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SACRED IMAGININGS: USING AI TO CONSTRUCT TEMPLES

Amanda Colleen Brown-Mather

Review of Jeffrey Thayne and Nathan Richardson, *Temples of the Imagination: AI-Generated Temples, Human-Generated Insights* (Provo, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, Verdant Press, and Eborn Books, 2023). 140 pages, \$24.99 (softcover).

Abstract: *We're commanded to seek out of the best books words of wisdom, but how exactly do we seek? What are the best books? Temples of the Imagination uses cutting-edge technology to show its readers one futuristic way to incorporate this spiritual practice into their lives.*

We are commanded to “seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). Jeffrey Thayne and Nathan Richardson have provided a unique way to do just that in their new book, *Temples of the Imagination*.¹

Growing up, Darth Vader taught me that repentance is always possible;² I learned that “it is our choices . . . that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities”³ from Albus Dumbledore; and long-lasting friendships were forged when I watched long into the night, with my roommates, the Avatar save the Four Nations from the usurping Fire

1. Jeffrey Thayne and Nathan Richardson, *Temples of the Imagination: AI-Generated Temples, Human-Generated Insights* (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, Verdant Press, and Eborn Books, 2023).

2. See *Star Wars: Episode VI, Return of the Jedi*, story by George Lucas, screenplay by Lawrence Kasdan and George Lucas (Beverly Hills, CA: 20th Century Fox and Lucasfilm, Ltd., 1983).

3. J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 333.

Nation.⁴ These are some of my favorite books and lasting memories, a few touch points I return to again and again. *Temples of the Imagination* builds on these and other stories, providing visual illustrations and written commentary on the truths they carry and how their narratives can inform our understanding of the temple.

Instead of finding religious principles in a text, Thayne and Richardson asked AI to bridge The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' most sacred structures with the stories so many of us grew up devouring. This is not just a picture book, however. Each chapter contains a devotional reading on the religious principle we can learn from that particular world and how we can tie it to our faith and worship.

The intertwining of technology, culture, and religious principles offers a uniquely meditative text. By reflecting upon the imaginary architecture of worlds wherein we collectively find entertainment and joy, we can strengthen our bond to our covenants by viewing them with new perspectives. When so much in culture and media demands the marginalization of religion, this text asks us to connect the worlds we love to explore with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Imperatively, linking fantasy worlds with religion can help those seeking faith learn how to incorporate belief into other aspects of life.

I don't think it's a mistake that after being commanded to seek learning from the best books we are told to "establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:119). The stories I keep returning to are the stories I intend to share with my children. These are the stories that have shaped my life and therefore my approach to faith in Christ, the plan of salvation, and the temple. I am thrilled that *Temples of the Imagination* shows others what such an integral part of the gospel would look like in the stories and worlds we love.

My only question: Where is the "Dr. Who and Temples" chapter?⁵

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4. See *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, created by Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko (Burbank, CA: Nickelodeon Studios, 2005).

5. For those unfamiliar with the Dr. Who character, a good overview can be found at "Doctor Who," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_Who.

spends her time producing university events, running the @comefollowme_women Instagram account, and competing in Scottish Highland Dance competitions.

