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Book Review

Temple Themes in the Book of Moses

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BOOK REVIEW

George L. Mitton

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw. Temple Themes in the Book of Moses. Salt Lake City: Eborn Publishing, 2010. xvi + 382 pp., with appendix. \$59.95 (paperback with color illustrations). \$19.95 (paperback with black-and-white illustrations).

In an earlier work entitled *In God's Image and Likeness*,¹ Jeffrey Bradshaw provided a remarkable commentary on much of the Book of Moses from the Pearl of Great Price, relating its details to many examples and parallels from ancient literature and summarizing recent scholarly work and commentary on this important scripture received from the Prophet Joseph Smith.² *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* expands on that commentary in a special way, emphasizing those aspects of the Book of Moses that help explain and illuminate the customs, teachings, and ordinances of the temple.

1 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God's Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City: Eborn, 2010).

2. See Brian M. Hauglid's review "A New Resource on the Book of Moses," *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 57–60.

It should be noted that the Book of Moses resulted from the Prophet's inspired work with Genesis and was an early revelation that followed the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. What is clear today, and a fact duly noted by Bradshaw, is that the Book of Moses anticipated in many ways Joseph's teachings and instructions on temple ordinances more than a decade later during the Nauvoo period of church history. The greater understanding of the ancient temple proceeding from recent scholarship helps demonstrate Joseph's prophetic foresight to those who consider these solemn things. Bradshaw's *Temple Themes* is very instructive in this regard. It is especially so in bringing the reader's attention to many resources, ancient and modern, that are important for a serious consideration of the temple.

Of much interest is the chapter "The Vision of Moses as a Heavenly Ascent." This ascent refers to revelations in which prophets receive a vision of the heavens, usually with God on his throne surrounded by angels in the heavenly court or temple, there to receive instruction and a commission. The temple ritual is related to this ascent and what is learned from it. Bradshaw was assisted in writing this chapter by David J. Larsen, a Latter-day Saint student of the important, extensive, and growing literature on the heavenly ascent (p. 23). The discussion is informed by a review of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, an ancient Jewish ascent account discovered after Joseph Smith's day, in which are seen many striking parallels to the Book of Moses. I was particularly interested in how each text tends to throw light on the others. Bradshaw reproduces, for the first time in more than a century, the remarkable illustrations of the *Apocalypse* found in the Sylvester Codex, a fourteenth-century manuscript. The illustrations help us to know how the Christians of that time interpreted these interesting writings.

Among the temple-related themes treated by Bradshaw, we find discussions of creation and the Garden of Eden as models

for temple architecture, the symbolisms of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, the symbolism of the “sacred center,” the concept of the “keeper of the gate,” the tree of knowledge as a symbol of death and rebirth, the question of whether Eve was beguiled, and the concept of “standing” in holy places. He further discusses the clothing of Adam and Eve and the symbolism associated with it, the prayer and temple work of Adam and Eve, and the new and everlasting covenant.

The book has more than one hundred informative illustrations and concludes with an appendix discussing the relationship of the Book of Moses with Genesis in the Old Testament.

George L. Mitton received a master's degree in political science from Utah State University and did additional graduate studies at the University of Utah and Columbia University. He is retired from a career in education and state government in Oregon. He has served for a decade as an associate editor of FARMS Review and has published there, in Dialogue, and in BYU Studies.

