

William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely.
Solomon's Temple: Myth and History.

London: Thames and Hudson, 2007

Reviewed by Daniel B. McKinlay

This book is a compelling survey of the impact of Solomon's Temple from the standpoint of its construction, symbolism, and legacy throughout the centuries, offering highlights of interesting information throughout its five chapters. Printed by a respected publisher in England, *Solomon's Temple: Myth and History* is one of an increasing number of books by Brigham Young University professors that have been published internationally. To an extent, I can see how the LDS interests of professors William J. Hamblin (history) and David Rolph Seely (ancient scripture) informed the decisions of what to include and how to express the concepts in the book. At the same time, I can see how the book might stimulate the fascination of non-LDS readers as well. It is clear that the authors read widely in preparation for writing the book. The endnotes are exclusively devoted to reference material, both primary and secondary; the authors did not choose to add content material within the notes. For each chapter, they provide a selected bibliography of useful resources for those interested readers who desire to study the material in further detail.

One of the enjoyable aspects of the book is a rich display of full-color photographs and artwork. Michael Lyon, who has illustrated a number of projects for the Neal A. Maxwell Institute at BYU, prepared some of the sketches especially for the book. Lyon also assisted in locating many of the art pieces included.

The first chapter deals with the concept of ancient temples in general, with descriptions of features that characterized them. Hamblin and Seely give vital material about Solomon's Temple and its predecessor, the tabernacle, and then compare those structures to other temples throughout antiquity. They show how the Israelite buildings compare to similar structures in Egypt and the Mesopotamian area. The authors note that the original temple was destroyed during the Babylonian captivity and then rebuilt as the Second Temple, or Zerubbabel's Temple (41), after the

Exile; this temple in turn fell into ruin and was rebuilt by Herod, and it was finally destroyed by Titus in AD 70.

Chapter 2 explains how Solomon's Temple with its various themes was expressed in post-Old Testament Judaism. The temple was still sacred to pious Jews, and they came to grips with its loss in a variety of ways, such as allegorizing the temple in rabbinic writings or incorporating some of its features into worship at the synagogue.

In chapter 3, the authors report the ways early Christians dealt with the loss of the temple. Many of them felt that with the rending of the veil at the time of the Crucifixion or the destruction of the temple a generation later, the physical structure became obsolete. It was assumed by some that Christ's Atonement fulfilled the typology of the temple and it was no longer needed. Therefore, some of the Church Fathers spiritualized the temple, emphasizing the Church, or the body of Christ, as a kind of temple.

Chapter 4 explains the entry of Islam into the site of Herod's destroyed temple. Muslim history tells us that Muhammad had a very sacred experience near the temple site—he was carried up to the heavens near the traditional site where Abraham almost offered his son as a sacrifice. To commemorate the holiness of the event, Muslims erected the imposing and beautiful Dome of the Rock. Historically, Muslims have shared with Jews and Christians the view that Solomon's Temple was a sacred edifice.

In chapter 5, the authors point out many trajectories stemming from Solomon's Temple that have developed from late antiquity to the present time. A number of those spin-offs are enshrouded in myth. They include the activities of the Crusades as well as the Templars and Freemasons. As one might expect from two LDS authors, Hamblin and Seely express the view that our modern temples contain the restoration of rites and beliefs that were characteristic of the tabernacle and temple. They explain the LDS viewpoint skillfully, and they appropriately include beautiful photographs of the Nauvoo and Salt Lake Temples.

Within the five chapters are a great many observations and explanations that have engaged my interest. I note some of them here so that LDS readers may catch a glimpse of the sundry insights that will likewise be of interest to them:

1. The authors emphasize the sacred and esoteric nature of temples as understood by the ancients (175–80).
2. They note the significance of creation and cosmos at the temple sites. Temples were aligned with the sun, moon, and stars, and the space within temples was considered the realm of the gods (11).
3. Temples had real or artificial gardens that represented the archetypal garden at creation (12).

4. The brazen sea in the tabernacle and temple represent the water the Lord subdued at the time of creation (14).

5. There was no temple (in the sense of a physical structure) in the Garden of Eden, nor will there be one in the celestial New Jerusalem, since the presence of God was already or will be there (14–15). Similarly, there is no temple in heavenly Jerusalem because the whole city is a holy of holies (97). Some of the pseudepigrapha describe ascents of biblical worthies to the heavenly temple (51).

6. Due to the perception that the priesthood had been corrupted in the Jerusalem Temple, the Essenes considered themselves to be the true temple; as such, they anticipated the Christian view that they as a community were the Lord's temple (55). Along that line, some early Christians believed that their community was the successor to the earthly temple "made with hands" (99). The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria also spiritualized the meaning of the temple (57–60).

7. When Jesus told the moneychangers that his "house shall be called a house of prayer," he was quoting Jeremiah, who spoke prior to the destruction of Solomon's Temple at the time of the Babylonian captivity. "Jesus' reference to Jeremiah was thus understood as an ominous foreshadowing of the destruction of the Temple." Such a setting for Jeremiah's oracle may have exasperated the hostility of some of Jesus' contemporaries (91).

8. The temple was the model of Jesus' ministry and Atonement (98).

9. Some Christians made pilgrimages to the Muslim Dome of the Rock, since they saw it as a temple (101–3). Affording the Ka'ba the highest level of sacredness, Muslims nevertheless hold the Temple of Solomon in high regard (131–40). For some Muslims, Solomon is regarded as the prototypical Sufi mystic (154–59).

10. Themes from Solomon's Temple were carried over into the New World during the period of European exploration (174–75).

11. Freemasonry is enshrouded in much legendary speculation concerning temples; there are competing myths that trace its origins, some of which claim to go back to the Temple of Solomon (182–86). Similarly, there is much confusing Templar mythology in connection to Solomon's Temple (187–90).

12. There are still some elements in Judaism and evangelical Protestantism that anticipate the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, while many Jews and Christians see no need for rebuilding. Because Muslims hold the Dome of the Rock to be sacred, as well as the temple wall that still stands, any attempt to reconstruct the temple has volatile potentialities (197–203).

I feel that the authors were successful in accomplishing their goal of giving the interested reader an overview of Solomon's Temple and the lasting effect it has had throughout much of subsequent history. The book is ideal for those who seek an introduction to a study of Solomon's Temple or who want to understand how many historical phenomena and traditions are rooted in this temple. This book deserves to be in the libraries of many Latter-day Saints.

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