double call [rejoice, *chairete,* and be exceeding glad, *agalliasthe* (Matthew 5:12)] appeals to the hearers or readers for what amounts to a liturgical response, much like 'hallelujah' or similar exclamations."[96] The verb *agalliaomai*, whose use in the Old Testament is obviously temple-related, appears almost exclusively in the Psalms (fifty-three times) and in Isaiah (eleven times). "Let all that trust on thee be glad in thee: they shall exult for ever (*agalliasontai*)" (Psalms 5:11 LXX); "I will be glad and exult in thee: I will sing to thy name, O

95 K.L. Schmidt, "*aphorizō*," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, p. 455.

96 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 151.

thou Most High" (Psalms 9:2). This has to do with "cultic joy which celebrates and extols the help and acts of God," including ecstatic and festal expressions.[97] The appropriate response to the nine preceding makarisms is this jubilant antiphony of the hearers themselves.

One further temple connection in this ensemble of beatitudes is found at the conclusion of Matthew 5:12, which calls to mind a time when people had rejected and persecuted the prophets who had gone before. This could well refer to the time, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, when the Chronicler reports the infamous disaster when the Temple was polluted by sins of the priests who refused to heed God's warnings and "kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets" (2 Chronicles 36:16). If this allusion in Matthew 5:12 was consciously given and received, the hearer would clearly have understood that, just as the Temple of Solomon had been destroyed because its priests had rejected the warnings of the prophets, so the Temple of Herod would be destroyed because its operators would scorn, curse, and reject the prophetic warnings of Jesus (compare Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2).

Thus, hearing the blessings of the Beatitudes in a ritual or temple context is more than natural. The trajectory of this reading is confirmed by other passages that are similar in form to the Beatitudes and found in several apocryphal, pseudepigraphic, and Greek religious texts,[98] in which this term had clear cultic usages, as well as eschatological and apocalyptic significance. For example, lines 480–87 in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* read: "Blessed (*olbios*) is the mortal on earth who has seen these rites, but the uninitiated who has no share in them never has the same lot once dead in the dreary darkness. . . . Highly blessed (*meg olbios*) is the mortal on earth whom they [Demeter and Zeus] graciously favor with love."[99]

In *2 Enoch* 42, one reads of an ascent into "the paradise of Edem [*sic*]," where a divine figure appears before Adam and his righteous posterity and rewards them with eternal light and life. Among the nine beatitudes he speaks to them are these:

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[97] R. Bultmann, "*agalliaomai*," in *TDNT*, vol. 1, pp. 19–20.

[98] See, for example, Sophocles frg. 753, "How thrice blessed are they of men who, when they have seen these rites, go to Hades; for to these alone is it given to live, and only misery to the rest," Tradicorum Graecorum Fragmenta (ed. A. Nauck, 1889), in H. Preisker, "*misthos*," in *TDNT*, vol. 4, pp. 704–5. See also *4 Ezra* 8:46–54; Pindar, frg. 131a; Sophocles, frg. 837; Euripides, *Bacchae,* pp. 72–7; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985), p. 289; Gustav L. Dirichlet, *De veterum macarismis* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1914), pp. 62–4; these and other references offered by Todd Compton, review of John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount*, in *FARMS Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): p. 322, n. 2.

[99] Helen P. Foley, *The Homeric* Hymn to Demeter (Princeton, 1994), pp. 26–7.

> Happy is the person who reverences the name of the Lord; . . . Happy is he who carries out righteous judgment; . . . Happy is he who clothes the naked with his garment, and to the hungry gives his bread; . . . Happy is he in whom is the truth, so that he may speak the truth to his neighbor; . . . Happy is he who has compassion on his lips and gentleness in his heart; Happy is he who understands all the works of the Lord, performed by the Lord.[100]

This connection with the Temple becomes explicit in *2 Enoch* 51–3, where one is further taught that "it is good to go to the Lord's temple" three times a day to praise God by speaking a matched list of seven blessings and curses, including: "Happy is the person who opens his lips for praise of the God of Sabaoth; . . . cursed is every person who opens his heart for insulting, and insults the poor and slanders his neighbor, because that person slanders God; . . . Happy—who cultivates the love of peace; cursed—who disturbs those who are peaceful. . . . All these things [will be weighed] in the balances and exposed in the books on the great judgment day."[101]

In the ancient sources of this genre, the word *makarios* "designates a state of being that pertains to the gods and can be awarded to humans *post mortem*. Thus in Hellenistic Egyptian religion, the term plays an important role in the cult of Osiris, in which it refers to a deceased person who has been before the court of the gods of the netherworld, who has declared there his innocence, and who has been approved to enter the paradise of Osiris, even to become an Osiris himself."[102]

Because these and other similar texts were regularly used in ancient cultic ceremonies, Betz sees an important parallel between the Beatitudes and the initiation rituals of ancient mystery religions, for both "impart to their adherents, in initiations of the most various kinds, the secrets of the world beyond and their own lot at present."[103] In other words, through the blessings of the Beatitudes toward the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, the listeners would hear an overture of the heights to which they may rise—the kingdoms and qualities they might obtain—if they remain true and faithful.

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100 Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, p. 168.

101 Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, pp. 178–81.

102 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 93.

103 Hans Deiter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Laurence Welborn (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 30; see pp. 26–33. Betz further relates that "the second line of the macarism in Matt. 5:3 is, therefore, to be regarded as an eschatological verdict reached on the basis of knowledge about the fate of humankind in the afterlife. There is thus a remarkable parallel within the phenomenology of religion between the ancient Greek mysteries of Demeter and other mysteries, and Jewish apocalyptic. . . . It is for this reason that the verdict awaited at the last judgment, both in the mysteries and in Jewish apocalyptic, can already be rendered in the earthly present" (p. 30). See further, Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 330–35.

Chapter 4
The Creation of a New Covenantal Relationship

After giving initial promises of ultimate blessings in the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount turns its attention to the creation of a new covenant relationship between God and his people. If the followers of Jesus are to claim the promises and blessings offered in the Beatitudes in the initial stage of the Sermon on the Mount, thereby becoming able to see God, being confirmed as sons of God, and inheriting the kingdom of heaven, they must become new creatures, to use Paul's words.[1] Their metamorphosis will be part of a larger transformation of the entire cosmos, in which this creation will become "a new heaven and a new earth," complete with a new heavenly temple, as John envisions in Revelation 21–2,[2] so that everything may be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). As with the Beatitudes, temple themes and elements continue to permeate this process, inasmuch as the Sermon on the Mount re-conceives the creation of the world, re-creates the covenant between God and Israel, and re-forms the community of the Lord's own personal people, whom God has called "out of darkness into his marvelous light," as Peter will say (1 Peter 2:9). In its next stages, the Sermon on the Mount commissions the people to stand in a new relationship with God and introduces the first set of stipulations required by that covenant relationship. Here, the Sermon on the Mount "spells out the tasks to which the community addressed is committed."[3]

Stage 2. Becoming the Salt of the Earth (5:13)

The Sermon on the Mount abruptly begins its programmatic[4] process by offering the people a special status, with a caution. The text both declares and commissions, "You are the salt of the earth," and at the same time warns, "if salt has lost its taste,

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[1] See 2 Corinthians 5:17 ("if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come") and Galatians 6:15 ("for neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation").

[2] See Revelation 21:1.

[3] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis, 1995), p. 158.

[4] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 155 (these sayings "formulate programmatically" the role and tasks of the SM's adherents).

how shall its saltness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13). This passage is easily understood as an invitation for this audience to become a certain kind of people and to serve the Lord and the world in a certain kind of way.

This text also contains more than a declaration that these people are already the salt of the earth, for that status carries with it serious responsibilities and consequences if the duties of that status are not carried out. Because serious obligations of this nature and magnitude are not created without some form of voluntary consent, one may assume that, either before or at this point in the Sermon on the Mount, the hearers had received a calling from the Lord to become "the salt of the earth" and that they had accepted that calling or would in connection with their acceptance of this teaching enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord to take up that commission. Thus, being identified as the salt of the earth carried with it a solemn warning that those who violate this covenant will lose that which is most essential to their very nature and will be rejected as useless by all men. These themes—making or renewing the covenant of belonging to the Lord, the issuance of warnings that dire consequences will curse those who fail to keep the covenant, the image of using salt in connection with the sacrifices of the covenant, and expelling and trampling underfoot those who disregard these sacred things—all bring to mind correlative functions at the Temple.

In the word "salt" in Matthew 5:13, one may find reference to the idiom "salt of the covenant" in Leviticus 2:13, which sets forth rules for proper sacrifice in the Temple: "You shall season all your cereal offerings with salt; you shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be lacking from your cereal offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt." As Jacob Milgrom points out, this idiom was used in biblical times "to refer to the binding character of the priestly perquisites (Num. 18:19) and of the David dynasty (2 Chr. 13:5)," presumably because the preservative qualities of salt "made it the ideal symbol of the perdurability of a covenant" throughout the ancient Near East.[5] A neo-Babylonian text uses the image of tasting salt to refer to one's "covenantal allies. Loyalty to the Persian monarch is described as having tasted 'the salt of the palace' (Ezra 4:14);" in Arabic, "to salt" means "to make a treaty;" and "it is likely that in Israel as well salt played a central role at the solemn meal that sealed a covenant (e.g., Gen. 26:30; 31:54; Exodus 24:11)."[6] Thus, when the Sermon on the Mount refers to people as the salt of the earth, evidently some type of covenant between Jesus and his followers, seen as benefiting themselves, the kingdom of heaven, and of all the earth, is implied or understood.

Among biblical commentaries, a wide variety of meanings has been attributed to Jesus' use of this particular metaphor, such as blending into the flesh of the sacrifice, being plain and ordinary, or symbolizing an agent of purification and preservation (Exodus 30:35; 2 Kings 2:19–23). Most often, these meanings draw

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5 Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York, 1991), p. 191.

6 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, p. 191.

on temple practices. Herman Hendrickx emphasizes that salt was used in various ways in the temple cult, including that of sprinkling it on offerings (see also Ezekiel 16:4; 43:24).[7] Wolfgang Nauck presents evidence, largely from rabbinic sources, that the reference to salt in Matthew 5 was "taken from a certain code of instruction for the disciples of Scribes," requiring them to be "modest and [of] humble spirit, industrious and salted, suffering insult and [they should be] liked by all men."[8] The concept of salt, according to his view, demands sacrifice, suffering, purification, and wisdom of the true disciple. Alfred Edersheim emphasizes the incorruptibility of sacrifices preserved with salt as he writes:

> We read in Mark 9:49: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt"; that is, as the salt is added to the sacrifice symbolically to point to its incorruption, so the reality and permanence of our Christian lives will be brought out by the fire of the great day, when what is wood, hay, and stubble shall be consumed; while that which is real shall prove itself incorruptible, having had the fire applied to it.[9]

However, as permanent and as incorruptible as salt is supposed to be, it is possible, Jesus warns, for this unusual "salt of the earth" somehow to lose its savor, to become useless, dull, insipid, or foolish (*mōranthei*), in which case it loses the might or strength to do anything at all (*eis ouden ischuei*). Metaphorically speaking, in just the same way, if a disciple turns away from this covenantal commission to be the "salt of the earth" and thereby becomes useless to the Lord, this person will be "cast out (*blēthēnai exō*)," or cut off from the circles of worthies.

The one place that salt is mentioned in the Psalms comes in the superscription at the beginning of Psalm 60, about the time when Joab defeated Edom in the Valley of Salt. After this head note, the psalm commences with a fear that God has cast off his people and shaken the earth, and then gives reassurance that God has spoken in the Temple and will succor his people: "O God, thou hast rejected us (*apōsō*), broken our defenses; thou hast been angry; oh, restore us. Thou hast made the land to quake, thou hast rent it open; repair its breaches, for it totters . . . . That thy beloved [ones] may be delivered, give victory by thy right hand and answer us! God has spoken in his sanctuary. . . . Hast thou not rejected (*apōsamenos*) us, O God? . . . O grant us help against the foe" (Psalms 60:1–2, 5–6, 10–11). Here is a confluence of the ideas of salt, being rejected (albeit *apōtheō*, pushed aside, thrust away, or expelled), the earth, God speaking, and the threat of enemies—ideas that are not far removed from the elements in Jesus' statement about the salt of the earth.

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7 Herman Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1984), p. 39.

8 Wolfgang Nauck, "Salt as a Metaphor in Instructions for Discipleship," *ST* 6 (1953): 165–6; see 165–78; italics deleted.

9 Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (updated edition, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1994), p. 78.

The expression *ballein exō* is semantically equivalent to *ekballein*, literally to throw away, which in the context of a covenant community means to be expelled from the fellowship, rejected by God, and banned from entering sacred places or spaces.[10] In the Psalms, this word is used in reference to Israel casting the Canaanites out of the land (Psalms 44:2 LXX; 78:55; 80:8), and in cursing an opponent with having his family expelled from its property (Psalms 109:10). Along the same lines, the word is used four times in the Gospel of John in the sense of excommunication or disfellowshipment: first in reference to the ruling that anyone who agreed that Jesus was the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue (John 9:22), and second when Jesus himself was expelled with double emphasis (*exebalon auton exō*; John 9:34). The practice of expelling people from the synagogue would surely have been known to the audience listening to Jesus as he gave the Sermon on the Mount, making it likely that they would have understood this expression to mean that if they were not themselves faithful to their commission from Jesus they would be expelled from associations with him. In the third instance, Jesus assured the multitude in his Bread of Life sermon that he would exclude from his presence none whom the Father had caused to come to him (John 6:37); and in the fourth, Jesus says that whoever does not abide in him is cast out (*eblēthē exō*) and will wither, be gathered, and be burned as a severed branch (John 15:6). Further evidence that people in the first century understood the idea of being cast out in the sense of being excluded from a congregation or *ekklesia* is found in 3 John 1:10, when the local church leader Diotrephes refused to receive the apostle John and his brethren, spoke malicious words against them, forbade others to receive them, and cast out (excommunicated, *ekballei*) anyone who did.[11] Those expelled from the synagogue or congregation would be all the more barred from entering the Temple, for they would pollute the holy place (see Acts 21:28).

Being disdainfully "trodden underfoot (*katapateisthai*)" (Matthew 5:13; see also 7:6) was a fate or punishment of utter contempt. Various scriptures make use of this image to convey God's judgments upon the proud and those who break the covenant or disregard the Temple.[12] They deserve to be trodden underfoot because they themselves have trodden underfoot the holy things, the Temple, or the judgments of God. To mention a few instances where this image appears, those who desecrate the Sabbath will be trodden underfoot (2 Esdras 23:15), and Ephraim will be oppressed and trodden underfoot for having trampled judgment underfoot (Isaiah 28:3; Hosea 5:11 LXX). That the Temple will be trampled underfoot is prophesied in Daniel 8:13 LXX, and 3 Maccabees 2:18 speaks of the Temple being trodden down by proud Gentiles. Judas Maccabeus called upon the Lord to look upon all those who had been trodden down and also to take pity on the Temple that

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[10] Contaminated stones in a leper's house are cast out in Leviticus 14:40; idols are thrown away in Isaiah 2:20.

[11] Friedrich Hauck, "*ballō*," in *TDNT*, vol. 1, pp. 527–8.

[12] See generally, Georg Bertram, "*pateō*," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, p. 941.

had been profaned (2 Maccabees 8:2). At the same time, the Psalmist deeply fears that he himself will be trodden down by the evil forces of darkness (Psalms 7:5; 55:1–2; 56:3; 138:11), being trodden underfoot of men. There is hope only if the Lord is the one who does the treading: "He will again have compassion upon us, he will tread our iniquities underfoot. Thou wilt cast our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). If the righteous are accountable to be the salt of the earth for the benefit of mankind, however, it is talionically fitting that those who fail in their covenantal responsibility should then be trodden into the earth by mankind.

Stage 3. Letting There Be Light (5:14–16)

Having committed the hearers to serving as the salt of the earth, the Sermon on the Mount places on them the responsibility of becoming the light of the world: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill (*epanō orous*) cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand (*epi tēn luchnian*), and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (5:14–16). Several elements in this charge reverberate with temple themes.

One can only imagine that Jesus' audience would have been stunned by the words "You are the light of the world." The common Jewish culture of the day saw God as the light of the world, a strong theme in the Psalms: "The Lord is my light" (Psalms 27:1); "O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalms 104:1–2). To people who thought of God as the source of light, it is certainly not hard to imagine that it could well have seemed shocking, almost blasphemous, to say that men are the light of the world.

On hearing this, one would naturally wonder, How is it possible that people would become a source or conveyer of such light? How would they share in this divine function? This would only be possible if the one who lights that lamp is God himself, as psalmist imagery anticipated: "Yea, thou dost light my lamp" (Psalms 18:28); "in thy light do we see light" (Psalms 39:9). The Beatitudes had also set the stage for the answer to these questions: by seeing God (Matthew 5:8), as did Moses or Enoch and the other angelic beings in the Temple, one can take on and radiantly transmit that light, for as John later will state, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

The Temple was understood as the principal place where this transmission of light occurred. Notable descriptions of this glorious light are found in the temple visions recounted in the books of 1 Enoch and Daniel; each of these visions paints a picture of fire and light surrounding God, his throne and his earthly/heavenly Temple.[13] As the dwelling place of God, who is the light of the world, the Temple

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[13] Margaret Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp. 19–22.

itself enshrined and radiated light. Conspicuously, the Temple was the house of light that had been placed by God on his holy mountain, a beacon to the world.

Thus, when Jesus said, "A city set on a hill cannot be hid," his words can be taken, as with all of his parables, either at face value as making an ordinary ethical observation, or they can be understood as presenting an allegorical (or anagogical) statement about the Temple. In the latter sense, the "city" represents the Holy Temple City, which does not simply happen to lie on a gentle hillside but has consciously been placed (reading *keimenē,* as does Jerome, in the passive, not the middle, voice) way up on the very top (*epanō*[14]) *of a significant mountain (orous*). Meanings of the word *keimenē* include having been set, appointed, or destined, which readily brings to mind the following lines from the song that Moses and all Israel sang to Yahweh in the wilderness: "Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them on thy own mountain, the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thy abode, the sanctuary, Lord, which thy hands have established" (Exodus 15:17). Notwithstanding Nolland's comment to the contrary,[15] Jesus' statement draws much of its extraordinary strength by understanding that this mountain was not an ordinary hill. Indeed, Theodoret of Cyrus of the early fifth century referred to Matthew 5:15 in his discussion of Psalms 48:2, in which he saw a clear reference to the city of Jerusalem, "beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King."[16] Likewise, Betz concludes that this city on the top of a mountain which "cannot be hid" is likely Jerusalem: "The observation that cities often are situated on the top of mountains is true of many ancient cities, but one can hardly have any doubt that here it refers to Jerusalem. This city is of great importance to the SM; it is the only city that is mentioned several times."[17] It may also prefigure the eschatological Heavenly Temple-City of Revelation 21:22,[18] drawing upon the full ancient imagery of the house of God situated on the summit of the cosmic mountain.

This Temple-City is not to be hidden. God did not establish this city to be placed under a bushel (*modios*), particularly a Roman bushel (the Greek *modios* being a direct loan word from the Latin, *modius*). Instead, this divine light was to

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[14] Reminiscent of the mountain top in Exodus 19:20.

[15] Nolland claims that "it is almost certainly a mistake to find a specific link to Jerusalem here." John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005), p. 214. The absurdity of the image of a person building a city on a hill and then putting it under a bushel only becomes more absurd when that temple-city is divinely destined for cosmic pre-eminence.

[16] Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington, DC, 2000), 1.278.

[17] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 161.

[18] The New Jerusalem is described in the Apocalypse as a golden cube—the holy of holies. Also, the Temple Scroll describes how the ideal temple and holy city were to be arranged. Margaret Barker, *Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London, 2007), pp. 100–103.

shine forth at all times to the entire world, as had been long acclaimed with respect to the Temple. The Temple was known as a place of light; it "was built as a temple of the sun with its opening towards the east, so that the sun at the equinoxes shone in straight through the open gates towards 'the Holy of Holies.'"[19] Pure olive oil was used in the Temple to keep a light burning continually.[20]

Margaret Barker argues that all of this light imagery in the New Testament builds upon the light imagery of the Temple of the Old Testament.[21] To the Israelite mind, she points out, "the great source of light, which dawned upon the people like the sunrise, was actually the glory of the presence of the Lord, described by the prophets and visionaries as a burning throne, surrounded by fiery creatures."[22] This throne sat in the Holy of Holies, and thus it was from that sacred and veiled place that the light of the Lord shone upon his people.[23] Even the priestly breastplate implements of light and truth were not to remain cloistered within the holy place, but were to go forth: "send out thy light (*urim*) and thy truth (*thummim*)" (Psalms 43:3). This light of the Temple will shine forth, not only as the Temple itself effuses splendor and glory, but also through the lives of the righteous kings, priests, and people who serve and are blessed there. As the Psalms sing: "He will bring forth thy righteousness (*dikaiosunē*) as light" (Psalms 37:6); and from a royal psalm of thanksgiving probably sung in conjunction with ritual sacrifice at the Temple,[24] "Yea, thou dost light my lamp (*luchnos*); the Lord my God lightens my darkness" (Psalms 18:28); "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105). In Zion, God has "prepared a lamp for [his] anointed" (Psalms 132:17).

The lampstand that Jesus mentions may, of course, be any indefinite lamp holder; but it is not insignificant that he speaks of placing the lamp "upon *the* lampstand (*epi tēn luchnian*)" and that the word *luchnia* is the specific term used for the seven-branched lampstand of pure gold in Exodus 25:31–7 LXX (where this Greek word memorably appears eight concentrated times) and also for the golden candlestick holding the lamps of the seven churches in John's Apocalypse (Revelation 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1, 5). The use of this term by Josephus, in *Antiquities of the Jews* 14.72, confirms that this word was ordinarily understood in the first century as, first and foremost, the menorah of the Temple, a prominent feature and symbol of the Temple.[25] The Enoch literature, as well, describes how a high

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19 Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (New York, 1962), vol. 1, p. 133.

20 Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *The Ceremonies of Judaism* (Cincinnati, 1930), p. 84.

21 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, pp. 13–25.

22 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, p. 17.

23 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, pp. 17–19.

24 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 31–2.

25 Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1985), pp. 156, 208–9, 217–18.

priestly figure entered a place of fire to come into God's presence—and that fire is represented in the Temple by the menorah.[26]

The supernal metaphysics of light was not only operative in the Jewish Temple. It also played important roles in Hellenistic mystical experience, where "light effects play a role in the cult of the dead. Light drives out demons. Esp. instructive are the mysteries, e.g., the Eleusinian." In early Greek texts, light means an actual epiphany or vision, not just personal illumination, as in the case of an epiphany of Dionysos. In later Greek periods, "the way through the mystery becomes mystical ascent, with interchange between light and darkness."[27] To people who knew nothing of atoms, electrons, light waves, or photons, the operation and perception of light was itself quite a mystery, making light a natural subject for philosophical speculation and esoteric explanations.

In the Sermon on the Mount, however, light was taken beyond its cloistered contexts. It is of the essence for the Sermon on the Mount that the divine light, which epitomized the Temple, should not remain secluded within the Temple. Just as the light of the fires within the Temple were placed on high so to illuminate everyone and everything in that house,[28] the Lord's city on his mountain cannot be hid from the world. The light is now understood as coming into the world, shining in the darkness, in all the world, and being the light of men (John 1:4–5, 9–10), as the Prologue to the Gospel of John makes manifest, bringing up another correspondence between the light of the Temple and the creation of the world. The Gospel of John sees the incarnation of Jesus as the advent of a new creation, a new Genesis of the world. Its opening phrase, "In the beginning was the word" (John 1:1), echoes the opening lines of the first creation account in Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, . . . and darkness was upon the face of the deep, . . . and God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Genesis 1:1–3). Besides the strong theme of light in Genesis 1 and Matthew 5:16, a grammatical similarity connects the two expressions, "Let shine your light (*lampsatō to phōs*)" which appears here toward the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, and "Let there be light (*genēthētō phōs*)" which stands at the outset of the creation of the world in Genesis.

All of this ties together in the Temple, where the six days of the creation were ritualized, the light of which may be reflected in this part of the Sermon on the Mount. The ordering of the Temple represented the days of the creation. An early Midrash declared: "The tabernacle is equal to the creation of the world." Day one was represented by the Holy of Holies, day two by the veil, day three the

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[26] Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London, 2004), pp. 19–20.

[27] Hans Conzelmann, "*phōs*," in *TDNT*, vol. 9, pp. 315–16.

[28] The feminine *oikia* could also on occasion refer to the Temple, the house of God, although the masculine *oikos* was more common. Daniel M. Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple and the 'Parting of the Ways,'" in Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (eds), *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007), pp. 130–31.

bronze laver, and day four the seven-branched lamp.[29] "On the fourth day the seven branched lamp was set in place, to represent the great lights set in heaven on the fourth day."[30] Josephus, Origen, Philo, and the Midrash Tanhuma all thought of the Temple as representing the whole of creation.[31]

In the Temple, particularly in the Holy of Holies, certain people became exalted as beings of light. Enoch in a vision entered the holy cubical, ascending past the sons of God, beings of radiant light who walked on fire and where everything was fire—ceilings, walls, and everything around him.[32] Moses was transfigured when he spoke to God on the mountain,[33] and he was not the only person described this way: "A few chosen people were able to enter the place of light and the experience transformed them. They became a part of that light. They became heavenly beings."[34] Accordingly, priests and prophets petitioned to have this light shine upon them (see Numbers 6:24–6; Psalms 31:16).[35] When, therefore, Jesus tells his hearers to let their light shine upon others so that they too may be brought to the Father, he employs an image pertinent to the Temple and temple traditions. His words suggest that all true disciples, like Moses, are filled with this special light. As Barker notes, such references to light imagery carried into the New Testament. Barker's translation of 2 Corinthians 3:17–18 captures the projection of this illumination from the image of Moses descending from Sinai: "And we all, with unveiled faces, reflecting the glory of the Lord are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another."[36]

What Moses brought down off the holy mount was a treaty, a covenant, between Yahweh and the people of Israel. That covenant was complete with laws and stipulations. Listeners steeped in that tradition could easily have heard a refrain of this same covenant theme in what Jesus said. In hearing Jesus say "you are the light of the world" (5:14), in-group listeners would likely have connected the correspondence between that statement and Isaiah's similar use of being a "light" to the world in a covenant context: "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness . . . ; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations" (Isaiah 42:6). That correspondence would have been confirmed as Jesus began to turn his attention next to matters of the law, the commandments, and the way in which people should live within that covenant.

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29 Barker, *Temple Theology*, pp. 17–19, citing Midrash *Tanhuma* 11.2, translation by S.A. Berman (Hoboken, New Jersey, 1996). Barker, *Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, p. 17.

30 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 17.

31 Barker, *Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, p. 17.

32 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, pp. 21–2; Barker, *Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, p. 22.

33 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, p. 61.

34 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, pp. 61–2.

35 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, p. 18.

36 Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, p. 69.

Implicit in Jesus' words here about the light and the world is not only an allusion back to the creation of the world but also a foreshadowing ahead to the doctrine of the Two Ways (the separation of opposites, light and dark, and heaven and earth).[37] Those under the covenant were to walk in the light, not in the darkness. They were to choose life, not death. This teaching was "emphatically brought home in the earliest Christian literature," proclaiming "that there lie before every human being and before the church itself two roads between which a choice must be made. The one is the road of darkness, the way of evil; the other, the way of light."[38] This principle of opposition is fundamental to the Sermon on the Mount. It will surface again explicitly in the doctrine of the Two Ways, one narrow and the other wide, in Matthew 7:13.

Themes such as these about the creation and covenant were not confined in the Bible to wisdom literature about living a good life in general; they were equally found in ritual. Indeed, there is little doubt that the creation account of Genesis and the law-giving theophany in Exodus played key roles in ancient Israelite temple ritual, although the details often remain obscure.[39]

In Jesus' words, these old symbolisms have been imbued with new, additional meaning. The daily walk of the righteous should not be aimed at currying favor among men, but the qualities of their deeds should shine before men in a particular way, namely in such a way (*houtōs*) that when others see those deeds they will glorify, not the doers, but their Father in the heavens (Matthew 5:16). Understood in this way, there is no tension between Matthew 5:14–16 and being seen of men in Matthew 6:2, 5, 16. Just as the Creator looked at the works of the creation and pronounced those works (*erga*, Genesis 2:2) to be good and beautiful (*kalon* or *kala* in Genesis 1:4, 8, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), even "very good" (*kala lian* in Genesis 1:31), Jesus now invites each disciple to become in his or her own way a creator of "good works (*kala erga*)" (Matthew 5:16), so that when they are seen, people will glorify God. The seat for the glorification of God, it almost goes without saying, is the Temple. There the glory of the Lord shines from his throne, which is on the wings of the cherubim—a reference to the Holy of Holies and the ark of the covenant,[40] as Jesus' listeners would have understood.

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[37] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 522–7.

[38] Hugh W. Nibley, *The World and the Prophets* (Salt Lake City, 1987), p. 185.

[39] Discussed in Stephen D. Ricks, "Liturgy and Cosmogony: The Ritual Use of Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East" (Provo, Utah, 1981). Ricks cites Arieh Toeg, "Genesis 1 and the Sabbath [Hebrew]," *BM* 50 (1972): 290; and Peter J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25–40," *ZAW* 89 (1977): 375–8. These articles explore the relationships between the creation account and the temple, particularly the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31. See also Hugh W. Nibley, *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, 1994), pp. 545–7.

[40] Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, p. 18.

Stage 4. Renewing the Commitment to Keep the Law of the Covenant (5:17–20)

Having extended the charge (or invitation) to personally embrace the obligations of God's covenant with his people, the Sermon on the Mount next affirms and requires an unwavering commitment to keep the law of God as that law was fully intended to be lived, even in its most minute details: "Think not that I have come to abolish (*katalusai*) the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill (*plērōsai*) them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished (*genētai*). Whoever then relaxes (*lusēi*) one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17–20).

It has been endlessly debated what Jesus meant by these words and in his other statements about various provisions of the Torah.[41] In some ways Jesus appears to be antinomian, rejecting the law and replacing it with an entirely new system.[42] In other instances and for stronger reasons, it makes better sense to see him as a friendly inside critic who is working from within Judaism, hoping to inspire a more acceptable adherence to the traditional law.[43] Roland Worth cites these

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41 For items relevant to this passage in the SM, see Robert J. Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975); Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland, *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007); William R.G. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (Tübingen, 1997; reprinted Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002); Phillip Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew* (Atlanta, 2007); Benjamin Wisner Bacon, "Jesus and the Law: A Study of the First 'Book' of Matthew (Mt. 3–7)," *JBL* 47/3–4 (1928): 203–31; Bennett Harvie Branscomb, "Jesus' Attitude to the Law of Moses," *JBL* 47/1–2 (1928): 32–40; Roger D. Congdon, "Did Jesus Sustain the Law in Matthew 5?" *BSac* 135 (April–June 1978): 117–25; William J. Dumbrell, "The Logic of the Role of the Law in Matthew 5:1–20," *NovT* 23 (January 1981): 1–21; Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly, "Attitudes to the Law in Matthew's Gospel: A Discussion of Matthew 5:18," *BR* 17 (1972): 19–32; Morna D. Hooker, "Christ: The 'End' of the Law," in David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl Henning Ulrichsen (eds), *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 126–46.

42 Texts that support the idea that Jesus emphasized the inadequacy of usual understandings of the law and demanded a new promulgation or interpretation of halakhic rulings to serve as norms in the new kingdom of heaven include Matthew 5:21–48; 7:12; 8:3; 8:22; 9:10–11; 11:11–15; 11:28–30; 12:1–8, 9–14; 15:1–11; 15:32–9; 16:19; 17:24; 18:3; 19:3–9; 21:12–13; 21:31–2.

43 Texts in the Gospel of Matthew that support the idea that Jesus essentially accepted the law and encouraged people to comply with the Jewish legal and temple institutions include Matthew 3:8; 5:3–10; 8:4; 9:20; 14:36; 23:2–3; 24:20.

particular verses in the Sermon on the Mount as principal evidence that Jesus was still strongly connected to the Temple itself and to the ceremonies conducted there:

> In light of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:17–20, we would expect to find him faithfully following all the provisions of the Mosaic Law—both its moral provisions and its ceremonial elements—and encouraging others to do so as well. We find this to be the case. Jesus takes for granted that gifts would be presented at the altar of the temple in Jerusalem (Mt. 5:23), that alms would and should be given (Mt. 6:2), and that fasting would be practiced (Mt. 6:16).[44]

This is not the place to examine the complex body of New Testament scholarship regarding Jesus' overall attitude toward the law but rather simply to suggest a different approach to all the relevant law-related materials in Matthew 5.

In puzzling over the question of what was meant by the key passage in Matthew 5:17–20, it may be less important to know how Jesus intended particular laws to be observed than to consider what role the law played in the Temple and also in Jesus' early teachings in this text. Had Jesus intended to give an elaborate commentary on the technical applications of certain provisions in the law, he could have done so. But that is not what one finds anywhere in the Sermon on the Mount. So one must look elsewhere for an answer to the question of what Jesus meant when he said that he had come to fulfill the law and the prophets, that nothing in the law would be abrogated, and that keeping and teaching even the minor commandments is essential to one's entering into the kingdom of heaven. Rather than attempting to set forth a detailed commentary on the law, the Sermon on the Mount's intended function is to be instrumental in establishing a covenant relationship between God and the followers of Jesus.

Jesus is less concerned at this stage in the Sermon on the Mount that his hearers know exactly what the law means or how it should be applied in each case than that his followers understand that they will be required to live the law with wholehearted commitment, however those laws will be delivered and explained to them. As members of this sect, they will learn from Jesus or his representatives what the law requires, and they will be committed to live according to the community's understanding of those laws or *halakhic* regulations. At this point in the Sermon on the Mount, however, first-time listeners have no idea what will come next. They may well be surprised at what they will be asked to do or how a provision of the law will be interpreted and applied. They may find to their astonishment and discomfort that Jesus will require them to take certain provisions of the law more seriously than they had ever before imagined; they may find that the law in fact embodies more elevated precepts than they had previously thought. Some listeners at this stage could be expected to embrace this general rule of recognition

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[44] Roland H. Worth Jr, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots* (Mahwah, New Jersey, 1997), p. 67.

by which interpretive authority is invested in Jesus. Others, undoubtedly, could be expected to turn away from this regime and walk no further under this arrangement. But for those who would stay, their allegiance would now be to Jesus as the one who had the plenary power to articulate and exemplify the full meaning of the law, that is, to fulfill the law, every jot and tittle of it. The Sermon on the Mount at this stage constitutionally assures that no other interpretations of the law will be allowed within the sect, and that those who try, even in the least degree, to supplant the fullness of the law and the prophets that Jesus will institute shall be themselves counted as the least in this community, now and forever. What is of most concern at this stage is to establish the organic nature of this new community. The Sermon does this by laying down the fundamental article of Jesus' authority, that he has come to fulfill the law and the prophets, that his words and ways will be determinative. In contrast, the followers of Jesus shall not be beholden to the Scribes or the Pharisees. In the end for these people it will be Jesus who speaks "with authority" and not "as their Scribes" (Matthew 7:29).

Grounding a new voice of authority, of course, is easier said than done, and here is where the traditional role of the law in treaty and covenant making can be drawn into service. Just as the Ten Commandments and the Covenant Code function in the text of Exodus 19–24 at Sinai as the stipulations comprising the substance of the covenant between Yahweh and the house of Israel, so the legal contents of the Sermon on the Mount define the elements of the restored covenant renewed on this occasion between God and the followers of Jesus. Hence, this section in the Sermon on the Mount has rightly been "compared to the preamble of a new treaty that relates what will be in force from now on but based on an existing foundation. No hints in the text indicate that this verse needs to be understood as a demand for a special Law-observant piety."[45] Rather, the new arrangement, as the prophet Jeremiah had said, is to be a new covenant according to which the law of God will not be written on tablets of stone but in the inward parts of the heart:

> This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:33–4)

In several ways it would appear that this prophecy in Jeremiah 31 supplied elements that appear in the blueprint of the constitutional preamble to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:17–20, with its emphases on having the law in one's heart

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[45] Roland Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew—An Ongoing Debate," in Gurtner and Nolland (eds), *Built upon the Rock*, p. 75.

(compare Matthew 5:8, 28; 6:21), teaching one's neighbor correctly (compare Matthew 5:19), and wanting to include everyone from the greatest to the least (compare Matthew 5:19), so that they will know the Lord and hence be known to the Lord (compare Matthew 7:21–3). Most of all, Jeremiah 31 foresees the creation of a new covenant (*diathēkē kainē*, Jeremiah 38:31, the same words being used in 1 Corinthians 11:25 and several manuscripts of Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24 and Luke 22:20), or in other words a new treaty relationship between God and his people. Perhaps this linkage between Matthew 5 and Jeremiah 31 led some people to say of Jesus, according to Matthew's account, that he was Jeremiah (Matthew 16:14).

Here, too, a prominent temple theme relating to the law of God comes into play, for promulgating, inculcating, and enshrining the law and the Decalogue (contained in the ark of the covenant) were among the principal functions of the Temple in Jerusalem. The essence of the covenant between God and Israel was fundamentally tied to the law and, hence, to the Temple. A reading of the entire law occurred at the Temple every seventh year during the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10–12), and on those occasions the covenant was renewed at the Temple. As Moshe Weinfeld has stated: "The view has become increasingly accepted that the event at which God pronounced his words at Sinai was not regarded as a once and for all event but as an occurrence that repeated itself whenever the people of Israel assembled and swore allegiance to their God,"[46] and thus "it should be assumed that the Decalogue was read in the sanctuaries at ceremonies of covenant renewal; and the people would commit themselves each time anew"; particularly, "in Second Temple times, the Decalogue was read daily in the Temple, together with the Shema^{c} prayer, close to the time of the offering of the Daily Offering" and "all those present would commit themselves to them by covenant and oath."[47] Thus "the reading of the Decalogue and the Shema^{c} prayer every morning were considered acceptance of the yoke of the heavenly kingdom, a kind of commitment by oath," and accordingly this set of obligations "constituted a kind of binding foundation-scroll of the Israelite community."[48] Hence, Jesus' positive attitude toward the law and his explicit use of three of the Ten Commandments is clearly understandable as an element in his formation of a new community of committed followers.

Worth has argued that, given the context in which Jesus taught, it would have been "vital for him to impress upon his listeners that no matter how much what he said departed from what they had been taught, it in no way departed from what the Mosaic Law itself demanded. In doing this, he was defying the religious traditions

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[46] Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in Edwin R. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (eds), *Religion and Law: Biblical Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1990), pp. 26–7.

[47] Weinfeld, "Decalogue," 34 (citing Tamid 5:1) and 37.

[48] Weinfeld, "Decalogue," 36–7.

that had evolved, but he was opposing nothing that came from God."[49] Even in Jesus' later cleansing of the Temple, Jesus did not reject the law or the Temple; instead, he protected the sanctity of the Temple by driving out the inappropriate business practices that had developed in those sacred precincts, "subvert[ing] the central purpose of the temple."[50] Interestingly, when Jesus later prophesied that every stone of the Temple would be torn down (*kataluthēsetai*, Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2), he used a word that reverberated with his statement in Matthew 5:17, giving assurance that he never intended to abolish (*katalusai*) even the least provision of the law itself. The stones of the Temple would fall by the hands of others, but his desire was to see that the laws behind the Temple were fully kept and fulfilled.

Another conspicuous point worth mentioning in this connection is the way in which the Decalogue was used in the Temple, an awareness of which would have drawn Jewish listeners further into the surroundings of the Temple. The Decalogue had a pervasive presence in the Temple because these ten statements served implicitly as requirements for entering the Temple. Worthiness or purity was required to enter into sacred space (echoing the preparations required of Moses and the people as they contemplated entering the holy mountain in Exodus 19), and in all likelihood the Ten Commandments functioned in ancient Israel as temple entrance requirements. Gerhard von Rad and Klaus Koch have argued that the Ten Commandments and related texts served as a temple entrance liturgy, "a ceremonious encounter or interview on the Temple Mount between a priest and a pilgrim, in which the requirements for entrance into the holy area were laid out."[51] One can see such an entrance examination standing in the background of Psalm 24, which asks questions of anyone seeking admission to the temple precinct: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" The answer is, "He that has clean hands, a pure heart, has not set his mind on falsehood, nor borne false witness." The interdiction against bearing false witness echoes the Decalogue's ninth commandment.

Such temple entrance requirements were not unique to Israel. The Egyptian Book of the Dead requires that the soul upon arrival at the hall of Maat, goddess of righteousness and judgment, recite a series of thirty-seven negative confessions concerning offenses against the gods or man in order to be admitted in purity before the god. Among these apodictic-like confessions are several that parallel the Decalogue: "Not have I despised God. Not have I killed. Not have I fornicated. Not have I diminished the offerings. Not have I stolen," and so on.[52]

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[49] Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 37.

[50] Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 68.

[51] Klaus Koch, "Tempeleinlassliturgien und Dekaloge," in Rolf Rendtorff und Klaus Koch (eds), *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen* (Neukirchen, 1961), pp. 45–60. The relevant publications of von Rad are listed in n. 2.

[52] E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London, 1895; republished New York, 1967), pp. 194–7.

What can be counted as ten entrance requirements were posted in front of a first-century B.C.E. private sanctuary in Philadelphia, in Asia Minor. These requirements, listed below, were issued by the goddess Agdistis to Dionysius in a dream from Zeus, and all visitors must swear each month to keep these ten standards, not just in the sanctuary but everywhere:

1. Thou shalt not deceive
2. Not use poison harmful to men
3. No harmful spells
4. No love potion
5. No abortions
6. Not rob
7. Not murder
8. No ill-intentions toward this sanctuary
9. No cover-up of any such doing by others
10. No sexual relations except with wife.[53]

Thus the potent use by Jesus of representative commandments from the Decalogue may well have sparked memories of the Temple in the minds of its listeners, especially when these words in Matthew 5:21–37 followed right after the warning in Matthew 5:20 that those who do not keep these commandments shall in no way "enter into the kingdom of heaven." Entrance to the Temple and entrance into the kingdom of God were, in several ways, virtually tantamount to each other. As Herman Hendrickx writes, the idea of entering into the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 5:20 and 7:21 may be directly connected either to the image of Israel entering the promised land (whether historically or eschatologically) or to the image of "ritual purity and ethical righteousness for entrance through the Temple gate or the city gates of Jerusalem," and "the latter seems to be more important in Mt. 5:20."[54] Accordingly, Hendrickx has concluded that Matthew 5:20 has rightly "been form-critically classified both as a 'provision of sacred law' (*Satz heiligen Rechtes*) and as an 'entrance-requirement' (*Engangsbedingung*). The verse has a double function: it sums up everything that precedes it and is also an immediate introduction to the antitheses, while Mt. 5:17–20 as a unit constitutes the larger introduction to the antitheses"[55] which immediately follow.

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[53] Cited in Weinfeld, "Decalogue," 34–6; first published in O. Weinreich, *Stiftung und Kultsatzungen eines Privatheiligtums in Philadelphia in Lydien* (Heidelberg, 1919). See further Moshe Weinfeld, "Instructions for Temple Visitors in the Bible and in Ancient Egypt," *ScrHier* 28 (1982): 224–50. Compare also Didache 2.2–6, similarly prohibiting murder, adultery, pedophilia, stealing, magic, potions, abortion, coveting, swearing false oaths, perjury, curses, grudges, greed, hypocrisy, and pride.

[54] Herman Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1984), pp. 55–6.

[55] Hendrickx, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 56.

Providing the backbone for the succeeding stages of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus thus speaks next of at least five laws from the Pentateuch: three come from the Decalogue, namely the commandments against (a) murder, (b) adultery, and (c) swearing falsely by the name of God. Another deals with (d) the essential principle of talionic or restorative justice which is central to the Covenant Code (see Exodus 21:23–5) and also to the basic Israelite concept of justice (see Leviticus 24:17–21). The final law that is interpreted in this sequence comes from the heart of the Holiness Code in its commandment (e) to love one's neighbor: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbor, lest you bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:17–18). By speaking of these five key provisions of the law, Jesus elliptically embraces and epitomizes the totality of the law, just as Psalm 24 mentioned four such requirements and Psalm 50:18–20 listed three of the Ten Commandments (namely theft, adultery, and bearing false witness), but in doing so these psalms were understood as embracing the law in its fullness and completeness.

At the same time, because the Sermon on the Mount mentions these laws as representative requirements for entering into the kingdom of heaven, Jesus does not take the time in this setting to go into all of the possible questions that might arise about the meaning and application of these rules. While it is true that Jesus interprets these *halakhic* texts from the Torah, it is less important to the logic of the Sermon on the Mount how these texts are reworked than how those reworked texts are put to use. Jesus' statements about the law are used in Matthew 5:21–47 in two ways: first, as an iconic list representing all the stipulations of the covenant used in rituals of covenant renewal in the Temple; and second, as entrance requirements assuring that the participants are ready and worthy to enter further into the sacred space and into the holy observances which continue to be unfolded in the stages of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 6 and 7.

Stage 5. Prohibition against Anger, Ill-Speaking, and Ridicule of Brethren (5:21–2)

The first of these requirements pertains to murder. No one can enter the Temple with hands that are stained with innocent blood, with hearts that yearn for revenge, or with tongues that spew out damning invectives: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill (*phoneuseis*); and whoever kills shall be liable (*enochos*) to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry (*ho orgizomenos*) with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council (*tōi sunedriōi*), and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire (*eis tēn geennan tou puros*)" (Matthew 5:21–2).

This statement at the beginning of this section of the Sermon on the Mount also stood at the top of the second tablet of the law with its prohibition against murder (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). Jesus interpreted the law of homicide to

include an underlying prohibition against becoming angry or speaking derisively or critically about one's brother. Not limiting its attention to the physical conduct of homicide, this intensification of the law addresses some of the underlying causes of murder, namely anger, insults, and ridicule. Sin can be rooted out if it can be eliminated at its internal source, at the heart of the matter, so to speak. For this reason, those who enter the Temple or answer the call of the covenant must have clean hands and also a pure heart (Psalms 24:4).

In cases of unintentional homicide, the Temple served the manslayer as a place of refuge from the vengeance of the redeemer of blood but only in cases where the manslayer had not acted in hatred or had been lying in wait with premeditation to inflict harm (Exodus 21:12–14; Numbers 35:25–8; Deuteronomy 19:4–10; Joshua 20:2–6). Thus, in the Temple in particular, the connection between anger and guilt worthy of death (*enochos*; as this strong word is used in Leviticus 20:27) are closely linked, for if a man had previously been angry with his brother or had insulted or ridiculed him, it would be very difficult for that angry person to plead for sanctuary and clemency should his brother die under conditions that the manslayer somehow controlled. Proof of previous anger or hatred expressly vitiated the slayer's right to the protection in the Temple or in one of the designated cities of refuge (Numbers 35:20, 22–3; Deuteronomy 19:4, 6; Joshua 20:5).

Moreover, in a community that is regulated by temple precepts, no vengeance is permitted except as the Lord might allow, for anger and vengeance belong only to the Lord. In the Psalms, anger is the Lord's. "Arise, O Lord, in thy anger (*en orgēi*), lift thyself up against the fury of my enemies; awake, O my God; thou hast appointed a judgment" (Psalms 7:6). It is the Lord's prerogative either to repay people for their crimes and "in wrath (*en orgēi*) [to] cast down the peoples" (Psalms 56:7), or to withdraw his "hot anger (*orgēs thumou*)," to "put away [his] indignation," and not to "prolong [his] anger to all generations" (Psalms 85:3–5).

One of the functions of the Temple was to mitigate anger by reducing anxiety and envy and giving assurances that the Lord will prosper those who serve him: "Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over him who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger (*apo orges*), and forsake wrath (*thumon*)! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the wicked shall be cut off; but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land" (Psalms 37:7–9). Roland Worth notes a parallel between Matthew 5:21–2 and the attitude that is conveyed here in Psalms 37:8 with the words "refrain from anger, and forsake wrath."[56] The use of Psalm 37 as a "thanksgiving Psalm," as Mowinckel has concluded,[57] which was sung by temple singers on behalf of individual worshipers offering thank-offerings, would have given prominence in the minds of temple worshipers to this prohibition against fierce anger and to the Temple's assuaging system of sacrificial thank-offering that helped to put worshipers in a spirit of gratitude and forgiveness that vitiated wrath, hostility, and

[56] Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 143.

[57] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 31–2.

anger. Moreover, by being slow to anger, the sons of God imitate the divine Father: He "is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love," and when he is angry, even he "will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger for ever" (Psalms 103:8–9; see also Psalms 145:8).

In addition, in a community of priesthood brothers, the Sermon on the Mount's edict that prohibits evil speaking against a brother takes on added significance. In effect, the final two statements in this saying prohibit all manner of evil or unholy speaking against any brother, and *a fortiori* even more so against any of the community leaders. Anyone who is angry with a fellowman may find himself in danger of judgment (*krisei*) before the town's synagogue of elders (compare *enantion tēs synagōgēs eis krisin*, Joshua 20:3, 6). Anyone who calls his brother "Raca" is in danger of being brought before "the council (*tōi sunedriōi*)," that is, the Sanhedrin, which convened in the Temple. And those who persist in such misconduct and speak insulting invectives against a brother a second time will find themselves in danger of being cast out of the community or kingdom of heaven into Gehenna, the valley of smoldering fire. Since the word "Raca" means "empty-head," the thrust of that injunction would seem to be that mocking or laughing at a brother's foolishness (that is, what to some may seem to be foolishness) is strictly prohibited; and since the word "Fool (*Mōre*)" will appear again at the end of the Sermon on the Mount to describe the foolish man who does not hear and do the words of the Lord (Matthew 7:26), calling a brother a "fool" is tantamount to calling him an apostate or unfaithful member of the community.

Such provisions and disciplinary procedures are especially pertinent to a community of covenanters, as evidence marshaled by Manfred Weise and others regarding rules of discipline at Qumran and in the earliest Christian community tends to show.[58] According to one of the rules of the Dead Sea community found in the *Manual of Discipline* 7:8, "anger against a fellow-member of the society could not be tolerated under any circumstances," and a punishment was applied "in any case of a member harbouring angry feelings."[59] Indeed, *Manual of Discipline* 1:16–2:18 concludes its covenant-making ceremony by subjecting those who enter the covenant unworthily to judgments of the community council and to punishments similar to those mentioned in Matthew 5:21–2. One may find evidence of similar early Christian councils in New Testament passages such as Matthew 18:15–17 ("If your brother sin against you, . . . tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector"), 1 Corinthians 5:4–5 ("when you are assembled , and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"), and 1 Timothy 1:20 (delivery of offending brothers "to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme"); and in the writings of Ignatius, who used the same

[58] Manfred Weise, "Mt. 5:21f—Ein Zeugnis sakraler Rechtsprechung in der Urgemeinde," *ZNW* 49 (1958): 116–23; italics deleted.

[59] P. Wemberg-Møller, "A Semitic Idiom in Matt. V. 22," *NTS* 3 (1956): 72; italics deleted.

word "council (*synhedrion*)" in reference to a council of the apostles.[60] These texts specifically speak of inspired councils meeting for the purpose of disciplining those who have affronted Christ by insulting those people in whom Christ's spirit dwells. In Weise's opinion, such deprecations are "not merely chidings in a banal sense, rather they insult to the core the community of God, viz., the covenant-community (*Verbundenheit*) of God. Therein lies their seriousness."[61]

Stage 6. Reconciliation of All Animosities (5:23–6)

Because brotherly harmony is integral to righteous unity, the ban in the previous stage against violence, anger and insult leads directly into the next stage of the Sermon on the Mount, which requires reconciliation of any known hard feelings or animosities between members of the community. In Matthew 5:23–4, Jesus explains that if anyone desires to come to the altar, he or she should have no hard feelings against any brother or sister that have not been resolved: "So if you are offering your gift (*dōron*) at the altar (*thusiastērion*), and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled (*diallagēthi*) to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23–4). Beyond making the general statement that no disciple can properly offer a gift—let alone advance further toward God's presence—without first being reconciled with his fellowmen, these words are unmistakably at home in the Temple in several ways.

Some scholars have seen this passage as an intrusive interruption in the flow of thought in the Sermon on the Mount because it breaks up the rhythm of the antitheses between the old and the new in Matthew 5:21, 27, 33 and 38. However, laying down the prerequisite of pre-sacrificial reconciliation at this point makes logical sense both as the practical application of the previous principle about eschewing anger or hard feelings and also as one of the traditional requirements of those going forward ritually toward the altar of the Temple. Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount tells the disciple to leave his sacrifice on the altar and go and reconcile himself with his brother before proceeding, and so the positioning of this saying in the presentation of the Sermon on the Mount expects that other ritual actions will follow.

Most deeply related to the Sermon on the Mount's requirement of pre-sacrificial reconciliation is the law of Leviticus 6:1–7, which requires that a person reconcile with his neighbor before coming to the Temple to make a trespass offering at the altar. In particular, this temple law required that if anyone had committed any act of disloyalty, deception, robbery, fraud, perjury, or swearing falsely, then before bringing the priest his guilt offering, he must first "restore what he took by robbery,

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[60] Eduard Lohse, "*synedrion*," in *TDNT*, vol. 7, p. 871, where Ignatius is cited as using *synhedrion* three times in his epistles to mean "council."

[61] Weise, "Mt. 5:21f.—Ein Zeugnis sakraler Rechtsprechung," 123.

or what he got by oppression, or the deposit which was committed to him, or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he has sworn falsely; he shall restore it in full, and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs," upon which he is permitted to bring an unblemished ram to the altar so that the priest can "make atonement for him before the Lord, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things which one may do and thereby become guilty" (Leviticus 6:4–7). The trigger that requires anyone who has thus sinned to make restitution and reconciliation is the feeling of guilt: "He shall pay it to its owner as soon as he feels guilt" (Leviticus 5:24, Milgrom's translation); "it is their consciences that subsequently disturb them."[62] Matthew 5:23 conveys the same idea. Its phrase "and there remember" reflects a twinge of conscience. Thus, Worth rightly states that

> there is but a modest step from this [Leviticus 6:1–7] to what Jesus demands: In Jesus the sacrifice is interrupted by the reconciliation and then completed afterwards; in Leviticus the reconciliation occurs and then the sacrifice. What Jesus seems to have in mind is that the very act of religious worship has caused the individual to openly confront his own responsibility. Recognizing the guilt, he moves to heal the breach, and then offers the sacrifice in the spirit God intended.[63]

Actually, Jesus' requirement goes beyond the pre-sacrificial requirement of Leviticus in two ways: First, as Worth points out, they differ in time and place. In Leviticus 6, the twinge of conscience occurs outside the Temple; Matthew 5:23 operates at the altar. Second, Leviticus 6 contemplates only the situation where a person is making a guilt offering for having stolen or misappropriated property (in which case the property plus a punitive twenty percent supplement must be paid to the injured party before the guilt offering is made), whereas Matthew 5 covers any type of offense or hard feeling that impairs brotherly love in any way, that is, any remembrance "that your brother has something against you (*echei ti kata sou*)" (Matthew 5:23). Thus, the requirement imposed by the Sermon on the Mount arises even after commercial reparations have been paid; if the person coming to the altar still feels that his brother has anything against him, the sacrificial offeror is obligated to halt the process and complete the reconciliation at the interpersonal level before proceeding further.

Because of the occurrence of the two temple terms "altar" and "gift" in Matthew 5:23–4, commentators commonly recognize that this passage clearly reflects Jesus' attitude toward the law of Moses and, hence, the Temple. Roland Worth sees the reference to an altar as a clear example of Jesus following and even explaining the law of the old covenant: "We could hardly ask for better evidence than this that Jesus' teaching in this antithesis was aimed at those living under and

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62 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, pp. 319, 338.

63 Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 146–8.

practicing the Mosaic Law. The individual is assumed to have brought some type of sacrifice to the Temple in Jerusalem—sacrifices could not properly be offered elsewhere."[64] Though Worth asserts that Jesus was not "initiating new practices and doctrines," he nevertheless clearly recognizes that the passage connects these teachings of Jesus to the law of the Torah and of the Temple.[65] Betz concurs, "If the SM conforms to Jewish practice in the Jerusalem Temple, this text contains important information about the Temple worship around 50 CE by Jerusalem Christians."[66]

As listeners to the Sermon on the Mount heard these particular sentences, the Temple would easily have come most sharply into focus. Certainly, the great altar of the Temple was one of its most distinctive features. The word *thusiastērion* appears rather conspicuously in such texts as Exodus 27:1; 30:1; 40:5; and throughout Leviticus chapters 1–9; and although *dōron* can mean gifts of people to each other, it is widely used in the Septuagint to refer to sacrificial offerings in the Temple (for example, Leviticus 2:1ff; 3:1ff; 4:23–4; 5:11; 7:13ff; Numbers 6:14; 7:3ff; Deuteronomy 12:11), and its primary usage in the New Testament, and certainly in this passage in the Sermon on the Mount, refers to sacrifices (see Matthew 8:4; 15:5; 23:18–19; Hebrews 5:1, 8:3–4; 9:9; 11:4; compare Genesis 4:4), or gifts of money in the Temple (Luke 21:1, 4). If they had begun wondering if they were correctly catching all of the Sermon's temple allusions, any remaining doubts would have been dispelled in their minds by the appearance of this explicit temple terminology.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the Didache also required reconciliation before the early Christians could partake of the Eucharist, so that their sacrifice might be pure: "Let no one engaged in a dispute with his comrade join you until they have been reconciled, lest your sacrifice be profaned."[67] Commentators rightly see this provision in the Sermon on the Mount or its application in the early Christian tradition as having influenced this passage in the Didache.[68] Although the Didache does not use the words *thusiastērion* or *dōron,* it uses *thusia* (sacrifice), effectively conjoining them both; and, in addition, Matthew 5:24 and Didache 14:2 both use forms of the catchword *diallassomai* (to reconcile), namely *diallagēthi* and *diallagōsin*, respectively.

In his final directive in this section on reconciliation, Jesus admonished his people to settle their controversies quickly in order to avoid going to court. Several reasons make this advice attractive. For one thing, secular judges are unpredictable. Once a matter is submitted to judicial determination, the parties

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64 Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 144.

65 Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 144.

66 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 223.

67 Didache 14:2, in Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache* (Minneapolis, 1998), 194; on the relation between this text and Matthew 5:23–4, see pp. 198–9.

68 For example, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 289 n. 62; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 224.

lose control of their destiny—settlement is not always possible. Beyond that, once a claim has been filed, counterclaims can be raised. If the character of the defendant has been disparaged by the accusation, the character of the accuser is likely to be drawn into question as well. But most of all, the judge mentioned here, who controls a court-guard and a prison, likely refers to the Roman institution of imprisonment of debtors,[69] and thus this rubric not only requires its followers to settle their debts and disputes quickly among themselves but also to avoid especially the use of Roman or other non-Jewish tribunals, a point that Paul will develop further in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 6:1–11). In other words, for present purposes, the Sermon on the Mount again draws upon temple conventions: those who go to court in a secular forum will need to make the normal pre-judicial sacrifices to other gods and to swear the required authenticating or exculpatory oaths in the names of those other gods, something that would be disabling if not unthinkable for pious, temple-observant Jews. And by settling quickly, the parties qualify themselves to make their sacrifices without delay, thereby satisfying the legal requirement to make temple sacrifices promptly, that "you shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses" (Exodus 22:29). In the end, settlement looks forward to the day of divine judgment, which will be far more important than any earthly day in court.

Stage 7. Commitment to Sexual Purity and Fidelity in Marriage (5:27–32)

The next subject addressed in the Sermon on the Mount is chastity, beginning with the commandment "You shall not commit adultery" (5:27), quoted from the Decalogue in Exodus 20:14, and ending with a brief comment about divorce. At this stage, the Sermon on the Mount makes three points about adultery, structured in a balanced, four-part chiastic a-b-b-a arrangement:

(a) You have heard that it was said (*errethē*), You shall not commit *adultery* (*ou moicheuseis*). I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed *adultery* with her in his heart.

(b) If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away (*bale apo sou*); it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

(b') And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

(a') It was also said (*errethē de*), Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity (*parektos logou porneias*), makes her an *adulteress*; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits *adultery*. (Matthew 5:27–32)

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[69] Bernard S. Jackson, *Theft in Early Jewish Law* (Oxford, 1972), p. 144; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 227.

Although the precise meaning of these brief lines in the Sermon on the Mount remains notoriously unclear,[70] reading these lines in a temple context sheds new light, in several ways, on why and how the Sermon on the Mount particularly addressed the subject of adultery, a topic that was of considerable interest and importance to the Temple. If the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount was not to define or legislate ethical principles in minute detail for all human circumstances, but rather to elevate the spiritual aspirations and to purify the inner desires of those who seek first and foremost after God and his righteousness, then these brief lines become fully adequate. Their immediate point is to ask the hearers again, Are you willing to enter into a covenant-relationship with the Lord? Are you worthy to ascend into the mountain of the Lord? A person can discover the answer to these questions by examining how well one observes and values the covenant-relationship with one's spouse.

As has been discussed above with respect to the law of homicide, the Sermon on the Mount shifts the attention concerning adultery from outward conduct to the inward heart of the adherent. This focus on the heart as the fountain of either righteousness or wickedness is articulated most clearly as a general principle in the Gospel of Mark, which mentions three terms that figure prominently here in the Sermon as well: "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication (*porneiai*), theft, murder, adultery (*moicheiai*), coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy (*ophthalmos ponēros*), slander, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21–2).

For the Sermon on the Mount, lust is to adultery as anger is to murder. Just as being angry with a brother will destroy the unity of the covenant-community of worthy and righteous worshipers, looking lustfully at another woman will destroy the unity of that which God has put together in the covenant-relationship of marriage which puts a man and a woman together as a single body. Just as homicide spills guilty blood upon hands of the murderer, defiles the land, and precludes the impure from entering into the presence of the Lord or seeking the protection of his sanctuary, so the defilement caused by any of the prohibited sexual relations listed in Leviticus 18 and 20 prevents the parties from standing in a holy state (Leviticus 20:26). As in the case of murderers, the consequence to those who commit adultery is that they "shall be cut off from among their people" (Leviticus 18:29; 20:17) and, no longer being under the aegis of the Lord's covenant and his Temple, "the land [will] vomit [them] out" (Leviticus 18:28).

Prominent concern with purity of heart brings to mind again the requirement of temple entrance in Psalms 24:4, "he who has clean hands and a pure heart," and also the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel about the new covenant relationship that will be established between God and his people. As mentioned above, Jeremiah

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[70] Besides the ethical and ecclesiastical questions left unanswered about what constitutes "adultery in the heart" or a justifiable "ground of *porneia*," the complexity of interpreting verse 32 is compounded by the array of textual variants that appear here also in Matthew 19:7, 9 in the Greek New Testament manuscripts.

prophesied that a covenant was to be made with the house of Israel according to which the law would be written "upon their hearts," and on this condition the Lord "will be their God, and they shall be [his] people" (Jeremiah 31:33). Ezekiel likewise prophesied in a context that discusses temple rituals of purification and blessing: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezekiel 36:25–8). If one falls into the faithlessness of committing adultery in one's heart against the wife of his youth, how can he be counted on to remain faithful to such a covenant between him and the Lord God that must be written likewise upon the living flesh of a new heart?

Marriage itself was understood under Hebrew law as a complex process resulting in a covenant that joined and united the man and the wife.[71] Besides creating bonds between the bride, the groom, and often their fathers, the Lord himself was intimately involved in marriages: He had approved the institution of marriage in general, and as a witness to the marriage vows, he watched over the fulfillment of the marriage covenant between husband and wife. In response to the question why the Lord paid no attention to their sacrifices, Malachi answered, "Because the Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Malachi 2:14).

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount strongly subscribed to this view: "The sanctity of God-ordained marriage is so important for Jesus that already the lustful look" is destructive.[72] While it goes beyond our present purposes to consider all of the nuances in the New Testament regarding marriage,[73] it is sufficient to note that Jesus' most important words about marriage are found in Matthew 19, where he takes the discussion back to the beginning, to the Garden of Eden, to insist that "what therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The Garden of Eden represents not only an ideal state in the creation of the mankind but also the ideal order of the world enshrined in the Temple's representation of the six days of the Creation.

Thus, it may well be that the kind of enduring, ideal faithfulness required by the Sermon on the Mount between the righteous husband (lord, Hebrew *ba^cal*) and wife is not the standard expected of all people on earth. All people, even the Gentiles, were required by the Noachide laws to avoid adultery and fornication (see Jubilees

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71 Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times* (2nd edn, Provo, Utah, 2001), p. 144.

72 Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, pp. 296–7.

73 For a lengthy bibliography and extended discussion, see Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 230–59.

7:20–21; 3 Baruch 4:17; Acts 15:29), to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 9:7), and to avoid evil imaginations of the heart (Genesis 6:5); but the man who is a true lord to his covenantal wife behaves at a higher level, being as true to his wife as the Lord God is to his bride and his people (see Ezekiel 16:6–14). Thus, Jesus said to the Pharisees, who thought they were living a higher moral law than ordinary people, that their understanding of divorce had not been so "from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8), and that, except in cases of unchastity, marrying another after a divorce constitutes adultery (Matthew 19:9). After this saying about the ideal permanency of the eternal bond of marriage, Jesus acknowledged that this saying was not necessarily to be received by all men (Matthew 19:11), any more than the Lord's covenant with Israel was necessarily to be received by all peoples. In other words, having and preserving an indissoluble marriage is not intended for all, but only for "those to whom it is given" (Matthew 19:11).

With similar force and effect, biblical law prohibited priests in the Temple of Jerusalem from marrying widows, divorcees, or women who had been defiled (Leviticus 21:7, 13–15). For temple priests, to whom a heightened state of holiness had been given, ordinary latitude with respect to divorce was not allowed. In a comparable (though not identical) manner, those to whom it had been given by Jesus to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth would be expected to observe a higher standard of righteousness than was practiced by other people, explicitly the scribes and the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

The Sermon on the Mount, however, does not say how this elevated covenant or condition of marriage was given or would be given to the followers of Jesus. The fact that the statements in the Sermon on the Mount about adultery are themselves elliptical may indicate that the readers or hearers had already been instructed in these further details and were thus in a position "to supply from memory and perception that which is left unstated,"[74] or perhaps they had been told to watch for further instructions that would be given later to clarify the meaning and application of this order of marriage that would be unbreakable by man alone. At a minimum, however, one might presume that the listeners would have understood that—whether by his divine beneficence or through those to whom he had delegated authority to bind on earth and in heaven—whatsoever God had ordained and given in such a marriage, only God or his duly constituted agents could worthily loose and lawfully take apart (Matthew 16:19; 18:18).

Because God's covenant with Israel and a husband's covenant with his wife are both covenants, adultery was widely used in the Old Testament as a metaphor for the unfaithfulness of Israel, breaking their covenant with Yahweh (see Ezekiel 16:15; Hosea 4:15–19; Malachi 2:14–16). Thus the New Testament extends the meaning of "adulterous" (*moichalis*) to become a figurative expression for total unfaithfulness toward God. Jesus used this word in rebuking sign seekers as a wicked and adulterous generation (Matthew 12:39); likewise James warned

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[74] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 230.

"unfaithful" people (*moichalides*) that becoming too friendly with the world made them enemies of God (James 4:4).

Similarly, adultery was frequently seen as something closely akin to idolatry, "playing the harlot after other gods" (see Exodus 34:15–16; Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 31:16; Judges 2:17; 8:27; Psalms 73:27; Ezekiel 6:9). In a single breath, Ezekiel links adultery and the worship of false gods: "For they have committed adultery, and blood is upon their hands; with their idols they have committed adultery; and they have even offered up to them for food the sons whom they had borne to me" (Ezekiel 23:37). "Since the prophetic movement found it appropriate to describe the relationship between Yahweh and Israel in terms of the relationship between husband and wife, it likewise characterizes religious transgression as adultery," and the word *nā'ap̱* was used to refer both to idolatry and adultery.[75]

Thus, this passage in the Sermon on the Mount about adultery is not to be understood simply as addressing matters of sexual propriety or as protecting chauvinistically the marital interests of husbands. Much more is at stake here, including the very foundation of a righteous people's relationship with their Lord. In the mind of the Temple, those who committed adultery were irrefutably presumed to be disloyal to Yahweh. Thus the Psalms warn that even though people may well offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, make solemn vows, supplicate pious prayers, and glorify God (Psalms 50:14–15), if they steal, commit adultery, speak evil or tell lies they will be torn in pieces and none will deliver them, "for you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are a friend of his; and you keep company with adulterers" (Psalms 50:18–19). Hence, avoiding adultery at all costs was of utmost importance to the efficaciousness of the entire cultic system and temple order.

In the temple context, the subject of adultery (introduced at the beginning of this stage in the Sermon) logically brought up the closely related subject of divorce (with which the stage concludes). Just as the hearers of the Sermon on the Mount knew that the sacrifices of an adulterer would avail him nothing, so they were also fully aware that any temple offerings made by a man who had been unfaithful to his wife by severing the marriage covenant were equally unacceptable to God: "May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob" and he "no longer regards the offering" of the man who wrongfully divorces such a wife (see Malachi 2:12–13). And just as God was heartbroken over adultery and infidelity, he recoiled whenever possible from divorce. Although the Lord sent the northern kingdom of Israel away with its bill of divorcement (Jeremiah 3:8), no such writ was issued even to an unfaithful Judah (Isaiah 50:1). "For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel. . . . So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless" (Malachi 2:16). Jesus' statement against divorce in the Sermon on the Mount echoes the same sentiment. Perhaps the odiousness of divorce in this context would have

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[75] David Noel Freedman and B.E. Willoughby, "*nā'ap̱,*" in *TDOT*, vol. 9, pp. 116–17.

sounded even louder in Jewish and Greek ears than to modern listeners, for in the biblical languages the terms for a bill of divorcement literally mean in Hebrew a "scroll of cutting off (*sefer keritut*)" (Deuteronomy 24:3), as if she were being excommunicated, blotted out, or exterminated (*kārat*), or in Greek a "book of divorce (*biblion apostasiou*)" (Deuteronomy 24:3 LXX), as if she were now an apostate or in apostasy (*apostasia*).

It is true that most readers of this part of the Sermon on the Mount have occupied themselves with the practical questions raised by its strong disapproval of letting a wife go (the word used in Matthew 5:31 for divorce is *apoluō*, to set free, release, pardon, dismiss, send away), except for the reason of some unchastity (*porneia*, meaning "sexual immorality of any kind."[76] Answers to the questions that devolve from this brief statement, asking when, why, and how divorce is lawful or under what conditions divorcees may properly remarry, are anything but clear from this text, even after centuries of discussion.[77] About all that one can safely conclude about this statement about divorce is that the Sermon on the Mount rejects the approach of those who take divorce too casually. It is important to note that Matthew 5:31 does not attribute this casual view about divorce to the venerable ones of old times, and it does not quote Deuteronomy 24. After making the central point that it is better for one part of the body to be lost than for the entire body to be destroyed, Matthew 5:31 simply states, "In spite of this, it is said (*errethē de*)," whoever would dismiss his wife, let him give to her a divorcement, as if getting a divorce is a very simple thing. Deuteronomy 24:1–4 may well stand somewhere in the background behind this apparently popular practice that was then being

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[76] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2nd edn, New York, 1989), p. 771.

[77] For an array of various interpretations concerning this section's passage on divorce, see, for example, David Daube, "The New Testament Terms for Divorce," *Theology* 47 (1944): 65–7, reprinted as "Terms for Divorce," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 3.13, and in *Collected Works of David Daube* vol. 2, p. 281–8; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence," *TS* 37 (June 1976): 197–226; Thomas V. Fleming, "Christ and Divorce," *TS* 24 (1963): 106–20; Wilfrid J. Harrington, "The New Testament and Divorce," *ITQ* 39 (1972): 178–87; William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce: The Problem with the Evangelical Consensus* (Nashville, 1985); Bernard S. Jackson, "'Holier Than Thou'? Marriage and Divorce in the Scrolls, the New Testament and Early Rabbinic Sources," in *Essays on* Halakhah *in the New Testament* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 167–225; Stanley B. Marrow, "Marriage and Divorce in the New Testament," *AThR* 70 (1988): 3–15; James R. Mueller, "The Temple Scroll and the Gospel Divorce Texts," *RevQ* 10 (1980): 247–56; V. Noam, "Divorce in Qumran in Light of Early Halakhah," *JJS* 56/2 (2005): 206–23; V. Norskov Olsen, *The New Testament Logia on Divorce: A Study of Their Interpretation from Erasmus to Milton* (Tübingen, 1971); David Parker, "The Early Traditions of Jesus' Sayings on Divorce," *Theology* 96 (1993): 372–83; Bruce Vawter, "Divorce and the New Testament," *CBQ* 39 (October 1977): 528–42; Ben Witherington, "Matthew 5:32 and 19:9: Exception or Exceptional Situation," *NTS* 31 (October 1985): 571–6.

advocated by some, but anyone who reads Deuteronomy 24 as supporting such leniency has already misread that text. It contemplates and justifies no such simple approach to no-fault divorce.

Much rather, the Sermon on the Mount takes the marriage relationship very seriously, as did the Temple. Indeed, the theme of dealing with issues of marital infidelity was very familiar to the Temple, with the cult itself providing an elaborate ritual for proving the guilt or innocence of a wife suspected of adultery. In Numbers 5, the well-known temple ritual of the bitter waters is spelled out. For present purposes it is not necessary to review all the steps involved in proving the guilt or innocence of a wife suspected of adultery, but it is relevant to point out that if a man ever wondered whether his wife was guilty of some *porneia* that warranted, if not required, him to separate himself from her, the temple cult provided the ritual mechanism for making that determination, and perhaps this explains why Jesus did not define *porneia*; he took this exception and its provability for granted.

The temple procedure was known as "the law in cases of jealousy, when a wife, though under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself" (Numbers 5:29). The wife may or may not have committed adultery; the jealousy could arise if the husband suspected that she had "gone astray" or acted in any way "unfaithfully against him" (Numbers 5:12). The concern that she might thereby have somehow become "defiled" appears to have presented the greatest problem for the husband, who by continuing living with her, assuming that she had become defiled, would himself then contract impurity from her. This concern over defilement seems to be the main concern necessitating the conduct of this divination procedure (the word appears seven times in Numbers 5:11–30, just as the problem of defilement is also the fundamental issue in Deuteronomy 24:4). If the wife is thereby found to be defiled, divorce would certainly be justified in the case of an ordinary husband; it is mandatory in the case of a husband who is a priest.[78]

This underlying concern about purity and hence worthiness to enter the Temple seems to stand in much the same way behind Jesus' statement about the *porneia* exception for divorce in Matthew 5. Except for the reason of *porneia* (any kind of unlawful sexual relationship outside of marriage) on the part of the woman (in which case she is already responsible for her defilement), the man "makes her to commit adultery/unfaithfulness" (Matthew 5:32), if he sends her out without justification. Just as a man obeys the commandment against murder by avoiding anger, so he keeps the commandment against adultery by not lusting after other women or by divorcing his wife who is sexually pure, for either will likely lead the man or the woman to further sexual defilement, for example, if a man (Matthew 19:9) or a woman (Mark 10:12) were to remarry after an invalid divorce, essentially being still married. Whatever the practical interpretations of the divorce texts in the Bible might have been, the common similarity between them ties into the concern

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[78] If the defilement has involved adultery or some other capital offense, the death penalty may have been involved (see Deuteronomy 22:22), in which case divorce was not really the matter in issue.

about purity. By committing adultery, one way or any other, the result is impurity and defilement. Purity in a ritual sense is at stake here,[79] for the dichotomy is either to stand pure in the presence of the Lord or to be cast impure into hell.

At the center of this section of the Sermon on the Mount is the pair of lines about the offending right eye and offending right hand, stating that they should be cut off or plucked out and cast away from you if they offend. This arresting, yet obvious, point emphasizes the seriousness of the commitment that the Sermon expects, if not requires: It is better that a member be thrown away than that the entire body be cast into the smoldering garbage pit of Gehenna. As Jesus' audience would have recognized, the valley by that name, which lies to the southwest of Jerusalem just outside the Dung Gate and not far from the Temple, was one of the main city dumps outside the walls of Jerusalem and had been the scene of the worship of the fire-god Moloch during the First Temple period (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6); that use made it a ready image, both physically and typologically, for the place where all impurities should land when thrown out of the holy city and the temple precinct.

This difficult saying has caused trouble in the minds of many biblical commentators, because Jewish attitudes around the time of Jesus were strongly set against any punishment that took the form of bodily mutilation.[80] It is unlikely, of course, that Jesus demanded actual self-mutilation of his disciples, for it does not speak in any way here of actual bodily mutilation; the mode of expression appears to be figurative. At a minimum, such hyperbolic speech served to impress upon listeners the importance of the commandment. Roland Worth explains:

> Even into the twentieth century the Aramaic adage about 'cut[ting] off your hand' was never taken literally but as a demand that one stop one's offensive conduct. For example, one would demand that you 'cut off your hand from my vineyard,' and that meant 'do not gather grapes from my vineyard.' Stay out of it. Stay away from it.[81]

Symbolically, it may be even more significant in a temple context that the Sermon on the Mount goes out of its way to specify the excision of the right hand and the right eye. The right hand was one of the main tools of priestly power. For example, when a leper was cleansed, the officiating priest would use his right hand to sprinkle the oil before Yahweh; he would then touch the leper's right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot (Leviticus 14:15–26). The right hand was also used in gestures, especially treaties or oaths (Genesis 14:22). On other occasions, the right hand was associated with blessings and priestly

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[79] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 306.

[80] J. Schattenmann, "Jesus and Pythagoras," *Kairos* 21 (1979): 215–20.

[81] Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 105–6, citing George M. Lamsa, *Gospel Light: Comments on the Teachings of Jesus from Aramaic and Unchanged Eastern Customs* (Philadelphia, 1939), p. 53.

officiating. When Jacob blessed his sons, he blessed Ephraim with his right hand and Manesseh his left, implying that Ephraim would receive the greater blessings (Genesis 48:13), and kings after the order of the priest Melchizedek sat at Yahweh's right hand (Psalms 110:1). "Since time immemorial, the 'right hand' has been used figuratively in the sense of 'power' or 'might.'"[82] With Yahweh's right hand he created the heavens and the earth (Isaiah 48:13) and redeemed the Israelites from the Egyptians (Exodus 15:6, 12); with his right hand he will redeem the oppressed (Psalms 16:7), punish the enemies of the righteous (Psalms 20:8), and will always aid his people (Psalms 59:5; 62:8); when he withdraws his right hand his people suffer (Psalms 74:11). Moses was powerful when God's glorious arm went on his right hand (Isaiah 63:12). Christ will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left (Matthew 25:31), paralleling his own ascension to the right hand of God (Acts 2:34). To cut off one's right hand, in this temple culture, would symbolize the cutting off of one's own access to many of the highest blessings and benefits that come from having divine power at and in one's right hand.

While the idea of the right hand would have conveyed many sacred connotations to the audience of the Sermon on the Mount, one can only wonder what they might have made of the reference to the "right eye." Losing one eye would impair one's depth perception, but it would not prevent the left eye from still looking upon a woman lustfully. Perhaps there was some idea that the right eye was a stronger channel of perception, while the left eye was already something of an "evil eye." Such a theory of vision might be reflected in Matthew 6:22, which speaks of the eye (singular) as "the lamp of the body," able to fill the entire body with light, while the other eye, being evil, fills the body with darkness. The general importance of light in the Temple, as discussed above, also comes to mind with these references to the eye.

But beyond that, this metaphorical language about cutting off and throwing away communicated the seriousness of the consequences of violating the law of chastity. Physically, the death penalty could be imposed under the law of Moses for adultery (see Deuteronomy 22:22), but even more fearsome would be the consequences of spiritual destruction in this life and in the world to come. In early Christianity, the punishment of those violating this covenant of chastity probably took the form of excommunication, understanding the idea of being cut off in Matthew 5:30 as "a communal parable."[83] No matter how important the person might have been to the community or how painful it would be to cut off relations with that person, the righteous must cast out impure offenders from their midst who remain intransigent. In the Enoch literature, even the angels who fall from heaven are not immune from this excision. As Margaret Barker recounts: "As a result of the teachings of the fallen angels—the abuse of women, the manufacture of weapons, medicine and abortion, the cosmetics and jewelry of the fashion industry which led to fornication and corruption, . . . 'there arose much godlessness . . . and

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[82] J.A. Soggin, *"yamin,"* in *TDOT*, 6:101.

[83] Helmut Koester, "Using Quintilian to Interpret Mark," *BAR* 6 (May/June 1980): 44–5, although the words *bale apo* are used here, not *bale exō* as in Matthew 5:13.

as men perished they cried and their cry went up to heaven' (*1 Enoch* 8.2, 4). . . . On the future day of judgment, Azazel would be cast into the fire,"[84] just as the Sermon on the Mount warns.

The strictness of this penalty makes sense in the context of the high standard expected of those who became priests or participants in the ordinances of the Temple of Jerusalem. In light of the select group of people that Jesus had taken with him up into the mountain, this very graphic mental image of the excision of violating members may likewise be understood as having something to do with the higher expectations required of the people in that audience. Thus, for many reasons connected with temple imagery and cultic observances, it is perfectly suitable for the Sermon on the Mount to mention adultery and divorce, as it strove to build a celestial community first between men and brothers, and second between husbands and wives. As with the previous stage regarding anger and brotherhood, the context of this stage of the Sermon on the Mount is also related to the Temple. In the summation of J. Duncan M. Derrett concerning Jesus' teaching about adultery and divorce, "in effect all Israel must practise the scrupulousness of the priests,"[85] which qualifies them to serve in the house of the Lord. This, more than the legalistic particulars of what constituted adultery or justified divorce, was the driving point behind this stage of the Sermon on the Mount.

Stage 8. Oaths to Be Sworn by Saying "Yes, yes" or "No, no" (5:33–7)

The next stage presented in the Sermon on the Mount is quite readily connected with the Temple, for it was the pre-eminent place of swearing oaths and making vows, often accompanied by offerings and oblations (Leviticus 22:18). In this section, Jesus gave instructions principally regarding oaths, not vows: "Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely (*epiorkēseis*), but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn (*tous horkous sou*).' But I say to you, Do not swear (*omosai*) at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say (*ho logos humōn*) be simply 'Yes' (*nai nai*) or 'No' (*ou ou*); anything more than this comes from evil" (Matthew 5:33–7).

The prohibition against swearing falsely is, of course, related to another commandment in the Decalogue, this time the law against perjury (Exodus 20:16; see also Deuteronomy 19:16–21). It is also associated with the provision in the Holiness Code in Leviticus 19:12 that "you shall not swear by my name falsely." But in the Sermon on the Mount the concern is much less about offering false testimony in court or in a business transaction than about making an oath in the

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[84] Barker, *Temple Theology*, pp. 45–6. Azazel is the leader of the fallen angels.

[85] J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London, 1970), p. 374.

name of God (*tōi kuriōi*)[86] and then not performing what was promised. Several texts in the Old Testament sternly caution people against failing to perform the things they have solemnly sworn by God that they would do. Even more serious is the problem of not completing a votive offering that one has promised to pay to the holy place in reciprocation for the receipt of God's blessing connected with their pledge (discussed further in connection with Matthew 6:19–20 below).

To Jesus' audience, all this was emphatically clear: Either if "a man vows a vow (*euxētai euchēn*) to the Lord, or swears an oath (*omosēi horkon*) to bind himself by a pledge (*horisētai horismōi*), he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth" (Numbers 30:2). Psalm 50 spoke to the same effect: "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice! . . . Pay your vows to the Most High" (Psalms 50:5, 14). Moreover, the law required that one should not delay in completing these obligations fully: "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not be slack to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin in you" (Deuteronomy 23:21), and if one chooses to make an oath or a vow, "you shall be careful to perform what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth" (Deuteronomy 23:23).

Not every oath involved the Temple, but all vows and many oaths did. "The biblical texts amply document the temple as a place to swear oaths."[87] Oaths and covenants were closely associated, for a covenant "by definition is an agreement solemnized by an oath."[88] Of the 215 oaths attested in the Old Testament, a majority involved "legal-religious oaths, often connected with vows, [or] theological oaths, especially the covenantal oath sworn by Yahweh and Israel. Yahweh himself is the guarantor of oaths, which means that taking oaths is in principle a good thing. Breaking oaths, therefore, is a form of sacrilege."[89]

The problem, of course, was rashly making excessive oaths or vows. Thus, the law recognized that the swearing of such oaths and vows, and the making of accompanying freewill offerings, was entirely optional. One was under no obligation to incur vows or swear oaths at all, should one not desire to do so: "If you refrain from vowing, it shall be no sin in you" (Deuteronomy 23:22). Longstanding wisdom held that "it is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:5).

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86 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 266.

87 Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes: The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2006), p. 137, citing "If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, and comes and swears his oath before thine altar in this house" (1 Kings 8:31; 2 Chronicles 6:22).

88 Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (New York, 1996), p. 246.

89 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 262.

One way to avoid the risk of nonperformance of an oath was simply to "swear not at all" (Matthew 5:34). But there were other options as well. Nonperformance was most grievous if God's name or his holy things had been invoked when the oath was sworn, which meant that the Divine would be demeaned and his holiness would be compromised by any failure of the oath. Thus, a second way to avoid the risk of offending God in making oaths was simply not to invoke God's name or his holy things when swearing an oath. And this is what the Sermon on the Mount recommends.

When a person made an oath, especially in the Temple, an almost irresistible urge would have been felt to swear by the things that were in plain view in the holy precinct. Jesus names four such things, instructing his listeners to swear neither "in [the name of] the heaven (*en tōi ouranōi*)," nor "in [the name of] the earth (*en tēi gēi*)," nor "unto Jerusalem (*eis Hierosolyma*)," nor "in [the name of] your head (*en tēi kephalēi*)." All four of these elements have strong temple connections.

The heaven is not only the heavenly realm where God dwells above the earth, it is also the holy place where God resides within the Temple. The heaven is equated in Matthew 5:34 with "the throne of God," and the earth with the cushion under his feet, a direct quotation from Isaiah 66:1, "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool." This headline from Isaiah evokes the entire final chapter of the book of Isaiah and its strong temple orientation, speaking of the return to Zion; there all nations and tongues shall gather, see God's glory, bring offerings into the house of the Lord on the holy mountain of Jerusalem, and even provide priests and Levites from their ranks (Isaiah 66:18–21). Once again, those who heard or used the Sermon on the Mount may well have seen themselves among the eschatological ranks of these priests and Levites of whom heightened degrees of righteousness and sanctity would be required.

When Isaiah saw the Lord, this theophany occurred in the Temple and the Lord was seated on its throne: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). In Ezekiel's vision, the four cherubim "represent nothing less than a throne for God."[90] Thus, the images of the throne and footstool invoked in this passage in the Sermon on the Mount readily recall the Temple's Holy of Holies, where God was said to be enthroned, with the ark serving as his footstool.[91] R.E. Clements discusses the ark-footstool in detail, and among his conclusions are these ideas: (1) that the ark, though not a throne, was associated with the "cherubim-throne"; (2) that the cherubim were associated with Israelite ideas about the presence of God; (3) that "it is not impossible that [the ark] was thought to serve as a pedestal for the invisible deity who guarded the covenant-law at his feet."[92] Likewise, the Psalms also speak often of the

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[90] Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*, p. 251. "Where God's throne and footstool are, there is his house. . . . The whole temple is sometimes designated 'throne' or 'footstool,'" p. 256, citing among others Isaiah 66:1; Psalms 99:5; 132:17.

[91] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 176.

[92] R.E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford, 1965), p. 35.

throne of God, connecting (if not equating) the temple on earth with the throne in heaven: "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne" (Psalms 11:4, my translation). Because the throne in the temple connects heaven and earth, serving as the place of God's observation, judgment, and power, an enduring seat established of old and built up to all generations (Psalms 9:4; 45:6; 47:8; 89:4; 93:2), it would have been a very natural focal point in the minds of people in swearing their oaths, needing to invite God's eternal watchful eye, his righteous assessment, and the execution of any appropriate penalties regarding any nonperformance of their oath or vow.

Swearing by Jerusalem also brings holiness and God into the imprecatory formula. Over the centuries, Jerusalem has been called the Holy City for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that its name in Greek, *Hierosolyma,* begins with the word *hieros*, meaning "holy," together with *hieron* meaning "temple" and *hiereus* meaning "priest." When Jesus referred to Jerusalem as "the city of the great King (*polis estin tou megalou basileōs*)" (Matthew 5:35), he used a phrase that appeared on coins of the day issued by kings, such as Agrippa I (37–44 CE), but Jerusalem could hardly have been thought of as a city of a great king a decade earlier. More likely, Jesus' audience would have heard in this phrase an unmistakable verbal echo from the Psalms, which used virtually this same phrase in singing praises to "Mount Zion . . . the city of the great King (*hē polis tou basileōs tou megalou)*" (Psalms 48:2). References to Zion and to Jerusalem generally imply the Temple,[93] and of this particular Psalm Mowinckel states that the "poet glorifies the sanctuary on the mountain of God," for "he that sits enthroned in the Temple is the one who sits enthroned [in heaven]."[94] The "great King" in this temple context is no political potentate but God himself.

Finally, the idea of swearing by one's head may not have immediately brought the Temple to mind, until the comment was added that a person cannot make a single hair of his head either white or black. Leviticus 13:2–10 contains an extensive section regarding the examination of white hairs as indicators of skin disease and impurity. The priest must examine the skin to see if a hair has changed from dark to white. The words here for the dreaded "white hair" on the spot of leprosy are *tricha leukē* (Leviticus 13:4, 10, alternatively *thrix leukē* in 13:20–21, 25–6), the same words used in Matthew 5:36. The Mishnah imposed similar requirements for the inspection of priests to ensure their continuous state of purity.[95] Because leprosy and other skin diseases were of widespread concern in New Testament times, it is not unlikely that anyone originally hearing these words in the Sermon on the Mount would have thought along these lines. A person whose head was pure could be assured that his or her entire body was ritually pure, and thus an oath by one's head would have carried great weight as an oath made in purity guaranteed by the Lord's own definition of purity.

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93 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, p. 7.

94 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, p. 174.

95 M. Negaim 4.1–3; M. Bekhoroth 3.3, 7.1.

While the Sermon on the Mount prohibited swearing by the throne or footstool or city or holiness of God, this section instead encouraged Jesus' followers to let their "word" be "Yes, yes," or "No, no," and that anything "more profuse (*perisson*)" than this is superfluous and is of evil. Some biblical commentators have found this section in the Sermon on the Mount odd because it does not continue logically with the sequence of commandments in the Decalogue, as one might expect Jesus to follow if he were simply giving a commentary on the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Moreover, it is hard to see this as a demand of love. But this element in the Sermon on the Mount makes perfect sense if it is understood as an instruction about how sacred commitments are to be made: The swearing of oaths (which often accompanied the making of covenants)[96] should be made simply by saying "yes, yes" or "no, no." That is sufficient. After all, when Yahweh made his covenant with Israel, he simply spoke and it was so. Jesus himself uses a simple *amēn* (truly or verily) five times in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:18, 26; 6:2, 5, 16) to give full force and effect to his prophecies and judgments; for Jesus, this word "guarantees the truth of his statements."[97] In a sacred or ritual context, any more than this is unnecessary and perhaps even devious; more is not required, and is to be avoided. When the Levites heap a dozen curses upon the wicked, all the men of Israel cried out with a loud voice after each curse, "Amen" or "truly, yes" (Deuteronomy 27:15–26); and when the woman suspected of adultery swore her oath of innocence, all she was to say was "amen, amen" (Numbers 5:22). The double "yes, yes" or "verily, verily" carried the weight of divine force and was "a substitute for an oath."[98] The double response, "amen, amen," emphasizes the importance of the commitments being made under oath or by way of covenant. While the words about oaths in this stage of the Sermon on the Mount can apply in numerous life settings, they are most pertinent when people are making, or are about to make, solemn oaths or commitments to the Lord.

With all this in mind, what is to be made of the truncated but very influential line "do not swear at all"? The upshot of what has been said is that Jesus is not opposed to oaths altogether, but only to oaths sworn in certain inappropriate ways that might bring reproach to God by one's untruthfulness or nonperformance. In other words, what Jesus objected to was such casuistry that asked whether one was bound if one swore by temple gold but not if one swore by the Temple, or whether one was bound to an oath by the offering but not to an oath by the altar (see Matthew 23:16–19). To this effect, Worth connects the brief statement about oaths in the Sermon on the Mount with the discussion of oaths in Matthew 23:

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96 J. Schneider, "*horkos*," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, p. 460.

97 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (New York, 1966), vol. 1, p. 84.

98 Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 317.

> In the antithesis of Matthew 5, we find four types of oaths condemned: (a) by heaven; (b) by earth; (c) by Jerusalem; (d) by one's head. In Matthew 23:16–22 we find a variety of oaths mentioned: (a) by the temple; (b) by the gold of the temple; (c) by the altar; (d) by the gift on the altar. It is these types of oaths that Jesus insists must be abstained from. Rather than swear such oaths, one must be content with an emphatic *yes* or *no:* "Whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Mt. 5:37) because it tempts one to engage in the making of subtle distinctions between binding and nonbinding oaths of the kind rebuked in Matthew 23.[99]

Quite clearly, in Matthew 23, which seems to reflect most clearly the fuller historical teaching of Jesus on oaths, "there is no total ban on oaths."[100] Rather, the prohibition is directed at the practice of swearing euphemistically by some substitute for the divine, thinking that such an oath is somehow less potent than if the oath had been sworn in the name of God. Any oath by anything connected with the Temple or with God is tantamount to an oath by the Temple or by God: "He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by him who dwells in it; and he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it" (Matthew 23:21–2). Thus, all oaths should be approached cautiously and taken equally seriously, for dire corruption follows the breaking of oaths.[101] "All oaths directly or indirectly appeal to God; all are therefore binding since they call on him to guarantee their fulfillment."[102]

To be sure, some have read the Greek in Matthew 5:34 and James 5:12 as forbidding all oaths or promises of any kind ("swear not *at all*," "swear *no* other oath"), but this does not capture what appears to be the historical intent of Jesus (as reflected explicitly in Matthew 23),[103] and these two texts can be interpreted otherwise: I read the Greek in James 5:12 as telling Christians not to swear any such oath, meaning one that swears by external things, by heaven, or by earth,[104] or by any other such thing (*allon tina*).[105] The problem lies in bringing in "extralinguistic props" and thereby failing to swear by God himself, who dwells in those places

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99 Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 201

100 Paul S. Minear, "Yes or No: The Demand for Honesty in the Early Church," *NovT* 13 (1971): 4.

101 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 44, commenting on the disastrous consequences that ensued after the fallen angels broke the eternal oath and corrupted the creation of the world in the Enoch literature.

102 Minear, "Yes or No," 5.

103 Minear finds that the accent originally fell, not on the ban against oaths, but on the demand for radical honesty, "Yes or No," 3.

104 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 271.

105 The Greek grammar in this verse is odd. "By heaven" and "by earth" are in the accusative case, leaving it unclear how to read *allon tina orkon*, which is equally in the accusative: that is, does it mean "an oath by any other thing" or "any kind of oath"? If

and sanctifies those oaths. James admonishes his followers to let their "yes" really be a "yes" and their "no" really be a "no," and to keep their solemn promises literally "so that they not fall under judgment [of the Lord]."

A rabbinic aphorism suggests a similar sentiment in general speech: "Let your Yes and No both be righteous. Do not speak with your mouth what you do not mean in your heart."[106] But much more is at stake in the Sermon on the Mount than simply speaking honestly in one's daily conversation. The use of a mere "yes" or "no" had precedent in "cultic-ritual oracles" in which "a 'token' was either of good or of evil omen, [and therefore] would answer either 'yes' or 'no.'"[107] Even the Essenes, who rejected oaths in general, used "the oath at entering the sect."[108] In a temple context, the Sermon on the Mount is likewise concerned with the complete integrity of oaths made in the name of God and with the full sincerity of vows made to God in the holy place.

Stage 9. Do Double-Good and Pray for All People, Including Enemies (5:38–47)

Having dealt with the problem of oaths, which addresses in one important way the relationship between humans and God, the Sermon turns its attention next to relations between humans and their fellow beings. The instructions of the Sermon on the Mount come in a two-step sequence: first, the hearers are told to avoid certain negative, impulsive responses to certain demands or opposition; and second, they are required to take certain positive steps to love and improve relationships with their neighbor.

The admonition to avoid retaliation relates to one of the central jurisprudential formulas of the law of Moses: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Matthew 5:38; Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21). Instead, one should not set oneself against the evil one: "But I say to you, Do not resist (*antistēnai*) one who is evil (*tōi ponērōi*)." Five examples are then given: (1) "if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," (2) "if any one would sue you and take your coat (*chitōna*), let him have your cloak (*himation*) as well," (3) "if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles," (4) "give to him who begs from you," and (5) "do not refuse him who would borrow from you" (Matthew 5:39–40). In cases (1) to (3) one may assume that the aggressor was "an enemy," but in cases (4) and (5) there is no reason to think that the beggar or the person asking for a loan was an enemy. The latter two cases illustrate the positive obligation, "You shall love your neighbor" (Matthew 5:43; Leviticus 19:18);

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the sense is "neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by anything in between," the meaning of James 5:12 is essentially the same as Matthew 23:16–22.

106 Quoted in Minear, "Yes or No," 11.

107 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 66.

108 Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 314, citing 1QS 5.8–11.

while the former three raise the question of how one should treat even an enemy. The answer, quite simply, is do not turn an enemy away any more than any other neighbor, and then, most of all, "pray for those who persecute you," and this is "so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:38–45).

Much has been written about the ethical meanings of these lines and also about the legal posture of the Sermon on the Mount vis-à-vis the law of Moses, attitudes at Qumran, or thoughts of the rabbis.[109] Commentators taking these ordinary ethical or legal approaches have shown that, in many ways, the instructions in the Sermon on the Mount about loving one's neighbor and being charitable were not radical or novel for the time. For example, making interest-free loans to the poor is required by the Covenant Code (Exodus 22:25), and giving or lending to the poor is required by Deuteronomy 15:7–8, "If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be." Among the attributes required of the righteous man in Ezekiel 18:7 are these: He "does not oppress any one, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment" (see also Proverbs 28:27).

Indeed, lending to the poor was required of the children of Israel as a condition of their covenant, qualifying them to receive God's generosity. Thus, the Psalms praise those who are willing to lend to those in need.[110] Psalms 112:5 blesses the man "who deals generously and lends," and Psalms 37:26 similarly extols the righteous who "is ever giving liberally and lending." Mowinckel identified Psalm 37 as a thanksgiving psalm, sung by temple singers on behalf of individual worshipers who were themselves making thank-offerings.[111] Hannah's prayer extolled God because he "raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap" (1 Samuel 2:8). Being charitable toward the poor in imitation of God was also one of the principal keys to receiving blessings from God at the Temple, where ancient customs of assisting the poor had relevance to confessions at Yom Kippur, egalitarianism at Passover, prayers for redemption at Shavuot, and in making prayers and offerings more acceptable to God.[112] Here at this stage in the Sermon on the Mount, the focus in items (4) and (5) is on the traditionally

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[109] See generally Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 274–320; Dan Lioy, *The Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount* (New York, 2004), pp. 151–6; R.T. France, *Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007), pp. 217–27; Brad H. Young, *Meet the Rabbis: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2007), p. 69.

[110] Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 216.

[111] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 2, pp. 31–2.

[112] Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York, 1980), pp. 174, 218, 257.

accepted and temple-encouraged norms of giving or loaning to those who ask for help from you.

The requirements (1) to offer the left cheek as well as the right, (2) to give the cloak as well as the coat, and (3) to go the second mile as well as the first, however, set standards that go beyond the normal. As listeners were struck by the spiritual and ethical challenges of these new situations, what did they hear? In addition to the ethical or legal implications usually seen in connection with these three requirements, what light might a temple background shed on the meaning of these innovative texts?

(1) Regarding the requirement to turn the other check, it is again interesting that the slap is taken on the right cheek. Along with the right eye and right hand as discussed above in connection with Matthew 5:29–30, the right cheek may have signaled the innocence and purity of the person being slapped. The example tacitly assumes that the person being slapped has not provoked the insult or deserved the reprimand. Moreover, the slap on the cheek may echo the year-rite ceremony in which the king was humiliated, had his royal garments taken away, was struck "on his cheeks," and after a series of confessions was reinstalled on the throne.[113] In this ancient temple ritual, the king obviously did not strike back: when struck on one cheek, he offered the other to show his submissiveness to the will of his god. In a similar way, the righteous man, who himself would be exalted and enthroned as a son of the Heavenly King, must be willing to suffer insult and injury for the sake of his sacred calling and in the name of his god.

(2) In offering one's outer cloak as well as one's inner tunic, more would seem to be involved in Jesus' example than simply the requirement to settle quickly with a person who had sued you in court, for that point had already been made earlier in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:25–6). Now, in Matthew 5:40, two specific items of clothing are mentioned and, while both may be ordinary pieces of daily apparel, they may certainly have meant and communicated something more specific in a temple context. For one, these were terms used for priestly garments. The "coat" (*chitōn*) was a garment worn next to the skin, as an undershirt or slip. This Greek word, as well as its Hebrew cognate, *kuttōneṯ*, designate it as a garment made of linen. Among the most famous instances in scripture of such items of clothing were the garment which was given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and Joseph's garment which was envied by his brothers. The priestly garment described in Exodus 28:4 is the *kuttōneṯ*,[114] and some priestly garments, along with the veil of the Temple, were required by the laws of purity to be made of linen (for example, Exodus 25:4; 26:1; Leviticus 6:10). The "cloak" (*himation*) was an outer garment (Hebrew *meᶜil*). According to the priestly regimen, this outer garment was worn over the *kuttōneṯ* (Leviticus 8:7). Thus it was a *himation* that both Elisha and Caiaphas tore in exasperation (2 Kings 2:12; Matthew 26:65), while the robe of Jesus that shone as white as the sun at his transfiguration was also his *himation*

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113 Jacob Klein, "Akitu," in *ABD,* pp. 138–40.

114 Fabry, "*kuttōneṯ*," in *TDOT*, vol. 7, pp. 384–6; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, p. 504.

(Matthew 17:2). The Lord puts on his *meʿil*, his garment of vengeance (*himation ekdikēseōs*), as he comes forth to judge (Isaiah 59:17). These are to be thought of as more than ordinary pieces of clothing.

Beyond the general association with priestly and royal garments, to have both an inner and outer garment symbolized the complete coverage of the Lord. From this sense of being encircled in the robes of the Lord's righteousness came considerable spiritual joy and satisfaction: "Let my soul rejoice in the Lord; for he has clothed me with the robe of salvation (*himation sōtēriou*) and the garment of joy (*chitōna euphrosunēs*)" (Isaiah 61:10). The occurrence of the two words *chitōna* and *himation* in Matthew 5:40 draws that text into close proximity with the memorable promises and blessings of Isaiah 61:8–10, where the Lord promises that he "will make an everlasting covenant" with his people. If Matthew 5:40 might be alluding to this Isaianic text, as it seems to, then the message added by the Sermon on the Mount would be this: if someone asks a person for the *chitōn* of joy (which God has given to that person), then he should do to the one who has asked just as God has done to him (that is, by giving not only the *chitōn* of joy but also offering him the *himation* of salvation), so that he or she too can be clothed in both as a bridegroom or bride (Isaiah 61:10). The imagery of wedding and heavenly garments in the Apocalypse may likewise build on this passage from Isaiah.[115]

(3) The final example, of being pressed into service for one mile and then going a second, also can have much more than an obvious, literal meaning. Of course, it was possible (but not likely—given the small number of Roman soldiers actually present in Judaea and Galilee) that the followers of Jesus would be asked by a Roman soldier to carry his gear a certain distance; much more likely they would be conscripted by local administrators to work on roads or public projects or by Jewish officials to do agricultural or maintenance work on temple property. The right of kings and rulers to force persons to work for a set number of days in the year was common (and expected) in the ancient world,[116] and in Israel kings could force people to plow and harvest his lands (2 Samuel 8:11–18)—Solomon "raised a levy of forced labor" of thirty thousand men to work on the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 5:13). Within the administration of the Temple, the priests and Levites were divided into courses, and each took their turn rendering

[115] The book of Revelation prophesies that all the righteous will receive a "white garment" (*leuka himation*, Revelation 3:5, 18; 4:4), and they all are admonished to stay alert and to protect their *himatia* (Revelation 16:15). Ultimately, Jesus will appear in a *himation* dipped in blood and on this robe will be written "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:13, 16).

[116] See entries regarding corvée labor in Raymond Westbrook, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law* (Leiden, 2003): pp. 368–9 (Old Babylonian period), 525, 553 (sometimes in lieu of taxes or as a punishment in Assyria), 829 (work on local dykes and canals required of free Egyptians under Demotic law).

mandatory service about two weeks each year.[117] As a result, nothing requires that the one who compels (*aggareusei*) someone to go a mile was a Roman, and thus opportunities for "going the second mile" could arise in many contexts, including temple service. Nothing would preclude a priest or Levite from taking an extra turn at the altar or an extra janitorial shift. In that way, the *talionic* formula of "eye for (*anti*) eye, tooth for (*anti*) tooth" is deftly transformed, to "cheek upon cheek, garment upon garment, mile upon mile." Because the preposition *anti* can have several meanings, including "for, in lieu of, because of, on behalf of," or "upon" (as in "grace upon grace" in John 1:16),[118] just as its Hebrew original, *taḥat* [can mean "beneath, instead of, as, for, for the sake of, unto,"[119] the old talionic formula had always been the subject of legal interpretation and thus was still ripe for recasting.

In each of these five cases, it is possible that the people slapping, demanding, or asking were in some sense enemies (*echthroi*) of the followers of Jesus' teachings, but not necessarily. Whether they were enemies or not, the Sermon requires that they be treated well. Good neighbors, of course, should be loved, and even the tax collectors and Gentiles loved those who loved them (Matthew 5:46–7). The perennial question, of course, was "and who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). The Old Testament and Jewish traditions offered certain examples of people helping their enemies, but they were fairly limited. The Covenant Code required all Israelites to treat an enemy kindly, but only to the extent of doing him the favor of returning his stray animal upon happening to come across it: "If thou meet your enemy's ox or his ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him" (Exodus 23:4, see also Deuteronomy 22:1).[120] Saul expressed the regret that David was "more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil" (1 Samuel 24:17), and it was considered wise "not [to] rejoice when your enemy falls" (Proverbs 24:17). More typical among all peoples were the contrary sentiments expressed in the Rule of the Community at Qumran, where animosity continued until the enemy repented and walked perfectly:

> The multitude of evil men I shall not capture unto the Day of Vengeance; yet my fury shall not abate from men of the Pit, and I shall never be appeased until righteousness be established. I shall hold no angry grudge against those repenting

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117 Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 199, 208.

118 Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 72–3.

119 R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 967–8.

120 The law, however, did not require a person to go out looking for the lost animal; and returning the animal was probably in the finder's self interest, in order to avoid being accused of having stolen it.

> of sin yet neither shall I love any who rebel against the Way; the smitten I shall not comfort until their walk be perfected.[121]

The Sermon on the Mount imposes no such conditions on its positive obligation to love even one's enemies.

The Sermon on the Mount may have many reasons for its rejection of hating of one's enemy, and one may well wonder about its motivation, but the best clue in this regard is its explicit requirement of what the righteous person is to do for the enemy, and here the Temple comes into the picture once again. The one thing consistently required in all New Testament manuscripts[122] is to pray for (or on behalf of, *hyper*) those who persecute you. This is the concrete action to be taken to exercise divine love (*agapate*) toward one's enemies. In a temple context, the best thing the righteous can do to love, bless, and do well for another person is to offer prayers in their behalf and for their benefit. While those hearing this instruction might well think of offering prayers outside the Temple, if they wondered where ideally they might best offer such prayers they would readily think of the Temple, the pre-eminent house of prayer.

Offering intercessory prayers on behalf of the wicked was a worthy act of piety exemplified by Abraham (Genesis 20:7), Samuel (1 Samuel 7:5–9), the prophets (Jeremiah 14:11), Jesus (Luke 23:34), Stephen (Acts 7:60), and the early Christians.[123] This is what righteous people do—they pray that God will forgive or show mercy to sinners and persecutors. The Didache, after covering all of the same examples as appear in Matthew 5:39–42 and after listing twenty apodictic commandments, concludes: "You will not hate any person, but some you will reprove, and concerning others you will pray, and some you will love more than your soul" (Didache 2:7). To the same end, the Sermon on the Mount makes it the duty of the righteous to pray for their enemies and then to leave it to God to deal with them.

Betz and Worth astutely argue that the "enemies" referred to in Matthew 5:44 were likely personal enemies from among the Jews, all being part of the people of the covenant. Betz reasons that because "the immediate environment [of the Sermon on the Mount] was Jewish, the persecutors were most likely fellow Jews (see also SM/Matt. 5:11–12), so that intercession for them coincided with the liturgical prayers on behalf of Israel."[124] Worth states that "the text Jesus cites only has God's then-covenant people specifically in mind, '*You* shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of *your* people, but you shall

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[121] 1QS 10.19–21, trans. M. Wise, M. Abegg, and E. Cook, in Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov (eds), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader, Part 1, Texts Concerned with Religious Law* (Leiden, 2004), p. 39.

[122] Some manuscripts add that one is to bless enemies or do well (*kalōs*) for them, but all include "pray on behalf of them."

[123] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 312, n. 893.

[124] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 313.

[*not* should] love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" (Lv. 19:18)."[125] This being so, the Sermon on the Mount's requirement that all should pray for fellow members of the covenant people, especially in the house of the Lord, becomes even more deeply compelling.

In a temple setting, the petitioner relinquishes to God the task of judging one's enemies. The Psalms often supplicate the Lord to deal with enemies of righteousness. Almost half of the Psalms mention enemies, making them a very common issue addressed in the Temple. The Lord smites them, turns them back, and cuts them off; vengeance is the Lord's, as the Psalms frequently say (Psalms 58:10; 94:1; 99:8; 149:7)—a sentiment reflected by Paul: "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. . . . Never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God" (Romans 12:17, 19). Some texts rather grimly encouraged people to be nice to their enemies in order to heap coals of God's wrath upon their heads (Proverbs 25:21–2), but there is no reason to believe that any such maliciously motivated kindness would influence how God might choose to impose his judgment. Rather, the only purpose of praying for one's enemies would be to show love, hoping that they will repent or be spared long enough in order to repent. The antithetical actions of taking vengeance and bearing a grudge are the opposite of love, and thus the full verse in Leviticus 19, upon which this entire section of the Sermon on the Mount is based, reads: "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18).

Thus, those who then pray for enemies who persecute them are promised that they "may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:45; see also Matthew 5:9, discussed above; and "you are Gods . . . sons of the most High," Psalms 82:6). Sons of God defer the judgment to God; as sons of God, they also love their neighbor and do unto their fellowmen as God would do unto them, precisely because they live and act in the image of God himself. Indeed, the dominant purpose of the Temple was to enable humans to imitate God. As Jonathan Klawans points out, "Josephus emphasizes *imitatio Dei* as *the* overall motivation and justification for Jewish religious practices."[126] Standing in a state of ritual purity and participating in holy rites approximated, as far as possible, the condition and activities of God. Several ancient writers express awareness of this idea, notably Josephus in his preface to the *Antiquities of the Jews*: "Moses deemed it exceeding necessary, that he who would conduct his own life well . . . should consider the divine nature, and upon the contemplation of God's operations, should thereby imitate the best of all patterns, so far as it is possible for human nature to do." Once Moses had "demonstrated that God was possessed of perfect virtue, he supposed that man also

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[125] Worth, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 114.

[126] Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple* (Oxford 2006), p. 115 (emphasis in original).

ought to strive after the participation of it," and striving in this direction was in no way "disagreeable either to the majesty of God, or to his love to mankind."[127]

In sum, when injustice occurs, the question, as Betz points out, becomes "What should one do to prevent further injustice and to restore justice?"[128] The legal answer of providing retribution and compensation is generally incomplete and unsatisfactory, because most injuries are irreparable or only approximately replaceable. The ethical answer (of doing unto others as you would like them to have done to you) is also inadequate here, because the application of that rule in such cases would require the injured party to ask himself what he would want to have done to himself, assuming that he were a tort feasor, overbearing plaintiff, or oppressive commander—an unseemly assumption. More satisfactory is the temple answer: sons of God who believe in his righteous judgment and power do not aggravate their enemies, are cooperative and generous, and then pray to the Lord that he might change the hearts of the offenders and execute proper justice in due course. Thereby the sons of God are able to restore the original covenant, reproducing the paradisiacal state of peace on earth, which was represented in the Temple by the Holy of Holies.[129]

Stage 10. A Promise of Gifts of Sun and Rain as Blessings from Heaven (5:45)

As a result of the covenant between God and his people, Jesus promises that God will "make his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and send rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). These gifts from God are collective blessings, showered down equally on all who occupy the holy land, including the strangers, friends and enemies. Correlatively, when people are wicked, God withholds these blessings from the land, and all of the people, righteous and wicked, suffer together. Jesus' audience would not need to be reminded of this fundamental biblical principle of collective responsibility.[130] The covenant people rise and fall together.

Sun and rain were among the main symbols of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. Rain in timely amounts was sent as a blessing to those who obeyed the covenant (see Deuteronomy 11:13–14), and the Temple was the principal place where prayers were offered to God so that such blessings would continue, particularly at the Feast of Tabernacles.[131] Symbolically, the Temple was

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[127] Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.19, 23–4.

[128] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 293.

[129] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 48.

[130] For the authoritative treatment of this subject, see Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, England, 1995).

[131] "There is an ancient tradition that the amount of rain which is to fall during the year is decreed on Sukkot." Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days* (New York, 1978), p. 46; citing Rosh HaShanah 16a.

the conduit between heaven and earth, able to open the windows of heaven so that blessings might pour down on all its people. Thus, at the dedication of the First Temple, Solomon made the following plea:

> When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against thee, if they pray toward this place, and acknowledge thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them, then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, thy people Israel, when thou dost teach them the good way in which they should walk; and grant rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people as an inheritance. (1 Kings 8:35–6)

Solomon's dedicatory prayer similarly consecrated the Temple so that it would be an agent of answers to prayers, forgiveness for sin, validation of oaths sworn at its altar, victory over enemies, and protection against famine and pestilence (1 Kings 8:28–53).

Rites of the Temple in Jerusalem specifically recognized rain as a blessing of the covenant. As Mowinckel explains, "When water from the holy spring Gihon in the valley of Kidron is poured over the altar at the autumnal festival, this signifies that the rainy season will bring rain in plenty; . . . the fact that [Yahweh] is there, in his Temple, means that the earth is once more firm, in spite of the furious uproar of the primeval ocean."[132] The divine presence signified renewal and the pouring out of promised blessings: "Yahweh's appearance as king involves a promise; he has renewed the covenant with his people. . . . In Jerusalem the festival was celebrated before the rainy season—and, originally, to cause it; when Yahweh has come, faith knows that blessing and crops and wealth will come also, if king and people but keep the covenant."[133] The enthronement festival thus dealt with the renewal of the earth. During this festival, "life, 'the World,' is created anew. The bond made with the deity in the harvest festival causes the rains to return, so that the curse of drought and death is overcome, dormant nature revives and life awakens, to the benefit of mankind (cf. Ps. 65)."[134] The Temple sat between the primordial waters below and the rains falling from above. From that place, the earth was renewed, as was God's covenant with his people. There the heavens were opened and God poured out rain and knowledge upon his covenant people (see Malachi 3:10). According to Raphael Patai, "the most elaborate yearly ritual performed in the Second Temple of Jerusalem, . . . the so-called 'Joy of the House of Water Drawing,'" was celebrated each year at the beginning of the rainy season to ensure

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132 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 20; see also vol. 1, p. 187.

133 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 164.

134 Mowinckel, *Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 113. This festival may have originated in Canaanite temple traditions. For Mowinckel's discussion of the enthronement festival occurring in Canaanite temples and its "conversion to a feast of Yahweh," see vol. 1, p. 134.

the blessing of rainfall.[135] The Psalms, always pertinent on such an occasion, acknowledged these powers of God over all of nature: "He covers the heavens with clouds, he prepares rains for the earth, he makes grass grow upon the hills" (Psalms 147:8); "the Lord is a sun and shield" (Psalms 84:11), in truth for the benefit of the entire world.

Thus, in concluding this part of the Sermon on the Mount in which the stipulations of the new covenant between God and his people have been set forth, Jesus ends with a promise and a paradigm. The promise is that righteous acts of the disciples will bring down from heaven the blessings of sun and rain upon all people in the land (the good and the evil, the righteous and the unrighteous). The paradigm is that true disciples, as sons of God, will do like God, likewise loving both the good and the evil, both their friends and their enemies. Having completed all of this level of instruction, the disciples are prepared to encounter the next level of perfecting temple principles and ordinances.

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[135] Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (New York, 1947), p. 24.

Chapter 5
A Higher Order of Righteousness and Consecration

In its transition from Matthew 5 to Matthew 6, the Sermon on the Mount shifts into a different mode. Inviting the hearers to move on in becoming perfect even as God is perfect (Matthew 5:48), the next part of the Sermon on the Mount takes up themes of inner righteousness and singular dedication (Matthew 6:1–24). This part contains no references to the law of Moses, or to what has been said by those of old, or to what is thought in or about outside society. Here the concern is not about the opinions of men but the surveillance of God. If Matthew 5 is about Moses, society, the Aaronic priesthood, and the law, then one may view Matthew 6 as pertaining to the domain of Melchizedek, the Lord, individual righteousness, and a distillation of the prophets (represented in Matthew's gospel by the spirit of Elijah; see Matthew 17:3), for the Sermon on the Mount as a whole embraces both the Law and the Prophets (see Matthew 5:17; 7:12). Stylistically there is also a sharp contrast between Matthew 5 and Matthew 6, so much that many biblical commentators have suspected Matthew 6:1–18 of being a later intrusion into the text. That suspicion dissolves, however, if one sees the text as simply taking its listeners the next step further into a higher or holier stage of instructive experience, thus accounting for the different thematic world to which this part of the Sermon on the Mount belongs.

In Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount presents a first set of regulations regarding one's mundane dealings with fellowmen, brothers, wives, neighbors, and enemies in the challenging affairs of this world. In this next level, the Sermon on the Mount takes a decisive step in the direction of greater holiness. Here, in Matthew 6, the Sermon on the Mount presents a second set of requirements regarding worship and piety, focusing on almsgiving, prayer, forgiveness, fasting, and total dedication of all that one has to God. In this sphere, emphasis is placed on cultivating secret and inward righteousness, as well as rejecting the treasures of this world and not worrying about the needs of the flesh. Astutely reflecting this fundamental shift from Matthew 5 to Matthew 6, Betz labels Matthew 6:1–18 as "the cultic instruction," because almsgiving, prayer, and fasting are "three ritual acts" that should be performed properly in preparing to "approach the deity."[1]

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[1] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis, 1995), pp. 329–35, quotes on 330, 332.

Stage 11. Transition into a Higher Order (5:48)

At the end of Matthew 5, which is equally the beginning of the next section of the Sermon, the people are invited to become perfect. At this point in the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples have reached one plateau and now look beyond to a higher order of righteousness. Behind the words *esesthe oun humeis teleioi*, "be ye therefore perfect" (Matthew 5:48 KJV) or "You, therefore, must be perfect" (Matthew 5:48 RSV) stands an interesting ambiguity. Betz is certainly right in puzzling over this conundrum, which arises because the second person plural imperative and future forms of the verb "to be" are one and the same, *esesthe*. Accordingly, "it is not clear from the outset whether *esesthe* is merely an imperative ('Be perfect!'), or a prediction ('You will be perfect'), or an eschatological promise ('You may be perfect'). Grammatically as well as contextually, one could justify each of the options."[2] In a temple context, however, one is not forced to choose between the strictly logical or grammatical alternatives, for in a performative setting the word *esesthe* can serve multiple functions: sequentially, it recaps (summarizing the previous commands, "so, be"), it requires (adding yet another command, "be this, too"), it beckons (inviting people to continue on, "come be"), it assures (affirming the listeners that they will succeed, "you can be"), promises (holding out the reward, "you may be"), and prophesies (guaranteeing that those who hear and do these words will succeed, "you shall be"). All of these meanings are possible and pertinent. Standing near the midpoint of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:48 therefore looks both backwards and forwards as a bridge between Matthew 5 and Matthew 6. Thus, the word *therefore* marks a transition in the design of the Sermon: On the one hand, it looks back over the instruction given thus far about the law of Moses, while on the other hand, it looks forward to yet a greater order to be required if the people are to become "perfect," even as the "heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

This textual transition is as dramatic and as concrete as moving from one court or hall within the Temple to the next. In Matthew 5:23–4, the altar in the Court of the Priests was mentioned prominently; it was the place for making one's offerings according to the law of Moses, swearing of oaths, and offering one's prayers, even for those who might be one's enemies or persecutors. With the transition in Matthew 5:48, the Sermon on the Mount progresses forward as if moving from court of the law through the vestibule (the *Ulam*), and into the Holy Place (the *Hekal*), drawing closer to the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies (the *Debir*).[3]

In much the same way and using grammatically and verbally similar expressions, the Torah commands and exhorts the children of Israel to obey the law in such a way that they will progress and increase in holiness, becoming holy even as God is holy: "You shall be men consecrated (*hagioi esesthe*) to me" (Exodus 22:31); "you shall be holy (*hagioi esesthe*); for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2);

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2 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 321.

3 Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven* (London, 1991), pp. 26–9.

"you shall be blameless (*teleios esēi*) before the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 18:13, here a translation of *tāmim*; see also 2 Samuel 22:26). A similar requirement was expressed at the end of Solomon's dedicatory prayer for the Temple, "Let your heart therefore be wholly true (*estōsan hai kardiai hēmōn teleiai*) to the Lord our God" (1 Kings 8:61). The strong verbal connections between Matthew 5:48 and these cultic passages could scarcely have failed to link this stage in the Sermon on the Mount with progression within the Temple in the minds of Jesus' listeners. The salient use of the word *teleios*, particularly in Deuteronomy 18:13 and 2 Samuel 22:26, strongly suggests that one need not look any further than mainstream Judaism in order to locate the Sermon on the Mount's concept of perfection in biblical terminology that was current in first century Palestine[4] with a meaning that encompassed the composite characteristic of God's nature and of "a total commitment to do his will."[5]

Most significant in these texts is the word *teleioi* (perfect), especially in conjunction with its counterpart *hagioi* (holy). These words are used to identify the ultimate attribute of God and his righteous followers. Although it is certainly presupposed that the word *perfect* has, on one important level, a straightforward ethical or religious meaning here[6]—reflecting perfect mercy, "undivided obedience to God," and "unlimited love"[7]—there is also a significant possibility that on another level the word conveys a temple or ritual connotation here. In this setting, one may understand that Jesus is expressing his desire that the disciples now advance from one level to the next, to go on to become perfect in the sense of being "ultimately finished" or "completed" in the full instruction and with spiritual endowment that will allow them to actualize the divine nature in their own lives and being.

Following the interpretive rule that context usually determines the sense in which any intended "perfection" or "completeness" consists,[8] the meaning of the word *teleios* in the Sermon on the Mount should be seen as having to do with becoming

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[4] The appearance of the idea of perfection in the Dead Sea Scrolls need not signal some influence of the Essense on Jesus or Matthew, but may reflect instead a common dependence on these biblical passages.

[5] Leopold Sabourin, "Why Is God Called 'Perfect' in Mt. 5:48?," *BZ* 21 (1980): 266–8, quote on 268.

[6] See Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 816–17, giving the meanings of *teleios* as "having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect," "full-grown, mature, adult," "complete," "fully developed in a moral sense"; E. Kenneth Lee, "Hard Sayings—I," *Theology* 66 (1963): 318–20; and E. Yarnold, "Teleios in St Matthew's Gospel," *SE* 4 (1968): 269–73, identifying three meanings of *teleios* in Matthew: Pharisaically perfect in keeping the laws, lacking in nothing, and fully grown.

[7] This is the preferred meaning suggested in the Protestant view; see *TDNT*, vol. 8, pp. 73, 75.

[8] Yarnold, "Teleios in St. Matthew's Gospel," 271; and Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 322.

completely instructed regarding all the attitudes and behaviors that will enable a person to become godlike. Several reasons support this ritualistic understanding. First, the Greek word *teleios* is an important word in Greek religious literature to describe several things, including the person who has become fully initiated in the rituals of a given religion. *Teleios* is "a technical term of the mystery religions, which refers to one initiated into the mystic rites, the initiate."[9] Orphic books spoke of the *teletai* (rites of initiation) which if performed prevented dire pains in the world to come.[10] Second, other forms of this word are used in Hebrews 5:14–6:1 to distinguish between the initial teachings and the full instruction ("full age," "perfection"). In Hebrews 9:11 it refers to the heavenly temple. Generally, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, its usage follows a "special use" from Hellenistic Judaism, where the word *teleioō* means "to put someone in the position in which he can come, or stand, before God."[11] Third, in a ritual setting, among the connotations of this word, this term refers to preparing a person to be presented before God "in priestly action"[12] or "to qualify for the cultus."[13] Early Christians continued to use this word in this way in connection with their sacraments and ordinances.[14] All this tends toward what my mentor, the late Hugh Nibley, saw as the meaning of the word *teleios*, namely

> living up to an agreement or covenant without fault: as the Father keeps the covenants he makes with us. . . . *Teleioi* is a locus technicus from the Mysteries: the completely initiated who has both qualified for initiation and completed it is *teleios*, lit. "gone all the way," fulfilling all requirements, every last provision of God's command. The hardest rules are what will decide the *teletios*.[15]

Moreover, a comparable cultic use of the Hebrew term *shalom* may provide a link between Jewish perceptions and these Hellenistic and Christian uses of the

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9 Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 817, citing sources and referring to Philippians 3:15 and Colossians 1:28. See Demosthenes, *De Corona* 259, in *Demosthenes*, trans. C.A. Vince (Cambridge, 1971), 190–91, where *telousei* is translated as "initiations" into the mystery religions; see also *TDNT*, vol. 8, p. 69.

10 Plato, *Republic*, 363C and 364E.

11 Gerhard Delling, "*teleios*," in *TDNT*, vol. 8, p. 82; citing Hebrews 7:19 and 10:1.

12 Delling, "*teleios*," vol. 8, p. 83.

13 Delling, "*teleios*," vol. 8, p. 85.

14 H. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* (Graz 1954), vol. 8, p. 1961, "gradibus ad sacramentorum participationem, ton hagiasmaton metochen, admittebantur." I thank John Gee for this point. See also Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom:Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden, 1996), p. 72 (the great mystery being known "only by the perfect ones," *tois teleiois*).

15 Hugh W. Nibley, unpublished notes on the New Testament, on Matthew 5:48, in the Hugh W. Nibley Archive, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Greek word *teleios*. In particular, John Durham has explored in detail the meanings of the Hebrew word *shalom*, in several of the Psalms[16] and also especially in the Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6:26. He concludes that this term, even though often translated as "peace," "in virtually sixty-five per cent of the usage-pattern, the reference is not to 'peace' but rather to 'fulfilment,' . . . completeness, a success, a maturity,"[17] concepts that the Greek *teleios* may be striving to express. Durham shows that in many texts *shalom* should be understood fundamentally as a cultic term referring to the complete gift or total endowment from God, "a blessing specially connected to theophany or the immanent Presence of God" that "can be received only in his Presence,"[18] specifically in the Temple of Solomon and represented within the Israelite cult and liturgy.[19] Baruch Levine has similarly analyzed the function of the *shelamim* sacrifices as producing "complete," or perfect, "harmony with the deity, . . . characteristic of the covenant relationship as well as of the ritual experience of communion."[20] *Teleios* is used in Exodus 12:5 LXX in reference to sacrificing a perfect lamb, one without blemish. Thus, Durham sees Israelite concepts behind the word *teleios* in Matthew 5:48,[21] concurring with the insight of Gerhard Barth that "Matthew does not use *teleios* in the Greek sense of the perfect ethical personality, but in the Old Testament sense of the wholeness of consecration to God."[22] The related word *teleiōsis* (perfection) is used five times in Exodus 29:22–34 and six times in Leviticus 8:22–33 to describe especially the sacrificial ram of "consecration," but also the holocaust, the basket, and the seven days of consecration or ordination to the Lord.

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[16] In examining over 125 verses, Durham draws attention to Psalms 1:3; 65:1 and 119:165, in which shalom is the reward for obedience and love of the torah.

[17] John I. Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," in John I. Durham and J.R. Porter (eds), *Proclamation and Presence: Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies* (Richmond, Virginia, 1970), p. 276.

[18] Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," 281, 292. On at least fourteen occasions, the Psalms identify God as the giver and source of the state of *shalom* (4:9; 29:11; 34:15; 35:27; 37:11, 37; 69:23; 72:3, 7; 73:3; 122:6, 7, 8; 125:5).

[19] Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," 286–92. Durham lists fifteen predominantly cultic terms with which *shalom* is associated, such as blessing (Psalms 29:11), covenant, good (Psalms 34:15), righteousness, law, name, mercy and faithfulness (Psalms 85:11), prostrate humility (Psalms 4:9), salvation, wealth, faithfulness, commandment, sin, shunning evil and seeking peace (Psalms 34:14). *Shalom* is the complete totality of all these elements, most of which figure prominently in the Sermon on the Mount in leading to the state of being *teleios*.

[20] Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden, 1974), pp. 35–6.

[21] Durham, "Shalom and the Presence of God," 293, n. 135.

[22] Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, trans. Percy Scott (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 101; see also Herman Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich, 1922), vol. 1, p. 386.

Accordingly, in instructing the people to be "perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), it would seem that Jesus had several things in mind besides "perfection" as that word is understood in modern usage. Whatever else he may well have meant, this would have involved the idea of becoming like God ("even as your Father which is in heaven"), which occurs by seeing God (see 1 John 3:2), knowing God (see John 17:3), and not being turned away but being allowed to enter and stand in his holy presence (Matthew 7:21). Through the rites of the Temple, a mortal high priest could become "divine," a "son of God" and like the Father. Writing about "those who 'became' the Lord" through ascent and transformation, Margaret Barker comments, "The ascent to heaven was the way to the angelic state. . . . This was the tradition of the temple and of the high priests who wore the sacred Name."[23] Since the high priest was born as a normal human being, "we have to ask how it was that the high priest became an angel, how he became divine. The answer must lie in the ritual performed in the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest was allowed to enter. Several texts do describe how the king was 'born' as son of God, or 'raised up' in the Holy of Holies. Being born as a son of God and being resurrected were both descriptions of the process of becoming divine. Jesus himself used the terms interchangeably. Angels are the sons of God, the resurrected, he said (Luke 20.36)."[24] In temple ceremonies, these ultimate realities of seeing, knowing and becoming like God were portrayed and foreshadowed most saliently.

Stage 12. Giving Voluntarily to the Poor (6:1–4)

Almsgiving is the first requirement encountered in connection with this establishment of the higher order inaugurated by the Sermon on the Mount: "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised (*doxasthōsin*) by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret (*en tōi kruptōi*); and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:1–4). Previously, in Matthew 5:42, the initiate was told to give to those *who ask*; now, the requirement is to give without being asked—voluntarily, inconspicuously, and in holy righteousness.

Apparently, Jesus did not valorize poverty, as did the Essenes. While some of his followers were wealthy (such as Mary, Martha and Lazarus apparently were) and others were undoubtedly very poor (being no better off than the widow who

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[23] Margaret Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1996), p. 24.

[24] Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London, 2004), p. 56.

cast her two mites into the temple contribution box), this requirement of almsgiving assumes that Christian disciples were at least economically capable of giving something regularly to the poor. Jesus agreed with the general Jewish notion that righteousness requires giving to the poor (as discussed above regarding Matthew 5:42). Giving to the poor had long been a requirement placed upon the Lord's covenant people,[25] and giving in sacred secrecy has been generally recognized as "a mark of the truly righteous man,"[26] and thus "one should not underestimate" the importance of generosity in Jesus' teaching.[27]

Later in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus will say to the rich young man: "If you would be perfect (the word here again is *teleios*), go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21), drawing on words and phrases in Matthew 5:48 and 6:21. How much money Jesus actually expected his disciples to forsake or to give to the poor is a topic that has been vigorously debated, especially because Matthew does not appear to go as far as Luke, which has the main disciples leave "all" (Luke 5:11, 28). Under Jewish law, "it was not permissible to spend more than a fifth of one's means on acts of charity," and "according to the Mishnah (M. Arak. 8.4) a man may devote only part of his means to the Temple, and to go further than this was not valid."[28] In placing high importance on generosity, the position of Jesus may well have been that such mishnaic limits had set the standard too low. Encouraging the righteous to go beyond this arbitrary ceiling would be one more example of his demand for righteousness that is fuller than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). In light of the temple theology which views the land and its crops as belonging completely to God in any event, any demand to give or render (*apodote*; Matthew 22:21) back to God or to his Temple that which is God's is a reasonable demand, and by so giving, the righteous make it talionically possible for a just God to render (*apodōsei*; Matthew 6:4, 6, 18) a comparable reward or repayment back to the righteous.[29] As one gives back to God, directly or indirectly, so God can return to the one who gives.

Significantly, the Temple in Jerusalem was connected in several ways with the collecting and dispensing of alms. The event of the widow casting her two mites into the temple treasury box (Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2) may not be historically verifiable, but it undoubtedly reflects the historical reality of collecting voluntary

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[25] For a broad and sensitive treatment of this subject in the biblical period, see Léon Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London, 1986).

[26] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 344.

[27] Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 127.

[28] Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 127.

[29] Metaphorically, *misthos* can refer to any reward which God gives, but this term was also used for payment for Levitical services in the temple (Numbers 18:31) or remuneration of priests (Micah 3:11). On the talionic nature of God's judgment, see the discussion of Matthew 7:2 below.

offerings in the Temple. A tithe was also collected for the poor, and all these funds were administered by a "special payment-office for the deserving poor of good families. . . . Since this office was situated in the Temple, we may assume that the other arrangements for assistance were also to be found there," such as the poor-basket and the poor-dish.[30] The Talmud describes two rooms or chambers in the Temple that were used for collecting such donations: "There were two chambers in the temple, one the chamber of secret gifts and the other the chamber of the vessels. The chamber of secret gifts—sin-fearing persons used to put their gifts therein in secret, and the poor who were descended of the virtuous were supported therefrom in secret."[31] According to this Mishnah, anonymous donations of various vessels or utensils could likewise be placed in the chamber of the vessels; once every month the treasurers opened it, kept those gifts that were useful right within the Temple or in its stewardships, and then sold the others to raise money to pay for temple repairs. The Jerusalem Talmud adds to this mishnah the further detail that it is "those who fear sin" who secretly and righteously put their contributions for the poor into the chamber of secret gifts.

Indeed, Joachim Jeremias, Geza Vermes, and others have argued that Jesus' requirement that alms must be given in secret alludes to the practice of giving gifts to the poor by way of this "Chamber of Secrets" in the Temple of Herod.[32] I would add that Jesus may also have, just as likely, intended to encourage anonymous donations of valuable vessels or utensils for the benefit and upkeep of the Temple. Furthermore, the Greek phrase "in *the* secret [place] (*en tōi kruptōi*)" uses the definite article and thus seems to refer to some place in specific; otherwise, the adverb "secretly" could have been used. Betz, however, resists such an idea, claiming that "the hypothesis does not allow a correspondence with the other two cultic acts" of prayer (Matthew 6:4) and fasting (Matthew 6:18), both of which the Sermon on the Mount also requires to be done in secret.[33] Betz's concern, however, can be mollified on several counts: first, it is possible that all three demands for "secrecy" or obscurity might refer to doing things, in one way or another, under the covering of the Temple, thus supplying a consistent correspondence throughout. Second, the word *kruptos* means hidden, concealed, covered, or simply out of sight; Jesus' meaning might just as well be to do these things under the covering of the Tabernacle or Temple as simply to do them without anyone noticing. Third, the secrecy required in each of these three cases need not necessarily be the same: physical gifts need to be kept out of the public eye in a different way than do personal prayers, and no one needs to know that a person is fasting unless it is somehow announced. The fact that Matthew 6:18 uses a somewhat different expression, "without being noticed (*en tōi kruphaiōi*)," signals

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[30] Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 132–3.

[31] M. *Shekalim* 5.6.

[32] Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 133; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London, 1973), p. 78.

[33] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 360.

that the correspondence between these three cases was, in fact, never intended to be exact. Finally, the normal English translations and the received wisdom which understand the giving of gifts "in secret" rather than in a secret place within the Temple have been unduly influenced by the Vulgate Latin, *in abscondito*, which, of course, lacks the definite article (there being no definite articles in Latin); this widespread Western reading has lent itself more readily to a generic notion of secrecy and has drawn to mind less often the temple-related specificity that may well have been originally intended in this instruction.

In contrast to the quiet giving of alms in secret that was modeled in the Temple, the reference to trumpets in Matthew 6:2 sounds a blaring note that criticizes any inappropriate practice of conspicuous giving, whether in the Temple or elsewhere. The phrase "sound no trumpet [or fanfare] before you (*mē salpisēis emprosthen sou*)" draws the Temple to mind, since "the principal musical instrument [used there] was the trumpet, which was used in conjunction with the sacrificial rites, on occasions of religious celebration (1 Chron. 13:8; 15:24), and at the dedication of the temple (2 Chron. 5:12)."[34] Glorifying God with the trumpet is required in the Psalms: "Praise him with trumpet sound" (Psalms 150:3; also 47:5; 98:6); "blow the trumpet (*salpisate*) at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day" (Psalms 81:3). Abraham Bloch's history of the *shofar* notes that "upon the return of the Babylonian diaspora to Jerusalem, the trumpets were restored to the Temple and their use was mainly confined to the Sanctuary."[35] Thus, the use of a *shofar* or *salpinx* for dramatic purposes by an actor in a synagogue would have struck Jesus' listeners as a usurpation of a temple instrument for personal aggrandizement in a less than holy context and for less than sacred reasons. Indeed, what these hypocrites sought was glory, to be glorified by men. Glory, however, should be given only to God, and no place was more conducive to glorifying God than was the Temple, as was sung countless times in the Psalms (for example, Psalms 22:23; 24:7; 29:1; 30:12; 45:3; 66:2; 76:4; 86:9, 12; 138:5).

Stage 13. The Order of Prayer (6:5–13)

The next topic of instruction in the Sermon on the Mount is about prayer. Although, and by all means, prayer was not limited exclusively to the Temple, prayer was quintessentially connected with the Temple, its rituals, and the very purpose for its existence. Mentioning prayer would never be out of place in any kind of discourse related to the Temple. Indeed, any such discourse would be somewhat incomplete without some mention of prayer. In addition to the temple element of prayer in general, temple correspondences are enriched in the case of the Lord's Prayer

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[34] Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York, 1980), p. 146.

[35] Bloch, *Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies*, pp. 146–7.

due to several of its specific themes as well as by its clear formulation as a group prayer with ritualistic applications.

The stated purpose of Jesus' instruction about prayer in general is to show his followers how not to be "seen by men" (Matthew 6:5) or "heard for their many words" (Matthew 6:7), but how to be seen and heard of God. This is the cry of the ages, the yearning that God will hear the words that we speak: The plaintive plea, "Then hear thou in heaven" (1 Kings 8:32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49), was repeated at least seven times in the dedicatory prayer of the Temple of Solomon.

The Sermon on the Mount begins its instructions about prayer with the same general point that applied to the giving of alms. Prayers should be offered to be heard of God and not to be seen of men. In the case of private prayers, Jesus advised going into one's *tameion* (Matthew 6:6), that is, into any small enclosed area, and shutting the door. In a domestic setting, such a room would probably have been "an inner storeroom, which is likely to have been the only lockable room in an ordinary Palestinian house,"[36] but the word is general enough to refer to any private space, including a barn (Psalms 144:13) or the secret chambers of a king (Psalms 105:30). One's secret place, of course, need not be only in a temple or other sanctuary,[37] but at the same time temples served as ideal places of secret communication with God and sheltered refuge from any kind of threatening or vengeful wrath. The idea that God was prone to hide made it all the more attractive to think of finding God in remote or cloistered places; and where can God be found better than in the innermost, private chamber of his own house, the Temple? So when it is said in the little apocalypse in Matthew 24 that God is to be found neither in his wide-open dwelling place out in the wilderness nor in his confined secret chambers (*en tois tameiois*), this merism emphatically drives home the point that God is then to be found nowhere at all, having departed again from all of his usual places of residence, and so there was no need to seek him out either in the open wilderness or in his secret chambers (Matthew 24:26), in other words, even in the Temple. Likewise, the apocalyptic warning in Luke continues by saying that in the last day nothing that was once "covered," including in the Temple, will not be exposed, and all that was whispered in the *tameia* will be shouted from the rooftops, especially the identity of anyone who has confessed or denied the Son of Man (Luke 12:2–3). Such references that embrace even the most secret of all chambers could easily have been connected with the idea of the "glorious innermost Temple chambers" as mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls.[38] The Father who sees and hears "in the secret place (*en tōi kruptōi*)" will then reward those who seek and ask him, and him alone. In the Psalms, God is often wont to

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[36] R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007), p. 239.

[37] Isaiah told his people to take cover in their shelters (*tameia*) until the anger of the Lord shall have passed over (Isaiah 26:20).

[38] 4Q405 14–15 in Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York, 1988), p. 227.

hide (*kruptein*, Psalms 10:1, 11; 13:1; 30:7; 89:46; 119:114), but the supplications of the righteous are not hidden from him (Psalms 17:8; 38:9; 40:10; 55:1).

At the time of Jesus, prayer was clearly linked to the Temple. In his main temple action, Jesus solidly affirmed "the public temple as a place of prayer."[39] Incontrovertibly, it was written "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13), quoting the long-standing tradition, reflected in Isaiah 56:7, of seeing the Temple as a house of prayer.[40] Speaking of this central function of the Temple, Rabbi Abraham Bloch explains:

> In the course of time a practice of individual prayers, in conjunction with a sacrificial offering, was instituted in the Temple. This practice was predicted by Isaiah: "Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7). The chanting of psalms in the Temple was an act of praying. Josephus described the custom of praying at the time when a sacrifice is offered "for the common welfare of all, and after that our own" ("Against Apion" 2.24). . . . While individual prayers were sporadic in the First Temple, they became a permanent feature in the Second Temple.[41]

By omitting the phrase "for all peoples" in this quote from Isaiah 56, "Matthew makes it clear that he understands Jesus' act to be concerned with the proper use of the temple as such," not just in any particular part of the Temple open to non-Jews.[42] Geoffrey Troughton further explains the context of the passage in Matthew 21 and how it fits with Jesus' own attitudes about the Temple and about Jewish leadership:

> Jesus recalls Isaiah 56.7, asserting that the Temple should be "a house of prayer for all nations". In context, Isaiah 56.1–8 describes a gathering of the righteous from foreign nations with the faithful of Israel in their worship in Jerusalem. This is interposed between a call to "maintain justice" (56.1) and accusations that Israel's leaders are blind and corrupt (56.9–12).[43]

In short, this Isaiah passage not only calls the Temple "a house of prayer" but also denounces the evil practices and greed of some who worked there. Thus, it is

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[39] Dale C. Allison Jr, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary* (New York, 2004), p. 89.

[40] Bloch, *Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies*, p. 66.

[41] Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days* (New York, 1978), p. 35.

[42] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 786–7.

[43] Geoffrey M. Troughton, "Echoes in the Temple? Jesus, Nehemiah, and Their Actions in the Temple," *JBS* 3/2 (April 2003): 9, available at http://journalofbiblicalstudies.org/Issue7/Echoes%20in%20the%20Temple.pdf

significant that these teachings of Jesus on prayer similarly include a denunciation of the public prayer practices of "hypocrites" (presumably referring to influential people) who pray for the purpose of obtaining worldly attention rather than for spiritual gain.

Robert Mounce discusses the inherent connection between prayer and the Temple, as well as the practices of these "hypocrites."

> A second important religious duty among the Jews was prayer. In the morning and in the evening the devout Jew would recite the Shema (three short passages of Scripture from Deut. 6 and 11 and Numbers 15), and at nine in the morning, noon, and three in the afternoon he would go through the Shemoneh Esreh (the Eighteen Beneditions). Acts 3:1 notes that Peter and John went to the temple "at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon." According to Jewish custom, if you were in the streets at this time it was proper to stop, turn toward the temple, and pray (the Moslem practice even today). Apparently the hypocrites would plan their day so as to be in some conspicuous place when it was time to pray.[44]

Jesus, however, emphasizes the virtue of private prayer, teaching that prayer should not be spoken to be heard and seen of men, but rather that its purpose was to reach the Father. Similarly, in the Temple, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies alone (see Leviticus 16:17) for the private and secluded communication that occurred there between God and his servant the high priest.[45]

After these instructions about praying alone in private, the English pronouns shift from a singular "you" to a plural.[46] This indicates that the Lord's Prayer was offered as an instruction in group prayer: "[You (plural)] pray then like this."[47] The words of the Lord's Prayer, which have become familiar to virtually all Christians, would already have had a familiar ring in the ears of Jesus' original audience: "Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:9–13). The words of the Lord's Prayer draw heavily on traditional idioms and temple terminology, with Psalm 103 containing "the majority of Old Testament connections with the Lord's Prayer."[48]

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44 Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 54.

45 See Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 61.

46 The second person plural is used in Matthew 6:9 (*humeis*) and the first person plural runs throughout the prayer itself.

47 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 362–3, recognizes the Lord's Prayer as "a group prayer," but finds it hard to place it in the context of instruction on personal prayer.

48 George Braulik, "Psalms and Liturgy: Their Reception and Contextualization," *VE* 2 (2003): 309–32, quote on 325.

The prayer begins by addressing God as "Our Father (*pater hēmōn*)." Whether the word used or assumed here is the Greek *pater*, or the Hebrew *ab* or *abba*,[49] this salutation assumes that a father-child relationship already exists between God and his petitioning children, which implies that the promise made at the outset of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:9 to the effect that peacemakers will be called the sons of God (discussed above) has already been to some extent fulfilled, so that the initiate by now enjoys that status.

Addressing God as Father "is one of the basic phenomena of religious history" worldwide, as it was also in Judaism before and after the New Testament era; it was also a common term of addressing the deity in Hellenistic mystery cults.[50] Herman Hendrickx has detected and commented on this widespread, sacred use of the term "father" in Near Eastern, Greco-Roman, and the Hebrew prayer and ritual discourse:

> In the *ancient Near East* "Father" was used to indicate that God is the creator of the world, the sovereign ruler, and protector. In ancient Egypt, the sun-god Amon-Re was called father, but it is possible that this practice was reserved to the Pharaoh, although there is some recently discovered evidence that ordinary people could do so too. In ancient Mesopotamia, the moon-god Nanna and the sun-god Shamash were also addressed as Father.
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> In the *Greco-Roman world*, Zeus was referred to as "father of gods and men," and addressed in prayer as "Father Zeus," designating him as divine ruler and protector, and later also as creator. The term "Father" was also frequently used for deities like Attis, Osiris and Mithras in the mystery religions in which the promise of personal immortality was expressed in terms of becoming "sons" of the divine "Father."
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> In the *Old Testament*, God is spoken of as "Father" on fourteen occasions expressing his relationship to his people (cf. Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:15–16; 64:7–9; Jer. 3:4, 19). Many other passages describe him as creator, ruler and protector without explicitly using the word "Father." In this respect the Old Testament usage is parallel to that of other religions and cultures of the ancient world. But it contains also a number of distinctive features. [For example,] the title "Father" has a connotation of God's working in history on behalf of his covenant people Israel.[51]

Although the appellation of "father" is perfectly suitable and was used in several different kinds of literary and social contexts, its use in Isaiah 63 to call upon God as the true Father in his heavenly (temple) habitation is especially pertinent to the invocation that begins the Lord's Prayer: "Look down from heaven and see, from

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49 For a lengthy discussion of *Abba*, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (London, 1967), pp. 11–65.

50 Gottlob Schrenk, "*patēr*," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, pp. 951, 953–4, 978–82.

51 Herman Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1984), pp. 108–9.

thy holy and glorious habitation. Where are thy zeal and thy might? The yearning of thy heart and thy compassion are withheld from me. For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name" (Isaiah 63:15–16). In the Psalms, God was extolled as the "Father of the fatherless" (Psalms 68:5; see also 103:13), and the servant of God shall cry unto him, "Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation" (Psalms 89:26). Elsewhere, in similar tones, both John the Baptist and Jesus place the Lord ahead of Abraham "as father whom we have" (Matthew 3:9), and ahead of Abraham "our father" ("are you greater than *patros hēmōn*," John 8:53, 58), and that emphatic statement that God is truly "our Father" increases all the more the resonance between these words in Isaiah and the opening words of the Lord's Prayer. Both texts, in effect, petition the Father, who is in the heavens (or in his holy and glorious habitation in the Holy of Holies) to look down, to hear, and to answer, with zeal and might, the prayers of the righteous who beg God for his acknowledgment, compassion, forgiveness, guidance, and redemption.

Pronouncing this name of God properly also suggests important ritual backgrounds. Knowing and invoking the *nomina sacra* typically carried with it numinous powers. Names were not taken lightly, and often they could be uttered only in sacred ceremonial settings. Some religions had "developed long lists of divine names, hoping that by endless repetition they would somehow invoke the name of the true god and receive what they wanted."[52] And so when Jesus began the Lord's Prayer by calling upon God as "Our Father," and by "hallowing" that name, he would have evoked a field of meanings that were at home in temples and in solemn rituals. As Margaret Barker explains, holy respect for the name of God was an important temple symbol. When the high priest ministered in the ancient temple, he "wore the Sacred Name on his forehead because he represented the Lord of the hosts dwelling with his people. 'Blessed is he who comes with the Name of the Lord' must have been the acclamation for the high priest."[53]

In averring that the name of God be "hallowed," or "made holy (*hagiasthētō*)," the Lord's Prayer taps into one of the most recognizable psalmodic pronouncements repeatedly sung in the Temple: "May his name endure for ever, . . . and all nations call him blessed!" (Psalms 72:17); "holy and terrible is his name!" (Psalms 111:9; also 99:3); "we trust in his holy name" (Psalms 33:21); "bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (Psalms 103:1; also 105:3; 106:47; 145:21).

When the Lord's Prayer continues to beseech that God's kingdom might come and his "will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10), other correspondences with the Psalms and the Temple are evoked: "Temple theology knew of incarnation, . . . the life of the age to come, . . . and the kingdom of God"

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[52] Mounce, *Matthew*, p. 55.

[53] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 26.

for his sons and daughters.[54] The kingdom of God is praised and extolled in Psalms 22:28, 45:6, 103:19, and 145:11–13; and Psalms 135:6 equates that state with the harmonization of affairs on earth with God's will in heaven: "Whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps." The initial verses of Psalm 135 place that hymn in the context of the Temple, praising Lord in his "house" and in "the courts of the house of our God" (Psalms 135:2).

Having just prayed "thy kingdom come," the mysterious request "give us this day our 'daily' (*epiousion*) bread" (Matthew 6:11) is unlikely to be a request "for ordinary food."[55] "The consumption of bread was accompanied by rich symbolism."[56] The interpretation of the word *epiousion* is notoriously difficult,[57] but in a temple context the variables and possibilities become contained. It may refer to the bread that came down from heaven (compare Jerome's rendition of this word as *supersubstantialis*, that is, supernatural), to the future bread of life that will be eaten at the eschatological messianic banquet, or to the bread that is given "day by day" (compare Luke 11:3; James 2:15), as was the manna in the wilderness. Mounce writes, "The background is God's daily provision of manna that could not be stored (except on Friday) for a future day (Exod. 16). God responds to our needs day by day."[58]

With the Temple in mind, one might find here a reference to the miraculous daily manna that all the children of Israel received from their protective Father during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. This enduring provision of this heavenly bread was so amazing "that Moses commanded Aaron the high priest to gather an omer of manna and place it in the ark of the covenant that future generations might be reminded of the Lord's supply."[59] That famed miracle was referenced in a temple context in Psalms 105:40, in praising the Lord through a recitation of his covenant dealings with Israel, and in this context mentions that the Lord "satisfied them with the bread of heaven."

Additionally, it was the privilege of the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies and eat the Bread of the Presence each Sabbath day: "As with so many temple practices, nothing is said of the meaning [of this bread], but there are enigmatic references to feasts in the Temple, associated with theophany,"[60] indicating the

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[54] Margaret Barker, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. ix.

[55] Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London, 2007), p. 208.

[56] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 399.

[57] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 397–9. A.W. Argyle, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 56, states: "The word translated 'daily' is so rare that no one knows what it means. It may mean 'for the following day,' 'our bread for the morrow.'"

[58] Mounce, *Matthew*, p. 57.

[59] Joel C. Slayton, "Manna," *ABD*, vol. 4, p. 511; see also Exodus 16:32–3.

[60] Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, pp. 208–9; see also Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest* (London, 2003), pp. 101–2.

presence of the Lord himself. Bread was used significantly in the Temple and was a familiar symbol there.[61]

A further connection between the Lord's Prayer and the temple context is evident in its doxology and the exclamation of the people in the Temple of Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement. In the opinion of the exhaustive compilers Strack and Billerbeck, after the High Priest had transferred the sins of the people to the scapegoat, had driven it out into the wilderness, and had said the words, "from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30), then

> the priests and the people, who were standing in the Forecourt [of the Temple], when they heard the name of the Lord clearly uttered, as soon as it came out of the mouth of the High Priest, bowed their knees and threw themselves down and fell on their faces and said, "Praised be the name of his glorious kingdom forever and eternally!" In the Temple [*im Heiligtum*] one did not simply answer "Amen!" How did one answer? "Praised be the name of his glorious kingdom forever and eternally!". . . How do we know that the people answered this way upon each benediction [in the Temple]? The scripture teaches, saying, "He is to be exalted with every praise and adulation."[62]

Accordingly, in the Temple, the faithful would not have answered the High Priest with a simple "amen," but by praising God and mentioning a pleonastic list of his divine attributes, such as his glory, power, kingdom, and everlasting dominion, before concluding with "amen." According to the rabbinic sources, this doxological acknowledgment of the kingdom and glory of God was in regular usage in the Temple before its destruction; and this practice can be attributed to a much earlier time, it being believed that similar words of praise were spoken by father Jacob to his sons shortly before his death.[63] In a temple setting, an expansive doxology was clearly called for, if not expected; in a plainer, public context, a simpler ending would have been more appropriate (compare Luke 11:4).

Indeed, words of praise and honor such as the doxology found at the end of the Lord's Prayer were comfortably familiar in Israelite temple ritual and liturgy. An exclamation of praise similar to Matthew 6:13 is set in a temple context as David glorified the Lord at the time when the people made generous offerings to support the building of the Temple: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11). Likewise, another doxology, this time in the context of the Holy of Holies, is found in the words of the seraphim who speak

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[61] Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: A Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supp. 220, New York, 2002), p. 345.

[62] Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, p. 423, citing Mishnah, *Yoma* 6:2, and others.

[63] Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, p. 423.

to each other in Isaiah's vision of the temple throne, declaring, "The whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). From the Psalms, further doxologies, each with strong connections to the kingdom, power and glory included in the doxology at the end of the traditional version of the Lord's Prayer, are known to have been sung with reverence and jubilation in the Temple. For example, "I will declare thy greatness, . . . and shall sing aloud of thy righteousness: . . . All thy saints shall bless thee! They shall speak of the *glory* of thy *kingdom*, and tell of thy *power*, to make known to the sons of men thy mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of thy kingdom" (Psalms 145:6, 10–12, emphasis added).

Thus the longer ending of the Lord's Prayer, "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, amen," would probably have been recognized by Jesus' listeners as a traditional sign of the great sanctity and solemnity connected with the Temple, and its hue and tone would have easily evoked emotions and experiences usually reserved for the holiest of temple rituals on the Day of Atonement. Thus, as Betz has pointed out, the words of praise used at the end of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 may even have signaled a ceremonical "acclamation," indicating that "perhaps the original function of the 'doxology' in the Lord's Prayer was that of a response by the worshiping congregation."[64]

The ritualistic tenor of the Sermon on the Mount is borne out by the long-standing use of the Lord's Prayer in religious services. From the earliest Christian times, the Lord's Prayer was "basically a prayer used by a group,"[65] and several early Christian texts document the use of sacred group prayers, with the participants standing in a circle around Jesus at the center.[66] The Lord's Prayer was undoubtedly intended as a pattern or model for group prayers. Jesus probably used words such as these as he prayed on several occasions; and it would appear that he taught his followers to pray in this way, modifying the words of the prayer somewhat from time to time, as is reflected in the fact that the earliest texts of the Lord's Prayer are not all quite the same (compare, for example, Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; Didache 8:2). The early church father Origen understood the Lord's Prayer to be only a model or outline,[67] and the rabbis similarly expressed "strong prohibitions against reciting a fixed prayer," recommending that in saying a set personal prayer one should vary it a little each time.[68]

The Lord's Prayer also has covenantal characteristics that draw it once again into a temple environment. In the lines "thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"

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[64] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 414. Compare Psalm 106:48.

[65] Gordon J. Bahr, "The Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church," *JBL* 84 (1965): 156.

[66] Hugh W. Nibley, "The Early Christian Prayer Circle," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City, 1987), 45–99.

[67] Bahr, "Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church," 153.

[68] Bahr, "Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church," 157. See Hans Dieter Betz, "The Lord's Prayer" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, 1988).

and "thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10), Margaret Barker sees an allusion to aspects of temple worship in the Holy of Holies pertaining to the Lord's creation of the world and mankind's fulfillment of the all-crucial covenant. The phrase "'on earth as it is in heaven' would be a good description of the creation as it was intended to be"[69] and the "kingdom" represented the Holy of Holies, the home of the "eternal covenant."[70] In the Temple, heaven and earth meet, and thus Barker aptly explains that covenant-making in the Temple essentially constituted the binding together of earth and heaven. "The Hebrew dictionary suggests that the root meaning of 'covenant' is 'to bind'. . . . Creating in the holy of holies was a process of binding into bonds, engraving limits and definitions, and then using them to order the visible creation."[71] The covenant-making language of the Old Testament "refers to the correspondence between earth and heaven."[72] The binding force and effect of this covenant was also recognized in the New Testament's teachings about atonement, for as Barker also writes,

> The high priest's renewal of the cosmic covenant is the natural context in which to understand Ephesians 1.10: ". . . a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth". . . . The one who is the image of the invisible God, who reconciles all things on earth and in heaven, who makes peace by means of blood, is the high priest.[73]

As Jesus prayed to bring the Father's will onto earth, he sought to connect or bind earth to heaven. His words invoked the concepts of covenant and atonement.

Always alert to further possibilities of temple allusions in a wide variety of ancient texts ranging from ancient Egypt to early Christianity, Hugh Nibley has detected more than a polite request or pious wish in the structure of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.[74] Nibley has maintained that the three main sections of this prayer conform to the well-known archetype of "mysteries or ceremonies" that bring down to earth the pattern of heaven ("on earth exactly as it is in heaven"), to which our present linkage and our "password is the name" of God ("hallowed be thy name").[75] Like the three typical elements of the Greek mysteries, the Lord's Prayer synoptically covers an *archē* (beginning in heaven, father of spirits), an

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69 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 41.

70 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 51.

71 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 43.

72 Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 43.

73 Barker, *Risen Lord*, p. 82.

74 On Jewish legalistic prayers, see Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 193–217, discussing the "law court patterns" in similar prayers, where one presents a plea to the divine judge, gives the facts, defends himself, and asks for judgment in his favor.

75 Hugh W. Nibley, unpublished notes on the New Testament, on Matthew 6:9–13, in the Hugh W. Nibley Archive, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo,

omphalus (history, this world, bread, debts, temptation, and cry for deliverance), and *sphragis* (end of the world, seal, kingdom, and glory).[76]

Unfortunately, most of these connections between the Lord's Prayer and the Temple have gone missing over the centuries. As Margaret Barker has observed, not all of the teachings in early Christianity regarding prayer were committed to writing, perhaps because many of them were Christian counterparts to ineffable holy things that were at home particularly in the Temple:

> St Basil, in his mid-fourth-century treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, explained that there were teachings from the apostles which had never been written down. These concerned facing east to pray, marking with the sign of the cross, and the *epiklesis*, the words used in the Liturgy to call on the Lord to come, originally to the temple (e.g. Ps. 38.21–22; Ps. 70.1, 5), but in this instance to the bread and wine. It cannot be coincidence that all three were customs from the first temple. Basil explained that "they had been kept in silence and in secret", and concerned "liturgical customs, prayers and rites of the sacraments" and the theological doctrines implied in them. . . . Basil compared facing east, the sign of the cross, and the *epiklesis* to the secrets of the holy of holies.[77]

Thus, when the Sermon on the Mount introduced its audience to the correct "manner" of prayer, it drew heavily upon the sacred teachings of the ancient temple, where prayer was given particular solemnity through the words, patterns, and symbols that were taken for granted in the instruction given and exemplified by Jesus.

Stage 14. Forgiving and Receiving Forgiveness (6:14–15)

The theme of forgiveness, which was introduced in the altar law of Matthew 5:23 and formulated in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:12, is expanded and elaborated in Matthew 6:14–15: "For if you forgive (*aphēte*) men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive (*aphēsei)* you; but if you do not forgive (*aphēte*) men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive (*aphēsei)* your trespasses." This pointed repetition places heightened emphasis on the inescapable fact that, under the new order of holiness, prayers beseeching the Lord for forgiveness of sin or for deliverance from evil will be granted only to the extent that the petitioners have truly forgiven or delivered one another. As the listeners are taken one step further along the Sermon on the Mount's path of progression, they learn that

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Utah. Apparently, the hallowed, holy name is something other than Abba, which is not a proper name.

[76] Nibley, unpublished notes; see Raymond E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatalogical Prayer," in *New Testament Essays* (London, 1965).

[77] Barker, *Temple Theology*, pp. 21–2 (citation omitted).

something more than reconciliation is now required. It is not enough to know that your brother or sister holds no hard feelings against you (which was the sacrificial prerequisite of Matthew 5:23–4). Now, the petitioner must be sure that there remains no residue of any incomplete forgiveness in his or her own heart. The one who asks God for forgiveness must hold no hard feelings against his brother or sister and must have completely forgiven all those who have sinned or trespassed against him. To be completely forgiven, one must forgive completely, for (following again the talionic nature of divine justice) God will only forgive us *to the extent* (*hōs kai*) that we have forgiven others.

Moreover, at this stage one now also learns that this is the only way to obtain forgiveness. Having asked "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12), the petitioners are now told that no other way to obtain forgiveness is open. Being forgiving is both a sufficient and also a necessary condition of receiving forgiveness from the Lord. One will be forgiven if and only if one forgives others: "if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Expiating sin, removing impurity, and making possible a reconciliation with God and his forgiveness was one of the most important functions of the Temple. Five times in his prayer dedicating the Temple, Solomon besought the Lord to hear the prayers and supplications of the people in that place: "when they pray toward this place; yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place; and when thou hearest, forgive" (1 Kings 8:30; see also 8:34, 36, 39, 50). In the Temple, "the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven" (Leviticus 4:20; see also 4:26; 19:22). Those who sought forgiveness in the Temple offered sacrifices there in order to "repair the broken relationship" with God; "if God will accept his sacrifice he will once again be restored to grace, at one with his deity."[78] Through the sacrificial cult the high priest was able to bear and forgive the transgressions and imperfections of the people.

> The name which the high priest wore enabled him to bear the guilt of the holy offerings and make them acceptable (Exod. 28.38). Wearing the Name enabled the high priest to carry, or to forgive—the word *naśa'* has both meanings—the imperfections of the people's offerings. He was the sin-bearer, and so the Palm Sunday acclamation: "Hosanna [which means 'Save us']. Blessed is he who comes with the Name of the Lord" (Mark 11.9) must have been an acclamation for the one who bore the Name as the sin-bearer. The third commandment had been intended for the high priest: "You shall not wear/carry [the word *naśa'* again] the Name of the Lord your God in vain for the Lord will not hold him free of guilt who wears his Name in vain" (Exod. 20.7). The high priest had the Name and thus the power of the Name. He was the seal of the eternal covenant, like Isaiah's Servant figure, or the cherub high priest described by Ezekiel.[79]

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[78] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York, 1991), p. 245.

[79] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 59.

The Sermon on the Mount teaches much the same principle as it warns all disciples that they must not fail to forgive or bear the sins of others. Those who fail to forgive (and thus wear the Name in vain) will not be held free from sin nor be forgiven.

Although several texts in the Hebrew Bible speak of forgiveness, mercy, release, and atonement, no book in the Greek scriptures uses the word *aphiein* more vividly and memorably than in the Psalms. After praising God for instructing "sinners in the way (*hodōi*)" and teaching "the meek (*praieis*) in his ways" (Psalms 25:8; compare Matthew 5:5; 7:14), the hymn poignantly begs, "Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive (*aphes*) all my sins" (Psalms 25:18). Psalm 32 begins, "Blessed (*makarioi*) are they whose transgressions are forgiven (*aphethēsan*), whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. . . . I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; then thou didst forgive (*aphēkas*) the guilt of my sin." Psalms 85:2 rejoices, "Thou didst forgive (*aphēkas*) the iniquity of thy people; thou didst pardon all their sin." Being made free—released from sin, debt, and servitude—was also the objective behind the Jubilee year, the year "of release (*apheseōs*)," which celebratory period began in the Temple on the Day of Atonement.[80] Thus, at many levels Jesus' teaching about forgiveness reflected central teachings and powerful symbols deeply embedded in Israelite and Jewish temple worship.

But perhaps for this very reason, more than any other, Jesus' potent teaching about forgiveness was on a collision course with the Temple and the chief priests and scribes, whose vested interests were compromised by the logical implications of this particular teaching. That conflict was foreshadowed shortly after the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven," and some of the scribes accused Jesus of "blasphemy" (Matthew 9:2–3), that is, in this case, of offending or invading the unique domain of the sacrificial cult of the Temple.[81] They dropped their accusation, however, when the paralytic took up his bed and walked home, expressly to show that if the Son of man could perform such a miracle he also had "authority to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6), a power traditionally reserved to God and accessible through the priestly caste in the Temple alone.

Stage 15. Fasting, Washing, and Anointing (6:16–18)

An instruction about fasting, anointing, and washing was next added to supplement the instructions on prayer and seeking forgiveness. "When you fast (*nēsteuēte*), anoint (*aleipsai*) your head and wash (*nipsai*) your face, that your fasting may not

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[80] Barker, *Temple Theology*, pp. 64, 70–71.

[81] That one could be accused and executed on a charge of blasphemy for speaking words that compromised the Temple, "this holy place," see the charge leveled against Stephen in Acts 6:9, 11.

be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret (*en tōi kruphaiōi*); and your Father who sees in secret (*en tōi kruphaiōi*) will reward you" (Matthew 6:17–18).

Whatever else one may think about the ethical and eschatological dimensions of this brief section of the Sermon on the Mount, there can be no doubt that fasting, washing, and anointing are very often related to ritual acts, especially associated with preparations, purifications, and consecrations of those presenting themselves at the Temple or participating in temple procedures. Hans Dieter Betz has persuasively defended on several literary and historical grounds his designation of the block of text in Matthew 6:1–18 as a "cultic *didache*" or "ritual instruction,"[82] and his characterization is strongly supported at this stage by the mere fact that fasting, when accompanied by washing and anointing, is undoubtedly connected with some religious ritual. Moreover, the triad of fasting, washing, and anointing readily draws to mind ritual practices connected with the Temple. While one might fast, wash, and apply scented olive oil at home or on special occasions in family or village life, the most salient reason for such acts of self-denial, cleansing, and purification was to prepare to enter the Temple and to present oneself humbly before the Lord.

Although this two-verse section of the Sermon on the Mount is shorter than the foregoing sixteen verses on almsgiving and prayer, one need not conclude that fasting was unimportant to Jesus or the earliest Christians. Other stages in the Sermon on the Mount are of great importance, even though they are very brief (such as the requirement of sacred secrecy in Matthew 7:6 or the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12). The overall flow of the Sermon on the Mount enhances the importance of each of its elements beyond what any single item might mean taken in isolation. The system of the Temple as a whole elevates every one of its details—no matter how small it might initially seem—in spiritual stature and sparkling significance, with the least of those observances sometimes becoming even the most highly esteemed (compare 1 Corinthians 12:23). The common thread in Matthew 6:1–18 is taking private, personal steps in secret, holy ways, so that God will see and rewards one's personal righteousness in some secret, holy space and time. Those three steps involve showing charity to others by giving alms, loving God by hallowing his name and praying to him, and attending to oneself by self-denial, personal cleanliness, and beautification.

Fasting

Fasting and prayer, topics that stand in close proximity to each other in stages 13 and 15 of the Sermon on the Mount, were closely linked to each other throughout the New Testament in connection with ceremonies of exorcizing demons (Matthew 17:21), in Jesus' ordeal of overcoming the temptations of Satan (Matthew 4:2; 1 Corinthians 7:5), or in ordaining elders (Acts 14:23). Fasting and prayer are suitable preparations for all ritual applications.

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[82] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount,* pp. 330–35.

People fasted on various occasions in biblical times. Ascetics, such as John the Baptist, fasted (Mark 1:6). Those mourning the dead fasted, such as when David and his men wept over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 1:12). Pertinent for present purposes, those seeking purification at the Temple on the Day of Atonement afflicted themselves or, literally, deprived their throats (Leviticus 16:29, 31; 23:27, 29), which at least always included fasting.[83] In Jesus' day, it may well have been a subject of some dispute how much more a person needed to do to comply with the requirement that "in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves" (Leviticus 16:29). Later rabbinic rulings require the person to refrain from eating, drinking, bathing, anointing, and having sexual intercourse,[84] perhaps borrowing from the occasion when David afflicted himself in all those ways, and also by sleeping on the ground and not changing his clothes, as he fasted and prayed for a son (2 Samuel 12:16–20), but nothing would necessarily require that litany of afflictions when appearing at the Temple. Evidently the "dismal" looking (*skuthrōpoi*, sullen, sad, or annoyed) Pharisees held that they should "disfigure" (*aphanizousin*, make unrecognizable, or hide) their faces when they fasted; and so perhaps the audience of the Sermon on the Mount would have understood this to be the case especially when the Pharisees were on the way to the Temple, for, as Betz points out, one of the "most interesting parallels" to Matthew 6:16 is found in the Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades Minor*,[85] a text that was widely known in antiquity. At the beginning of that dialogue, Socrates meets Alcibiades on his way to a temple to offer a sacrifice and to pray to a god; Alcibiades was going along, looking down at the ground, sad or worried (*eskuthrōpakenai*, essentially the same word as in Matthew 6:16). Socrates proceeds to teach Alcibiades the importance of asking the gods for the right things, and in the end Alcibiades decides to place on the head of Socrates the wreath (*stephanos*) he was carrying and to put off his sacrifice (*thusia*) until another time.[86] If this allusion was not lost on the Sermon on the Mount's audience, those hearers would have understood that the Pharisees were just as wrong as Alcibiades in approaching God in the Temple with worries and sullen countenances, instead of with joy and rejoicing.

Moreover, as a natural part of the public weeping and wailing that would go on in funerals or contrived legal proceedings (as in the case of Jezebel's framing

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[83] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, p. 1054; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27* (New York, 2001), p. 2022.

[84] *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Yoma* 8:1, cited in Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, p. 1054; see also Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 417–18; Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies*, pp. 168–9.

[85] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 420.

[86] Plato, *Alcibiades Minor* 138a and 151a. Greeks "who went to a temple to pray to a god carried a garland, which they wore while praying; and hence Socrates knew, on meeting Alcibiades, whither he was going." George Burges, *The Works of Plato* (6 vols, London, 1891), vol. 4, p. 397, n. 87.

of Naboth in 1 Kings 21:9) or in pietistic afflictions on temple occasions, fasting could easily lend itself "to ostentatious displays of piety, that is, to false piety," and the Sermon on the Mount took particular exception against any such false pretenses.[87] While Jesus inveighed against those who fasted that way to be seen of men, he did not reject fasting in general; indeed, he encouraged correct fasting as a part of true righteousness in order to be seen of God.[88] And here, again, the Temple is brought to mind. When the prophet Joel summoned Israel to come to the Temple, he called out: "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord. . . . Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 1:14; 2:12). When the Jews returned to Jerusalem, they assembled themselves at the Temple "with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth upon their heads. . . . they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God" (Nehemiah 9:1, 3). All this was a necessary precursor to the joy that would come in celebrating the forgiveness of the Lord, especially on the great Day of Atonement at the Temple. That day of pilgrimage to the Temple, of sacrifice, giving to the poor, fasting, offering prayers, receiving forgiveness, and feeling "spiritual ecstasy and joy,"[89] was so prominent that "there was no need to identify it by name, and a mere reference to 'the fast' was sufficient" to call it to mind (see Acts 27:9).[90] The Day of Atonement temple themes of charitable giving, prayer, forgiveness, and fasting are all closely linked[91] and completely consonant with the themes of the instructions in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:1–18.

Over-enthusiastic joy for the Almighty also needed to be corrected. When the Psalmist was overcome in public by his passion for the glory of the Temple, he was ridiculed by the public and alienated from his family; in response, he humbled and corrected himself by fasting privately: "For zeal for thy house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me. When I humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach" (Psalms 69:9–10). Thus, it was advisable to approach the Lord in his Temple with inconspicuous, secluded fasting, especially praying in behalf of one's enemies or persecutors. When false witnesses rose up

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[87] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 422.

[88] I take the saying in Gospel of Thomas 14 as a conscious reversal of Matthew 6:1–18. It reads, "If you (plur.) fast, you will acquire a sin, and if you pray you will be condemned, and if you give alms, it is evil that you will do unto your spirits," Bentley Layton, trans., *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, New York, 1987), pp. 382–3, reversing not only the sense but also the order of alms, prayer and fasting in Matthew 6, and therefore should be taken as secondary to the Sermon on the Mount.

[89] Bloch, *Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies*, p. 170, "Thus Rabbi Simon b. Gamliel said: 'There never were in Israel greater days of joy (*yomim tovim*) than the fifteenth of Av and YomHaKippurim' (*Taanit* 26b)."

[90] Bloch, *Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days*, p. 28.

[91] For the connection between fasting and giving to the poor, see Isaiah 58:6–7; *Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitude 5.3.7.

against the Psalmist and to him returned "evil for good," he reciprocated by fasting and praying for them when they were sick, wearing sackcloth and grieving as for a friend or brother (Psalms 35:11–14). It was then promised that the Lord would hear and answer the prayers of those who approached him in a humble state of fasting and self-denial, but no outward manifestations would sanctify the prayers or offerings of those whose acts were worldly or evil. Jeremiah warned the wicked that even "though they fast, [the Lord] will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and cereal offering, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence" (Jeremiah 14:12). Hence, the Sermon on the Mount requires moderation and restraint on the part of its adherents as they participated in temple ordinances.

Anointing

Anointing and washing could also take the ordinary practice of fasting to a higher level of holiness and divine acceptance. The word used for "anoint" in Matthew 6:17 is *aleiphō*. This Greek word appears in various Septuagint texts as the translation of three different Hebrew words, all three of which may stand behind this one word in the Sermon on the Mount: *suk*, which has to do with applying cosmetic lotions and "encompasses only the secular realm," not the cultic;[92] *tuach*, which means to rub, coat, or smear; and *māshach*, meaning to pour an offering of oil over something or someone. While *māshach* was used in connection with ceremonial applications of oil, especially for "induction into leadership offices," in which case is it usually translated into Greek as *chriō*, *māshach* can also "refer in everyday usage to such acts as . . . applying oil to the body (Amos 6:6)."[93] Thus, while anointing of oneself with lotion or olive oil may, on some occasions, entail nothing more than an act of ordinary hygiene or beautification, as in the cases of Ruth who washed and anointed (*aleipsēi,* LXX) herself and put on her best clothes as she went to offer herself in marriage to Boaz (Ruth 3:3) and of Judith who anointed her face with ointment to lure Holofernes with her beauty (Judith 16:8), the Sermon on the Mount's mention of anointing in a clearly religious context elicits more than cosmetic applications and brings to mind solemn connotations of anointing for purposes of consecration, glorification, and election by God. As Jacob Milgrom comments, the main symbolic roles of anointment in the ancient Near East were "to ceremonialize an elevation in legal status: the manumission of a slave woman, the transfer of property, the betrothal of a bride, and the deputation of a vassal, and—in Israel—the inauguration of a king, [or] the ordination of a priest."[94] Several of these functions may be called to mind by the Sermon on the

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[92] C. Dohmen, "nāsak," in *TDOT*, vol. 9, p. 459.

[93] Victor P. Hamilton, "*māshach,*" in *TWOT*, vol. 1, p. 530; see also Seybold, "*māshach,*" in *TDOT*, vol. 9, p. 45.

[94] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, p. 553. On the widespread use of anointing, "including the consecration of priests," in ancient urban temples and countryside shrines, see Daniel

Mount, as its adherents also effectively will change their legal status to become deputies of God, not servants of Mammon, and to lay up their property in the treasury of heaven, not on earth. Such "anointment stems from God" and "the implication of anointing as a sacred rite is that the anointed one receives divine sanction and that his person is inviolable (1 Sam 24:7, 8; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1:14, 16; 19:22)."[95]

The outward action of pouring olive oil onto the head or skin had "its own inner meaning," evoking not only "a mood of joy and festivity," but also powerful expectations with respect "to healing [James 5;14], . . . at conjurations [to expel evil spirits], . . . to change or to dispense life."[96] Thus, olive oil, which can symbolize or transmit the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 10:1, 6, 9; Acts 10:38; 2 Corinthians 1:21–2), is associated with the transformation of the recipient into a new person or being born of the spirit.[97] In 2 Enoch 22:8–10, Enoch was anointed with oil and arrayed in the garments of God's glory, and the appearance of the oil was greater than the brightest light, and Enoch looked at himself and saw that he "had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference," that is, no outward physical difference seen of men, or any inward difference either, for there had been a total, inner regeneration.[98]

Accordingly, the instruction about anointing in Matthew 6:17 may be taken as a step toward one being called, chosen, and anointed a king or a priest in the kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9), or as one of God's angelic servants. Even the anointing of the king in the Temple transformed the chosen monarch from his previous status of an ordinary mortal into a new person, one begotten of God (Psalms 2:7). As Mowinckel says of the anointing of the king: "By the anointing, which was a sacred, cultic act, he becomes 'another man,' he has 'another heart' (1 Sam. 10. 6, 9), that is he has obtained a special 'holiness', a superhuman quality."[99] It requires little imagination to relate these ideas about the meaning of anointing to the intended aims of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:17. The Sermon on the Mount equally seeks to transform the hearts and souls of all its adherers.

Fleming, "The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests," *JBL* 117/3 (1998): 401–14.

[95] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, p. 553.

[96] Heinrich Schlier, "*aleiphō*," in *TDNT*, vol. 1, pp. 229–30.

[97] See generally, Donald W. Parry, "Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil in Ancient Israelite Religion," and John A. Tvedtnes, "Olive Oil: Symbol of the Holy Ghost," in Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (eds), *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5* (Salt Lake City, 1994), pp. 279–81, 446–52.

[98] F.I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,' in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 138–9 and note q. Anderson notes that "the emphasis is physical," but "42:5 speaks of feasting in eternal life" and "there are statements elsewhere that suggest that he has become omniscient."

[99] Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (New York, 1962), vol. 1, p. 53.

Washing

Moreover, Matthew 6:17 calls not only for anointing the head but also washing the face. Washing and anointing were combined in biblical religion on several ceremonial occasions: Before David went into the house of the Lord to worship, he "washed (*elousato*), and anointed himself (*ēleipsato*), and changed his clothes" (2 Samuel 12:20). A bride was washed, anointed, and clothed in preparation for marriage, as Ezekiel reflects as he spoke of Jerusalem becoming Jehovah's bride: "Then I bathed (*elousa*) you with water and washed off (*apepluna*) your blood from you, and anointed (*echrisa*) you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with leather, I swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk" (Ezekiel 16:9–10).

Of the three possible Greek words for washing, *niptō* is the one used in Matthew 6:18. *Pluneō* was used only for washing inanimate objects; *louō* usually involved bathing the entire body; but *niptō* (or *nizō*) referred to washing particular parts of the body, usually the hands or feet (see Matthew 15:2; 1 Timothy 5:10).[100] Of these three, *niptō* is the least common, perhaps drawing to mind the ritual use of this word in Exodus 30:18–21 in connection with the laver of bronze in the court of the Temple, as well as anticipating the washing of the feet of the apostles by Jesus in John 13:5–14 at the Last Supper.

This word choice in Matthew 6:17 may intentionally reflect a ritual in which certain parts of the body (the head) were washed, different from a *miqveh* or baptism which involved a full ritual immersion of the body. Thus, the Sermon on the Mount may well assume an audience whose members had already been baptized by John the Baptist for the remission of sins or had been ritually cleansed in a *miqveh* near the entrance to the Temple Mount or elsewhere. The washing and anointing mentioned here would then serve a different, further purpose, very possibly relating to some ritual of initiation, since several initiatory texts from the Second Temple period "involve some form of washing with water, even 'living water.'"[101]

Interestingly, Matthew 6:17 instructs the listener to anoint only the head and to wash only the face, perhaps with the idea in mind of preparing the disciple to see God (Matthew 5:8), face to face. Hand washing before meals, which was such a point of controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees (Matthew 15:2), is not the issue in the Sermon on the Mount. At this stage of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is more concerned about transforming the head, the mind and the countenance, than about the washing of hands as a part of pure eating. For Jesus, loving God

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100 F. Hauck, "*niptō*," in *TDNT*, vol. 4, pp. 946–7. Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Dictionary*, s.v. "*louō*," "*nizō*," "*plun-*" pp. 1062, 1423. "Each kind of impurity [had] its own specific rituals of purification," but all involve washing in some way. Jonathan D. Lawrence, *Washing in Water: Trajectories of Ritual Bathing in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Atlanta, 2006), p. 27.

101 Lawrence, *Washing in Water*, p. 76.

with all one's heart and mind always stood ahead of other concerns about purity (see, for example, Matthew 15:18–20; Mark 12:30, 34).

Jesus may reflect this same point—namely, that what matters most is complete love for and dedication to God with all the mind—when Peter reacted to the washing of the feet at the Last Supper. Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me," to which Peter reacted "not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:9). Then Jesus said, "He who has bathed (*leloumenos*) does not need to wash (*nipsasthai*), except for his feet" (John 13:10). Although the meaning of this instruction is not very clear, the point may be that once a person has been fully bathed (that is, baptized by complete immersion), a washing of a part of the body is sufficient as a token of remembrance or renewal in maintaining or intensifying that relationship.

Nevertheless, as Luz rightly cautions, due to the cryptic nature of this passage in Matthew 6:17, more cannot be said about the exact nature of what is required: "The listener himself or herself has to determine what 'washing and anointing' means tangibly."[102] And yet, the thrice repeated promise of the Sermon on the Mount is clear enough: When a disciple, washed and anointed, truly seeks the Lord with generosity, forgiveness, prayer, and fasting, in a condition of inward and outward purity, the Lord will see and reward the supplicant openly in heaven (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18). The importance of the confluence of these outward rituals and inward attitudes is evident: "Whether someone's righteousness is safeguarded is therefore decided not by convictions of faith but by the performance of rituals."[103] And the pattern of repeating things three times or grouping things in clusters of three has been identified as a prevalent feature in the Sermon on the Mount;[104] it is also a common marker of ritual.

Fasting continued to serve many purposes in early Christianity, some of which were set in ritual contexts, most notably in preparing for the washing and anointing of baptism. According to Didache 7:4, "Fasts are to be held one or two days prior to baptism."[105] Fasting, washing, and anointing may be mentioned in Matthew 6 for a similar purpose. Just as fasting was used to prepare a proselyte for baptism, the triad of fasting, washing and anointing would serve well to prepare the disciple to advance to the next requirement of pledging wholehearted and exclusive loyalty to God, whose face one seeks to see in the innermost courts of his holy house.

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102 Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 361.

103 Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 352.

104 Dale C. Allison Jr, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *JBL* 106/3 (1987): 423–45; see Matthew 5:22 (angry, Raca, fool); and Matthew 7:7 (ask, seek, knock) for examples of triadic structures.

105 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 419.

Stage 16. A Requirement to Lead a Life of Consecration and Singleness of Heart (6:19–24)

The final stage in this part of the Sermon is the requirement of total commitment and uncompromised dedication. Its three parts are familiar, about laying up treasures exclusively in heaven, having an eye single to the glory of God, and serving only one master. These three requirements of complete loyalty to God all serve to establish the same theme, namely to insure obedience to the first and greatest commandment to love God with *all* one's heart, soul, and might (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37). That commandment calling for total love of God is violated if any part of the heart, mind, or might is drawn away. Significantly, this cluster builds on recognizable temple themes.

One Treasury of the Heart

"Do not lay up (*thēsaurizete*) for yourselves treasures (*thēsaurous*) on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up (*thēsaurizete*) for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart (*kardia*) be also" (Matthew 6:19–21). At stake here is not just good advice regarding the protection of one's investments, for the heart itself is at issue. Involved here is not only a wise recommendation or moral exhortation,[106] for the Greek can just as well be translated imperatively,[107] "Thou shalt not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth." Also intended here is not just a commonplace philosophical truism that true wealth was to be found in wisdom and not in herds or hoards;[108] the point of the Sermon on the Mount is not to encourage people to become philosophers, but to inspire them to consecrate all that they have in serving and loving God with all their might.

Moreover, one should not minimize or trivialize the future tense of the concluding line. That line should not be taken merely as a statement of the fact that one's heart is where one's treasure is. Instead, it should also be understood as a promise or as a warning that one's heart *will be* found—for better or worse, and both in this world and in the world to come—in the same place as where one's treasures are. As a promissory pronouncement, the future tense *estai* carries much the same import as do the future tense verbs in the initial promises in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:4–9 whose aura colors the entire Sermon on the Mount.

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106 As in Psalm 62:10, "If riches increase, set not your heart on them," or in Tobit 4:7–9, giving alms lays up good deposit for yourself "for a needy day" (*eis hēmeran anagkēs*), for if you do not turn your face away from the poor, God will not turn his face away from you.

107 Barclay M. Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York, 1988), pp. 183–4.

108 Betz privileges this line of interpretation in *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 429.

But the sober prediction of future realities in Matthew 6:21 escalates the matter by warning the devotee that he or she must now make a choice between the one type of treasure or the other. Likewise, Matthew 6:21 looks back to the saying about almsgiving at the beginning of Matthew 6, which required the devotee to give to the poor in secret. But the invitation of Matthew 6:19–20 now goes beyond giving occasional alms to the Temple's chamber of secrets or paying ten percent of one's produce as tithing to the house of the Lord. This saying now heightens those mandates by further requiring devotees to dedicate all that they have,[109] entrusting or laying up all of their treasures to God, and the idealized Temple provided the model and religious background for how this injunction should be taken.

The word *thēsauros* (treasure) readily brings the Temple and its treasuries to mind, and that root word is used five times in this short passage. The Temple was widely known as the treasury of God, and its most precious and sacred objects were known in the Septuagint as the treasures (*thēsauroi*) of the house of the Lord (for example, 1 Kings 7:51; 14:26; 15:18; 2 Kings 12:18; 16:18; 24:13; 1 Chronicles 9:26; 26:20). Ordinary people could deposit for safe keeping[110] their precious things in the *gazophulakeion* (vault; 2 Maccabees 3:4–6, 10–15; 4 Maccabees 4:1–3, 7) of the Temple, which was a common term for the Temple treasury (Esther 3:9; Nehemiah 10:37 [38]; 12:44; 13:4, 5, 7, 8, 9; 1 Esdras 5:45; 1 Maccabees 3:28, 14:49; 2 Maccabees 3:24, 28, 40; 4:42; 5:18). In addition, the Temple served many other financial purposes. The Temple probably acted as a lender, not of money which it held on deposit, but of property that had been given outright or otherwise dedicated to the Temple.[111] As secure as the Temple treasure generally was, temples in antiquity were sometimes raided and plundered by thieves or enemy soldiers, even as the sacred "hidden treasures" were stolen away from the Temple in Jerusalem by Antiochus (1 Maccabees 1:23). Managers of the Temple treasury, which according to data given by Josephus contained the phenomenal amount of at least 10,000 talents of gold or silver,[112] could also misappropriate these assets, causing Jesus to decry their practices which had transformed the Temple from a "house of prayer" into a "den of robbers" (Matthew 21:13; citing Jeremiah 7:11).

This strong temple theme leads to the distinct possibility that something more is going on here than merely encouraging people to do good works in general.

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[109] The option is not given to have one part of one's treasures on earth and another part in heaven.

[110] Ancient temples "functioned as 'treasuries' or 'depositories,' a place for the storage and retrieval of (precious) commodities and metals by the depositor. . . . Temples lent their own property, not that of others on deposit with the temple." Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes: The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2006), p. 137.

[111] Stevens, *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes*, p. 150.

[112] Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.72, 105–9, mentioning 2,000 of money and 8,000 talents of gold respectively. The total of 10,000 talents may have something to do with the parable of the unforgiving steward in Matthew 18:24.

The mention of rust and moths signals that precious physical objects are somehow involved[113] and, thus, that something more than having kind deeds recorded in heaven's Book of Life is being called to mind. How else might one in first-century Judaism have thought of voluntarily "treasuring treasures" to God?

The law required people to give many types of sacrifices, tithes, and offerings to God at the Temple, but beyond all that many people followed the widespread practice of voluntarily devoting additional property in the payment of vows at the Temple (see Leviticus 22:21; 27:2–8, and Numbers 15:3, 8; 30:2–4). Completely of their own volition people took vows upon themselves. At this stage in the Sermon on the Mount, the listeners were, in effect, invited to do as one who has found a "treasure hidden in a field" then joyously and voluntarily "goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44), that is, buys it from God and uses all that he has.

The votive system in Israel created a binding agreement, in the presence of a priest or sanctioned by an oath, to enter into a written agreement or to complete certain transactions or performances. This system operated in Jesus' day (see Acts 23:14), and its rules and regulations were addressed in the Dead Sea Scrolls and filled in an entire tractate of the Talmud. Vows were often expressed in the form of a person negotiating with God, saying, in effect, if you will bless me in a certain way, I will practice certain forms of self-affliction or denial, or contribution of pledged property. Reduced to its simplest form, a vow essentially said "to the god(dess) in question: 'If, *and only if*, you do something for me, then I will do something for you.'"[114] It is perfectly expectable that, shortly after discussing prayer and fasting, the Sermon on the Mount would turn its attention to the total dedication of property. More than anything else, the disciples of Jesus sought forgiveness of their transgressions and trespasses. Nothing would be more natural for them to say to God, "If you will forgive me of all my sins, I will give you all my treasures." By giving property to God in the Temple, people in the Jewish world of the New Testament reinforced the seriousness of their commitments to obey God's instructions and to follow the order of his kingdom. Making a vow to that effect would have solemnized that obligation and made it irrevocable. Therefore, the devoting of the treasures mentioned in Matthew 6:19–21 might well relate to the tacit or explicit making of comprehensive vows and an eternal covenant with God.

Whether the Sermon on the Mount contemplates individual vows or a collective promise connected with a common covenant remains unknown, but both may be implicated. Matthew 6:19–20 speaks in the plural ("lay ye not up"), while Matthew 6:21 (your treasure, your heart) is singular. Interestingly, just as Matthew 6 switches from plural to singular discourse, the votive regulations in

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[113] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005), p. 298; Newman and Stine, *Translator's Handbook*, p. 184.

[114] Jacques Berlinerblau, *The Vow and the "Popular Religious Groups" of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield, 1996), p. 41.

Numbers 15 begin with plural forms in verses 2–3, while verses 4–8 qualify or develop that regulation using singular forms. In the Psalms, vows are frequently mentioned, and "the fact that the votary is a solitary agent is tacitly assumed in Pss. 22:26; 50:14; 56:13; 61:6, 9; 66:13 and 116:14."[115] This temple vow practice continued into New Testament times (Acts 21:24). Although vows were typically initiated by individuals as a part of their private piety, groups of soldiers, sailors, or other communities facing a common crisis could still personally adopt the same vow as all the others who were similarly situated, as may be reflected in the group experience in Jonah 1:16 when all the sailors feared God, made vows and offered a sacrifice. In all cases, "the application is personal,"[116] which explains the shifts from plural to singular in Matthew 6.

Vows were typically accompanied by votive offerings or sacrifices "laid up in the temple."[117] Thus, "in his long hair the Nazarite bears on his head a sacrificial gift dedicated to God,"[118] and the word *euchē* (prayer) came to mean the dedicated gift itself (as in Leviticus 7:6). While some vows were made in sanctuaries or temples, not all of them originated in a sacred confines. Nevertheless, the vow texts in Hebrew literature make it quite clear that "most vows are to be *paid* in a sanctuary," even though they were not necessarily sworn to begin with in front of altars or in the presence of a priest.[119] "It seems certain that the literati want us to know that good Yahwists fulfill their vows within a temple, shrine, or sanctuary."[120] Thus, Absalom returns to Hebron to fulfill his vow (2 Samuel 15:7–8). Elkanah and Hannah similarly returned to Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:21, 24). Deuteronomy 12 goes so far as to demand that vows be paid solely at the temple (Deuteronomy 12:4, 11, 26), and "in the Psalms there is more evidence supporting the proposition that vows were paid in a temple, although in these instances it is specifically the Jerusalem Temple that is posited as the location in which public compensation takes place (see for example, 22:26; 65:2; 66:13 and 116:14)."[121] Within the Israelite system, the votary exclusively controls what he or she takes upon himself and also when the promise is to be paid, and thus those who cheat on their vows or sacrifices are most despicable (Malachi 1:14; 3:8), but on all counts the making and fulfillment of vows normally involved very expensive or treasured offerings, such as Hannah's sacrifice of a three-year-old bull together with an ephah of flour and a skin of wine (1 Samuel 1:24). Vows were binding agreements and failure to follow through with the offered behavior or donation

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[115] Berlinerblau, *Vow*, p. 57.

[116] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992), p. 153.

[117] Johannes Behm, "*anathema*," in *TDNT*, vol. 1, p. 354.

[118] Heinrich Greeven, "*euchomai*," in *TDNT*, vol. 2, p. 777.

[119] Berlinerblau, *Vow*, p. 67.

[120] Berlinerblau, *Vow*, p. 79.

[121] Berlinerblau, *Vow*, p. 81.

caused profanation, defilement, or desecration.[122] Hence the Psalms require: "and pay your vows to the Most High" (Psalms 50:14).

Seeing Matthew 6:19–21 in this light provides insight into the interplay between this passage and the earlier text in Matthew 5:33–4, "you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely (*ouk epiorkēseis*), but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn (*tous horkous sou*).' But I say to you, Do not swear at all (*mē omosai holōs*)." A key distinction lies in the difference between an oath (usually *horkos*; see Leviticus 19:12) and a vow (typically *euchē*, see Numbers 6:2–21 regarding the Nazarite vow, and Numbers 30:3–15 regarding vows of women). An oath "is primarily self-cursing should one not be speaking the truth,"[123] whereas a vow involves an affirmative promise to pay in thankful reciprocation for God's granting the negotiated blessing. As discussed above, Jesus was not necessarily opposed to the simple and proper swearing of oaths; nor would he have had any reason to oppose the votive system per se, for he insisted that he had not come to destroy but to fulfill and to honor every part of the law. Thus, Matthew 6:19–21 addresses a person at a different, higher stage of religious commitment. At this stage the concern has advanced beyond simple truth telling, respecting God's name, and avoiding self-cursing. Here the concern is about asking for divine blessings, dedicating to God all of one's treasures, and paying one's vow with complete gladness of heart (Deuteronomy 6:5).

One Light of the Body

Woven into the command to love God with all one's heart and might is its corollary to love God with all one's mind and body. In a similar way, the Sermon on the Mount builds on the point about the heart in Matthew 6:21 by speaking next about the body: "The lamp of the body (*ho luchnos tou sōmatos*) is the eye. So, if your eye is sound (*haplous*), your whole body will be full of light (*phōteinon*); but if your eye is not sound (*ponēros*), your whole body will be full of darkness (*holon to sōma sou skoteinon estai*). If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matthew 6:22–3).

Betz sees Matthew 6:22–3 as "one of the most difficult and yet most interesting of the SM,"[124] and indeed it can be read at several levels. Betz offers an elaborate analysis of ancient Greek theories of vision as background for his interpretation of this passage, suggesting that these two short verses might be "a condensation into a sayings composition of what in an elaborate form would be a treatise" on the physiology of vision, sense perception, as well as psychological and metaphysical reflections on the origins and behavior of light, both as a divine and human quality.

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[122] See generally Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21–36* (New York, 2000), pp. 425–41.

[123] J. Schneider, "*Horkos*," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, p. 458.

[124] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 438.

He sees Jesus as entering "only hesitatingly into the debate" about the eye and the faculty of vision.[125]

While there can be no doubt that ancient people puzzled over the great mysteries of the physics of light, of how good eyes work, and what causes some people to be blind—phenomena that modern people take for granted but which in actuality have only been explained relatively recently—one need not go so far afield as to the pre-Socratics and Plato in order to make clear sense of this parable in the Sermon on the Mount. Temple themes and Jewish symbols are much closer to home and more relevant to this stage in the Sermon.[126]

For one thing, this text is concerned about the body as a whole, not just about the eye. The totality of the body is at issue; the body is completely affected by the light or by the darkness that surrounds it and enters it through the portal of the eye. The word for "whole," used twice in Matthew 6:22–3, is *holon*, and it would seem obvious that this occurrence draws intentionally on the prominent, three-fold repetition of this same word in the great commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5 to love God with one's whole mind (*holēs tēs dianoias*), one's whole spirit (*holēs tēs psuchēs*), and one's whole power (*holēs tēs dunameōs*). Whereas the word *pas* (all) typically tends to focus on quantitative totality, the word *holēs* usually connotes wholeness or completeness with a qualitative "focus on unity,"[127] making it the more suitable of these two, both semantically as well as traditionally, in Matthew 6:22 and 23.

Matthew 6:22–3 is also linked to Matthew 5:14, where Jesus had extended to his listeners a favorable prospect and opportunity, "You are the light (*phōs*) of the world." In that stage of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus projected positive allusions reinforced by the favorable temple themes of the creation and the menorah (*luchnia*). In Matthew 6:22–3, however, the Sermon presents a radical dichotomy. Disciples may choose not to be the light of the world, but they must know that such a choice carries with it stark consequences. One may elect to live either in the glorious light or in profound darkness; a person will be either full of

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125 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 442–8, quotes on 441, 448. Similarly, see W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 635–41; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), p. 113. To the contrary, however, Mounce holds that people in Jesus' day had an understanding of the eye more in line with modern science—that it was a portal through which light enters.

126 As Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1991), p. 101, points out, the moral approach to this text would be "more at home in Judaism." Davies and Allison cite six Jewish texts that presuppose an extramission theory of light and see the eye as a light-emitting lamp (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel*, pp. 635–6); and Morris points out that "'the light that is in you' is surely not the light that strikes the eye" (*Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 155).

127 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains* (2nd edn, New York, 1989), p. 613.

light and goodness or full of darkness and wickedness. But it will be either one or the other. That is their choice.

The consequences of this choice are illustrated by the parable of the eye. This parable takes for granted several things: (1) there is only one source of light for the soul, just as a lamp (*luchnos*) usually has only one wick; (2) there is only one way that light can enter the body, through the eye; (3) if an eye works properly, light spreads uniformly and completely throughout the whole body and will make the body radiant (*phōteinon*); and (4) if an eye works improperly, the whole body will be darkened (*skoteinon*). So, if that light (*phōs*) is darkness, how complete that darkness will be!

This text has much to do with the Temple and temple themes.[128] Just as there is only one source of light for the soul, the Lord is the only light of the world in Jewish and early Christian symbolism. Temple psalms sang, "The Lord is my light (*phōtismos*, illumination, enlightenment, revelation) and my salvation" (Psalms 27:1). "In thy light do we see light" (Psalms 36:9), "that I may walk before God in the light of life" (Psalms 56:13). Thus, at the outset of the book of Isaiah comes the plea: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:5).

The light of the Lord is the only light that really matters, for without it there is only darkness: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." Otherwise, "darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples" (Isaiah 60:1–2). "When I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me" (Micah 7:8). Thus, the plea was raised in the Temple, "Let thy face shine, that we may be saved" (Psalms 80:3).

Seeing salvation, the righteous and the simple could then see their way. "For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see" (Psalms 36:9). "The unfolding of thy words gives light (*phōtiei*); it imparts understanding to the simple (*nēpious*)" (Psalms 119:130).

That light streamed forth from the Temple,[129] as from a lighthouse: "Send out thy light and thy truth, let them [the light and truth] lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill and to thy dwelling!" (Psalms 43:3). Worshipers followed that light in processions all the way to the altar of the Temple: "The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar!" (Psalms 118:27). The Hymns from Qumran understood that illumination would come from the Lord himself because of or by means of the covenant.[130]

The covenant-keepers who saw the Lord, the source of light, themselves became lights to the world. "Those who saw the light reflected the light."[131] The book of Isaiah's Servant was appointed to be "a light to the nations" (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). When Moses saw the Lord in a blazing bush (Exodus 3:2) his face became

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128 Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, pp. 160–64.

129 Barker, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven*, p. 18.

130 1QH 17; see Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, p. 162.

131 Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, p. 162. Enoch, for example; see Barker, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven*, pp. 21–2.

radiant (Exodus 34:29). All people in the Temple were invited, likewise, to "look to him and be radiant (*phōtisthēte*)" (Psalms 34:5), and thus when Jesus was transfigured "his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light," and "a bright (*phōteinē*) cloud overshadowed them," out of which the voice of the God recognized the Son (Matthew 17:2–5). The word *phōteinos* in Matthew 17 and in Matthew 6:22 means shining or radiant, indicating the presence of God (Matthew 17:5). It is also used to describe the radiant garments of angels in the Apocalypse of Peter 3:7.

This light, however, could be received only by those whose eye is described in Matthew 6:22 as *haplous*. This word can be translated in many ways:[132] physiologically ("healthy, sound"), morally ("humble, simple, sincere," or "unbegrudgingly generous"[133]), psychologically ("single-minded," "wholehearted," "free from inner discord"), ontologically ("single"[134]), functionally ("focused," "undistracted"[135]), or ritualistically ("pure,"[136] "innocent," "without blemish," "whole-hearted dedication," or "ready for sacrifice"[137]). Under any of the renditions, but especially in its ritual application, this word points to qualities and behaviors befitting the Temple. Likewise, its opposite, *ponēros*, which can mean many things, including bad, evil, base, wicked, spoiled, sick, worthless, vicious, or guilty, epitomizes all that opposes the Temple, holiness, God, or goodness.

Thus, the eye in the parable of Matthew 6:22–3 is either completely full of light or completely full of darkness. The concept of "the light of the eyes" was proverbial, either for good—"The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones" (Proverbs 15:30)—or for ill, "the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me" (Psalms 38:10).[138] This light drives away darkness. "Even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is bright as the day; for darkness is as light with thee" (Psalms 139:12). "Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?" (Amos 5:20). The two cannot coexist.

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[132] "Sound is the word used by most translations, but the precise meaning is difficult to determine. By itself it contrasts with the Greek term for 'two-folded,' as if to say 'singlefold.' It thus has the idea of simplicity, straightforwardness, or purity, and depending upon context it can mean 'single,' 'simple,' or 'sincere,' that is, with no ulterior motive." Newman and Stine, *Translator's Handbook*, p. 187.

[133] Henry J. Cadbury, "The Single Eye," *HTR* 47 (1954): 71; compare James 1:5, "liberally."

[134] Mounce, *Matthew*, p. 58.

[135] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 261.

[136] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 397.

[137] Otto Bauernfeind, "Haplous," in *TDNT* vol. 1, p. 386; and Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 431–2.

[138] "*The light that is in you* is surely not the light that strikes the eye. We might call it the brightness of the goodness within." Morris, *Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 155. See also Gerald Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (New York, 1969), pp. 183–4.

This dualistic view that pervades this parable as well as the Sermon on the Mount and much of the Dead Sea Scrolls allows for no middle ground. A person is either full of light or full of darkness. Just as a tree brings forth either good fruit or evil (*ponēros*) fruit (Matthew 7:17–18), a person brings forth either light or darkness, and "woe to those who . . . put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20). And so, as in Matthew 5:29, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away."

One Lord

Finally, after assuring that the listener has set his heart exclusively on treasures in heaven and has filled his whole body with light, the Sermon on the Mount requires complete dedication in serving God the Lord and him alone: "No one can serve (*douleuein*) two masters (*kuriois*); for either he will hate the one and love (*agapēsei*) the other, or he will be devoted to (*anthexetai*) the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Although in common parlance one may easily speak of serving God by doing deeds of moral kindness in ordinary life, the rhetorical register of this compelling postulate in Matthew 6:24 draws upon the much more intensive social institutions of slavery and temple service in formulating this ultimate mandate of total loyalty to the Lord God and "submission at entry into [temple] service."[139]

This culminating requisite is founded on the categorical assertion that no person is able to serve two masters. The problem assumed here is one of practical, legal, logical and spiritual impossibility. As a practical matter, true service to a lord or master by a slave or servant simply cannot occur when loyalties are divided. Perhaps under some odd legal circumstance a slave might have been owned in antiquity by two masters, but I am unaware of documentary evidence of any such instances of cotenancy or joint ownership over slaves. Legally as well as logically, the idea of one slave being owned by two masters and owing complete fidelity to both of them is patently nonsensical. Spiritually, the dichotomy of Matthew 6:24 is axiomatic in biblical thought: Either "all nations serve him" (Psalms 72:11), or they must serve other gods (Exodus 23:33, *douleusēis tois theois autōn*).

This verity, which has its roots in the ordinary social world of ancient master-slave relations, transfers readily to the world of Lord-worshiper relations, especially in a temple context. The use of certain key words and phrases facilitates the mental transfer of this image from one of slaveholder/slave to that of Lord/devotee. When Matthew 6:24 speaks of serving two masters, it uses the word *kurioi*. In Hellenistic Greek it was "particularly used in expression of a personal relationship of man to the deity, whether in prayer, thanksgiving or vow, and as a correlate of *doulos* inasmuch as the man concerned describes as *kurios* the god under whose orders

[139] Fleming, "Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests," p. 404.

he stands."[140] In the Septuagint, on some occasions the word *kurios* could be used to designate men as lords, owners, masters, or rulers, but in the religious sphere it was most commonly "reserved for the true God" and stood as "an expository equivalent" for the name of Jehovah some 6,156 times.[141]

Based on this key word, the Ten Commandments begin, "I am the Lord (*Kurios*) your God. . . . You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:1, 3); and they continue, "you shall not bow down (*proskunēseis*) to them or serve them" (Exodus 20:5); "him only shall you serve (*monōi latreuseis*); you shall cleave (*kollēthēsēi*) to him" (Deuteronomy 6:13), for it follows summarily that a person can righteously serve or bow down to only one Lord. Paraphrasing Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 13, Jesus dismissed Satan at the end of the temptations according to Matthew with the same words: "Be gone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship (*proskunēseis*) the Lord your God and him only shall you serve (*monōi latreuseis*)'" (Matthew 4:10), and this same resolve to drive away the Evil One and his minions is articulated in Matthew 6:13 and deeply embedded in the either/or of Matthew 6:24. Satan, the Evil One, is the alternate. Mammon signifies more than just money. The word was used in Jewish texts to describe ransom, tangible property, dishonest gains, or bribes; mammon personified the world of materialistic powers and influences, and in some cases "the idea of the impure, dishonest and worldly is intrinsically bound up with the word," all of which may derive from the root meaning "that in which one trusts."[142] The idea that "demonic power" was present in money or possessions[143] was not weakened by the fact that Greek and Roman coinage characteristically bore the images of the gods or potentates of the cities and empires from which that money came.

The idea of serving God, of course, can evoke a wide range of meanings, ranging from being a domestic servant, subjugated captive, or purchased slave (*doulos*), and in each case being subjected to, belonging to, or being at the disposal of the lord or master to one degree or another (see Exodus 12:44; 21:2, 6; Leviticus 22:11; 25:39; Numbers 31:26; Deuteronomy 15:12; 20:10–14; 21:10). But the verb *douleuō*, used in Matthew 6:24, also entails the full complement of temple service and servitude, with all of its sacrificial, ritual, musical, and worshipful cultic activities. In this temple sense, *douleuō* appears often in the Psalms in

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[140] Werner Foerster, "*Kurios*," in *TDNT*, vol. 3, p. 1052. "In figurative senses: *doulos* designates the individual in his or her *relationship of dependence and service* toward God, the absolute Lord, whose possession he or she is. . . . The sonship of Christians does not mean autonomous and certainly not unbridled freedom, but rather *service* to God." Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 350, 352.

[141] Foerster, "*Kurios*," vol. 3, pp. 1058–9.

[142] F. Hauck, "*mamōnas*," in *TDNT*, vol. 4, pp. 388–9. Mammon is used in the Targums to describe the sacrilegious priestly corruption at Beer-sheba of the sons of the high priest Eli.

[143] Hauck, "*mamōnas*," vol. 4, p. 389.

contexts that refer to temple service, expressing the idea of serving God: "Serve (*douleusate*) the Lord with fear" (Psalms 2:11); my "posterity shall serve him" (Psalms 22:30, *douleusei*); "serve (*douleusate*) the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!" (Psalms 100:2). Likewise, regarding priestly service, the Hebrew words ^{c}*avodah* (service) and ^{c}*avod* (serve) can mean work or serve, but they also may mean worship or "to perform a (cultic) rite," referring especially to temple worship.[144] These terms are frequently used in expressions such as the "service of the tabernacle," as the Levites "execute the service of the Lord" (Numbers 8:11), or the priests perform "the work of the service of the house of God" (1 Chronicles 9:10, 13), with "the vessels of service in the house of the Lord" (1 Chronicles 28:13; 9:28), clearly linking service with holy, cultic, temple service (Joshua 22:27; 2 Chronicles 35:16).

Set out in a chiastic form, Matthew 6:24 emphatically punctuates the conclusive climactic importance of this antithesis:

a No one is able to serve two Lords
    b Hate the one
        c Love the other
        c Hold fast to the one
    b Despise the other
a You are not able to serve God and mammon

At stake here once again are matters of serving God with all one's heart and mind: on the one side there is the passion of hate with the mindset of resentment or scorn (*kataphronēsei)*, and on the other side is the emotion of heartfelt love with the tenacity of faithful conviction.

Loving God stood at the heart of the Shema^{c}, recited daily in the Temple. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love (*agapēseis*) the Lord your God (*Kurion ton Theon sou*) with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:4–5). The word used here in the Septuagint for "love" is *agapaō*, arguably the most distinctive theological and ethical word in the early Christian message, figuring most prominently in the writings of John, Paul, and Peter as well. Significantly, this word was not a word that was invented or dredged up by Christians out of obscure Greek sources; it comes right out of the Shema and the Temple, and from what was identified by Jesus as the greatest (*megalē*) of all the commandments (Matthew 22:37) and by Paul as the greatest (*meizōv*) of all the spiritual gifts.

Cleaving unto God brings the mind into service. The word *antechō* has to do with holding fast to, being devoted to, paying attention to, or being concerned

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[144] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1958), pp. 670–71; see also Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (Leiden, 1983), p. 19; cited and discussed in Donald W. Parry, "Service and Temple in King Benjamin's Speech," *JBMS* 16/2 (2007): p. 45.

about someone or something.[145] Used, as in Matthew 6:24, in the middle voice with a genitive of a person, it also means to worship.[146] This word involves trust and faith, but also wisdom and covenant. Thus, Wisdom "is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her (*tois antechomenois autēs*)" (Proverbs 3:18), and the prophets exhort people to "hold fast to the covenant" (Isaiah 56:4, 6) and to "hold fast to the law" (Jeremiah 2:8), while Zephaniah warns that the names of the priests who worship the host of heaven upon the housetops and cleave not (*antechomenous*) unto the Lord will be removed from the face of the land (Zephaniah 1:2–6).

In sum, the ultimatum in Matthew 6:24, about the impossibility of serving two masters, epitomizes the point made throughout this section. One must choose between serving and loving God with all one's heart, might, mind, and body, or alternatively serving and loving other gods. This instruction is tantamount to requiring one to consecrate all that one has and is to the Lord. The true heart dedicates all toward the kingdom. The pure eye does not deviate from the course that God has ordained. As servants of God, his followers have been marked as temple slaves, as a "peculiar people," purchased by and belonging to him (*laos periousious; laos eis peripoiēsin*, Exodus 19:5; 23:22; Deuteronomy 7:6; Malachi 3:17; 1 Peter 2:9), and hence it would be a breach of contract or covenant to serve another lord.[147] Thus, the Sermon on the Mount presupposes a totally committed community, one that is "prepared to take responsibility for the consequences of the teaching of Jesus, even if it means their lives."[148] By such total, exacting devotion to God, his disciples are given the ultimate promises that they will have treasures in heaven and that their "whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). Heavenly treasures and a fullness of light are what the righteous continually seek.

This concludes this next major part of the Sermon on the Mount. Betz has suggested that, after the end of the teaching about fasting in Matthew 6:18, "a new section obviously begins, treating subjects other than worship," but he also laments that "most difficult to explain is the composition of the third major block of material," which he runs from 6:19 to 7:12.[149] That problem, however, is alleviated, as has been seen in the foregoing discussion, by connecting Matthew 6:19–24 with the material about approaching God in the proper order of fasting, prayer, and generosity found in Matthew 6:1–18, all of which taken together introduces disciples into a higher order of righteous relationship with God.

As will be argued next, a new and final section of the Sermon on the Mount begins in Matthew 6:25 and runs to the end of Matthew 7. With the break at the

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[145] Hermann Hanse, "*antechō*," in *TDNT*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[146] See, "worship him [Hercules] above all (Pindar, *Nemean Odes*, 1:33)," cited in Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1968), p. 152.

[147] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 456–7.

[148] Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Laurence Welborn (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 21; see Matthew 5:11–12.

[149] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 423.

end of Matthew 6:24, the Sermon on the Mount has completed the stipulations that are carried in the new covenant, presented here on the new mountain of the Lord. According to the widely accepted treaty pattern of covenant formation in the ancient Near East and in the Bible, after the stipulations have been enumerated, the treaty document pronounces blessings and curses upon those who either keep or disobey the covenant.[150] As will be seen, the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount turns attention in a similar way to the blessings promised to the disciples as well as to the catastrophes that will befall those who fail to give strict heed to its requirements. Just as Matthew 5 presents Jesus' interpretation of the requirements of the second tablet of the Decalogue and of the second commandment to "love you neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43), this part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 ends in essence in the opposite order with the first of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7) and with the first and greatest of the commandments to "love God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). In the Sermon on the Mount, the last of the stipulations of the former covenant were presented first, while the first was saved for last, correctly understanding that "*all* of these stipulations represent those characteristics of human behavior that constitute the definition of the will of God: they describe the hightest value, the 'ultimate concern' of the community formed by covenant."[151] *In nuce*, the ultimate commitment required in Matthew 6:24, to love and serve only God as master, is counterweighted immediately with the ultimate blessing in Matthew 6:33, that all things will be added to those who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.[152] Having given its stipulations, the Sermon on the Mount now turns its attention to the favorable blessings or adverse consequences that follow either compliance or noncompliance.

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[150] George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," in *ABD*, vol. 1, pp. 1179–202.

[151] Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," vol. 1, p. 1184.

[152] Sensing the centrality of this pairing, Jonathan A. Draper sees Matthew 6:22–34 as the chiastic turning point of the concentral structure of the entire Sermon on the Mount, in "The Genesis and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount," *JSNT* 75 (1999): 32–5.

Chapter 6
Blessings and Consequences of Righteousness or Unrighteousness

The final major part of the Sermon leads hearers into its highest and most sublime sections. Having passed through the previous parts—from the altar and the stipulations of the law to the higher order of fasting, prayer, and devotion to God—the inductees are now taken into the third chamber, as it were, of the structure of the Sermon on the Mount. As the Temple and its cosmology were tripartite with its highest part modeling the heavens in its Holy of Holies, the Sermon on the Mount now moves its devotees the final step closer to entering into the innermost presence of God. Entering his presence would be the ultimate blessing promised to those who are faithful to the Lord in all things.

To those progressing along the pathway that ascends into the presence of God, many blessings are promised along the way. Given to them are the necessities of life, glorious garments, answers to their admission-seeking petitions, the gift of life, eternal fruits, and reception into the heavenly kingdom. They are assured that the house wisely built upon this rock will not fall.

To those who digress or regress, going out through the broad gate and on down the comfortably spacious way, curses are imposed. Those on this descending road will receive the harsh realities of the final judgment, a violent death for treating the holy thing lightly or indiscriminately, destruction at the jaws of dogs and ravening wolves, painful and worthless fruits, exclusion from the presence of God, and utter collapse and washing away.

All of these blessings and curses draw on temple motifs.

Stage 17. Promised Blessings of Physical Care and Glorious Clothing (6:25–34)

First in this sequence, Jesus strongly assures his disciples that, with the Lord as Master, his created earth will provide for their physical needs. At this point in the Sermon, it would appear that worries needed to be calmed—anxieties or concerns that came perhaps less from the ordinary stress of their daily lives than from the feeling of vulnerability that came from having just turned everything completely over to the Lord in stage 16. Accordingly, the followers are counseled, "Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear (*endusēsthe*)?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all" (Matthew 6:31–2). Jesus'

listeners are promised that they shall have sufficient for their needs, just as they had previously requested in stage 13: "Give us this day bread 'sufficient for our needs' (*epiousion*)," as one translator has rendered it.[1] The people of the Lord shall be blessed. "Worldly concerns are not to be ignored; . . . God will provide what is needed for life's necessities,"[2] just as such blessings were traditionally seen as flowing forth from the House of the Lord.

The Temple was seen by many people in ancient Israel as the main avenue through which God maintained the created order and channeled blessings to earth, both spiritual and physical: "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain . . . if they pray toward this place, and acknowledge thy name, and turn from their sin, . . . then hear thou in heaven, and . . . grant rain upon thy land. If there is famine in the land, . . . whatever supplication is made by any man . . . stretching out his hands toward this house; then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and render to each whose heart thou knowest, according to all his ways" (1 Kings 8:35–9). The spiritual and physical blessings of peace and prosperity expected to come from the Temple are legendary: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalms 23:5).

At a cosmic level, it was the Temple's reconciliation of God and man to each other that mitigated the estranged condition between them that derived from the blighting effects of the Fall of Adam and Eve. This theme of primordial restoration aligns well with Matthew 6. Whereas Adam was cursed to eat his bread in the sweat of his face (Genesis 3:18), Jesus looked to the birds of the heaven who, unlike Adam, do not plant, reap, or gather crops into barns, and to the gloriously arrayed lilies of the field, who likewise do not exhaust themselves (*kopiōsin*) or spin (*nēthousin*). Just as Adam and Eve were given garments (*chitōnas*) and the Lord clothed (*enedusen*) them (Genesis 3:21), so God will clothe and nurture his children now (Matthew 6:31), for they are indisputably "of more value than" the plants and animals (Matthew 6:26, 30), the lesser life forms that were created in the creative days before the formation of Adam and Eve.

In this stage of the Sermon on the Mount, the verb *merimnaō* (to be anxious, to care for) appears six times, always in a negative or deficient sense. By way of contrast, the pagans worry about banquets, wine, and togas, while the righteous people of God must be concerned with more important things. This word appears infrequently in the Jewish background literature, but often enough to attest that its semantic range of meaning in Matthew 6 relates to temple themes. God will

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1 This translation is offered by R. ten Kate, 'Geef üns heden ons 'dagelijks' brood,' *NedTT* 32 (1978): 125–39; see Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 296–7. The meaning of this cryptic word is widely debated and is by no means certain, as discussed above.

2 Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis, 1995), p. 483.

alleviate the worries and anxieties of his people if they will be concerned with (1) sacrificing, (2) doing God's will, (3) confessing, and (4) harboring no sin or evil. Thus, when the Israelites in Egypt said that they wanted to make sacrifices to God, Pharaoh countered in opposition, "Let heavier work be laid upon the men that they may care about (*merimnatōsan*) this work and not care about (*merimnatōsan*) empty words" (Exodus 5:9 LXX). After the Conquest, the Lord promised that he would appoint a place for Israel where "they will not worry (*merimnēsei*) any more" (2 Samuel 7:10 LXX). In Israel it was understood that "when judging, we should be concerned (*merimnōmen*) only about God's goodness" (Wisdom of Solomon 12:22); that "anxiety (*merimna*) may beset even a wise man, but only fools carry on conversations (*dialogiountai*) with evil" (Proverbs 17:12 LXX); and that not only does worry not add to one's lifespan but "anxiety makes you old before your time" (Sira 30:24). How did one eliminate such anxiety? In the Temple. There one was told to "cast your burden (*merimnan*) on the Lord, and he will sustain you" (Psalms 55:22; compare 1 Peter 5:7); and there one declared, "I will confess my iniquity, and I will be concerned about (*merimnēsō*) my sins" (Psalms 38:18 LXX).

In this context, the meaning of two words in Matthew 6:27 "has always been debated,"[3] usually being translated "which of you by being anxious can add one cubit (*pēchun*) to his span of life (*hēlikia*)," following the Vulgate, "adicere ad aetatem suam cubitum unum." But this rendition still is uncertain. Being a metaphor, its meaning remains symbolically obscure. In general, of course, the instruction counsels listeners not to worry about adding something to something else, whatever they may be. Betz understands this as encouraging listeners to accept the future, because God alone "calls each new day into being" and "measures out the periods of one's life . . . . Thus, human anxiety over the future is presumptuous. The future is divine creation, continuous creation."[4] The theme of the creation—its perfect beauty and continuous renewal—was a dominant feature of the Temple, with its daily rituals and offerings regenerating life.

As far as the word *hēlikia* is concerned, it appears rarely in the Septuagint. It can mean long life, stature, or something else, depending entirely on the context in which it is used. In Job 29:18, the Hebrew and Greek texts are quite unrelated, but both have to do with living a long time. The Greek expresses this as "my age (*hēlikia*) shall continue as the stem of a palm tree; I shall live a long time." Used as a negative term in a way similar to Matthew 6:27, Ezekiel 13:18 condemns "women who make things to pile on top of heads of every height (*hēlikia*) to pervert souls." Here *hēlikia* is a translation of the Hebrew *qômâ*, height or stature.

But a person's *hēlikia* can have broad reference in any number of ways to a person's magnitude, size, age, strength, importance, or excellence. This quality was not to be found numerically, but qualitatively: "For honorable age (*polia*) is not found in its length of time, and it is not measured in its number of years.

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3 Johannes Schneider, "Hēlikia," in *TDNT*, vol. 2, p. 942.

4 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 476.

Intelligence is 'old age' for men, and the *hēlikia* of old age (*gērōs*) is an unspotted life" (Wisdom of Solomon 4:9). Thus, the use of the term *hēlikia* fits nicely into any context that addresses the futility of trying to add anything to something that cannot be improved upon in quality (such as the Temple). For instance, in extolling the impeccable virtue of a good wife, Sira 26:17 uses the word *hēlikia* in temple terms, comparing the beauty of how she arranges the order (*kosmos*) of her household to the rising of the sun "amidst the most exalted beings (*hupsistois*) of the Lord"; the radiance of her face in "maturity steadfast (*hēlikiai stasimēi*)" is compared with "the light that beams forth upon the holy menorah;" and the effect of her righteous feet upon well-grounded hearts to "golden pillars set upon foundations of silver." The word *hēlikia* is also used in this sense of unimprovable excellence in Ephesians 4:13, until all members of the body (or temple) of Christ come "to mature manhood (*andra teleion*), to the measure of the stature (*eis metron hēlikias*) of the fullness of Christ."

The measure mentioned in Matthew 6:27 happens to be a *pēchus* (cubit, forearm). One might ask, why was this particular measure mentioned? Why does it ask, who can add a "forearm" instead of a "head" or any other expression of measurement? One possible answer suggests itself, because the word *pēchus* was saliently connected with the construction of the Temple and Tabernacle. To be sure, this word can occur in other contexts, but its connection with the Temple far outstrips its usage everywhere else. It dominantly appears scores of times in Exodus 25–7, 37–8, 1 Kings 6–7, 2 Chronicles 3, and Ezekiel 40–43, all of which deal with the measurements of the holy space and its many implements and ornaments. Since the Temple was seen as being perfect down to its precisely revealed measurements, no one would be presumptuous enough to add a single cubit to any part of the Temple. That being so, how much more should one trust the arm of God in his creation of the world and his nurturing of human life.

The lilies of the field are mentioned next (Matthew 6:28), especially because they do not toil or spin. If the use of the word *pēchus* had brought the construction of the Temple to mind, the word "spin" (*nēthousin*) would equally have echoed the spinning of fabrics for the Temple. Forms of the word *nēthein* unforgettably appear exactly ten times in Exodus 26:31; 35:25 (twice), 26; 36:35, 37; 38:18; 39:2, 24, 29, as the workers, who were wise and willing-hearted, spun cloths of blue, purple, scarlet, and linen for the Tabernacle's veil, holy garments, curtains, door hangings, and the ephod. The word never appears again in the entire Septuagint or New Testament, except in the parallel saying in Luke 12:27.

With the Temple in mind, the references in this section of the Sermon on the Mount to food, drink, and clothing take on elevated significance. Because God regularly provides the food and drink for the priests and Levites in the Temple, as was commonly understood, would he not similarly provide sustenance for all others who stand in his service, especially for his emissaries as they go out into the world as his servants proclaiming the coming of his Kingdom? And if God is the one who is providing that food, what servant should worry either about the quantity or the type of food that God will provide?

Regarding clothing (*endumata,* Matthew 6:25, 28), Jesus assured, "Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory (*en pasēi tēi doxēi*) was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes (*amphiennusin*) the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?" (Matthew 6:29–30). Several points are implicit in this saying: garments will be given by God; they will pertain to the lasting eternities, not to this passing temporality; they will be glorious; and their glory will exceed even that of the royal-temple garments of King Solomon. Each of these points discernibly targets the Temple through the glorious robes of the priests and the High Priest.

In general, the words *enduō* and *enduma* can, of course, refer to any ordinary clothing, but the raiment or garments of which Jesus speaks here may also be richly symbolic. In biblical usage, it is just as likely as not that these words refer to priestly or other extraordinary robes. Over thirty of the one hundred times they occur in the Septuagint, these words refer to the robes of priests, especially the garments of Aaron and his sons;[5] on several other occasions they refer to the king's robes or royal armor[6] or have some other holy metaphorical referent.[7] In expressions using these particular words, God himself is said to be clothed (Isaiah 6:1). He is robed in honor (Psalms 93:1; 104:1) or with a breastplate (Wisdom of Solomon 5:18); and the divine beings who appeared to Daniel were clothed in linen garments of pure white (Daniel 7:9; 10:5). On God's day of vengeance, he will appear wearing garments dyed red from his having trod the winepress alone (Isaiah 63:1–3; see also 59:17). In all of these cases, the word *enduō* or *enduma* appears.

Using this traditional terminology, God himself is sometimes said to perform the dressing, as he also does in Matthew 6: God clothed the priests of Zion with salvation (Psalms 132:16), and the spirit of God enveloped Zechariah the son of the priest (2 Chronicles 24:20). If God dresses the grass and wildflowers (which symbolize the transience of mortal life in Psalms 37:2, 90:5–6, 102:11, and 103:15[8]), he will certainly clothe, even more so, his children who are blessed to enjoy the permanence of eternal life.

The garments promised in the Sermon on the Mount will be glorious, another link to the Temple. Using the same word (*doxa*) as in Matthew 6:29, biblical texts coupled the highest attributes of glory and honor with the robes of the priests and the garments of righteousness: "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your

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[5] For example, Exodus 28:37; 29:5, 8, 30; 40:13; Leviticus 6:10, 8:7, 13; 16:4, 23, 32; 21:10; Numbers 20:28; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 6:41; Psalms 133:2; Ezekiel 9:2, 3, 11; 10:2, 6, 7; 1 Esdras 5:40; Ben Sirah 45:8, 13.

[6] For example, 2 Chronicles 18:9; Esther 6:9–10; 1 Kings 22:30 (armor).

[7] For example, Isaiah 52:1 (Zion to put on her garments); Daniel 5:7, 16, 29 (a purple robe given to the prophet who can interpret the dream); Baruch 5:1 (Jerusalem to put on garments of glory).

[8] See Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount.– A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, Texas, 1982), p. 340.

brother, for glory and for beauty (*timēn* and *doxan*)" (Exodus 28:2). Job is told by God to "clothe (*amphiasai*) yourself with glory and splendor (*doxa* and *tima*)" (Job 40:10 [40:5 LXX]).

Moreover, in emphasizing the glory of these sacred vestments, the Sermon on the Mount promises that God will clothe the disciples even more gloriously than David's son, King Solomon himself. Here another allusion to the Temple is evident, for Solomon was famous for building the most splendid temple of all. But in any event, even after fully combining all the imagery of kingship and priesthood, the arraying glory was God's, not Solomon's. The text does not read "in all *his* glory" but "in all *the* glory (*en pasēi tēi doxēi*)."

From Second Temple sources, "there seems to have been a particular fascination among ancient Jews with the priestly garb . . . [which] cast an otherworldly impression,"[9] and so this promise of garments more glorious than Solomon's, or in other words the high priest's, would have communicated to listeners an obvious reference to temple vestments and sacred spheres. As Margaret Barker vividly explains, when the high priest performed his duties in the Temple, he wore a robe whose colors matched the colors of the veil and represented the totality of God's creation:

> Woven from the four elements [i.e. four colors representing fire, air, water and earth], the veil which concealed the Glory of God represented matter, the stuff of the visible creation. An exactly similar fabric was used for the outer vestment of the high priest, which he wore in the hall of the temple, but not in the holy of holies, where he wore the white linen of the angels. The coloured vestment was therefore associated with his role in the visible creation, and although the Hebrew Scriptures say nothing of the meaning of the high priest's vestments, Philo and Josephus reveal that the outer vestment represented the created world. The book of the Wisdom of Solomon, perhaps a century earlier than Philo and Josephus, has simply "On Aaron's robe the whole world was depicted" (Wisd. 18.24). Thus the high priest was an angel who had emerged from the holy of holies into the visible creation, and vested himself in the stuff of the creation.[10]

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[9] Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 114–15, citing Aaron's "perfect splendor" (Wisdom of Ben Sira 45:8), the high priest appearing as a man from outside the world (Letter of Aristeas 99), and the cosmic symbolism seen in the priestly garb (Wisdom of Solomon 18:24); on the temple symbolism on the priest's robe, see also G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 2004), pp. 39–40.

[10] Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), p. 30 (citing Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.184; Philo, *Special Laws* 1.95–6; translations of both in Loeb Classical Library). See also Margaret Barker, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 41 (explaining that the priest entered the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement wearing "white linen, the dress of angels").

This creation symbolism of the high priest's clothing is mirrored in the Sermon on the Mount at 6:24–34, as Jesus mentions the lilies of the field, the grass, food, and drink in promising that God will clothe his children more gloriously than he has clothed anything in this world.

These ideas were apparently common enough that Jesus' listeners could easily have caught these allusions to the Temple. For example, Barker discusses a passage in *2 Enoch* in which Enoch stands as a high priest before the mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies and is dressed by the Lord "in the garments of glory," after which he "sees himself transformed into an angel."[11] In yet another temple reference to being gloriously clothed, Barker mentions an account of "the high priest Simon 'coming out of the house of the veil', the Holy of Holies. . . . The reappearance of the high priest is described as a theophany; Simon emerges like the morning star, like the moon and the sun, clothed in perfection and making the sanctuary glorious with his presence."[12]

In much the same sense, Jesus anticipates that his disciples will ultimately emerge clothed in perfection and glory when he uses this word in Luke 24:49 to tell his apostles to remain in the holy city "until you are clothed with power from on high." The Greek word *enduō* has two meanings, both of which are active in these texts. The first is "to dress, to clothe someone" or "to clothe oneself." The second is, figuratively, to take on "characteristics, virtues, intentions."[13]

Interestingly, Todd Klutz notes that Luke uses the word *enduō* on another occasion in Luke 8:27 to describe the unclothed state of a naked man afflicted with demons.[14] As Klutz explains, *enduō* in the New Testament sometimes describes a "'putting on' of spiritual protection for the purpose of succeeding in conflicts against the spirits of wickedness"[15] and in a similar manner the Septuagint sometimes uses this word "to refer to act of clothing that equips one for success either in priestly service, prophetic ministry, or situations of conflict."[16] Thus,

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[11] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 57. See also Margaret Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1996), p. 17. In *The Risen Lord*, Barker also refers to the clothing of Enoch, as follows: "[*2 Enoch*] describes how Enoch the wise man ascended to heaven into the presence of the Lord. Michael was told to robe him in a garment of Glory and he became like one of the glorious ones (*2 En.* 22)."

[12] Barker, *Risen Lord*, p. 72.

[13] Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957), p. 263. Thus, Job put on judgment or the virtue of prudence (Job 29:14).

[14] Todd Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke—Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 100–101.

[15] Klutz, *Exorcism Stories in Luke—Acts*, p. 100 (citing Romans 13:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:53–4; Ephesians 6:11, 14; 1 Thessalonians 5:8).

[16] Klutz, *Exorcism Stories in Luke—Acts*, p. 100 (citing Exodus 28:41; 29:5–8; Leviticus 8:5–13; 16:4–32; 21:10; Numbers 20:26, 28; 1 Chronicles 12:18; 2 Chronicles

its use in introducing the naked demoniac "has powerful connotative effects. It suggests vulnerability, defenselessness against alien oppression, and unfitness for any kind of divine service."[17] This state of nakedness is overcome when Jesus casts the demons out, after which the man appears fully clothed. By this act, Jesus "reverses the harsh effects of the demonic legion's presence and equips the man to speak, with his own voice, about how much God has done for him."[18] In short, by clothing the man, Jesus empowers him. Therefore, in this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus can be understood as promising more than garments that offer physical protection for the body against the physical elements (although garments do this too); his garments will "endow" disciples with spiritual powers in this life and eternal attributes more glorious than Solomon's.

This section concludes, "but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33). Similar promises of blessings in exchange for keeping the commandments are also found in the Psalms: "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalms 37:4). Ultimately, the Christian who escapes rebuke is promised a place sitting with God on his throne, wearing "white garments . . . to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen" (Revelation 3:18). By seeking the kingdom of God, disciples may gain royal entrance, as symbolized in temple visions in which "Man" or the "Son of Man" is brought to the throne of God. Such visions, as Barker argues, paralleled the high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies surrounded by clouds of incense which represented the clouds of heaven. "It is likely that the Man was *offered* before the throne . . . and then was given 'dominion and glory and kingdom': he was enthroned."[19] Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, therefore, urges each disciple to realize these royal temple visions and symbols by seeking "first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33). For all these reasons, therefore, one need "not be anxious about tomorrow" (Matthew 6:34). Not only is there more than enough to worry about today; but empowered and clothed in this way, and living within their sphere in God's created order, the faithful will be "a match for"[20] the evil of every day.

6:41; 24:20–22; Esther 5:1; Isaiah 59:17–19; 61:10–11; Ezekiel 16:8–10; Zechariah 3:3–4 (4–5); Judith 10:3).

[17] Klutz, *Exorcism Stories in Luke—Acts*, p. 101.

[18] Klutz, *Exorcism Stories in Luke—Acts*, p. 101.

[19] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 65.

[20] Noting that *arketon* can mean both sufficient and equal to, and that it can relate to things tomorrow (*aurion*) as well as to the evils of today.

Stage 18. Preparing for the Realities of the Judgment (7:1–5)

With that said, the Sermon on the Mount turns to the theme of judgment. While at one level Matthew 7:1 gives practical, ethical direction that, in ordinary social relations, a person should not judge others, or otherwise others will judge them in return[21]—at a higher level Matthew 7:2 looks forward to a future, conclusive judgment: "For with the judgment (*en hōi krimati*) you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure (*metrōi*) you give will be the measure you get" (Matthew 7:2). Stage 18 discloses the fundamental principle by which the final judgment will be administered.[22] Here again, temple functions and features are in evidence.

Judging (*krinō*) is a common theme of the Temple, particularly divine judgment. As one encounters often in the Old Testament,[23] but most elaborately in the Psalms, God is rightfully the sole judge of the world: "The Lord judges the peoples; judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness" (Psalms 7:8; 35:24). "God is a righteous judge" (Psalms 7:11; see also 9:8). In his appearance, he "has made himself known, he has executed judgment" (Psalms 9:16; see also Psalms 9:8, 19; 10:5; 50:4, 6; 58:1, 11; 72:1–2; 82:8; 96:13; 98:9; 103:6), which brings joy to his people and the whole earth (Psalms 67:4; 96:12–13). For this reason alone, one should not judge, for that is God's role. Especially in a temple-centered world view, God is the rightful and righteous judge of all mankind. Any other forms of judgment are likely flawed and presumptuous.

Moreover, it is thoroughly understood in the Psalms that the Temple is the premier place where God's righteous judgment is found. There God dispenses judgment, seated on his throne or mercy seat: "Thou hast sat on the throne giving righteous judgment" (Psalms 9:4); "righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne" (Psalms 89:14; 97:2). The judgments of the Temple are both personal (Psalms 7:8) and cosmic.[24]

In the Second Temple period, the Temple was home to the Great Sanhedrin. It is unclear to what extent the Sanhedrin was viewed as an extension of the justice of God, but the temple venue of this great council certainly added an aura of divine sanction to its rulings. In this respect, the Sermon on the Mount is not necessarily

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[21] The Talmud contains the Mishnah, "By that same measure by which a man metes out [to others], *they* mete out to him." TB, Sotah 8b; TJ, Sotah 1:7 (emphasis added), which contemplates only human reprisal.

[22] See also Matthew 12:36–7, explicitly stating that "on the day of judgment . . . by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

[23] For example, Genesis 18:25; 31:53; Exodus 5:21; 1 Samuel 4:18; 24:12; 1 Chronicles 16:33; Isaiah 3:13; Ezekiel 34:17, 20, 22; Revelation 6:10; 18:8; 19:2.

[24] The little apocalypse in Isaiah 24–7 presents a revelation of the mystery of judgment: it portended the collapse of world, the removal of the veil of mortality, the revelation of the glory of God, the restoration of the earth, its renewal and recreation. Margaret Barker, "Isaiah," in James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (eds), *Eerdman's Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2003), pp. 516–17.

critical of the properly authorized and righteously principled verdicts of that court, but to the extent that even its judgments do not conform to the measured jurisprudential precepts of the Torah, as found in the judicial Decalogue of Exodus 23:1–3, 6–10, those rulings would fall short of representing or effectuating the exclusive jurisdiction of God's judgment over the affairs of this world.

Even the deceptively simple term *metron* (measure), like its Hebrew counterpart *mādad*, is unexpectedly freighted here with theological and cultic meanings. Going back to Akkadian texts, the gods are said to measure the waters of the sea, to regulate the world, and to magically measure the character of a person. In the Hebrew Bible, the "measure" was not an official yardstick, but could include a wide variety of sticks, reeds, lines, times, or weights, by whatever measure one measured, often in a cultic context. Some forty times the word is used in Ezekiel 40–48 in measuring the millennial temple. It is also used to measure the walls of Jerusalem, the tabernacle curtains, the altar, hewn stones, and clothing. H.-J. Fabry explains how this term "becomes an indirect term of *revelation*," is prominently used for "measuring a divine work, not a human work, and to that extent this activity takes on the character of a *promise*," while at the same time has the goal "to *proclaim* Yahweh's greatness." "In measured stages the human being draws closer and closer" to the holy presence, and by the process of measuring God "*takes possession* of the temple complex as he enters," which "could also become a representation of the *rhythm of creation*."[25] Temple themes abound here. Thus, another reason why one should "judge not" is that God can measure all things, even if man cannot and, therefore, should not (Isaiah 40:12).

Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount turns once again to the concept of talionic justice. Rewarding or punishing a person in a manner that matches his own being or conduct is mentioned several times in the scriptures as the form of God's justice both in this world (Exodus 22:22–4) and at the judgment day.[26] The least ambiguous and most important use of the talionic formula can be found in the concept of divine justice—the "ultimate justice, or the effect of a cause from which one simply could not escape"[27]—and in the teachings of prophets about

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[25] H.-J. Fabry, "*mādad*," in *TDOT*, vol. 8, p. 128 (italics in original).

[26] The talionic nature of God's rewards and punishments is embedded in Matthew 6:4, 6, 14 and 18, as signaled above. On talionic justice, see generally Calum M. Carmichael, "Biblical Laws of Talion," *Hebrew Annual Review* 9 (1985): 107–26; Bernard S. Jackson, *Studies in the Semiotics of Biblical Law* (Sheffield, England, 2000), pp. 271–97; Philip J. Nel, "The Talion Principle in Old Testament Narratives," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Language* 20 (1994): 21–9; Eckart Otto, "Die Geschichte der Talion im Alten Orient und Israel," in D.R. Daniels, U. Gleßmer, and M. Rösel (eds), *Ernten, was man Sät: Festschrift für Klaus Koch* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1991), pp. 101–30; S. West, "The *Lex Talionis* in the Torah," *JBQ* 21 (1993): 183–8; and Raymond Westbrook, "Lex Talionis and Exodus 21:22–25," *RevB* 93 (1986): 52–69.

[27] James E. Priest, *Governmental and Judicial Ethics in the Bible and Rabbinic Literature* (New York, 1980), p. 155.

that justice. Warnings that God will adhere to this principle when judging man are plentiful in the Old Testament, and it is fair to say that no principle is more fundamental to the concept of justice in biblical times than the requirement that the punishment should somehow match, relate to, or balance out the nature of the crime or wrongdoing itself. Talionic justice accomplished a sense of poetic justice, rectified imbalance, related the nature of the wrong to the fashioned remedy, and achieved an appropriate measure of punishment or degree of reward. Both divine and human actions, as well as natural consequences, can conform to these talionic principles, but it is more often divine judgment that guarantees that those who dig pits for their neighbors will fall into their own pit or who oppress widows will have their own wives become widows.

Therefore, a primary concern of the truly righteous person should be to develop one's own character, by becoming pure ("take the log out of your own eye"), by serving (actually taking "the speck out of your brother's eye"), avoiding hypocrisy, and thinking and acting toward others in the way that one would have God render judgment in return (Matthew 7:3–5). In a temple sense, judgment process is more reflective than projective.

Two final words are worth noting. The word for "speck" or mote is *karphos* (chip, dry straw, bit of sawdust). It appears only once in the Septuagint, and so Matthew 7:3 may contain a distant but significant allusion to Genesis 8:11, where the dove of peace returns to Noah with a dry twig (*karpos*) of an olive branch in its beak as a sign of God's merciful abatement of the destruction of the land and leading to a covenant of reconciliation. If the *karpos* in a brother's eye is actually an olive branch of peace, especially one of divine peace, covenant and atonement, how much more grievous is the other's inability to be of true assistance.

Curiously, there may be a connection between the "heavy wooden beam" (*dokos*) in the eye of the would-be helper and the *dokoi* or "heavy beams used in the building of the temple."[28] Large beams capable of spanning wide spaces were expensive commodities in antiquity, and they receive notable mentions in the building and refurbishing of the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:15–16; 2 Chronicles 34:11). Perhaps here is a veiled indictment of temple administrators who purported to help the widows and the ordinary man but who were blinded by the ceiling beams of the Temple to see above them into the heavens where they might learn wisdom.

Essentially, this stage of the Sermon and the Temple makes it clear that people may choose to judge others, but if they do they must be prepared to be judged by God by same standards that they have used in judging others. This principle of divine judgment operates universally and impartially, for God is no respecter of persons.[29]

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28 Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 64, quoting James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1930).

29 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 491.

Stage 19. A Curse on Those Who Breach Confidentiality (7:6)

Next, the Sermon on the Mount requires its listeners to keep holy things secret: "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you" (Matthew 7:6). For most commentators, "the original meaning [of this saying] is puzzling."[30] "The logion is a riddle."[31] In Betz's view, the likelihood is that this saying was "part of the pre-Matthean SM; . . . it may have been as mysterious to [Matthew] as it is to us."[32] This rubric seems badly out of place and hard to explain for most interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount,[33] for after demanding that disciples should love their neighbors, even their enemies, it seems inconsistent to call those neighbors or others "dogs" and "swine" and to withhold pearls from them.

The emphasis here, however, is clearly on withholding certain things that are "holy" and protecting them as sacred. Drawing on Logion 93 in the *Gospel of Thomas*, Strecker identifies one possibility for the holy thing, "that which is holy (*to hagion*)" in Matthew 7:6, as some "gnostic secret knowledge."[34] The implication is that Jesus has given his hearers something more than what the recorded texts publicly report, something they are required to keep sacred and confidential—an implication consistent with some other interesting conclusions of Jeremias and others regarding the existence of sacred, secret teachings and practices in primitive Christianity.[35] Similarly, Betz finds it most likely that this prohibition in verse 6 is

> an esoteric saying that the uninformed will never be able to figure out. Finding the explanation is not a matter of natural intelligence but of initiation into secrets. . . . In other words, we are dealing with some kind of secret (*arcanum*). Indeed, the language reminds us of arcane teaching (*Arkandisziplin*) as it was used in the Greek mystery religions and in philosophy. . . . Philo also alluded to the oath

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30 Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O.C. Dean Jr (Nashville, 1988), p. 146; and Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 494–5.

31 Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 418.

32 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 494.

33 H.C. van Zyl, "'n Moontlike verklaring vir Matteus 7:6 [A Possible Explanation of Matthew 7:6]," *ThEv* 15 (1982): 67–82, collapses this saying into Matthew 7:1–5 as a possible solution to the problem.

34 Strecker, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 147.

35 Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York, 1966), pp. 125–37. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, "Do Not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs," *ExpTim* 90 (1979): 341, argues that "dogs" has a nonliteral metaphorical sense of "those who are unbaptized and therefore impure, . . . without shame" and that "holy" might originally have meant "what is precious, what is valuable." It is possible that the "holy thing" refers to holy food, which would explain the association of this saying with the Eucharist in *Didache* 9:5.

> that the initiates of the mysteries had to swear to protect the sacred tradition by not revealing its myths, formulae, rituals, and symbols to uninitiated outsiders. . . . If something specific, the "holy" could be a ritual. . . . Originally, then, the [Sermon on the Mount] was meant to be insiders' literature, not to be divulged to the uninitiated outsiders. But one should remember that these are possibilities, no more. . . . Remarkably, Elchasai used the same language: "Inasmuch as he considers that it would be an insult to reason that these great and ineffable mysteries should be trampled under foot or that they should be handed down to many, he advises that they should be preserved as valuable pearls saying this: Do not read this word to all men and guard carefully these precepts because all men are not faithful nor are all women straightforward."[36]

Such a requirement of secrecy is a common feature of ritual initiations or temple ordinances.[37] Indeed, Didache 9:5 associates this saying in Matthew 7:6 with a requirement of cultic exclusivity, specifically the prohibition not to let anyone "eat or drink of the Eucharist with you except for those baptized in the name of the Lord" (see Didache 14:1–2, also connecting the gift at the altar in Matthew 5:23–5 with the observance of the Eucharist). Accordingly, Betz concludes that "the 'holy' could be a ritual."[38] In any event, when the body of sacred knowledge is given by the Sermon on the Mount to its recipients,[39] its elements become or produce a string of precious pearls of great price, "*your* pearls," which are revelations that one would sell all that one has in order to obtain (see Matthew 13:45–6). Once that knowledge is found, one keeps it hidden to protect it (see Matthew 13:44).

The violation of this obligation of secrecy carries or implies harsh penalties and consequences. If it is violated, the pearls will be trampled, and the one who has disclosed the holy thing will be torn to pieces. This reflects the method of punishment prescribed for covenant breakers in Psalms 50: "who made a covenant with me, . . . Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I rend, and there be none to deliver!" (Psalms 50:5, 22). The Sermon text may also warn against apostasy, apostates, or heretics.[40] In a ritual context, a strict requirement of secrecy is most readily understandable. Of its seriousness the listeners were expressly forewarned

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[36] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 495–6; citations and footnotes deleted, except for final quote from note p. 573. "All that one can say is that 'the holy' may indeed indicate that sacred rituals or one such ritual were regarded as constituting something arcane by the SM. . . . This probability would imply that at its earliest stage the SM was regarded as inside information only." Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 498.

[37] Stephen D. Ricks, "Temples through the Ages," in *EM*, 4:1463–5; Hugh Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," in Donald W. Parry (ed.), *Temples of the Ancient World* (Salt Lake City, 1994), pp. 553–4, 569–72.

[38] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 496.

[39] "It is conceivable that the saying refers obliquely to the SM itself, admonishing the hearers or readers to keep the document secret." Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 494.

[40] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 500.

when they were first charged to become the salt of the earth, thereby acquiring great potency but at the same time running the risk of being "trodden underfoot" for losing their strength or of being "cut out" for violating the requirement of chastity (discussed above in connection with Matthew 5:13, 30).

Stage 20. An Answer to a Threefold Petition (7:7–8)

Having been duly entrusted and warned, the listeners are ready to approach the Father. They are told that if they will, one at a time, ask, seek, and knock (in other words, when a threefold petition is made), "it shall be opened to [them]" (Matthew 7:7). Each one must ask, and each one (*pas*) who asks, having reached this point, will receive and be received (see Matthew 7:8). Here again, the theme of seeking God, as well as another instance of triadic intonation, is reencountered in the Sermon.

The admonition to seek (*zēteite*) God is salient in the Psalms. Psalms 69:32 invites, "Let the oppressed see it and be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive (*ekzētēsanta ton theon, kai zēsesthe*)." Using Psalms 105:4, "seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually!" as illustrative, Guelich comments that "to *seek* occurs frequently in the Old Testament with God and his will as the object."[41] Raymond Jacques Tournay hears in the Psalms "an inspired dialogue," constituting a request by the Levitical singers followed by the divine response: "I cry aloud to the Lord; God answers me from the holy mountain" (Psalms 3:5). This dialogic interchange is a strong theme of the Temple in the Psalms: There are "countless texts in the psalms in which God is asked to reply and does so."[42] Even if not exclusively, one would dominantly think of seeking the Lord in his Temple in Jerusalem (see, for example, Isaiah 2:3; Zechariah 8:22). Jeremiah prophesied that God would bring the people back "to this place," that is, to the Temple in Jerusalem, and there "you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find (*heurēsete*) me; when you seek (*zētēsete*) me with all your heart, I will be found by you, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:12–13); the Greek, using an even stronger temple term, reads "I will appear to you (*epiphanoumai*)."

Jonathan Draper goes one step further, viewing Matthew 7:7–11 in the context of principles of exclusion or inclusion in the Christian community. He interprets Jesus' admonition in 7:6 (to not give that which is holy to the dogs or cast pearls before swine) to include the idea that Wisdom, or Christian teachings, are "not to

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[41] Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 357. See, for example, Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 Chronicles 16:10; 22:19; 2 Chronicles 11:16; 12:14; 15:12, 13; 16:12; 20:3, 4; Psalm 34:10; 77:2; 105:3.

[42] Raymond Jacques Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield, 1991), pp. 160–64, quote on 162.

be entrusted to any except those wishing to enter [the Christian community]."[43] Draper notes the contrast between the restrictiveness of Matthew 7:6 with the openness of verses 7–11:

> In ironic contrast to this stands the promise that those who seek will find (7.7–11)—picking up the earlier instruction to "seek first the righteousness of God [and his kingdom]". Those who knock will find the door opened to them. This refers to admission to the covenant people. Thus outsiders are encouraged to seek admission, despite the stringent restrictions and demands of the Christian life of righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees.[44]

There is little irony, however, in the idea that the promised opening is not extended to all who ask, but to those who seek, ask and knock correctly, which makes particularly good sense in a ceremonial context of those being granted admission into the Christian community. Actual experience shows that the promise extended here ("you will find") should not be understood as an absolute one: Many people ask, and seek, and knock; yet many do not find. Moreover, there is reason to believe that Jesus expected his true followers to seek or ask for something specific and something out of the ordinary: The second saying that is attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas reads, "Let one who seeks not stop seeking until that person finds; and upon finding, the person will be disturbed, will be astounded, and will reign over the entirety."[45] The Greek fragment of this text adds, "and reigning, will rest."[46] It is crucial that a person come to the Father correctly and according to the divine way (as Matthew 7:21 will make particularly clear), and for all who seek and ask at this point in their progression—after believing and living the requirements in the Sermon that precede the invitation in Matthew 7:7—for them it will be opened.

Stage 21. Giving Good Gifts as Does the Father (7:9–12)

Who, then, will be there to open unto the petitioner? The Father: "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask [for] bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask [for] a fish, will he give him a serpent? . . . how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to those that ask him?" (Matthew 7:9–10, 11). Asking for "bread" may be the symbolic equivalent of asking for the "daily

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[43] Jonathan A. Draper, "The Genesis and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount," *JSNT* 75 (1999): 25–48, 42.

[44] Draper, "Genesis and Narrative Thrust," p. 43.

[45] Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, New York, 1987), p. 380.

[46] Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "The Oxyrhynchus Logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel according to Thomas," in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London, 1971), p. 371.

(*epiousion*, supernatural) bread" (Matthew 7:11) or the "bread of life" (John 6:48), with its overtones of the manna or showbread (discussed previously). Asking for a fish, also, may be figuratively asking for eternal life. The fish was a common pre-Christian symbol of health and good fortune that became a familiar symbol of Jesus and baptism early in Christianity. The promise veiled in such symbolism is that those who properly ask for Jesus will not be stoned (suffer death), nor will they encounter a serpent (Satan).[47] Instead, the petitioner will receive good gifts directly from the Father. The gift is eternal life, descending below all things, rising above all heavens, and filling all things (see Ephesians 4:8–10, where *domata*, the Greek word for "gifts" in Matthew 7:11, also appears). The abundant generosity of God providing his people with bread and fish either anticipates or recalls to mind the miraculous multiplication of the fish and the loaves (see Matthew 14:15–21), which may point to a ritual meal in the background behind Matthew 7:9–11. That meal could well have commemorated and relived the feeding of the five thousand. Those who ask for fish and loaves will be fed in miraculous ways.

The Golden Rule, often seen as the sum and substance of the Sermon on the Mount, is added as a conclusion to this stage of the Sermon: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (Matthew 7:12). Just as a petitioner would want to be given life and not death, so that person should, like the Father, give life and not death to others. Implied in the background of the Golden Rule is the assumption that the petitioner is now prepared to act in a godly manner. Just as the Father gives generously to those who ask, his children should give and do generously to those whom they might want to do something for them. In the collective view of corporate well-being that prevailed among the covenant peoples of Israel, one did not enter into well-being or eternal life alone. In the final analysis, doing good to (or for) others is required to claim the blessings of the Lord for oneself.

The concern behind the Golden Rule, however, has less to do with restating the principle of retaliation or the proper response to stimuli than with a proactive implementation of the divine attitude of abundance.[48] More than borrowing simply on Hellenistic wisdom literature, the Golden Rule implies a background of prayerful petitions in approaching God. Earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, it was enough for a person to go and reconcile with a brother when one remembered that a brother harbored a grievance against him (Matthew 5:24); now it is incumbent on those who would ask God for a blessing to first do for others what they would have done to them. Earlier in the Sermon, it was sufficient for a person to respond to a request from a neighbor by giving more than was asked (Matthew 5:39, 44); now it is necessary for the would-be petitioners to take the initiative and do voluntarily for others as they would have them do unto them. This will allow the Father to give generously to those who ask. Just as the Father cannot forgive those who do not

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[47] Perhaps even more directly indicative of the symbolism of life and death, Luke 11:12 reads "egg" and "scorpion," in lieu of "bread" and "stone."

[48] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 514.

forgive others (Matthew 6:14), the Father cannot give fish or bread to others who do not of themselves give. Out of his storehouse of plentitude, God gives not only through nature to all the good and wicked (as was the general point in Matthew 5:44), but now he imparts particularly to those petitioners who give as he gives. By opening the way for God to bless people with peace, prosperity, well-being, and with all that they righteously seek and ask, the Golden Rule and all that leads up to it in the Sermon on the Mount fulfills the overriding purpose behind the entire law and the prophets.

Various forms of the Golden Rule are to be found, of course, in many cultures throughout the world.[49] The underlying concept, however, did not enter Judaism late or through aphorisms from other societies, for the similar idea of treating others in the same manner as you would treat yourself was already embedded in the command "you shall love your neighbor (*plēsion*) as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Praising those who treated their neighbors respectfully and certifying that one had not dealt dishonorably with one's neighbor is found several times in the Psalms. For example, Psalm 15 begins by asking who may tarry in the tabernacle or temple of the Lord: "Who shall sojourn in thy tent? Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?" The answer includes, one who "does no evil to his neighbor (*plēsion*)" (Psalms 15:1, 3; see also 24:4). Thus, it is fitting that the Sermon on the Mount reiterates this element, one of the fundamental requirements for entering the Temple, as it turns its attention to entering through the gates that open into the presence of God.

Stage 22. Entering through a Narrow Opening That Leads to Life (7:13–14)

The necessity of entering next through a certain narrow opening arises because, as Matthew 7:13–14 makes clear, there is only one gate that opens into life: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." The doctrine of the Two Ways—the one path to life or the other road to destruction—was a salient teaching in early Christianity as well as at Qumran,[50] one of its most famous occurrences being in these two verses. This motif, as Robert Guelich writes, "has its root in the Old Testament," and among a host of verses he cites Psalms 1:6, "for

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[49] See the discussion and sources cited in Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 508–15.

[50] 1QM 1:1; 1QS 1:9–10; 3:18–26; 4:16–19. See, for example, Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 522; Paul Winter, "Ben Sira and the Teaching of the Two Ways," *VT* 5 (1955): 315–18; M. Jack Suggs, "The Christian Two-Ways Tradition: Its Antiquity, Form, and Function," in David E. Aune (ed.), *Studies in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 60–74; Hugh W. Nibley, *The World and the Prophets* (Salt Lake City, 1987), pp. 183–6; and Hugh W. Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, 1989), pp. 462–3, 550–51.

the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."[51] "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19); "Thus says the Lord: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death" (Jeremiah 21:8); "the way of peace they know not, . . . they have made their roads crooked" (Isaiah 59:8). The good way of life and of the Lord certainly ran through the Temple; the evil way of death and destruction did not. This dichotomy is as primordial as the temple-related creation account, with its flaming sword that guards the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

According to Luz, the gate envisioned here in the Sermon on the Mount is not that of a door to a house (*thura*), but "the gate of a city or a temple (*pulē*)."[52] References to the gates of the Temple are found in Psalms 24:7–10; 118:19–20.[53] Psalms 118 was among those sung at the Feast of Tabernacles,[54] for as Mowinckel writes, "Ps. 118 . . . starts before the Temple and resounds while the 'procession' (*hagh*) marches through 'the Gate of Righteousness' and encircles the altar of burnt offerings in the temple court."[55] Mowinckel further asserts that the gate of Psalms 118 is "very likely the innermost temple gate, through which only 'the righteous' . . . are allowed to enter."[56] The word *pulē* would have carried strong temple overtones. The word is used in five locations in reference to the gate of the Tabernacle (Exodus 27:16; 38:15–17, 30; Numbers 3:26; 4:32). Ezekiel, on his extended tour through the celestial temple, pays special attention to its gates (*pulēs*), the word being used 33 times in Ezekiel 40–47, always with reference to the temple gates.

Entrance to the Temple was carefully regulated. As Clements explains, "One of the priests, acting as 'door-keeper', was entrusted with the important task of declaring the conditions of entry into Yahweh's temple, so that no undesirable person should come into the presence of God, or be regarded as one of his covenant people."[57] Moreover, Koole has argued that Psalms 15 was an entrance liturgy

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[51] Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 387.

[52] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 435. The word *pulē* is also used when Jacob sees the "gate of Heaven" (Genesis 28:17). The earthly Temple may have been primarily intended, which of course instantiated the heavenly Temple. Betz reads this text as eschatological, "behind the gates comes first of all the last judgment," *Sermon on the Mount,* p. 523, although he finds "no indication that the heavenly Jerusalem is thought of," even if "it would be suggestive," p. 521.

[53] Connection between these verses discussed by Herman Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1984), pp. 161–2.

[54] Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (New York, 1962), p. 3.

[55] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, p. 6.

[56] Mowinckel, *Psalms*, p. 180.

[57] R.E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 74–5. See also the discussion of Psalm 24 and the Beatitudes above.

"used in the royal accession to the throne."[58] Likewise, only a few, even of the priests, could enter into the innermost courts of the Temple, where the blood of the atonement was connected to the *life* it represents for the people.[59] In short, the idea that only a few of royal or holy quality will enter the narrow gate would have made considerable sense in the Temple, where it would have been a familiar image.

Stage 23. Recognizing and Bearing the Fruits of the Tree of Life (7:15–20)

In order to stay on the narrow path, a person must be careful to follow the voice of the true shepherd and not succumb to the enticements of those who purport to be true followers of the Lord but in fact are to be avoided: "Keep your distance from the false prophets (*prosechete apo tōn pseudoprophētōn*), who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (7:15). This stage of the Sermon continues to draw heavily on echoes of familiar texts trenchantly associated with the Temple.

The Sermon on the Mount's warning against "false prophets" reverberates in 2 Peter 2:1 (now as in ancient times there are both true and false prophets), in 1 John 4:1 and Didache 11:5–10 (many false prophets are gone out into the world, and they need to be judged by their conduct), and in Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10 (the beast and the false prophet are cast into a lake of burning sulfur), but the idea of false prophets is not original with the Sermon on the Mount: "the concept itself goes back to the Hebrew Bible."[60] The book of Jeremiah saliently mentions *pseudoprophētoi* nine times. Jeremiah 6 contains a judgment prophecy of the time when the Lord, "like a grape-gatherer,"[61] will glean the remnant of Israel as if it were a vine; Jeremiah singles out for condemnation "the priests and false prophets," and he admonishes the people to seek and "ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is (*hē hodos hē agathē*); and walk in it" (6:9; 13, 16). The concatenation of "the way," false prophets, and grapes links Matthew 7:13, 15 and 16 back into Jeremiah 6, and thus associates the false prophets in this stage of the Sermon with their traditional accomplices, the temple priests. Three other passages in Jeremiah speak, in one and the same breath, of "the priests and the false prophets" as the ones who heard Jeremiah speaking in the Temple and brought a legal action against him (26 [33 LXX]:7, 8, 11, 16), who spoke to Jeremiah in the Temple (35 [28 LXX]:1), or who had taken over leadership of the

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[58] Clements, *God and Temple*, p. 75, n. 4 (citing J.L. Koole, *Psalm 15 — ein konigliche Einzugsliturgie?* [Oudtestamentische Studien XIIII, Leiden, 1963], pp. 98–111).

[59] Barker, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven*, p. 45.

[60] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 534.

[61] The word used by Jeremiah is "*ho trugōn*." Although Matthew 7:16 uses *sullegousin* to cover the gathering of both grapes and figs, the parallel text in Luke 6:44 uses *sullegousin* for the figs and *trugōsin* for the grapes, thus echoing Jeremiah 6:9 even more closely.

Temple but had spoken falsely in the name of the Lord (36 [29 LXX]:1, 8, 23, 26; see also 34 [27 LXX]:9).

Outside of Jeremiah, the only occurrence of term *pseudoprophētoi* in the entire Septuagint is in Zechariah 13:2, which is also indirectly relevant to the Temple and Matthew 7:15. Zechariah looks forward to the day when "there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness" (13:1). The first order of business on that day will be for the Lord to cleanse the cult, to purge the land of idols and of "false prophets (*pseudoprophētas*)" (Zechariah 13:2), for they lead people away from the Temple's correct understanding of the atoning peace that alone heals the people's breach of the covenant (Jeremiah 6:14). The false prophets appear to be sacrificial lambs, but in reality are ravenous wolves.

In asking, "Are grapes gathered from thorns (*apo akanthōn*), or figs from thistles (*apo tribolōn*)?" the Sermon on the Mount alludes clearly to Genesis 3:19, where, as a result of their transgression, Adam and Eve were told that "thornbushes and thistles (*akanthas kai tribolous*) shall [the earth] bring forth to thee." Grapes and figs, symbolic of life, are not to be found in the fallen world, but are to be found in the restored conditions of Eden represented by the innermost courts of the Temple.

The best-known feature of the Garden of Eden were its two trees, a tree of life and a tree of death (Genesis 3:3, 22). Those trees were no ordinary trees, and just as Adam and Eve were allowed to choose between them, the Sermon on the Mount opens the way for its adherents to partake of the fruit of life or the fruit of death.

These trees are ultimate religious symbols. Each tree's fruits are either "evil" (*ponērous*, "sick, wicked, worthless, degenerate, malicious"), for it is "corrupt" (*sapron*, "decayed, rotten, evil, unwholesome"), or it is a "good tree" (*agathon*, "fit, capable, of inner worth, moral, right") and its fruits are "good" (*kalous*, good, beautiful). These trees are symbolic of whether one will have eternal life or be "hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matthew 7:19).

The good tree represents the tree of life, an important feature in the landscape of all temple literature.[62] "No mortal could touch the tree until after the great judgement, when its fruit would be given to the chosen ones, and the tree itself transplanted again into the temple."[63] It is to the tree of life that the difficult path leads.

Sometimes, early Christian allegories saw only one tree of eternal life, the living cross, with Jesus being the root and righteous people becoming the branches

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[62] John M. Lundquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East," in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Salt Lake City, 1984), pp. 67–71; and John M. Lundquist, "Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988), p. 293; Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven* (London, 1991), pp. 90–5.

[63] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 88.

(see John 15:1–5). Ritually, early Christians prayed in the "cruciform" position, with their hands raised, "stretched out towards the Lord." This "extension," they said, "is the upright cross."[64] Originally, this signified the passion of Christ and was a gesture used in confessing Christ at baptism; it imitated the cross, death, and a mystic unification and life with Christ.[65]

Other times, by partaking of the fruit of the tree of life, a person becomes a fruitful tree planted in God's paradise, growing up unto eternal life and yielding much good fruit. This imagery owes much to Psalms 1:1–3, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, . . . but [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord. . . . He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season." This idea flourishes in Isaiah 61, proclaiming that the Spirit of the Lord will grant to those who mourn in Zion a garland, the oil of gladness, and the mantle of praise, "that they might be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (Isaiah 61:3). The idea of righteous individuals becoming paradisiacal trees became even more fully expressed in the early Christian Syriac hymns: "Blessed, O Lord, are they who are planted in Thy land, and who have a place in Thy Paradise; and who grow in the growth of Thy trees" (*Odes of Solomon* 11:18–24).

At the same time, the Sermon on the Mount makes it emphatically clear that its disciples are to avoid those whose "fruits" are evil. The warning that an evil tree will be cast into the fire may well reflect a criticism of those who mismanage the Temple, and may foreshadow Jesus' action in cleansing the Temple. Geoffrey Troughton observes that the account of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, as it is described in Mark 11:12–26,

> is intercalated within the episode of the withered fig tree, so that each event provides a mutual commentary on the other. Thus, the action in the Temple and the withering of the fig tree are each seen to be symbolic prophetic actions enacting destruction; the absence of fruit provokes the action against the fig tree, while the absence of "true fruit" in the Temple (or "fruit" of the wrong kind), is the catalyst for action.[66]

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[64] *Odes of Solomon* 27:3; 35:7; 37:1, in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols, Garden City, N.Y. 1983–85), vol. 2, pp. 759, 765–6. "The Odist refers to the early cruciform position for praying," James H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford, 1973), p. 125, n. 10. See 1 Timothy 2:8: "I will therefore that men pray every where lifting up [raising] holy hands." In the Greek tragedians, *hosioi cheirēs* are "hands which are ritually pure." Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 44.

[65] D. Plooij, "The Attitude of the Outspread Hands ('Orante') in Early Christian Literature and Art," *ExpTim* 23 (1912): 199–203, 265–9. One early artwork shows the figures with "the stigmata Christi in their hands" (p. 268).

[66] Geoffrey M. Troughton, "Echoes in the Temple? Jesus, Nehemiah, and Their Actions in the Temple," *JBS* 3/2 (April 2003): 8, available at http://journalofbiblicalstudies.org/Issue7/Echoes%20in%20the%20Temple.pdf (citations omitted).

Jesus' cursing of the fruitless fig tree echoes this teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about knowing a tree by its fruits, and the juxtaposition of the withered fig tree and the temple cleansing draws an analogy between fruit-bearing trees and correct temple administration.

Stage 24. The Privilege of Entering into the Presence of the Lord (7:21–23)

Brought to this point, the participant is ready to encounter the Lord himself, calling on his name: "O Lord, I beseech thee, save my life!" (Psalms 116:4). Some will say, "Lord, Lord," and they will be allowed to "enter the kingdom of heaven," realizing the promise given to them in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."[67] But many others will be turned away, for the Lord will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, you evildoers (*hoi ergazomenoi tēn anomian*)" (Matthew 7:22–3). This strong declaration is precise: "I never knew you (*oudepote egnōn humas*)," not even once.

One must wonder, in what sense does the Lord not know them? Since God knows all, he cannot be unaware of these people. Indeed, he knows them all too well.[68] So, admission must be denied because he does not know them in some other sense. The idea of "knowing" reflected in Hebrew word *yada^c* has a broad range of meanings. One of them is covenantal: "You only have I known of all the families on earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). Yahweh recognized Israel alone as his legitimate servants; only to them had he granted the covenant.[69] Others—even though they claim to prophesy in the name of the Lord, drive out demons by calling upon the name of the Lord, or issue powerful curses or perform mighty works by invoking the name of the Lord—all lack covenantal status, and thus their works are outside the law (*anomia*).[70] The Sermon on the Mount, therefore, seeks to restore the old

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[67] Early Christians understood that only the followers of Jesus would "enter in" through the gate to obtain the secrets of the Kingdom. Clement of Alexandria wrote of the others: "'They do not enter in as we enter in, through the tradition of the Lord, by drawing aside the curtain.'" Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 21 (citing Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7.17; translation in *The Ante Nicene Fathers* [Grand Rapids, Michigan 1979–86], vol. 2).

[68] The problem cannot be, as Betz suggests, that the Lord is barred from serving in court as the advocate for these people because of "the legal principle that one cannot serve in court as an advocate, bailsman, or witness for someone to whom one is a total stranger," *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 544, 551–4; these evil doers would be anything but total strangers to him.

[69] Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, 1969), p. 122. See Hillers' discussion of the use of the word *know* in connection with ancient Near Eastern treaty terminology (pp. 120–24).

[70] If it appears "in a context which people already associated with supernatural forces," the phrase "workers of iniquity" in the Psalms may denote those who use "supernatural or

covenant between God and Israel, by which God knew (or recognized) Israel and the Israelites knew God (see Hosea 13:4; Jeremiah 24:7).

In telling the evildoers to depart (*apochōreite ap' emou hoi ergazomenoi tēn anomian*), the Sermon on the Mount veritably quotes Psalms 6:8 which reads, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil (*apostēste ap' emou pantes hoi ergazomenoi tēn anomian*)." According to this Psalm, the power to expel these evils comes only after intense crying to the Lord: "Every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief, it grows weak because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of evil; for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord accepts my prayer" (Psalms 6:6–9). Efficacious prayer must take on temple proportions: "Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice!" (Psalms 141:2)—in order for the righteous to be separated from the company of "men who work iniquity (*hoi ergazomenoi tēn anomian*)" (Psalms 141:4). Isaiah 59:6–9 likewise makes it clear that darkness shall come upon those whose works are works of iniquity (*erga anomias*), whereas the righteous will enjoy the security of the Temple, there seeing the king in his heavenly beauty, being judged of the Lord and given bread and water (Isaiah 33:14–22).

Who are these grievous workers of intense lawlessness? In Matthew's explanation of the parable of the wheat and the tares, they are the enemy within the kingdom, apostates, false prophets, "all causes of sin and all evildoers (*tous poiountas tēn anomian*)" (Matthew 13:41). In the forecast of apostasy, Satan is this man of *anomia,* who shall sit for a time illegally in the Temple itself (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4). Not everyone who simply invokes the name "Lord, Lord" will enter into the kingdom, but everyone who enters the kingdom will have sworn loyalty to the Father and faithfully will have done his will.

Stage 25. Concluding Admonition to Build upon the Rock (7:24–27)

The Sermon on the Mount concludes with a final admonition and warning. Its last four verses compare those who accept and obey these teachings to a man who "built his house upon the rock (*epi tēn petran*); and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." Those who hear and perhaps even initially embrace these teachings but do not obey them are "like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24–7).

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magical power" or "words or incantations to harm or kill people." Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (New York, 1996) pp. 102, 104.

The wise man (*phronimos*) is the one who grasps his ultimate heavenly character.[71] The foolish man (*mōros*) is the blind guide who cannot distinguish the Temple from the gold one swears by in the Temple (Matthew 23:17), or a foolish bridesmaid who is unprepared for the marriage supper of the Lord (Matthew 25:2). The coupling of these two words would have been familiar from the Psalms: "Fools (*mōroi*), when will you be wise (*phronēsate*)?" (Psalms 94:8).

While the parable of the wise and foolish people who build on the rock or sand can certainly be understood in the context of the preceding warning against following false prophets[72] or blind guides, it also says more than this. Not only must the community be "built on the sound foundation of good works of the Torah, which will never pass away (Mt. 5.18) [in order to] stand the test of the judgment,"[73] but also this parable presupposes the construction of a building of everlasting strength, which again takes the hearer to several images of "the rock," which represent the Lord and his house, the Temple.

Matthew 7:24 and 25 do not speak of a man who built his house upon any nondescript rock, but upon *the* rock. This expression occurs at one key juncture in the Old Testament that relates to this concluding parable. In the wilderness, Moses spoke "to the rock (*pros tēn petran*)" and struck "the rock (*tēn petran*)," out of which much water poured forth (Numbers 20:8–11). This rock prefigures the rock in Matthew 7:24–5 in several ways: it enshrined the deity (and thus could be equated by Paul with Christ himself in 1 Corinthians 10:4); it was a source of rescue from impending death; and it gave forth great amounts of water: "He made streams come out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers (*hōs potamous*)" (Psalms 78:16) that "gushed forth" (Psalms 105:41). Because many of the occurrences of the word *petra* in the Septuagint occur in passages that refer to this event, a first-century Jew hearing about the wise man who built his house on the rock would readily have recalled this story. By inviting his disciples to liken his life-giving words to this life-giving rock, Jesus not only affords a concluding parallel between himself and Moses but also between his words and the source of salvation in the Temple.

Moreover, the rock served as a euphemism for an altar of sacrifice in days before the construction of the Temple by Solomon, and it continued to serve as a metaphor for the Temple in the Psalms. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah to herald the birth of Samson, Manoah took a kid and "offered it upon the rock (*epi tēn petran*) to the Lord" (Judges 13:19). In Psalms 27, the rock is used as a strong image of the protective safety found especially at the Temple. The Lord's

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[71] Most often in the words of Jesus, the wise man (*phronimos*) describes a person "who has grasped the eschatological condition of man (Mt. 7:24; 24:45; 25:2, 4, 8, 9; Lk 12:42)" and not the person who is intelligent or prudent in the practical worldly sense of the word. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London, 1971), p. 172, n. 21.

[72] Draper, "Genesis and Narrative Thrust," p. 44.

[73] Draper, "Genesis and Narrative Thrust," p. 44.

tent or tabernacle stands in synonymous parallelism with the rock, just as the Temple stands inseparably atop its mountain: "He will conceal me under the cover of his tent, he will set me high upon [or *in*] a rock (*en petrai*)" (Psalms 27:5).

In contrast to the stability of that rock and the controlled waters that flow from it, the Sermon on the Mount juxtaposes the coursing torrents and raging floods (*potomoi*) that are archetypical images of the forces of evil. The contrast between those waters of destruction and the immovable solidity of the Lord is never expressed more clearly than in Psalms 93. This Psalm, constructed in an A-B-A pattern, celebrates, at the beginning and at the end, the Lord who is securely ensconced in his holy Temple, clothed in his garments (*enedusato*) of power (*dunamin*), seated on his throne, and issuing his everlasting decrees. At the center of this Psalms, even the three-fold primordial floods (*potomoi*, which are echoed in Matthew 7:25 and 27 by the three-fold rain, floods, and winds) fail to match the mighty strength of the Lord:

> A The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty.
> The Lord is robed, he is girded with strength.
> Yea, the world is established; it shall never be moved
> Thy throne is established from of old; thou art from everlasting.
>
> B The floods have lifted up, O Lord,
> The floods have lifted up their voice
> The floods lift up their roaring
> Mightier than the thunders of many waters
> Mightier than the waves of the sea,
> The Lord on high is mighty!
>
> A Thy decrees are very sure.
> Holiness befits thy house,
> O Lord, for evermore. (Psalms 93:1–5)

God's control over the rivers and waters hearkens back to the primal history and the establishment of the world (Psalms 93:1), and thus to the primordial mountain, where heaven and earth meet and from whence these cosmic waters flow (Genesis 2:10). Because the Temple symbolized Eden, where God reigned in peace over the waters of chaos, the summary injunction at the end of the Sermon on the Mount to be wise by building upon the mountain of the Lord would easily have evoked images of the Temple and its eternal stability.

Contrariwise, when evil reigns the floods rise up, as they did in the days of Noah, threatening to overcome God's world order. Only by the ark (and, by extension, by the ark of the covenant) was mankind saved. As Mbuvi has observed in commenting on 1 Peter 3:20, "Noah's ark was associated with temple imagery—both were built with the help of angels, both are refuges where one can escape the wrath of God," and both "functioned as symbols of God's redemptive

act (and judgment) in the cosmological history of the nation of Israel,"[74] which adds another link between Matthew 7:24–7 and the Temple.

More specifically, the rock may refer not only to the Temple in general but to the engravings of the words of God in the Holy of Holies.[75] The Holy of Holies was directly associated with the Shetiyyah-stone, the rock on which the Temple was built.[76] When God created the heaven and earth, "he also created the stone over the Deep, and engraved on it the Ineffable Name consisting of forty-two letters, and fixed the stone over the Deep in order to keep down its waters."[77] Barker points to Isaiah 24:4–6 as teaching that "when [the laws and statutes of the ancient covenant] are broken, the earth withers away and the creation collapses."[78] She argues that these "statutes" were the inscription of the divine plan housed in the Holy of Holies:

> These engravings were known as *surot*. . . . This word *surot*, which is a plural form, only occurs in post biblical texts, but the singular form *sur* appears throughout the Old Testament, where it is translated "Rock," a word with the same consonants. Sometimes "rock" is an appropriate translation, but there are many places where "rock" does not appear in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and so the bilingual translator must have known that at that point the word had another meaning. Thus in Isaiah 30.29 "Rock of Israel" became in the Greek "God of Israel" or Isaiah 44.8 "Is there a God beside me? There is no Rock. I know no other," became in the Greek "There is no God except me." This means that the familiar Rock of ages (Isa. 26.4), in the Greek "the great eternal God," was probably "the *sur* of the holy of holies."[79]

Thus, to build one's house upon the rock would mean to base it on the Lord, his plan, statutes and covenants in the Temple.

In sum, every section of the Sermon on the Mount has been seen to contain temple elements. This text is completely at home in the Temple. This leaves us, next, to explore several potential implications of a temple setting for the Sermon on the Mount.

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[74] Andrew M. Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile, and Identity in 1 Peter* (New York, 2007), p. 113.

[75] Barker, *Temple Theology*, pp. 38–40.

[76] O. Cullmann, *"petra,"* *TDNT*, vol. 6, p. 96, summarizes the symbolic meaning of the rock as the foundation (see Job 38:6) of the world in the depths of the primal flood: "The rock in the holy of holies is thus the origin of the creation of the world and the supreme point of the earth. It is the gate of heaven and belongs to the future Paradise" (citations omitted).

[77] Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (New York, 1947), p. 57; see also Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, pp. 18–20.

[78] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 39.

[79] Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 40.

Chapter 7

Unifying the Sermon with Temple Themes and Ritual Theory

This book set out to find a way to read the Sermon on the Mount as a unified text. The method employed was to read the Sermon on the Mount against the rhetorical background of the Jerusalem Temple. Although the Sermon on the Mount has been studied extensively over the centuries, no analysis of this text has ever pursued this particular approach before, striving to identify and value its temple-related elements. At the outset, it was argued the distinctive mountain setting of the Sermon supplies prima facie evidence for seeing the Sermon on the Mount in the light of the Temple. In the end, the detection of prominent uses of temple terms, concepts, and themes throughout the Sermon bears out the validity and value of that approach. These temple elements give the Sermon on the Mount its consistent voice. They hold its various parts together in a logical progression. They imbue the text with authority and transformative power.

A Summary of the Sermon's Temple-Related Vocabulary

First and foremost, this study exposes the consistent use in the Sermon on the Mount of the temple-related words and phrases from the Old Testament, especially from the Psalms and the blocks of temple materials at the end of the book of Exodus and in the first part of Leviticus. Table 1 recaps much of the evidence,[1] displaying 120 of the temple themes that have been found in the Sermon on the Mount, from beginning to end.

Two-thirds (86) of these elements can be strongly linked to words, phrases, or concepts in the Psalms. Some are immediately recognizable as quotations or direct paraphrases of well-known passages such as Psalms 6:8, 24:4, 37:11, 48:2, 50:22, and 94:8, as discussed individually above. Others make use of vocabulary that appears multiple times, giving this text a strong ring of psalmody. For example, the Beatitudes begin with the word *makarioi* (blessed), which is also the first word in Psalms 1:1, and it goes on to appear twenty-five more times in the Psalms.

[1] I have used the Brenton version of the Septuagint throughout. The frequencies listed are based on the number of times these words appear in Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Oxford, 1897), giving a general idea of word usage. Several of the listed word frequencies are higher in the Psalms than in any other book in the Septuagint.

Table 1: Temple Themes and Temple-Related Texts in the Sermon on the Mount

Sermon on the Mount	Psalms	Other OT Texts	Pertinent Temple Themes
Into the mountain	24:1	Isa 2:2	Mountain of the Lord
Blessed (*makarioi*)	1:1 (+25 more times)		Celestial beatification
Rewards	19:11		Source of heavenly rewards
Poor (*ptōchoi*)	69:32 (+15x)		Beseeching and bowing down
Kingdom of God	145:11–13		God as eternal king
Mourning		Ezra 10:6	Sadness over covenant breaking
Comfort (*paraklēsis*)	94:19		Comfort and joy
Meekness (*praeis*)	76:2–9 (+8x)	Num 12:3	Like Moses, waiting on the Lord
Meek inherit the earth	37:9, 11, 18		Receiving peace and prosperity
Hungering	37:19; 107:9		Needing and seeking righteousness
Thirsting for God	42:2; 63:1; 107:9		Needing and seeking God
Righteousness	17:15 (+80x)		Divine justice
Filled (*chortasthēsontai*)	17:15 (+8x)		Beholding God's glory
Receiving mercy	5:7 (+171x)		Through covenantal fidelity
Pure in heart (*katharoi*)	24:4 (+6x)	Exod 25–Lev 24 (101x)	Entrance and purity requirements
Seeing God	17:15; 24:6; 63:2		Encountering God's glory
Peace, peacemakers	147:14 (+23x)	Isa, Jer (49x)	Peace of complete atonement
Sons of God	2:7; 82:6	Job 38:7; Dt 32:8	Sonship, angels, deified beings
Persecution	7:1; 31:15; 35:3		Deliverance from persecution
Exclusion (*aphorisōsin*)	69:28; 109:13		Blotting out the wicked
Unjustly cursed, reviled	119:86, 161		Imprecations, swearing of oaths
Rejoice, rejoice	32:11 (+60x)		Cultic joy
Hallelujah (*agalliasthe*)	5:11; 32:11 (+51x)		Cultic exultation, singing
Salt of the earth	60:1	Lev 2:13	Salt of the covenant
Casting out (*ekballein*)	78:55; 109:10		Excluding evil, excommunication
Trodden underfoot	7:5 (+5x)	Isa (14x)	Judgment, humiliation
Light of the earth	27:1; 104:1–2		Light to the world

Sermon on the Mount	Psalms	Other OT Texts	Pertinent Temple Themes
City on a mountain	48:2		Holy city, temple city
Lamp (*luchnos*)	18:28; 119:105		Word of God, God's Torah
Lampstand (*luchnia*)		Exod 25 (9x)	The Menorah (*luchnia*)
Letting light shine	31:16	Gen 1:1–3	Creation, Let there be light
Decalogue	19; 50:18–20	Exod 20:13, 14, 16	Daily temple Decalogue recitation
Anger	7:6; 56:7		The anger of the Lord
Prohibition of anger	37:7–9		Vengeance is only of the Lord
Judgment	(24x)		Judgment by temple councils
Gift (*dōron*)		Lev 1–9 (30x)	Sacrifice
Altar (*thusiastērion*)		Exod 27–Lev 10 (125x)	Altar of the Temple
Reconciliation		Lev 6:1–7	Unity and harmony
No adultery	50:14–19	Lev 18; Ezek 23:37	No infidelity, impurity, or idolatry
Purity of heart	24:4		Complete purity
Covenant marriage		Mal 2:14; Ezek 16	The creation of man and woman
Divorce (*apostasion*)		Hos 4; Lev 21	Requiring purity of priests
Right hand	16:7 (+38x)		Priest's use of right hand
Yes, yes		Deut 27; Num 5:22	Amen, amen
Oaths	50:5, 14	Num 30	Solemnizing obligations
God's throne in heaven	11:4 (+5x)		Throne of God, ark
In the name of the earth		Isa 66:1	Connecting heaven and earth
City of the great king	48:2		Holy city of Jerusalem
Make hair white (*tricha leukē*)		Lev 13:2–10 (5x)	White hair of leprosy
Talion		Exod 21; Lev 24	Divine justice
Repay good for evil		Exod 23:4; 1Sam 24:17	Divine mercy
Slap on the cheek	3:7	Isa 50:6; Lam 3:30	Ritual humiliation of the king
Coat (*chitōn*)		Ex 28–Lev 16 (12x)	Linen garments of priests
Lend and give generously	37:26; 112:5	Deut 15:7–8	Caring for the poor
Love (*agapaō*)	(50x)	Lev 19:18	Love, peace, holiness

Sermon on the Mount	Psalms	Other OT Texts	Pertinent Temple Themes
Pray for enemies	(*echroi* 108x)		Intercessory prayers
Sons of God	82:6		Fatherhood of God
God gives to all		1 Kings 8	Life-sustaining blessings
Sun over all	84:11		The Lord is a sun
Rain on all the earth	147:8		Ensuring rain
Perfect (*teleios* = *shalom*)	1:3; 65:1; 119:165	Deut 18:13; 2Sm 22:26	God's nature, gift for doing his will
Perfect (*teleiōsis*)		Exod 29–Lev 8 (11x)	The ram of "consecration"
Giving in secret			The Chamber of Secrets
Trumpets	81:3; 105:3	1 Chron 15:24	Music, heralding God
Glorify (*doxazein, doxa*)	22:23 (+65x)		Glorifying God
Prayer in secret	55:1	1 Kings 8 (hear 12x)	Being heard of God
Prayer	(37x)	Isa 56:7	House of prayer
God as Father	89:26; 103:13		Nomina sacra
Hallowed name, make holy	72:17; 103:1; 111:9		Sanctification
Kingdom come	22:28; 45:6		Praising God
On earth as in heaven	135:6		Connecting heaven to earth
Daily bread	105:40	Exod 25:30	Manna, Bread of the Presence
Kingdom, glory, power	145:10–12	1 Chron 29:11	Doxology
Forgive	25:18; 32:1 (+6x)	1 Kings 8:30	Forgiveness
Fasting	35:11–14; 69:10	Lev 16	Self-abasement, humility
Anointing		Exod 40:15	Ritual anointing
Washing		2 Sam 12:20	Ritual washing
Treasures		Neh 10:37	Temple treasury, making vows
Light	27:1; 56:13		The Lord is Light
Seeing in the light	36:9; 119:130		Understanding, enlightenment
Reflecting the light	34:29	Exod 3:2	Transfiguration
Eye single (*haplous*)		Prov 11:25	Purity
Radiating light	38:10		The Temple as a beacon, lighthouse
Full of light	139:12		Driving away darkness
Serve the Lord only	2:11; 22:30 (+6x)	Exod 20:3	Temple service
Love the Master (*agapaō*)	(+50x)	Deut 6:4–5	Loving God
Cleave unto (*antechō*)		Prov 3:18; Isa 56:4	Loyalty to God
Necessities of life	23:5	1 Kings 8:35–39	Providing sufficient abundance

Sermon on the Mount	Psalms	Other OT Texts	Pertinent Temple Themes
Anxiety	38:18		Worrying about sin
Stature, life span (*hēlikia*)		Sira 26:17	Unimprovable life, excellence
Cubit (*pēchus*)		Exod 25–38; Ez 40–46	Temple measurements (+120x)
Spin (*nēthousin*)		Exod 26–39 (10x)	Temple veil, garments, curtains
Clothes (*endumata*)	93:1; 104:1	Exod 28:2; Job 40:10	Holy garments
Grass is temporary	37:2 (+3x)		Temple is eternal
Seek first, all else added	37:4		Eternal promises
Judgment	7:8; 35:24 (+22x)		Eternal judgment, the Mercy Seat
Measure (*metron*)		Ezek 40–48 (+40x)	Divine order of creation
Measure for measure (talion)		Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20	Principle of divine justice
Speck, chip (*karpos*)		Gen 8:11	Evidence of divine peace
Beam (*dokos*)		1 Kings 6:15–16	Beams in the Temple
Cast not the holy (*hagion*)	2:6 (+59x)	Exod 26–Num (300x)	Guarding sacred things
Tear in pieces	50:5, 22		Punishing covenant breakers
Seek	69:32; 105:4	Isa 2:3	Seeking the Lord in his Temple
Bread, fish	23:5; 132:15		Sacred meals
Others (*plēsion*) as the self	15:3 (+10x)	Lev 19:18	Community, collectivity
Two ways (*hodos*)	1:6	Deut 30:19	Separating polar opposites
Gate (*pulēs*)	24:7–10; 118:19–20	Exod Num Ezek (38x)	Temple gates
False prophets		Jer (9x); Zech 13:2	Mismanagers of the Temple
Tree as archetype	1:1–3	Gen 3:3, 22	Tree of Life, individuals as trees
Works judged as fruits	58:11; 104:13; 128:3		God's judgment
Vine and fig		1 Kings 4:5	Blessing the righteous
Thornbushes and thistles		Gen 3:19	Cursing sinners, the fallen state
Lord, Lord	116:4		Invoking the name of the Lord
Knowing God		Amos 3:2	Covenant making
Entering	118:26	Isa 33:17	Entering into the Lord's Presence
Excluding iniquity (*anomia*)	6:8, 141:4		Defeating evil
Wise man (*phronimos*)	94:8	Prov, Sir (26x)	Wisdom
Upon the rock	27:5	Num 20:8; Jdg 13:19	Temple, mountain, altar
Foolish man (*mōros*)	94:8	Sira (28x)	Lack of Wisdom
Upon the sand		Ezek 13:10–11	Chaos, false prophets
Floods	78:16; 93:3; 105:41		Cosmic floods, destruction of evil

Whereas "makarisms" are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the Enoch literature, in proverbial sayings and in the Old Testament Apocrypha, one may rightly suspect that the average Galilean or Judean audience would have been most familiar with this distinctive word's prominent use in the Psalms. Several key words in the Sermon on the Mount appear multiple times in the Psalms, ranging from mercy (171x), enemies (108x), righteousness (81x), glory, glorify (66x), rejoice (61x), holy (60x), hallelujah (53x), love (*agapaō*, 50x), right hand (39x), and prayer (37x), to meek (9x), filled (9x), forgive (8x), serve (8x), pure (7x) and trodden underfoot (6x). Moreover, 43 of these 86 psalmic elements can be tied additionally to technical terminology used in other Old Testament texts that are clearly related to the Temple, such as the instructions for the construction and operation of the Tabernacle or the Temple, as well as the prayer dedicating the Temple of Solomon in 1 Kings 8 and the futuristic vision of the ideal temple in Ezekiel 40–48. The consistent use of temple vocabulary and the extensive use of the Psalms in the Sermon on the Mount are most noteworthy. Never before have temple themes in the Sermon on the Mount been catalogued in this breadth and detail.

The remaining third (34) of these temple elements do not draw on vocabulary that is found in the Psalms, but they appear significantly in the Old Testament—and sometimes exclusively—in temple-related passages. For example, words such as *luchnia* (lampstand, menorah) or *nēthousin* (spin) would have been quite unforgettably known to scripturally literate listeners as words distinctively associated with the Tabernacle and Temple. While the individual significance of each instance may be small, the cumulative effect of these verbal echoes only increases the likelihood that listeners would have appreciated the temple register of the words used in the Sermon on the Mount, especially with temple-related elements being found in each of its twenty-five stages.

Each of these references to the Psalms can be counted as being related to the Temple. Even though it is probably true that the book of Psalms was not published or used as a hymnbook in the sense of a modern Christian hymnal, there can still be no doubt that the Psalms were sung (or chanted) in the Temple by Levitical cantors and lay worshipers, by pilgrims as they went up to make legally required appearances at the Temple, by individual worshipers in the Temple, by dispersed Jews yearning for the Temple, and by families giving thanks for the blessings of the Temple.[2] While poetry written in psalmodic form served several purposes in many settings (as the Psalms of Solomon, the Dead Sea Thanksgiving Hymns, and the Odes of Solomon show), it remains overridingly clear that the Temple unites the biblical Psalms. They all have something directly or proximately to do with the Temple.

Readers may well be surprised by the number of phrases in the Sermon on the Mount that essentially repeat or allude to temple-related texts in the Old Testament. By my count, there are 383 words in total vocabulary of the Sermon on the Mount,

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[2] See generally, Dirk J. Human and Cas J.A. Vos (eds), *Psalms and Liturgy* (London, 2004). Discussed above in chapter 3, see notes 8–14.

approximately one-third of them casting a temple shadow. Obviously, David Flusser is right in saying that the Sermon on the Mount should not be thought of as "a spontaneous lyrical outbreak of prophecy," but rather as carrying profound messages "founded on a complex network of biblical reminiscences and midrashic exegesis."[3]

But perhaps this should not come as any great surprise. Readers are well aware of Jesus' apparent practice of quoting from the Psalms. The report of the crucifixion is especially punctuated with verbiage from the Psalms: for example, the piercing of hands and feet is found in Psalms 22:16 LXX;[4] the giving of gall in Matthew 27:34 draws on Psalms 69:21; the parting of garments in Matthew 27:35 builds on Psalms 22:18; and Jesus' final cry of abandonment in Matthew 27:46 quotes Psalms 22:1. This use of the Psalms was neither a late nor an isolated practice.

While it is true that parallels can also be adduced from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the occurrences of these points of similarity are limited. For the most part, these pertain only to passages in Matthew 5 and thus do not characterize the entire Sermon. While Jesus occasionally "followed Essene thought," he more often "taught and acted in diametrical opposition to it" and "decisively rejected all [its] excessive features."[5] Likewise, while many parallels have also been found in rabbinic writings,[6] these Jewish texts are often too late to be very indicative. Certain passages in the Sermon on the Mount may be well understood in terms of Hellenistic philosophy or culture (such as going the second mile, or living the

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3 D. Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit," *IEJ* 10/1 (1960): 13.

4 New evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls supports the Septuagint reading of this passage. See 5/6 Hev-Sev4Ps Fragment 11, in James H. Charlesworth and others (eds), *Miscellaneous Texts from the Judaean Desert*, Discoveries in the Judean Desert 38 (Oxford, 2000), 160–61, and discussed in Shaun Hopkin, "The Psalm 22:16 Controversy," *BYU Studies* 44/3 (2005), 161–72.

5 A classic article is Kurt Schubert, "The Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts," in Krister Stendahl (ed.), *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York, 1957), pp. 118–28, quote on 128. Besides beatitude-type statements (4Q525) and ethical dualism (1QS 1:9–10; 3:18–26; 4:16–19; and throughout 1QM), one finds in the Scrolls lines about hating enemies (1QS 1:10; 2:4–19; 9:16, 21–3; 10:5), being poor in spirit (*ebionim*, 1QpHab 12:3, 6, 10; 1QM 14:7; CD 6:21; 14:14; 1QH 3:25; 18:29–30; 1QS 6:18–20), treading in the ways of light (1QS 3:20), "eyes of unchastity" (1QS 1:6), not swearing by God's name El (CD 19:1); prayer (1QH 5:5–6; 11QPs[a] 19), forgiving (1QS 5:24–6:1); and not repaying a man with evil (1QS 10:17–18), as well as statements about suffering persecution, righteousness, perfection, divorce, numbering the hairs of the head, and keeping secrets.

6 In discussions of the thoroughly Jewish character of the Sermon on the Mount, others have convincingly found Jesus' Jewishness at virtually every turn in the Sermon on the Mount. See, for example, Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich, 1922), vol. 1, pp. 188–474; Samuel T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament* (New York, 1987); and W.D. Davies, asking the question "Does the Sermon on the Mount Follow a Rabbinic Pattern?," in "My Odyssey in New Testament Interpretation," *BRev* 5/3 (June 1989): 15.

Golden Rule), but these ethical ideals are not exclusively Hellenistic. A profusion of temple themes, temple texts, and temple contexts, however, accounts quite satisfactorily for every stage of the Sermon on the Mount.

Imbuing the Sermon on the Mount with Authority

Detecting the rhetorical and thematic unity of the Sermon on the Mount is not a trivial or inconsequential observation. By hearing the Sermon on the Mount as a text that draws heavily on numerous temple themes and temple allusions, a listener is inescapably impressed by its unified and targeted voice of authority. Through these strong threads that tie the Sermon on the Mount to the Temple, this text taps into potent religious bedrock, speaks in a rhetorical register of traditional authority, and draws on the authoritativeness of all that is most holy and sacred. Everything that pertains to temples has to do with moral and religious authority, and thus these temple themes confer moral authority on the Sermon on the Mount in many ways, which can be bundled under the headings of divine authority, social cohesion, and personal commitment.

Divine Authority

In order to be compelling, all ethical pronouncements must be grounded in some form of authority, be it traditional, social, logical, political, familial, or religious. Not drawing on the modern preference for utilitarianism or rationalism as it source of authority, the Sermon on the Mount relies primarily on the voice of divine authority as its major force of ethical influence. In this text, as in the Temple (the place of God's presence and revelation), that voice speaks distinctly and preeminently.

To draw people up to a higher standard of moral behavior, speakers must speak from a position of higher authority and stand on a higher moral ground than the listeners. To speak from a position of power and influence, speakers must have stature, charisma, and demonstrated capabilities to lead and to instil confidence. They must be able to ensure some enforcement of consequences for ignoring their messages, and they must have some means of delivering any promised rewards. By standing on the verbal and theological platform of the Temple, Jesus drew on the authority of the divine place in just such ways.

In a temple setting, he was able to give commandments that captured the charisma of Moses (as in Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 44), to make promises that evoked the glory of Solomon (Matthew 6:29), and to invoke in effect the authority of Melchizedek, the Great High Priest, to bless the people of Abraham, to receive their treasures, and to control the elements of the created cosmos, even the rains from above and the floods from the deep. Echoing sacred words from the Temple, Jesus' blessings and promises carried the bright prospect of God's inviolable endorsement of fulfillment, especially to those who ask (Matthew 7:11) and act

(Matthew 7:21, 24), just as all blessings pronounced upon the righteous by temple priests brought with them the deepest possible assurances that they would certainly materialize. Cloaked in the mantle of temple gnosis and revelation, Jesus' warnings and promises carried with them the most intense vouchers of prophetic forecasting (as in Matthew 5:13; 7:11).

Jesus issued these commandments, warnings, and promises so strongly and clearly that people immediately wondered by what authority he was able to make such statements (Matthew 7:28–29). By the end of the Sermon, he openly answered that inevitable query, unequivocally stating that he spoke for God, his Father, when he limited his blessings to those who do "the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Within conventional expectations, it was only because of temple access to the holy Presence that one could speak in such a way with credibility. In this voice of divine authority, there is hope that divine power can solve all problems that threaten the earth; but in the context of a temple theology, mankind must also do its part to love and serve God and to maintain the sacred order of the Lord's creation, as most temples of the ancient world were designed to do.

Social Cohesion

Ethical formation requires societal trust and cooperation, and temples enshrined, celebrated, and protected the most treasured values shared by a bonded community. The Temple was an institution of consummate social order. Temples necessarily involve large numbers of people working in harmony to celebrate and perpetuate the sacred order, not only for the benefit of believers but of the entire world. If God sends rain in answer to the prayers of the righteous few, the rain will necessarily fall on the entire land, not just on certain plots. Temples draw on venerable traditions of ancestors, on deeply seated world views, and on ritually repeated routines. Violating these sacred boundaries and traditional norms brought social shame, if not casting out, expulsion, and effectual death.

By embedding its messages in a temple framework, the Sermon on the Mount did not destroy but built on these things that are generative of healthy societies. In the Temple of Jerusalem, vast numbers of people were involved in the cooperative activities of the Temple, including builders, gatekeepers, priests, chief priests, Levites, singers, worshipers, scribes, wood-gatherers, and many people in an elaborate temple infrastructure. Temples forged community bonds and defined social identity. In a temple community, the collective took precedence over the individual, and duties overshadowed rights. By working within a temple framework, the Sermon on the Mount readily communicates a firm sense of belonging, the support of healthy social pressure, and durable bonds of community relationships within the otherwise fragile new Jesus movement (see Matthew 5:21, 47; 6:2; 7:3). In the established Christian community two thousand years later, social justice and peace can still be achieved, beyond normal individual abilities, through praying for enemies, seeking and granting reconciliation and forgiveness, and strengthening commonalities as children of God. After all, the Temple was all

about becoming sons of God, obtaining forgiveness, and praying for help in facing challenges that exceed our own abilities.

Personal Commitment

In terms of the role of individual commitment in moral formation, to be morally influential a statement must be sufficiently clear, consistent, presumptively correct, and adequately complete. Being saturated with temple images, the Sermon on the Mount enjoys a clearly coherent and unified character. The Temple's pervading sense of order and completeness enhances the authority of the Sermon on the Mount by communicating a sense of permanence and cosmic control, and by orienting humans to the guiding grid of heavenly coordinates. The Temple induced and inculcated voluntary personal commitment to and adoption of durable moral principles based on selflessness, sacrifice, obedience, love, forgiveness, purity, and consecration. The motivation engendered by this clear ethical vision offers hope in the continuous campaign to lessen the gap between the wisdom of hearing and doing these teachings and the foolishness of hearing and doing them not.

Beyond dispensing practical instructions, effective moral statements must orient, inspire and motivate the hearers to aligning their willing desires with the objectives of the speaker. Through comforting reconciliations and reassurances, both the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount (as in Matthew 5:3–12, 45; 6:4, 6, 14; 32; 7:7, 25) motivate the hearer to want to do, to voluntarily agree to do, and to actually do whatever it takes to succeed in obtaining these glorious, promised rewards.

Ultimately, moral texts derive their most powerful authority from some consequential force outside of the present time and the immediate space. Temples do this by instantiating divine law and universal order, by providing access to and communication with God, and by enshrining holiness and worthiness in an aura of awe and spiritual reverence. In the Temple of Jerusalem were found some of the most powerful images and most awe-inspiring institutions on which the Judeo-Christian tradition rests. The Sermon on the Mount is systematically and effectively constructed in such a way that listeners are ritualistically guided, with confidence, stage by stage, from preliminary blessings and conditions, to higher cultic instructions and warnings, to eventually enable the hearers to withstand the forces of evil (as in Matthew 6:13; 7:20, 23, 25) and enter perfected into the presence of God (Matthew 5:48; 7:21). Temples always involved more than texts alone; the Temple is a template, an active model, of principles of righteousness demonstrated.

Thus, in many ways, temple elements unify the authorial voice of the Sermon on the Mount and give it a permeating aura of authoritativeness. Indeed, it is now no wonder that the reaction of the people as they heard this teaching of Jesus was one of astonishment precisely because Jesus spoke as one having true authority and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:28–29). By tapping into potent temple themes,

the Sermon on the Mount spoke in a clear rhetorical register of traditional authority coupled with the indisputable authoritativeness of all that is sacred and holy.

Without recognizing this emphasis on the Temple, other views of the Sermon on the Mount fail to understand, and may actually diminish, its main source of moral authority. Cut off from its firm roots in the traditional sacred values of its Jewish heritage, the Sermon on the Mount withers without a legitimizing moral foundation.[7] Seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a jumble of random, isolated maxims diminishes its claim to presenting a clear, complete, mature statement with moral effectiveness. Beyond that, logic alone is not enough. People may rationally agree that certain behaviors are desirable, but without some form of authoritative imprimatur, ethical maxims and words of moral encouragement remain in the realm of polite hypotheticals. And if the Sermon on the Mount presents only folk norms that were popular among Galilean peasants in the first century, and if it launches only hyperbolic attacks against passing sectarian competitors, it lacks durable moral value. The mystery of the Temple, however, offers keys for unlocking the enduring potency of the Sermon on the Mount in ethical formation.

Seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a Possible Conversion Ritual

Having such a strong, authoritative character, the Sermon on the Mount lent itself readily to ritual and ceremonial applications. Individual initiation into a religious group and the personal adoption of a code of spiritual conduct often involves some form of ceremony or ritual. Likewise, a group response to an authoritative plan of action typically involves some form of ritual expression of approval and compliance. Temples of the ancient world were intrinsically ritualistic, and thus it should not be surprising to find that temple themes further enhance the unity of the Sermon on the Mount by lending this text a ritual quality, allowing it to serve as a script that lays out a course of transformational stages that are not just to be learned but also experienced by initiates converting to Christianity.

From the very outset, viewing the Sermon through the lens of ritual studies would seem promising. Rituals were practiced by the early Christians from the first century onward, including baptism (Matthew 3:15; 28:19); almsgiving, prayer, fasting, washing and anointing (mentioned in the cultic instructions in Matthew 6:1–18); the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost or to ordain priesthood officers (see Acts 6:6; 8:17; 1 Timothy 4:14); the Eucharist (Matthew 26:26–28; 1 Corinthians 11:23–29); blessing the sick (James 5:14); and marriage

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[7] "The mythology and symbolism of the ancient temple are the key to understanding much of Christian origins. Modern translations of the New Testament which obscure this imagery are counterproductive, . . . for when the meaning of these symbols is lost, the meaning of Christianity will also be lost." Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven* (London, 1991), p. 181.

(in the *Gospel of Philip*[8]). Might the Sermon on the Mount have been involved with any such rituals?

The most likely ritual uses of the Sermon on the Mount would have been connected with its role as an "early Christian catechetical instruction to new converts."[9] Betz and others have marshaled considerable evidence that the Sermon on the Mount is precisely the kind of document that would have been used as a cultic text or to instruct or remind initiates of church rules.[10] Drawing on Christian, Jewish, and other ancient practices as parallels, the idea that the Sermon on the Mount was uses to instruct neophytes for baptism becomes quite plausible. Especially the Didache, which draws extensively on the Sermon on the Mount, was used toward the end of the first century CE to prepare converts for baptism.[11] Moreover, the main themes and structure of the Sermon on the Mount compare well with the Giyyur ritual required, according to the Talmud, of all persons desiring to become Jewish converts.[12] While it is unknown how early this particular practice was in place, it stands to reason that it (or something like it) would have been in use during the first century CE, when proselytism was favored by certain Jewish groups. According to the Giyyur ritual, the following interrogation and instruction preceded circumcision and immersion, by which the Jewish convert became an Israelite in all respects:

First, the proselyte was told to expect to be persecuted: "Do you not know that Israel at the present time is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions?" Likewise, early in the Sermon on the Mount, Christian disciples are warned that they will be reviled, reproached, insulted, persecuted, and cursed (Matthew 5:11).

If the Jewish proselyte accepted that first burden, he or she was next "given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments." In the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples are likewise next instructed in some of the rules of ordinary life as well as in major laws of highest consequence (Matthew 5:17–47).

Next, the Jewish inductee was "informed of the sin" of neglecting the poor by not observing the law of gleanings, the law of the corner, and rule of the poor man's tithe. In the Sermon on the Mount, the subject also turns next to almsgiving,

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[8] April D. DeConick, "Entering God's Presence: Sacramentalism in the Gospel of Philip," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1998 Seminar Papers, Part One* (Atlanta, 1998), 483–523.

[9] Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin, 1986), p. 16.

[10] Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Laurence Welborn (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 55–70; and W.D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 105–6.

[11] See below, chapter 8, note 27.

[12] TB, *Yebamoth* 47a–b. See A. Sagi and Z. Zohar, "The Halakhic Ritual of Giyyur and Its Symbolic Meaning," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9/1 (Winter, 1995): 1–13.

serving God and not Mammon, and understanding how the Lord cares for his children by providing them with what they need to eat, drink and wear (Matthew 6:1–4, 24–34).

The Talmudic ritual continued by telling the candidate clearly "of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments." The person was reminded that, before conversion, he was not subject to stoning for breaking the Sabbath laws or liable to excommunication for eating the forbidden fat. Likewise, on several occasions in the Sermon on the Mount the consequences of failed discipleship are articulated in graphic imagery and with similar terminology: the salt that becomes impotent is taken out, cast away, and trampled down (Matthew 5:13); the affronting brother is subject to the council (Matthew 5:22); and the one who defiles the holy thing is trampled, torn, and cut loose (Matthew 7:6).

At the same time, the Jewish candidate was told "of the reward granted" to those who keep the commandments. In the same manner, interspersed throughout the Sermon on the Mount, great rewards are promised to the faithful (Matthew 5:2–12; 6:4, 6; 7:25).

Finally, the Rabbis concluded by making it clear "that the world to come was made only for the righteous," while being careful not to persuade or dissuade too much. In a similar tone, the Sermon on the Mount states its case firmly and unequivocally but without any spirit of coercion or compulsion, concluding unambiguously that the kingdom of heaven will be open only to those who do the will of the Father who is in heaven (Matthew 7:21).

While the precise date of this Jewish ritual is uncertain, these parallels raise interesting questions about the origins of the pattern it shares with the Sermon on the Mount. Both texts yield a clear idea of the kinds of admonitions, instructions, and stipulations that likely were typical of initiation rituals in early Jewish-Christian days. In this regard, David Daube has argued expansively that early Christian catechisms followed the same five-phase structure as did the Tannaitic catechism: namely (1) testing the candidate's commitment, (2) accepting the commandments, (3) assuming a duty of charity, (4) imposing penalties, and (5) promising future rewards.[13] Daube educes evidence for each of these five elements from scattered Christian sources but pays no particular attention to the Sermon on the Mount, as well one might. In addition, Sagi and Zohar point out in their discussion of this Jewish ritual that "the concept of conversion as a [legally literal] physical rebirth into the Jewish kinship" is more constitutive of conversion than simply of a theological change in one's belief-system.[14] As a convert, the newly constituted Jew has a new father and new kinship structure. Not dissimilarly, Jesus positioned his disciples to address God as Abba, Father (Matthew 6:9), and he

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[13] David Daube, "A Baptismal Catechism," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1956), pp. 106–40, reprinted in *New Testament Judaism*, vol. 2 in the Collected Works of David Daube (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 501–28.

[14] Sagi and Zohar, "The Halakhic Ritual of Giyyur and Its Symbolic Meaning," p. 8.

assured them that this Father will not turn away any of his sons who ask good gifts of him (Matthew 7:11).

Although, unfortunately, little is known about ancient religious rituals, they were very important in most ancient societies. Comparisons between the Sermon on the Mount and the eminent Eleusinian mysteries may prove instructive. The Greek mysteries featured four stages, namely of (1) purification, (2) initiatory rites and sacrifices (compare Matthew 5:3–16, 23–4), (3) a prior or lower induction (compare Matthew 5:13–48), and (4) a finishing or higher induction (compare Matthew 6:1–34), that culminated by admitting the initiate into the divine presence (compare Matthew 7:7, 13–14, 23).[15] It was forbidden to speak about these things, except to initiates alone.[16]

Moreover, becoming a member of utopian societies, such as those led by Pythagoras, the Essene Teacher of Righteousness, Pachomius, Proclus, and others, involved similar types of instruction and initiation into their regimes of rigorous religious and esoteric lifestyles.[17] To become a Pythagorean, initiates had to divest themselves of property, swear oaths, and be instructed, tested, and purified. Pythagorean rites of initiation were called *teletai*;[18] initiates who were admitted became Esoterics who could pass through a temple veil, where they heard and saw Pythagoras.[19] Initiates were forbidden to speak of these sacred things lightly, if at all.[20] Likewise at Qumran, by saying "Amen, amen," Essenes became full members of the community there by freely and solemnly covenanting to keep God's commandments and to dedicate all their property to the community in the Lord's perfect ways.[21] If it was typical for close-knit religious groups in the ancient Mediterranean to be formed by inducting initiates into the sacred teachings and revealed practices of their inspired founder through ceremonial texts and rituals that were closely tied to or imitated temples, it would have been perfectly natural

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[15] See G. Bornkamm, "*mysterion*," *TDNT*, vol. 4, pp. 803–8; Bollington Foundation, *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks* (Princeton, 1955).

[16] *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, line 479; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5.49.5.

[17] See generally Brent J. Schmidt, "Utopia and Community in the Ancient World" (PhD dissertation, University of Colorado, 2008), directed by Noel Lenski; see pp. 52–70. I am grateful to Brent for his service as a research assistant on this topic and many other subjects I have addressed in this book.

[18] Plato, *Republic*, 363C and 364E.

[19] Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica Liber*, 18.89. Brent Schmidt, pp. 38–40, and others argue that this Hellenistic work may draw on the historian Timaios (350–260 BCE) and may reflect Mediterranean ritual practices close to New Testament times.

[20] Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica Liber*, 23.103–5.

[21] 1QS 1:11–20; 5:2–3, 7–11. For punishments imposed on those who did not keep their covenants, see 1QS 7:5–18.

for Christians to have done something similar,[22] and the Sermon on the Mount would appear to be an ideal text for such purposes.

Of course, one must not jump from comparison to equation, for no doubt Christians, Eleusinians, Pythagoreans, and Essenes would have seen many essential differences between their respective cults, but to outsiders some similarities may well have seemed striking. Nevertheless, the approach suggested here may help to close the ideological schism that has long divided Catholic and Protestant approaches in comparing Christian ritual with the religions of late antiquity. As Jonathan Z. Smith articulates, Christians have divided over seeing their early rituals either as operational sacraments or as instructional dogmatics.[23] In reality, the bridge forged through the Sermon on the Mount shows that it may have been both.

The Sermon on the Mount and Ritual Theory

Seeing the Sermon on the Mount in a ritualistic setting invites further questions about its similarities to ritual functions in general, as have been defined by ritual theory. Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount functions in all of the ways that rituals typically function. Various cultic rituals and ceremonial systems align religious adherents with the religion's understanding of the cosmic order; they serve as markers to distinguish members of the group from others; and they foster group loyalty, enshrine basic tenets, and commemorate foundational events, such as the creation of the world or the inception of the law. The recitation of the Sermon on the Mount would have served similar purposes.

Victor Turner was among the first to conduct a social scientific analysis of religious rites, classifying them functionally under two headings: rituals and ceremonies. By *ritual* Turner meant any "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers."[24] Rituals (such as Christian baptisms) are transformational:

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[22] See Marvin W. Meyer (ed.), *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook* (San Francisco, 1987), including chapter 8, "The Mysteries within Judaism and Christianity," which begins with the statement, "During the time of the Roman Empire, several Jewish religious traditions, and especially early Christianity, showed remarkable similarities to the mystery religions." See also, Meyer, "Mystery Religions," *ABD*, vol. 4, pp. 941–5.

[23] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago, 1990).

[24] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York, 1967), p. 19. Turner's pioneering efforts have long since been refined and expanded beyond the domain of religion. See, for example, Robert Wuthnow, *Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 97–123, discussing ritual and moral order in terms of symbolic expressivity, human interaction, motives, embellishment, and social contexts.

they may occur on any day and at any time, are primarily oriented toward the future, are presided over by professionals, and transform a person from one status to another. *Ceremonies* (such as the observance of Passover or the sacrament of the Lord's Supper) are reenactments: they usually occur at regular times, celebrate or memorialize momentous past events, are conducted by many kinds of officials, and serve principally to reconfirm the status and role of people in the religion.[25] Both of Turner's concepts may apply to the Sermon on the Mount. The first time a listener, whether in Galilee, Greece, or Rome, heard a recitation of the Sermon on the Mount, it may well have been a generative, transformative, ritual experience for that person. On other occasions, such as rehearsing the Sermon on the Mount to remind people of things that they had originally come to know "in the context of liturgical initiation,"[26] this text may well also have been used ceremonially.

One of the first tasks undertaken by ritual studies was to identify criteria by which one might recognize ritual or ceremonial texts. Since the original genre of many ancient texts remains obscure, the question often arose, "Is there a ritual in this text?" Endeavors to answer this question anthropologically and literarily soon spilled over into biblical studies, with the Psalms being a particularly fertile field for the detection of liturgical vestiges.[27] In 1994, an entire issue of *Semeia*, a prestigious journal dedicated to experimental biblical criticism, was devoted to detecting ritual texts in the New Testament. Notably, K.C. Hanson's contribution to that volume focused attention on the Sermon on the Mount in terms of ritual transformation.[28] More recently, Richard DeMaris, one of the leading biblical scholars in the study of ancient rituals, speaks with justifiable enthusiasm of the "recent blossoming of the field" of ritual studies pertinent to the New Testament,[29] citing many fruitful works, especially the methodologically rigorous work of Christian Strecker, who postulated that, among other criteria, a text may be said to have a ritual function if it stemmed directly from ritual use (as with the Lord's Prayer), was intended to be read aloud, or was connected "synecdochically with a

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[25] K.C. Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain: Ritual Analysis and the Gospel of Matthew," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 152–4; Mark McVann, "Reading Mark Ritually: Honor-Shame and the Ritual of Baptism," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 180; and Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 95.

[26] Hanz Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Laurence Welborn (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 28.

[27] See, for example, Dirk J. Human, "Psalm 136: A Liturgy with Reference to Creation and History," 73–88; Stephanus D. Snyman, "Psalm 32—Structure, Genre, Intent and Liturgical Use," in Human and Vos (eds), *Psalms and Liturgy*, pp. 155–67; and Hans Ulrich Steymans, "Traces of Liturgies in the Psalter: The Communal Laments, Psalms 79, 80, 83, 89 in Context," in Human and Vos (eds), *Psalms and Liturgy*, pp. 168–234.

[28] Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain," pp. 147–70.

[29] Richard E. DeMaris, *The New Testament in Its Ritual World* (London, 2008), p. 5, elegantly and compellingly shows that a ritual logic was at work in the framing of 1 Corinthians.

rite," that is if it echoes or alludes to a rite "even though the text may not be about ritual per se."[30]

From these religious ritual studies, ten significant functions can be extracted as significant indicators that a ritual or ceremony in some way stands behind a given text.[31] All of these ten characteristics can be plainly discerned in the Sermon on the Mount:

1. *Transformation from one religious status to another.* Standard theory sees rituals as conducting initiates through three phases, typically involving (1) a separation from the old society, (2) an isolation in a marginal or liminal, amorphous state, and (3) a reaggregation into a new social set.[32] It was K.C. Hanson who successfully applied this three-stage ritual analysis to the Sermon on the Mount.[33] Thus (phase 1), "in ritual terms, [Jesus] left the general population and gathered his disciples for instruction."[34] They are strongly separated from other people, being told not to understand the law in the same way as others and not to act as Pharisees or hypocrites. The initiates then (phase 2) find themselves in a liminal state, all equally estranged from their previous group affiliations and "divested of their previous habits of thought, feeling, and action," thinking about "the powers that generate and sustain them."[35] Finally (phase 3), through adherence to "keeping secret the nature of the sacra," which is "the crux of liminality,"[36] the Sermon results in "the group's initiation into Jesus' teaching. . . . The master-teacher has guided the initiands into a new status."[37] Hanson argues that all five mountain experiences in the gospel of Matthew are transformational in nature and

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30 DeMaris, *The New Testament in Its Ritual World*, p. 6, summarizing the six ways in which rites and texts may be interwoven as identified by Christian Strecker, *Die liminale Theologie des Paulus: Zugänge zur paulinischen Theologie aus kulturanthropologischer Perspective*, FRLANT 185 (Göttingen, 1999), pp. 78–80.

31 See generally, Tom F. Driver, *The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites That Transform Our Lives and Our Communities* (San Francisco, 1991), p. 71.

32 Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 94, following the theories of Van Gennep. See also Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain," pp. 153–75; McVann, "Rituals of Status Transformation," pp. 335–41.

33 Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain," pp. 154–61. Kari Syreeni, "Methodology and Compositional Analysis," pt. 1 of *The Making of the Sermon on the Mount: A Procedural Analysis of Matthew's Redactoral Activity* (Helsinki, 1987), p. 217, anticipated this structural analysis. Philip F. Esler, "Mountaineering in Matthew: A Response to K.C. Hanson," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 171–7, is critical of Hanson's efforts elsewhere in Matthew but finds that "the Sermon on the Mount is a little more promising for Hanson's view" (Esler, "Mountaineering in Matthew," p. 173).

34 Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain," 160.

35 Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 105.

36 Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 103; italics in original.

37 Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain," pp. 160–61.

were "meant to be replicable experiences within the community on the path of discipleship."[38]

2. *Successfully crossing boundaries*. The Sermon on the Mount directs people in the difficult process of crossing ethical boundaries, in turning one's world upside down. Barbara Babcock notes the effective role of rites in inverting an existing social or religious order, thereby introducing a new society, order, or cosmos, even as it sets the old aside.[39] One of the most obvious characteristics of the Sermon on the Mount is its inversion of old ways into new. What one had previously heard in old times is now said in a new way: enemies become beloved; valuables become worthless; deeds done in secret will be rewarded in the open; and flawed mortals become perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect.

3. *Setting forth a social order*. Another common function served by most religious rites is to give order to a community's way of life: "Societies employ rituals that express their guiding ideas . . . by dramatizing [their] world view and way of life."[40] Early ritual studies observed how "ritual presents or dramatizes in symbolic form a society's worldview and ethos."[41] In many ways, the Sermon on the Mount sets forth the community's way of life by clearly expressing the guiding ideals of Christian discipleship: being exemplary, considerate, chaste, honest, loving, generous, prayerful, forgiving, dedicated, faithful, uncritical, and doing good, to name a few.

4. *Linking the individual with the cosmos*. Rituals tie the particular to the general and the real to the ideal by turning ordinary experiences into universal symbols. Jonathan Z. Smith rightly observes that "ritual relies for its power on the fact that it is concerned with quite ordinary activities,"[42] such as eating bread, drinking wine, or being washed. Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount imbues the ordinary occurrences of daily life with sacred import, inexhaustibly drawing profound religious principles out of ordinary mundane elements. Its repertoire ranges from salt, light, cheeks, and coats, to lilies, thistles, fish, and bread.

5. *Sacred setting*. In ritual or ceremony, Jonathan Smith continues, the ordinary "becomes significant, becomes sacred, simply by being there," being in a sacred place, a place of clarification, where "it becomes sacred by having our attention directed to it in a special way."[43] Functioning as a focusing lens, ritual or ceremony, when performed at a temple or in some other sacred space, presents "the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are in such a way that

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[38] Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain," p. 147.

[39] Barbara Babcock (ed.), *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (Ithaca, New York, 1998). I am grateful to Richard DeMaris for this reference.

[40] Bobby C. Alexander, "An Afterword on Ritual in Biblical Studies," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 210–11.

[41] Alexander, "Afterword on Ritual in Biblical Studies," p. 210.

[42] Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," *History of Religions* 20 (1980): 125.

[43] Smith, "Bare Facts of Ritual," p. 115.

this ritualized perfection is recollected in the ordinary, uncontrolled, course of things."[44] In the Sermon on the Mount, the ordinary events of daily existence, such as handling conflicts, helping someone in need, or building a house, take on new meaning as they become constitutive elements of a higher order of life.

6. *Performative force*. Social scientific observers are interested not only in what rituals and ceremonies do, but how they do it. For example, ritual silence heightens the ability of participants to hear these clarifying messages. Temples and rituals in general function best when "as in all forms of communication, static and noise (i.e., the accidental) are decreased so that the exchange of information can be increased."[45] Accordingly, people are admonished in the Sermon on the Mount to give their alms in secret and to go into their secluded closets to pray.

7. *Interpersonal experiences*. By nature, rites and ceremonies are interpersonal. They typically foster fellowship and community bonds. A salient purpose of ritual is "to create social cohesion."[46] Unquestionably, the Sermon also serves this purpose. It prohibits anger against other members of the community, requires members of the group to settle their differences quickly, demands kindness and generosity, encourages honesty and forgiveness, and restrains judging others. The Golden Rule is widely recognized as the ultimate touchstone of social cohesion.

8. *Empowerment*. Rituals and ceremonies are seen as unleashing spiritual power by drawing on "the generating source of culture and structure."[47] They provide structure and control to the social order, making important public statements "about the hierarchical relations between people."[48] Thus, Clifford Geertz and Carol LaHurd have concluded that rituals are "'models *of* what people believe' and . . . 'models *for* the believing of it.'"[49] In this light, the Sermon on the Mount sets social structures, group boundaries, and communitarian models. It provides fundamental community rules for interpreting law and order, for increasing spousal fidelity, for serving God, and rejecting false leaders. It sets boundaries by criticizing those who love only their friends or who parade to be seen in public. It

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44 Smith, "Bare Facts of Ritual," p. 125.

45 Smith, "Bare Facts of Ritual," p. 114.

46 Alexander, "Afterword on Ritual in Biblical Studies," p. 210; see also Francis Schmidt, *How the Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism* (Sheffield, 2001).

47 Driver, *Magic of Ritual*, p. 189, quoting Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York, 1986), p. 158.

48 Esther Goody, "'Greeting', 'Begging', and the Presentation of Respect," in J.S. La Fontaine (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A.I. Richards* (London, 1972), p. 39.

49 Carol Schersten LaHurd, "Exactly What's Ritual about the Experience of Reading/ Hearing Mark's Gospel," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 204–5, quoting Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in William Lessa and Evon Vogt (eds), *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach* (New York, 1965).

also provides prototypes for believing in God, going the extra mile, and giving to those who ask for help.

9. *Restoring order*. Ritual is also a system of "redressing social crisis and restoring order" after disruption.[50] Quelling the unsettling effects of change, the stability afforded by ritual rejuvenates community values and institutions. This ritual function is detectable in the Sermon's optimistic promises of God's blessings and in its reassurance that Jesus did not come to destroy but to fulfill the law. The teachings of Jesus were certainly unsettling to many people. He was controversial in his own lifetime, and his followers were condemned as blasphemers by the dominant culture (Acts 6:13). In the face of these monumental crises, the reassurances given by the Sermon undoubtedly stabilized the lives of the early followers of Jesus, especially when they assented to the prospects offered by this text in sacred, ritual settings.

10. *Celebration*. Finally, ritual and ceremony celebrate important events of the past. By reenacting a giving of the law of Sinaitic proportions, and by reembracing the essence of that law, the Sermon on the Mount in its own way fully celebrates the formation of a covenant relationship between God and Israel. Ritually rereading these words of Jesus, Christians also remembered and celebrated the Lord's giving of the new law.

In all these respects, the Sermon on the Mount operates in ways that are generally recognized by social-scientific theory as being typical of the functions of texts that are interwoven with ritual.

Imagining the Sermon on the Mount as a Ritual Experience

One final step remains in seeing a ritual unity in the Sermon on the Mount, and it pertains to the fact that all rituals must be performable. Ritual studies invite modern scholars to imagine how rituals work in actual performance. In trying to reconstruct ancient rites and ceremonies from surviving textual clues, students of ritual must dare to "engage in the rituals described or implied in the text through imaginative participation," as Gorman and Alexander have encouraged.[51] The following excursus attempts just such a venture.

With rare exception, biblical scholars have paid little attention to ritual, perhaps because they often view "the [human] body with suspicion" in contrast to "the spirit as the reservoir of truth."[52] The Sermon on the Mount, however, manifests no such aversion to the body. This text is filled with references to hungering, eating,

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[50] Alexander, "Afterword on Ritual," p. 211.

[51] Alexander, "Afterword on Ritual," pp. 221–2, alluding to Frank H. Gorman Jr, "Ritual Studies and Biblical Studies: Assessment of the Past, Prospects for the Future," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 24–5. For such an attempt to reconstruct the ritual activity standing behind the Gospel of Philip, see DeConick, "Entering God's Presence," pp. 483–523.

[52] Gorman, "Ritual Studies and Biblical Studies," p. 25.

seeing, washing, dressing, mourning, and many parts of the body (hair, cheeks, eyes), again inviting the mind of the reader to roam into a world of "gestural construal, a world enacted, a world bodied forth."[53]

Social scientific examinations of rituals across numerous cultures have identified certain elements commonly found in ancient rituals. No single rite or ceremony incorporates every possible performative element that has been identified with ritual, but many rituals and ceremonies include performances such as (a) purifications, (b) symbolic journeys, (c) inspired lectures on future behavior, (d) initiations, (e) the giving of secrets or expositions of holy objects, and (f) investiture or crowning. The Sermon on the Mount contains or alludes to many of these: (a) purification ("the pure in heart," Matthew 5:8), (b) journeys or paths of life ("the way is hard, that leads to life," Matthew 7:14), (c) instructions on future behavior, persecution, forgiveness, and serving God, (d) step by step progressions toward becoming perfect, (e) the imparting of a holy thing ("do not give your holy thing to the dogs," Matthew 7:6), and (f) an investiture ("even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these," Matthew 6:29).

Initiatory rituals from the Second Temple period are scarce, but the few that are known from rabbinic Judaism, the Essenes, and the followers of John the Baptist all involve some form of washing with water and demand certain behavior, such as "giving up property, professing belief, taking oaths, or leading righteous lives."[54] The Sermon on the Mount also expects or requires washing and the relinquishment of property (see Matthew 6:17 and 19).

Equipped with the foregoing, one may begin to imagine an array of actions that could have potentially accompanied ritual uses or ceremonial recitations of the Sermon on the Mount.[55] Imagine even a few of the following actions as possibilities:

- The singing of pertinent psalms at certain points in the ritual
- Accompanying the initial makarisms with hand gestures of blessing
- Making themselves "poor" by falling prostrate before God and beseeching blessings
- Mourning over transgressions, followed by embraces of comfort
- Receiving a new name (compare Revelation 2:17) as part of being "born" as "sons of God," name transmission being frequently found as part of rituals
- Responding with a shout of joy as do the sons of God in Job 38:7; shouting "hallelujah" in the face of impending maledictions and persecutions
- Pouring salt on the ground and dramatically trampling it underfoot

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[53] Gorman, "Ritual Studies and Biblical Studies," p. 22.

[54] Jonathan D. Lawrence, *Washing in Water: Trajectories of Ritual Bathing in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Atlanta, 2006), p. 76.

[55] In general, see Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship* (Oxford, 1994).

- Lighting lamps in a dark room and setting them on a menorah
- Reciting the Ten Commandments
- Pausing to reconcile with others in preparation for making some offering
- Accepting the main covenantal requirements presented in the Sermon on the Mount by uttering the words "yes, yes" or "no, no"
- Slapping an initiate on one cheek (as in the humiliation of the king in the ancient Akitu year rite festival), and having the initiate then turn the other cheek
- Asking an initiate to surrender a tunic and, in response, having him give not only his undergarment but also his outer garment, thus becoming stripped of all worldly things
- Receiving a more glorious garment later as the rite progressed
- Offering a prayer of blessing for enemies and opponents
- Anonymously collecting alms or offerings
- Allowing some time for private meditation and secret prayer
- Reciting a collective prayer (one recalls that the Lord's Prayer immediately became part of early Christian liturgy)
- Having come fasting, the participants are washed with water and anointed with oil
- Making vows to consecrate or treasure up property to the Lord
- Marking the initiates as slaves who belong completely to the true Master
- Standing before a judge and confessing one's sins (thereby removing a beam from one's own eye)
- Tearing to pieces and throwing out something that represents the initiate, dramatizing the punishment of those who inappropriately talk about the sancta
- Making a threefold petition (knocking, asking, and seeking) requesting admission into the presence of deity
- Eating food and drink, fish and bread, figs and grapes, in a sacral meal
- Passing, one by one, through a narrow opening into the symbolic presence of God, and being there received and recognized by God.

Many other ceremonial actions are easily imaginable. Any attempt to reconstruct such ritual actions is admittedly conjectural, for the details of any such ceremony would have become lost with the deaths of any such early Christian initiates and remains unknown to us. But one may well wonder if even a few such gestures or actions might actually have been employed, since virtually every element in the Sermon on the Mount lends itself easily to possible ritual presentation.

Far less conjectural, however, are the general patterns and purposes that investigators have discerned in ceremonies and ritual dramas across all cultures. The phenomena laid out above support the basic suggestion that the Sermon functions exquisitely well in a temple or ceremonial context. Because the Temple—any

temple—is nothing if not ritualistic, the consistent appearance of temple themes throughout the overall, unifying program of the Sermon on the Mount raises the possibility that this text could have been originally repeated or deployed in some ritualistic manner. Just as ritual provides social order to one's way of life, ritual analysis can strengthen further the long-sought sense of underlying, unifying order within the Sermon on the Mount itself.

Unity in Ascent

Finally, temple themes provide an ultimate unity to the Sermon on the Mount by allowing readers to see it as an ascent text. More than ethical wisdom literature and more than a text centrally structured on a midpoint,[56] this text begins by placing its hearers in a lowly state and then, step by step, guides them to its climax at the end, entering the presence of God.

Texts and rituals of ascent were common enough throughout the ancient world, from Enoch's ascent into the tenth heaven, to Paul's or Isaiah's being taken up into the seventh heaven.[57] Roots of the heavenly ascent motif reach deeply into Akkadian mythology, Egyptian funerary texts, Greek processions and magical papyri, initiations into the mystery religions, and Gnostic literature.[58] Whether the architectural features and the progressive rituals of the temple were patterned after this basic spiritual yearning, or the cosmic journeys and the esoteric experiences described in these texts assumed the temple as the stage on which these events were orchestrated, texts of ascent are deeply intertwined with the Temple.

Augustine's insight that the Beatitudes chart the stages of ascent for the soul[59] can and should be extended to the entire Sermon on the Mount. John Climacus' *Ladder of Divine Ascent* similarly guides the monk's life up thirty steps, from humbly renouncing life (step 1), mourning for sin (step 7), being meek and not angry (step 8), not judging (step 10), being totally honest (step 12), living a life of complete chastity, including no sexual thoughts (step 14), conquering avarice, not having money as an idol (step 16), seeing poverty as a life without anxiety (step 17), shunning vainglory and being seen of men (step 22), praying devoutly (step 28), to being perfectly united with God in faith, hope, charity (step 30). Quite a number of these thirty steps correlate with the themes and instructions of the Sermon on the

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56 Discussed in chapter 1, see notes 23, 37–42.

57 For example, in 1 Enoch, 2 Corinthians 12:1–4; Ascension of Isaiah. See, for example, Margaret Barker, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp. 18–21, 64–7; *The Gate of Heaven* (London, 1991), pp. 150–71.

58 James D. Tabor, "Heaven, Ascent to," *ABD*, vol. 3, pp. 91–4, citing a host of leading sources.

59 Discussed in chapter 3, see note 90.

Mount. Interestingly, John Climacus draws rarely on the Sermon on the Mount, but he turns extensively and explicitly to the Psalms for authority and inspiration.[60]

Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount builds step by step, through its twenty-five stages in an overall crescendo. Its progression is understandable, each point leading to the next. The commission to being a light to the world brings up a warning about false teachers, which raises the question of what to teach, beginning with an explanation of the Ten Commandments, including the need for men to reconcile with each other and how to behave toward women. That leads to the need for honesty and keeping one's word, and not only doing what one promises, but then some. However, these actions should be done inconspicuously, and prayer and fasting also should be done in secret, to pray especially for forgiveness, and so on. Tightly stitched together, this sequence culminates in the final divine destination.

Individual thematic escalations accentuate the overall path of ascent in the Sermon on the Mount, as concepts take on new dimensions of elevated religious and moral importance over the course of the Sermon. Often these steps build from an initial concern about one's obligations toward others (mainly in part 1, in Matthew 5), to a second concern about personal and secret virtues (mainly in part 2, in Matthew 6), and finally culminating in qualities related to God and his holiness (mainly in part 3, in chapter 7). This pattern involves others, the self, and God.

For example, the focal theme of the Kingdom of Heaven arises several times in the Sermon on the Mount. After the promises in the Beatitudes that the righteous will obtain the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:3, 10), the initial concern is about those who might teach other people to break even the least of the commandments of God; such teachers will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:19). The next mention of the kingdom comes in the Lord's Prayer, where members of the righteous community submit their individual wills to God's will (Matthew 6:10). This expression of personal commitment is reinforced a few sections later with the admonition to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), making it not just one of their committed objectives but now the supreme goal of their existence. Finally, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, those who do the will of the Father are told that they will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 7:21). The progression here is from community instruction, to complete individual commitment, to doing God's will and entering into the divine presence.

Similarly, prayer is featured three times in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:44, people are told to pray for other people, particularly their enemies, having love for their neighbors and doing good to all. Second, in the Lord's Prayer, people are now to pray for themselves, seeking forgiveness of their own transgressions (Matthew 6:12). Finally, in Matthew 7:11, prayers seek gifts from the Father in

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[60] John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (London, 1982). This edition identifies 179 passages of scripture quoted from throughout the Bible, 96 of which (54%) come from the Psalms.

Heaven. In particular, those who ask and knock and enter in at the strait gate are promised that the divine presence will be opened to them.

The same pattern of intensification surfaces in the admonitions about generosity. In the first instance, people are told to give generously to others if they ask for clothing or assistance (Matthew 5:40–41). The obligation to give arises if someone asks. In Matthew 6:3, however, the obligation to give becomes an affirmative obligation of the righteous to give of their own accord and in secret for their own eternal benefit. Anonymous charity purifies the soul and allows for open rewards in heaven. Finally, in the culmination of the Sermon on the Mount, the person has reached the stage of being able to give good gifts in a divine fashion, doing all things unto others that one would have them do to him (Matthew 7:12).

Punishments are mentioned three times in the Sermon on the Mount. First, the salt that is cast out is trodden underfoot by men because it has become useless to other people (Matthew 5:13). Second, when a person jeopardizes his own eternal well-being, it becomes better for him to cut off his own hand than to lose his entire soul (Matthew 5:30). Third, those who cast the holy thing before swine will find themselves torn and trampled by instruments of divine punishment (Matthew 7:6). Just as the offences here are against others, oneself, and God, the punishments are inflicted by men, oneself, and divine agents respectively.

Similarly, the law of talion progresses through three stages. Socially, one is instructed not to return to others eye for eye, or evil for evil, but good for evil (Matthew 5:44). Personally, this virtue turns inward as one must be forgiving in order to be forgiven (Matthew 6:14). Finally, in relationship to God and his divine judgment, the principle of talion emerges as the fundamental concept of divine justice by which all people will be judged according to the same measure by which they have measured (Matthew 7:2).

Other themes intensify as the Sermon on the Mount builds in a crescendo to its final culmination. Concerns about food move from a petition for daily bread (Matthew 6:11), to an awareness that life is more than food and drink (Matthew 6:25), to a personal delivery of bread and fish from the Father himself (Matthew 7:9–11). Reconciling with brothers at the outset (Matthew 5:24) eventually leads to being able to help the brother by removing a flaw in his eye, but only after one has removed the greater flaws from one's own eye (Matthew 7:4–5), allowing one to see clearly and judge properly, even as will the Lord.

In this progression, one encounters the two great commandments, "thou shalt love [1] thy neighbor as [2] thyself," and "[3] the Lord with all thy heart." In the experience of this ascent, the fundamental unity of this text is found. Its pieces work together, and belong together. Progressively, there comes fulfillment, perfection, and completion as the culminating goal of the Sermon on the Mount is reached.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Further Implications

The power of any theory lies in its ability to explain things that are otherwise opaque or unclear. Reading the Sermon on the Mount as a text that was integrally linked to temple vocabulary, temple authority, temple ritual, religious initiation and group identity formation explains many things about the unity, the meaning, the reception, and the durable memory of this seminal text.

Every culture, it would appear, has its coded figures of speech, the meanings of which are perfectly transparent to people within that culture. As seen throughout this book, sufficient evidence has been found to advance the claim that temple materials comprised a strong element in the Sermon on the Mount. This realization sheds essential light on what the Sermon would have originally meant and how it would have been initially heard by people steeped in the words and images of Jewish culture in the first century. Although each point in this rhetorical ensemble is not equally strong, the cumulative effect of the evidence is clear enough. Jesus' words struck one familiar chord after another. Not only would those chords have resonated with the general ethos of pious Jews in that day, they would also have struck at the very heart of the main religious institution of the Jewish world, namely the Temple, which cast a long and influential shadow over all its surrounding landscapes.

Seeing the Sermon on the Mount in a temple setting gives new appreciation to its place in the structure of the gospel of Matthew. W.D. Davies and others have perceptively seen Jesus as a new Moses, and they have made a strong case that this is a leading paradigm in Matthew's gospel, but to this insight can now be added connections in the Sermon on the Mount with Moses's instructions concerning the building of the Tabernacle, the prototype of the Temple. The new Moses was not only a new lawgiver but also a new temple founder.

In the Talmud, as was pointed out above, God was said to pass through ten stages in taking his leave from the Temple.[1] In the gospel of Matthew, the direction of those ten stages is reversed. Instead of moving from the Holy of Holies out into the wilderness as in the Talmud, here God and his people are presented as moving in the opposite direction, entering the Temple. Beginning (10) in the wilderness with John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1), Matthew's account moves with Jesus (9) up onto a place of temptation (Matthew 4:1), (8) to the holy city of Jerusalem (Matthew 4:5), and (7) onto the highest point on the wall of the Temple (Matthew 4:5), and then ascends (6) to a high mountain (cf. the roof of the Temple) which

[1] TB, Rosh Hashanah 31a, discussed in text accompanying note 23 in chapter 3 above.

overlooks the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8); at that point the devil must depart, and angelic beings (cf. true temple personnel) come as ministrants (Matthew 4:11); this allows one to satisfy the entrance requirements (Matthew 5:2–12) and go (5) into the court of the priests (with the Decalogue and altar; Matthew 5:13–47), subsequently (4) into the great hall (with alms, prayer, forgiveness, fasting, washing and anointing; Matthew 5:48–6:24), and ultimately (3) through a narrow gate (Matthew 7:14), to pass (2) the judgment of those guarding the holy place, and to enter (1) into the holy presence (Matthew 6:25–7:23).

This scenario may help to explain Matthew's main message as the coming of God to his people and why the Temple figures so prominently in this gospel. In contrast to the gospel of Mark, in which the Temple first appears after the triumphal entry, the Temple is present in Matthew from the outset.[2] As Daniel Gurtner has recognized, the reference to the altar in Matthew 5:23–24 avers that "'participation in the sacrificial system,' far from being replaced or mooted, is 'presupposed.'"[3] It is true that the parable of the wise man who built his house on the rock may pave the way for Jesus' recognition of Peter's conversion in Matthew 16; but earlier, just as David was appointed to build a house as Yahweh's perpetual dwelling place, and just as God will establish David's throne forever, the gates of hell shall not prevail against anyone who builds his house on the rock of God's temple. Next, Matthew locates Jesus' healing in the Temple, "not violating the Law by acknowledging these outcasts in the Temple, but upholding it. . . . He heals their disabilities 'so that they may then enter.'"[4] So many times, Matthew shows Jesus speaking or acting in the Temple, encouraging payment of the temple tax (Matthew 17:24–27), driving out the money changers (21:12–13), teaching openly (21:23; 26:55), reasoning with Jewish leaders, answering questions, giving parables, and cursing the Pharisees (21:23–23:39), and lamenting the Temple's coming destruction (24:1–2). Matthew, a Levite, apparently felt "no need to attack the Jerusalem Temple, nor did he. Rather did he assume its propriety, that is, its foundation in the Torah, and its one-time sanctity."[5] Matthew is concerned only "to portray the Temple as being misused by those in charge of it."[6] Matthew's positive affinity to the Temple is only strengthened by the many temple elements in the Sermon on the Mount, which more than accounts for Matthew's use of this text near the beginning of his gospel, in which temple themes are thinly veiled. In reemploying temple themes and expressions, and not writing an entirely new song,

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[2] Daniel M. Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple and the 'Parting of the Ways,'" in Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (eds), *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007), p. 138.

[3] Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple," p. 133.

[4] Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple," p. 139.

[5] Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple," p. 152, quoting W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (Edinburgh, 1988), vol. 3, p. 143.

[6] Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple," p. 143.

the Sermon on the Mount transposes the meaning of the Temple into another key, as a musician might transpose a famous melody so as to begin with another pitch, or as a composer might write new variations on a familiar tune.[7]

Seeing its temple character also reinforces the view that the Sermon on the Mount should be thought of as a pre-Matthean source,[8] written at an early time when Jesus and his followers were still hoping for a restoration, reform, and rejuvenation of the Temple, not its destruction or obsolescence. In looking for the Temple to be a house of prayer, Jesus affirmed the "legitimacy of its function" and desired "to see that function restored."[9] A previous, solemn ritual use of the Sermon on the Mount among the early disciples would help to explain its respectful presentation by Matthew as a single block of text, strengthening several conclusions advanced by Betz and others that the Sermon on the Mount is in some ways un-Matthean and in most ways pre-Matthean,[10] and in no case inconsistent with the characteristics of the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus.[11] This understanding of the Sermon on the Mount would also explain why "the parting of the ways" between Christians and other varieties of Jews in the first century turned out to be a longer and more complicated process than one might otherwise have expected.[12] A simple rejection of the Temple would have resulted in a much less problematical separation.

If Jesus regularly used the Sermon on the Mount (or something like it) in instructing initiates and guiding them through the stages of induction into the full

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[7] Joshua L. Moss, "Being the Temple: Early Jewish and Christian Interpretive Transpositions," in Lieve M. Teugels and Lumer Rivka (eds), *Midrash and Context* (Piscataway, N.J., 2007), pp. 39–59.

[8] Certain passages in the Sermon on the Mount may well postdate Jesus' lifetime, such as those that reflect anti-Pauline sentiments. However, these may be later additions.

[9] Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple," p. 138.

[10] Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. L. Welborn (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 1–15, 55–76; and Hans Dieter Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis, 1995), pp. 70–80. Alfred M. Perry, "The Framework of the Sermon on the Mount," *JBL* 54 (1935): 103–15, similarly finds evidence that Matthew worked from a written source that he regarded "so highly that he used it for the foundation of his longer Sermon, even in preference to the Q discourse" (quote on 115). On the conjectured existence of other pre-Matthean sources, see Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, trans. O.C. Dean Jr (Nashville, 1988), pp. 55–6, 63, 67–8, 72.

[11] Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York, 1971), pp. 29–37; see John Strugnell, "'Amen, I Say unto You' in the Sayings of Jesus and in Early Christian Literature," *HTR* 67/2 (1974): 177–82. The Sermon speaks in parables, proclaims the kingdom, and uses cryptic sayings, amen, and Abba.

[12] Showing that the separation of Christianity from Judaism was a slow and complex process, with the Temple being the key issue that distinguished the various Jewish sects and movements, see Richard Bauckham, "The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why," *ST* 47 (1993): 135–51.

ranks of discipleship, this would explain why bits and pieces of this text appear elsewhere in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, as well as in the letters of James and Paul. It is often assumed that Jesus said something once and only once, or that he always said it in the same way. This assumption lies implicitly behind the quest to ascertain the "original form" of the Beatitudes or of the Lord's Prayer. But if Jesus blessed his disciples using the words of the Beatitudes on many occasions, and if he used the text of the Sermon on the Mount ritualistically, two different performances of that text could both be original sayings. Rituals and ceremonies do not need to be reiterated identically each time they are reproduced in order to be authoritative or effective. Moreover, a ritual reading of the Sermon on the Mount would explain its apparent fragmentary composition. Rituals, like all dramas, are performed stage by stage. They also can be easily quoted, section by section or line by line, as discrete elements outside of their overall context.

Thus, for example, the complex relationships between the Sermon on the Mount and Luke's so-called Sermon on the Plain and the other gospels become more understandable. For example, many assume that the sayings of Jesus started out short and simple and that they grew in complexity as they were collected, grouped, and handed down in folklore and tradition until his followers canonized them. Hence, Jeremias reasons: "The Sermon on the Plain [in Luke 6] is very much shorter than that on the mount, and from this we must conclude that in the Lucan Sermon on the Plain we have an earlier form of the Sermon on the Mount."[13] This view receives some support from the fact that pithy sayings of Jesus were collected elsewhere by Matthew into single chapters (as in the Parable Sermon of Matthew 13), and thus one infers that the same thing occurred with the Sermon on the Mount.[14] But this inference is not compelling. What may have happened in the case of Matthew 13 need not have happened for Matthew 5–7. Moreover, movements as dynamic as early Christianity do not characteristically begin with a sputtering start. Great religious and philosophical movements typically begin with the monumental appearance of a figure who enthralls the spirits of his followers and galvanizes them into dedicated action. That result does not flow from disjointed sayings and fragmented maxims. Day in and day out, Jesus spoke to his disciples and to the multitudes who flocked to see him. They came out to hear more than a string of oracular one-liners. The Sermon on the Mount projects that body of coherent wisdom and sweeping perspective. The abbreviated excerpts scattered elsewhere in the synoptic Gospels are its derivatives.

In fact, one would not expect the Sermon on the Mount to be shared in its sacred completeness in an open, popular setting, which is what one finds in Mark and in Luke's Sermon on the Plain. Table 2 shows the location of Sermon on the Mount materials in Mark and Luke.

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[13] Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 15.

[14] Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 13.

Table 2: Sermon on the Mount Materials Elsewhere in Matthew, Mark and Luke

	Matthew	Mark	Luke 6	Luke 8	Luke 11	Luke 12	Luke 13	Luke 14	Luke 16
Blessed are the poor			6:20						
Blessed are the hungry			6:21						
Blessed are the reviled			6:22–23						
Salt is good, savor		9:50						14:34–35	
Lamp under a bushel		4:21		8:16					
Not one jot									16:17
Settle quickly						12:57–59			
Cut off your hand	18:8–9	9:43–48							
Divorce	19:9	10:11–12							16:18
Turn the other cheek			6:29–30						
Love your enemies			6:27–28, 32–35						
Be perfect/merciful			6:36						
The Lord's Prayer					11:2–4				
Treasure in Heaven	19:21					12:33–34			
Eye single					11:34–36				
Mammon									16:13
Care, food, clothing	10:29					12:22–34			
On judging		4:24	6:37–38, 41–42						
Ask and be given					11:9–13				
Golden rule			6:31						
Narrow door							13:23–24		
Tree known by its fruit	12:33		6:43–44						
Lord, Lord			6:46						
Depart workers of iniquity	25:41						13:25–27		
Upon the rock			6:47–49						

On three occasions, Mark quotes lines found in the Sermon on the Mount. First, after telling the disciples in private the meaning of the parable of the sower, namely that all hearers of the word will be judged by the fruits they bring forth, Jesus told (reminded) the twelve that they too will be judged: Mark 4:21 assumes that they have been given the commission to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14) and need to take the light abroad; Mark 4:24 reiterates the disciples' obligation to be careful about which voices they hear and obey, a particular application of the general rule that "the measure you give will be the measure you get" (the same as in Matthew 7:2). Second, in Mark 9 Jesus spoke again to the twelve in private. In response to their dispute over who was greatest, Jesus told them again to receive anyone who casts out devils in his name (Mark 9:38–40) and that, on pain of being cast into hell, they should not offend anyone who so much as gives a disciple of Christ a cup of water (Mark 9:41–48). This instruction makes good sense, if one assumes that the twelve have already been told that some who perform miracles in Jesus' name will be told to depart (Matthew 7:22). These people, like children, need to grow and should not be offended. For now, they are not against God. If they come to know the Lord, they will some day enter into his presence. But before that day, "everyone," including the twelve, "will be salted with fire" (Mark 9:49), their own sacrifice salted with salt,[15] and thus they should have salt, or peace, among themselves. The key premise here in Jesus' reprimand, that they are the salt that should not lose its saltiness, remains unstated, presumably because they already know it. Third, after answering in public the question of the Pharisees about divorcing one's wife in Mark 10, Jesus again spoke to his disciples in private about this matter, explaining that the rule among them applies to husbands as well as to wives who divorce their spouse and marry another (Mark 10:11–12), which clarifies and thus may well logically presuppose the teaching on divorce in Matthew 5. In all three of these instances in Mark, the words of the Sermon on the Mount were spoken to disciples in private, consistent with the esoteric nature of these teachings. In all three cases, Jesus explained the disciples' obligations to let their light shine, to receive all who will recognize Christ, and to remain married or not to remarry. In each case, these specific applications or clarifications assume a previous commitment to the underlying obligations in general.

In Luke's Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6, Jesus spoke in public to a large, diverse audience: "a great multitude of people" had come out from all around the region, from Jewish and Greek cities, to hear Jesus (Luke 6:17). Not all in this crowd were faithful disciples, and here Jesus cursed the unruly crowd for being rich, full, haughty, and socially accepted (Luke 6:24–7), and he castigated them for not doing the things he said (Luke 6:46). Although he drew on some parts of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus limited what he said to them, presumably following the rule of not giving the holy thing to those who are unprepared to receive it.

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[15] Several manuscripts, including Alexandrinus and Bezae Cantabrigiensis, add "and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," obviously recalling a temple connection.

Seeing the Sermon on the Mount as the more sacred presentation explains those omissions in the Sermon on the Plain, which essentially follows the same order as the Sermon on the Mount but contains only the more public elements of the Sermon on the Mount.[16] Missing in Luke 6 are the elements that one would expect to be reserved for the closer circle of righteous disciples, for example the promises to see God or to be called the children of God; the commissions to be the light to the world and the salt of the earth; the demand to keep every minute provision of the law; the rule of avoiding anger against a brother; the instruction to reconcile with brothers in the community of faith before bringing sacrifices to the altar; the higher rules of covenant marriage; the making of covenants by simple oaths; the saying about becoming perfect (here the public is told just to be merciful); praying in secret; fasting, washing, and anointing; keeping the holy thing secret; and entering through the narrow gate into the presence of God.

Elsewhere in Luke, Jesus will speak to his disciples in private about more elevated topics, such as not placing their lamp under a bushel, praying, laying up treasures in heaven, receiving garments and the necessities of life from God, keeping every jot and tittle of the law, following a higher law of divorce, and serving God and not Mammon (see Table 2). In all of these cases, as in Mark, Jesus speaks these words in private. On one occasion, Jesus speaks to an unidentified person about entering in through the narrow gate (Luke 13:23–27), but here also the speaker begins by addressing Jesus as "Lord," and they speak together in confidence. Outside of the Sermon on the Plain, the only words of the Sermon on the Mount that are ever spoken in public by Jesus in the gospel of Luke are (1) the warning not to go to court against an adversary (Luke 12:58–9), which is good general advice; and (2) the warning that tasteless salt will be good for nothing (Luke 14:34–5), which lacks on this occasion the opening commission, "You are the salt of the earth."

In any event, it is highly unlikely that Jesus would have said any of these things only once.[17] Ritual studies enhance our understanding of why these sayings carried numinous power and carried such decisive authority whenever they were used. More than literary source criticism or the analysis of oral tradition or folklore, ritual studies identify these sayings in Mark and Luke as fragments of a formative ritual text, which lends them unassailable authority.

If the Sermon on the Mount was in fact used as a very early initiation ritual, this understanding will also explain why its various elements were quoted so often in the earliest Christian writings. Christian authors could assume that their faithful readers would recognize the original, foundational context of these sayings. Thus, verbal and conceptual similarities between the Sermon on the Mount and the epistle

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[16] Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 372. Similarly, when Jesus repeated in Matthew 18:8–9 the point that it would be better to lose a hand or an eye than one's entire body, only the disciples were present.

[17] Andrej Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin, 1986), p. 168.

of James show that James and his audience knew and accepted as authoritative a text that was similar to the Sermon on the Mount. One may compare, for example, James 1:12 with the Beatitudes (using *makarios*, but in a new formula about enduring temptation); James 2:13 with Matthew 5:7 (on the unmerciful receiving judgment without mercy); James 1:19–20 with Matthew 5:22 (on being slow to anger); James 1:14–15 with Matthew 5:28 (on lust leading to sin); James 5:12 with Matthew 5:33–7 (on not swearing oaths by heaven or earth, but only by yes or no); James 1:4 with Matthew 5:48 (on patiently becoming perfect, *teleioi*); James 1:13 with Matthew 6:13 (on God not tempting or being tempted by evil); James 4:11 with Matthew 7:1–2 (on not judging a brother); James 1:5–6 with Matthew 7:7 (on asking of God); James 1:17 with Matthew 7:11 (on good and perfect gifts coming down from heaven); James 3:11–12 with Matthew 7:16–22 (on people not speaking both blessings or curses, as trees produce either good or bad fruit), and James 1:22–25 with Matthew 7:24–7 (on not just hearing the word but doing the word).[18] Jeremias has correctly noted that James and the Sermon on the Mount share the same character as "the classical example of an early Christian *didache*."[19] It seems quite evident that the epistle of James consciously drew on a known body of basic Christian teachings that was used in the community as a persuasive, accepted, and binding text in governing daily life. As with the Sermon on the Plain, James draws mainly on passages from the Sermon on the Mount that have practical, ethical applications, but his selection ranges throughout the Sermon and includes items that presuppose brotherly relations and obligations of righteousness that would apply more within a faithful community than to the public at large.

A similar point can be made with respect to Paul's letters, some of which reflect parts of the Sermon on the Mount,[20] although Paul used this text much less frequently and more loosely than James. Paul's rhetoric may reflect oral rather than literary channels of transmission.[21] The role of memory must not be discounted,[22] especially where ritual texts are involved. In light of the teaching methods of his

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18 Mentioned in John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the New Testament," in John W. Welch (ed.), *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim 1981; reprinted Provo, Utah, 1999), p. 212. See also Patrick J. Hartin, "James and the Q Sermon on the Mount/Plain," in David J. Lull (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, 1989), pp. 440–57, and his *James and the "Q" Sayings of Jesus* (Sheffield, 1991), pp. 140–72. However, the precise nature of the relationship between James and the Sermon remains a puzzle; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 6, n.13.

19 Jeremias, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 22.

20 Compare, for example, Romans 12:14, 17, 19 and 14:10 with Matthew 5:44, 5:15, 5:22, and 7:1–2.

21 Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 6 n.12.

22 Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998); and Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992), pp. 182–5.

day, Jesus "must have required his disciples to memorize,"[23] and memory is never a flawless conveyor. But as Gerhardsson has argued, "Remembering the attitude of Jewish disciples to their master, it is unrealistic to suppose that forgetfulness and the exercise of a pious imagination had too much hand in transforming authentic memories beyond all recognition in the course of a few short decades."[24]

Furthermore, recognizing the preponderance of temple themes in the Sermon on the Mount may also shed light on the prominence of the Temple in the earliest historical memories of Jesus scattered throughout the New Testament. Jesus did not reject the idea of the Temple, which would have been readily understood by his original temple-conscious audience. He desired to reconstitute the temple system in Jerusalem with a way of holiness he promised to raise up without mortal hands (Mark 14:58; compare Daniel 2:34).[25] In John, where recollections of Jesus at the Temple are pervasive (see John 2:13; 5:14–16; 7:10, 28; 8:2), Jesus went to prepare the way to God and guide his friends there (*paralēmpsomai*, John 14:3). "*Paralambanein* is also a technical form for the reception of rites and secrets of the Mysteries."[26] In Acts 15:16–7, the plan was to rebuild the old Temple but this time to allow all people, whether Jewish or not, to seek the Lord's presence there, as Amos 9:11–2 had prophesied. In Hebrews, some early Christians understood that a new temple system had been established by Jesus as Jeremiah had prophesied that, through a spiritually transforming experience, the new temple in the day of the Lord would write the law upon the people "in their inward parts" (Jeremiah 31:33). The new temple would thereby build a covenant people of the heart, not of outward performances of the hand only. The epistle to the Hebrews has much to say about the high priesthood of Christ and related temple imagery (Hebrews 7–10). In the midst of this temple section of this epistle stands the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy: "For this is the covenant, . . . I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10). This covenantal transformation of the heart is precisely what the Sermon on the Mount strives to achieve.

All this is to say that the earliest Christian memory of Jesus was deeply intertwined with the Temple. The reason for this connection must have something to do, not merely with the place where Jesus often stood, but even more with the things that he taught, which involved receiving an endowment of power from on high and entering God's presence. Understanding the Sermon on the Mount as a text that has everything to do with a new order of sacred relationships between God and his people exposes the temple subtext for Jesus' program of temple renewal

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23 Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, p. 328.

24 Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, p. 329.

25 Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1992), pp. 137–54; on Jesus' position regarding the Temple especially in Mark 14:58, interpreted non-eschatologically, eschatologically, messianicly, and culticly, see Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel* (Tübingen, 2000).

26 G. Delling, "*Paralambanō*," in *TDNT*, vol. 4, p. 12.

and restoration. He did not aim his mission merely at the fringes of rural Jewish societies; he sought to recreate its very heart. By all measures, that heart stood in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, in its Holy of Holies.

Seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a focal instrument in Jesus' agenda also explains why the Christians in Jerusalem continued to frequent the Temple after the death of Jesus (Luke 24:53). In the book of Acts, the Temple in Jerusalem continues to figure prominently in the religious lives of the followers of Jesus. It is difficult to imagine that this emphasis on the Temple would have arisen in early Christianity if the teachings of Jesus had not been explicitly understood by his earliest disciples as having much to do with the Temple.

This would also explain why these recollections persist into the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. The Didache—a handbook of instructions concerning the rules required of people converting to Christianity, their baptism, the Eucharist, and the local operation of congregations by prophets, teachers, bishops and deacons—abounds with connections to the Sermon on the Mount.[27] Present in the Didache, among other things, are descriptions of the "two ways" (1:1–6:3), the Golden Rule (1:2), praying for enemies (1:3), turning the other cheek, going the second mile and giving the cloak (1:4), avoiding court (1:5), giving alms (1:6), not swearing falsely (2:3), shunning anger that leads to murder and lust that leads to adultery (3:2–3), being meek and merciful (3:7, 8), becoming perfect by bearing the whole yoke of the Lord (6:2), fasting (before baptism, 7:4), praying the Lord's Prayer (three times a day, 8:2), not giving what is holy to the dogs (9:5), and detecting false prophets (in the local congregations, 11:5). But missing here is any reference to becoming sons of God, seeing God, being the light of the world or the salt of the earth, keeping every jot and tittle of the law, facing the council, treading violators underfoot, sacrificing at the altar, giving alms in secret, washing, anointing, being clothed, asking, seeking, knocking, entering through a narrow gate into the presence of God, and building upon the rock. After the loss of the Temple, temple elements that made sense outside the ambit of the Temple were readily retained in training initiates for baptism and membership as Christians, while it seems that those that did not were dropped or adapted for use outside the temple context. Similarly, in Asia, Ignatius wrote to the Trallians about bonding church members to the temple of their bishops through the mysteries of the elders, and in this new setting but reminiscent of Matthew 5:24 he required, "Let none of you have anything against his neighbor."[28] In the West, the Shepherd of Hermas issued twelve commandments (mandates), several of which are highly reminiscent of the instructions in the Sermon on the Mount.[29] After the destruction of the

[27] See various comments and tables in Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache* (Minneapolis, 1998), for example pages 66, 69, 70, 75, 78, 81, 87, 95, 97, 135, 153, 179, 198, 203–4.

[28] Ignatius, *To the Trallians*, 8.

[29] For example, *Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandate 2 (give gifts to all as God gives to all), Mandate 4 (prohibiting remarriage after divorce), Mandate 5 (no anger), Mandate 6 (walk the straight path), and Mandate 11 (distinguishing true prophets from false).

Temple, a sense of loss over the Temple can be detected in Christian writings for many years to come.[30]

If the Sermon on the Mount was in fact used as an esoteric, sacred early Christian ritual, this would go a long way toward explaining such statements as the claim by Eusebius that Clement taught that the Lord had entrusted Peter, James, and John "with the higher knowledge" after the resurrection, which knowledge they shared with the inner circle of early Christian leaders.[31] Clement of Alexandria indeed wrote of his opponents, "They do not enter in as we enter in, through the tradition of the Lord, by drawing aside the curtain," which has been seen as a reference to secrets of the universe being held, or learned, in the holy of holies.[32] Valentinus reportedly taught of an "anointing" that was "superior to baptism," and he reserved certain rites "for the spiritual elite," disclosing these revelations selectively.[33] Origen spoke about mysteries that he would not commit to writing;[34] and Clement reveled in his "truly sacred mysteries," in which the initiate became "holy," was "marked with God's seal," and "ascended to God" to "become even as I am."[35] Augustine's arguments against the Priscillianists show how persistent the idea was in some circles that Christ "delivered a secret initiation" to his disciples, "above all to John."[36] The major difficulty in studying such sacred rituals, of course, is that they were kept secret. Faint clues of these rituals, however, sometimes survived. This emphasis on the esoteric mysteries in early Christianity would seem best explained by the idea that some teachings of Jesus were somehow remembered as having instituted a new sacred order.

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[30] Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London, 2007), pp. 12–18; Hugh W. Nibley, "Christian Envy of the Temple," *JQR* 50 (1959–60): 97–123, 229–40; reprinted in *Mormonism and Early Christianity, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City, 1987), pp. 391–434.

[31] Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans. G.A. Williamson (New York, 1981), vol. 2, p. 1, quoting Clement, *Hypotypooesis*, p. 8.

[32] Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London, 2004), p. 21, citing Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* vol. 7, p. 17.

[33] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 200. Tertullian remarked that "not even to their own disciples do they commit a secret before they have made sure of them." Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos*, p. 1. See also Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, pp. 2, pref.; 3.3.2–3; 3.15.2.

[34] Origen, *Commentarii in Epistolam ad Romanos*, vol. 2, p. 4. See C. Wilfred Griggs, "Rediscovering Ancient Christianity," *BYU Studies* 38/4 (1999): 73–90.

[35] Clement, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, vol. 12, p. 120. See further sources in Marvin W. Meyer (ed.), *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook* (San Francisco, 1987), pp. 225–53; Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden, 1996).

[36] Max Pulver, "Jesus' Round Dance and Crucifixion According to the Acts of John," in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks* (Princeton, 1955), p. 173. Similarly, Thomas is called an "initiate in the hidden word of Christ, who receives his secret oracles," in *Acts of Thomas* 39, in M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1924), p. 383.

While the Christian ritual order may not have actually materialized very far beyond the close circle of disciples in Jerusalem and their followers, this nascent ritual program may be discernable in the Sermon on the Mount. Paul battled other Christians who wanted to "undergo initiations beyond baptism," being "perfected" through "mystical initiation."[37] He eventually "secured for baptism its unique status as a ritual of initiation for Christians,"[38] but the difficulties Paul faced in accomplishing this unifying feat would make it apparent that, before and outside of Pauline Christianity, multiple initiations were the norm in some Christian communities. Luke Johnson has recommended a phenomenological approach in assessing the religious experiences of the first Christians, to which "the study of ritual provides an obvious point of access."[39] The present study invites modern readers to understand the Sermon on the Mount in such a light, conducting disciples through a present transformation of sacred instruction in order to commit them to a life of present discipleship and to prepare them to withstand the future day of God's judgment and to enter into his presence. These and other issues bear fruitful reflection.

The temptation at this point is almost irresistible to suggest further inferences that might flow from this reading of the Sermon on the Mount. For the time being, however, it suffices to set that process in motion. Much more remains to be considered beyond what can be mentioned here. Left for other occasions must be discussions of such things as: the relation of this approach to conventional understandings of the composition and meaning of the Sermon on the Mount; the temple connotations of the Hebrew or Aramaic antecedents behind the Greek vocabulary of the Sermon on the Mount and the Septuagint; the stance of the Sermon on the Mount toward the Temple vis-à-vis the attitudes of other Jewish groups about the Temple;[40] detailed analysis of the contexts of parallels to certain phrases in the Sermon on the Mount found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in rabbinic literature;[41] the relevance of this approach to the many previous studies on the historical Jesus, his position on the Law and the Temple;[42] the implications of this reading for the synoptic question; the bearing of these findings on the presence of temple themes elsewhere in the New Testament; the application of these results in a full comparison of early Christian initiation practices to Hellenistic mystery religions; and the use of these insights in evaluating the presentation in the Book

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[37] Luke T. Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1998), pp. 99, 101.

[38] Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity,* p. 103.

[39] Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity,* p. 69.

[40] This topic is introduced in Bauckham, "Parting of the Ways," pp. 135–51.

[41] As a basis for comparison, see such works as Samuel T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament* (New York, 1987), and his "Some Textual Observations on the Sermon on the Mount," *JQR* 69/2 (1978): 98–111.

[42] For example, William R.G. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (Tübingen, 1997; reprinted Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002).

of Mormon (3 Nephi 12–14) of a text much like the Sermon on the Mount, which appears there in an explicit temple setting involving theophany, commandments, covenant making, and messianic blessings, all copiously intertwined with temple themes.[43]

In conclusion, the light of the Temple opens new perspectives on the Sermon on the Mount, its vocabulary, unity, potency, functionality, morality, and spirituality. An awareness of its mountain setting, its extensive use of the Psalms, and its embodiment of numerous temple themes provides leverage in appreciating the Sermon on the Mount's foundational voice. Unveiling the mysteries of the Sermon on the Mount in the light of the Temple and its traditional Old Testament roots opens valuable insights into its extraordinary ability to communicate a clear moral vision, to instil a firm commitment to its precepts, to engender a spiritual sense of purpose in life, to forge a shared community ethic, and to bridge between heaven and earth in binding human hearts to serve the Lord and love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

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[43] The temple context of 3 Nephi 12–14 was first explicated in John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, Utah, 1999), 26–101.

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