

BELONGING IN THE TEMPLE  
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*'Deus, quem nosse, vivere est, cui servire, regnare est'* Augustine, Meditation 32.

The world view of Solomon's temple became the world view of Christianity and all that flowed from it. Before elaborating in this theme, I need to say a few things about the processes and preoccupations of recent biblical scholarship - by which I mean the critical biblical scholarship of the last two or three centuries.

First, many developments were prompted by other disciplines; all the literary and source criticism that dominated Old Testament study for over a century in fact sprang from German literary criticism, the fascination with folk tales and the like, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The quest for real, provable history - with the flawed assumption that historical accuracy was the truth of the Bible - began with the fashion for archaeology in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and has been pursued relentlessly and with disastrous results ever since. Biblical scholars suffered a collective failure of nerve and needed to bolster their own studies by gaining respectability from other disciplines. Today we have the unhelpful spectacle of those drawn to literary methods declaring the very late date of, for example, the narratives in Judges, whilst others are using the same material to reconstruct the social life of the bronze age.

Second, there has been the virtual secularisation of biblical studies by those who, with good Protestant zeal, felt bound to study the Bible, but preferred not to engage with its real subject matter. They concentrated instead on writing Hebrew dictionaries, becoming archaeologists-anything but theology. This has resulted in a simple and almost naïve approach to Old Testament theology on the part of very distinguished persons who have contributed much to ancillary and preliminary studies, but not to theology.

Third, there has been the all too human need to find in the Old Testament what one needs to find there, dressing one's own ideas decently in texts of scripture. The great histories of Israel written by German scholars are in fact telling, using biblical material, the story of the unification of Germany. The same material in the hands of American scholars tells us how the west was won. In the field of New Testament study, Protestant scholars have been loathe to find the roots of the Eucharist in the Temple and priesthood, but have searched instead for roots in the synagogue, in meal time blessings - anything but the sacrificial practices of the temple - because sacrifice smacked of Rome.

The most neglected of all study areas has been the temple in Jerusalem. What little there was concentrated on the externals: the organisation of the priests' duties, the archaeological evidence - or rather, lack of it - and temple finance. Until recently, there was little serious study of the system that was, physically and intellectually, at the centre of the Hebrew world. Serious study of the Temple on its own terms, insofar as this is possible, calls into question some fundamentals

of Church teaching and practice, for example, the idea of atonement. The world of the New Testament was the world of the temple, and so the temple was the matrix of Christianity. Tensions and disagreements as the Church developed, for example, over what is meant by the Kingdom of God, resulted from losing the original context and reinterpreting key texts.

The temple world that shaped Christianity was not the temple that existed in the time of Jesus. This was the second temple, rebuilt by King Herod during Jesus' lifetime, and then destroyed by the Romans in 70CE. The temple of early Christianity was the myth and memory of the true temple that had been built by Solomon and destroyed by the Babylonians at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The second temple was very different in both form and theology from its predecessor, and many heirs of the ancient Hebrews never accepted it as a legitimate temple. The harlot who burned in the book of Revelation was the second temple and its city, and she was replaced by the true Jerusalem, the golden city that came down from heaven. This was the restored temple and its world.

Hebrew culture was pre-philosophical insofar as it expressed and discussed complex and sophisticated ideas not by means of abstraction, but by stories and verbal images. Re-arranging the symbols or retelling the story, with slight changes, was how the debate proceeded. We must not be put off by talking snakes, but rather listen carefully to what the snake said, recognising that in this tradition the snake was the deceiver. Or rather, that the one who appeared as the snake was the deceiver. The snake may have been a symbol of something good, and so chosen by evil as its means to deceive.

My final preliminary observation concerns the available sources. Those who built the second temple were the people who preserved and edited much of what is now the Old Testament. To recover the older temple it is necessary to uncover the older faith embedded in the present form of the texts. There was a crisis in text transmission with the advent of Christianity. A number of texts important to Christians are no longer found in the Old Testament. Did the Church invent them? This was seriously considered for a long time, until the Dead Sea Scrolls, with their pre-Christian version of the Hebrew Scriptures, showed that the 'Christian' texts had indeed been part of the Scriptures, but disappeared from the Hebrew text that became the standard version at the end of the first century CE. This problem was compounded when the Church, in the interests of dialogue with Jews, agreed to adopt their version of the Scriptures. This means that the Old Testament used by the western churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, has been, in effect, the 'wrong' Old Testament. The sources for my quest therefore lie outside the present canon and in many cases beneath it, a situation that does not make for an exact science, but it does illuminate in a remarkable way, the early Christian world view.

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Reconstructing from a variety of older sources and memories in later Jewish and Christian texts, [e.g. Midrash Tanhuma, Cosmas Indicopleustes] it is clear that the temple represented the cosmos. In this respect, Hebrew culture was no different from that of her neighbours. The wise men of Israel received all this information in visions, and so their world view was 'given' rather than discovered. This is how Aristotle criticised the Pythagoreans: 'They do not seek accounts and explanations in conformity with appearances, but try by violence to bring the appearances in

line with accounts and opinions of their own' (Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 293a). Israel lived within the vision, and Israelite society was an enclosed system of those and for those who accepted the vision. There was a wise saying: 'Where there is no vision, the people unravel' (Proverbs 29.18, translating literally).

The most famous of the wise men was Moses, and he received this vision of the cosmos on Sinai. After being given the ten commandments, Moses was on the mountain for six days, and then entered the cloud of the divine glory for a further 40 days and nights (Exodus 24. 15-18). Moses was entrusted with detailed instructions for building a place of worship, initially the tabernacle, but later the temple. *It was to replicate what Moses had seen on the mountain* (Exodus 25.9, 40), and what he had seen was a six day vision of the process of creation. This is why the Books of Moses begin with an account of the six days of creation. Genesis 1 is Moses' vision. The creation was itself the real temple of the Creator, and worship in the temple maintained the creation.

The sanctuary of the temple, the holy of holies, corresponded to Day One, the source and origin of all things, the presence of God. The second day was the firmament that screened the presence of God from human eyes, the veil of the temple, and the outer hall of the temple represented the material creation, the third to sixth days. Since the temple represented the creation, any sin in creation or human society was a pollution of the temple, and so when the temple was purified, the whole of creation and human society was renewed and restored. This purity entailed not only observing the moral and cultic laws; it also embraced what we should nowadays call national customs. The Israelite believed he was one of the chosen people, and to be cast off, to lose this status, was the worst situation he could envisage. Thus the prophet Isaiah gave words of comfort to his people in exile: 'I have chosen you and not cast you off, says the Lord; fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God...' (Isa.41.9-10).

The whole creation was held together with bonds - in fact the Hebrew words for creation and binding are related. The resulting system of bonds was called the covenant of eternity, meaning that the visible creation was bound into a system that included the invisible world. The other name for this covenant was the covenant of peace, peace in the sense of wholeness and integrity. It was an affirmation of belief that the cosmos was good, and that human society as well as the natural order were one system created by God. The chosen people were safe within the cosmic order because the covenant stood firm. Jeremiah comforted his people: 'Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar - the Lord is his name: If this fixed order departs from before me, says the Lord, then shall the descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before me for ever: (Jer.31.35-6). Incidentally, the verb 'create' *bara*, is only ever used of divine activity. Humans cannot create; they make, they fashion, but they do not create. Human health and happiness necessitated being part of that system, since there were no other options.

Any breach of the divinely given commandments damaged the bonds of the covenant. It did not matter that it was an inadvertent breach; the bonds were still damaged or even broken. The priests therefore had two roles; they had to give the correct teaching, and exclude anyone who broke a bond of the covenant; and they also had to provide a way back into the community for the penitent person who had not only recognised the fault, but had also done everything possible

to restore the damage. Then the Lord forgave what had been done and the sinner was readmitted to the community. Forgiveness and acceptance were dependent on repentance and conformity.

Any breach of the covenant bond was, by definition, a sin, and the result of sin was 'iniquity', *'awon*, a word that literally means distortion. Such distortion polluted the creation and had to be corrected. This was done by the Lord absorbing the pollution, and in so doing, cleansing and restoring the creation and human society. It was ritualised as the Day of Atonement, the autumn festival for the new year.

Atonement was the blood ritual that restored the cosmos. The blood of a goat was taken into the holy of holies by the high priest, and then brought out again, sprinkled and smeared in various parts of the temple to 'cleanse and consecrate' the temple and the creation it represented. The high priest then transferred the sins to the head of a second identical goat - the scapegoat - which was driven away into the desert. This ritual is the key to understanding the world view of the temple.

First, the high priest was the visible presence of the God of Israel. He was the incarnation of the Lord. The goat he offered as sacrifice represented the Lord, and so was, in effect, a substitute for himself. And blood, in this instance, represented life (Lev.17.11). *The Day of Atonement was the Lord himself offering his own life to renew the creation and to restore human society.* Plague and punishment were averted because the broken bonds of the covenant were repaired and the protection restored.

A close scrutiny of the ritual is not possible, given the gulf of time and culture that separates us from them. The logic, if such it can be called, was that the high priest absorbed into himself the pollution caused by human sin, carried it, and then transferred it to the scapegoat who represented Azazel, the source of evil. The high priest wore the sacred name Yahweh on his forehead, which enabled him to bear the iniquity without putting himself into danger (Exod.28.36-8). This, incidentally, is the original meaning of the commandment: 'You shall not bear the Name of the Lord your God lightly, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who bears his name lightly.'

This absorption was described as 'bearing' the iniquity. The greatest punishment for an unrepentant sinner was that s/he had to bear her/his own iniquity, and so s/he was cut off from the protection of the covenant bond. Bearing the iniquity is sometimes translated in the Old Testament as forgiving. It is the same word, *nasa'*. Unfortunately, it is the custom of translators to speak of the Lord 'forgiving' and the high priest or the scapegoat 'bearing', even though it is the same verb. Thus the prophet Micah asked: 'Who is a God like you forgiving [literally 'bearing;] iniquity?' (Mic. 7.18); and Job could ask: 'Why do you not bear my transgression and cause my guilt to pass away?' (Job 7.21). We shall return to Job and his dilemma.

The wording of the ancient law codes illustrates this well. Anyone who failed to bear witness when he had evidence had to *bear his own iniquity* (Leviticus 5.1). A couple who contracted an illicit marriage had to *bear their own iniquity* (Lev.20.17). Anyone who ate forbidden meat would defile himself and had to *bear his own sin* and die (Lev.7.18; 22.9). Anyone who cursed God would *bear his own sin* and die (Lev.24.15-16). The sinner would then be 'cut off' from the

bonds of the covenant, from his people, from life. 'That person shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him.' (Numbers 15.30-31).

The sign that a person was carrying iniquity was plague. This affected not only himself, but the whole people. When an Israelite man married a foreign woman (Numbers 25.6-13), they were both killed by the high priest to put a stop to the outbreak of plague that would have killed the whole community. This was called atonement. When a group of men rebelled against the authority of Moses and Aaron, plague broke out, and the high priest had to act to stop it. He took incense and 'stood between the dead and the living and the plague stopped' (Num 17.47). This too was called atonement. Atonement was the process by which the covenant bonds were restored and chaos was held at bay. In other words, atonement maintained the cohesion of cosmos and society.

The underlying image here is not, in fact, one of impurity and cleansing, but of repairing what has been broken. Here I should like to quote Mary Douglas's study of biblical purity laws. They did not, she observed, set members of the community apart from one another. On the contrary, they were rules for keeping the community together. This was not of a caste system with inherent degrees of impurity that were permanent. 'The more closely we look at the biblical rules of sacred contagion', she wrote, 'the more marked appears the difference between the Bible system and other systems of contagious impurity. We cannot avoid asking why the priests defined laws of purity that did not make parts of the congregation separate from or defined as higher or lower than the rest.' She concluded that ideas of washing and cleansing have imported into Leviticus a range of meanings that are not there in the original. To atone originally meant to repair or cure a sickness, to make good a torn covering. The health of the nation depended on the self offering of the Creator to renew and restore the covenant bonds and to reintegrate those who repented and wanted to return to the protection of the covenant society. Thus Ezekiel could proclaim: 'I will remember my covenant with you', says the Lord, 'I will establish with you an everlasting covenant... and you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be confounded and never open your mouth again because of the shame, when I atone for you everything that you have done says the Lord Yahweh.' (Ezek. 16.60, 62-3).

When the bonds were intact, this was the state of *ṣedaqah*, usually rendered 'righteousness', which is somewhat misleading, because, like all translations, nuances are lost in the process. Righteousness meant the original state of integrity or wholeness, the cosmos as the Creator intended it to be. It was maintained by justice, *mišpat*, another word that loses much in translation, since to our ears 'justice' implies retribution, and *mišpat* was the means to restoration. In modern terms, we might compare a badly damaged road. How is the smooth surface to be restored? By filling in the holes and levelling the lumps. The result is a road in a state of *ṣedaqah* and the process of achieving it is *mišpat*. The process of finding out who had ignored the weight restrictions and caused this state of affairs that affected all other users was another matter.

Justice and righteousness applied to the natural world as well as to human society; they were inseparable. The idea of justice for the environment is a deeply biblical idea, and it was recognised that a society without *ṣedaqah* meant an environment without *ṣedaqah*, although they had no word for 'environment'. Human sin broke the bonds and so affected everything. The

prophet Isaiah had a vision of the future, when there would be kings and princes who ruled with righteousness and justice (Isa.32.1). 'Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness will abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace... (Isa.33.16-17). These two words, justice and righteousness, describe the covenant of peace restored, the eternal covenant intact. The Righteous One was the person who made things righteous, the one who restored the covenant. Righteousness was not a state that could be achieved in isolation; it described a healed and a healing relationship. Those who had been made righteous were in their turn expected to become righteous ones. This aspect of the temple world view is well summarised by St Paul in 2 Corinthians: 'If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself, and gave us the task of reconciliation...' (2 Cor. 5.17-18, my translation). The healed had to become the healers.

The Old Testament prophets often used wordplay to emphasise their teaching, and also to show how similar two entirely opposite conditions could seem. The prophets chose words with a similar sound, but which had an exactly opposite meaning. The best known example is the parable of the vineyard, taken up later by Jesus, but originally composed by Isaiah. He described the Lord's provision and care for his people in terms of a man who planted and tended a vineyard. He looked for a good crop, and found nothing but sour grapes. He looked for justice and righteousness, but found instead bloodshed and cries of despair. Justice and bloodshed sound similar: *mišpat* and *mišpah*; as do righteousness and cry of despair, *šedaqah* and *še'aqah*.

Satan, because of this, is always described as the deceiver, the one who makes things seem similar and attractive, when in fact the result is the exact opposite. When the creation is restored and the Kingdom established, in St John's vision in the Book of Revelation, 'the deceiver of the whole world is thrown down (Revelation 12.9). The deceiver's first words, in the Garden of Eden, had been that the forbidden tree would make humans into gods, when in fact it turned them into mortals. They had already been created as the image of God, entrusted with preserving the creation, but they were deceived into creating for themselves a world of thorns, thistles, dust and death. Satan convinced them that his type of freedom was better. The image of God in which Adam had been created was one expressed in self giving, not in taking, in self limiting, resting on the Sabbath day when everything was good and there was enough.

The great warning was that the human pair had chosen the wrong tree, and by opting for freedom in the sense of choosing how they would use their knowledge - the knowledge of good and evil - they found that other options had been closed to them. The mighty angel with a flaming sword - in later tradition the angel was identified as Uriel, the archangel who inspired the human mind - guarded the way to the tree of life whose fruit was true wisdom. Now wisdom was defined as that way of knowing and having knowledge that kept all things in harmony. In other words, Wisdom maintained the covenant, and the knowledge that could be used for good or evil destroyed it. Freedom - the biblical narrative would describe it as disobedience - destroyed the covenant bonds and the whole system that the covenant maintained. Total individual freedom and harmony are incompatible, in the biblical world view. Everyone was put at risk by the freedom of one or two. It is often said that humans were created free, but the biblical story does not say this. They were created in the image of God, and lost that status when they broke

the unity and chose instead to be free. The prayer attributed to St Augustine sums up this way of thinking:

‘O Lord God, the light of the minds that know thee, the life of the souls that love thee, and the strength of the hearts that serve thee, help us so to know thee that we may truly love thee, and so to love thee that we may fully serve thee, whom to serve is perfect freedom’ (literally Whom to serve is to reign like a king’) (Gelasian Sacramentary).

The second of the ten commandments has a dire warning attached to it. If anyone worshipped an idol, that is, put anything but God at the centre of the system, the resulting iniquity would affect the third and fourth generations. The idol could be anything made by human beings: ‘They bow down to the work of their own hands’, said Isaiah, describing a society that had fallen under the influence of evil angels (Isaiah 2.8). The idol always represented another set of values, another way of living. Iniquity, you will recall, meant ‘distortion’, and so to have a false centre distorted the whole system. One person’s choice could create distortion that destroyed the whole system. Everyone was affected. The prophet Ezekiel gave this harsh oracle: ‘As I live, says the Lord, I will be King over you... I will make you pass under the sceptre and bring you back into the bond of the covenant. I will purge out the rebels from among you and all those who transgress against me (Ezek. 20.30, 37-8).

The alternative was a total collapse of the cosmos and human society. The prophets had many visions of such a collapse. Isaiah, for example: ‘The earth mourns and fades away; the world languishes and fades away, the haughty people of the earth grow weak. The earth is polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate...’ (Isa.24.4-6, my translation). Or Jeremiah: ‘My people are foolish, they know me not; they are stupid children, they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil. but how to do good they know not.’ He then had a vision of total collapse; the visible world returned to the pre-created state when all was chaos: ‘I looked on the earth, and lo it was waste and void; and to the heavens and they had no light’ (Jer.4.22-3).

The essence of this system was that conformity, self limiting, gave security. The human was not lost in the system insofar as each was recognised as the image of God, and so of absolute worth, but with the clear expectation that s/he was to be like God: ‘You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy’ (Lev.19.2). The story of Adam was told to remind everyone that they all had one common ancestor, that all were, like Adam, children of God. The most familiar example of this is Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats, the story of the Day of Judgement. The question everyone is asked is: How did you treat the poor, the lonely, the sick, the hungry? And those who have not recognised the demands of God in every other human being are condemned to join the devil and his angels, his messengers, those who teach evil. (Matthew 25.31ff).

Detailed laws set out how to behave in every situation, and there was an idiom ‘This is not done in Israel.’ There had to be a protective parapet round the roof of a house, lest anyone fall from it (Deut 22.8); you could not weave wool and linen together as mixed fibres (Deut. 22.11); you did not return any runaway slave to his master (Deut. 23.15-6); you did not lend anything at interest to a fellow Israelite (Deut. 23.19); no fruit trees could be cut down when besieging a city (Deut. 20.19-20). Above all you had to remember that nothing was yours by right; ‘Beware lest you say

in your heart: 'My power and the might of my hand have given me this wealth. You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the power to get wealth.' (Deut. 8.17-18). A tithe was paid, not to the temple and its priests, but to assist those without other means of support: the Levites, who were allowed no land because the Lord was their portion, the stranger, the orphan and the widow (Deut. 15.28-9; also 16.11). At harvest, you could only visit your field or vineyard once. If there was grain left, or olives or grapes, they were to be left for the stranger, the widow and the orphan (Deut. 24.19-22). These were divine laws and not negotiable. Even the most primitive of the law codes shows this sense of balance: 'You shall not afflict any widow or orphan... or your wives will become widows and your own children orphans.' (Exod. 22.22).

Now for a few examples.

The best known story of anguish and debate about the human situation is found in the Book of Job. He has lived in accordance with all God's laws (Job 31), and yet he has been afflicted with misfortune and disease. His wife told him to curse God for his misfortune, but Job would not: "'Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not receive evil?'" In all this Job did not sin with his lips' (Job 2.10). The structure of this book is complex, but the story ends with Job accepting that he cannot understand the ways of God, because he cannot see the whole picture. Job trusted God, and his fortune was restored (Job 42.10). The theologians who attempted to rationalise the situation, the three friends, were condemned (Job 42.7). Job had to maintain his belief despite appearances, and then everything was restored. Belief despite appearances was a key factor in maintaining the tradition. The Lord was enthroned on the praises of Israel; the ancestors had trusted him and were not disappointed (Psalm 22.3-4).

The Psalmist, perplexed by the apparent triumph of evil, began to question the ways of God:

All in vain have I kept my heart clean, and washed my hands in innocence.

For all day long I have been stricken, and chastened every morning.

If I had said, 'I will speak thus,

I would have been untrue to the generation of thy children.

But when I thought how to understand this,

it seemed to me a wearisome task. ... (Psalm 73.13-16).

Then the Psalmist went into the holy of holies. He recovered the common vision, saw how the wicked would meet their end, and recovered his faith. This was the vision that the wise men had seen, the vision of how the whole creation holds together. Where there is no vision, as the wise saying went, the people unravel. The system collapses and people are adrift.

One of the questions put to Job by his 'friends' was: how can you understand the whole system?

'Have you listened in the council of God? (Job 15.7-9). Had Job been privileged like the wise men to stand in the holy of holies and see the whole cosmos and its plan? And when the Lord spoke to Job from the whirlwind, he asked, in effect, the same question: Do you know the how the creation works? Do you understand even the ways of the natural world around you? 'Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high? (Job 39.26). Again, the response was to trust. To accept and to share the vision.

Isaiah received a vision of the Glory of God. He saw the Lord enthroned in the temple, in other words, he saw the Creator at the heart of the cosmos, surrounded by the powers of creation, the



heavenly host. Isaiah heard the song of creation: Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.' Isaiah's reaction was that of a man who had doubted this. 'Woe is me', he said, 'for I kept silent. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts (Isa. 6.1-5). The prophet had seen the vision, and he recognised that the whole creation was full of the glory of God. He then experienced one of the heavenly powers burning his lips with a coal, and he felt himself forgiven, healed and empowered. He was part of the vision, part of a secure cosmos. He belonged.

The most important of the Hebrew books that did not become part of the final canon is the collection of material now known as 1 Enoch. It is a repository of ancient temple tradition, and centres on the myth of the fallen angels. Two hundred angels, led by Azazel, made a counter covenant and decided to become independent of the Great Holy One. They were angels and so had great knowledge about the creation, but when they brought this knowledge to earth and gave it to the human race without the law of the Great Holy One, the result was disaster. The angels taught about metalworking and the arts of civilisation: the knowledge of medicine, the knowledge of the stars, and even, in one tradition, the art of writing. There was bloodshed and war, the creation itself was diminished and corrupted, and eventually the cries of despair reached heaven. 'Bloodshed and a cry of despair' were the two signs of the counter covenant, when there should have been justice and righteousness. The archangels came to earth to imprison the evil angels, to heal the earth from the plagues they had brought, and to restore it to its intended fruitfulness and peace. 'Heal the earth which the angels have corrupted, and proclaim the healing of the earth, and they shall heal the plague...' (1 Enoch 10.7). 'And then shall the whole earth be tilled in righteousness, and shall all be planted with trees and be full of blessing (1 Enoch 10. 18). This appears also in the Book of Revelation. When the Kingdom of God was proclaimed on the earth, it was the time for 'destroying the destroyers of the earth' (Rev.11.17-8), the evil angels and their teaching that brought plague and destruction.

Compare this with the Greek myth of Prometheus, the divine figure who learned from Athena about architecture, astronomy, medicine, metallurgy and other arts. He then stole fire from the gods and thus brought to the human race the possibility of civilisation. He was savagely punished by Zeus, along with the mortals he had tried to help. Zeus had Pandora created, in whom were mingled all the virtues and vices: good and evil, gold and dross, beauty and treachery, and when she opened her box, a gift from Zeus, everything that could plague mankind was released into the world, including Hope, which was the greatest delusion. Superficially this is the same as the myth of Enoch: how the arts of civilisation came to earth with disastrous results. In fact, the Prometheus myth is the exact opposite of the Enoch myth. The Greeks had to wrest civilisation from the gods who guarded it jealously and punished them for their theft. The Hebrews knew that the arts of civilisation led to disaster only when they were separated from the law of the God. An archangel taught Noah about medicine, so that he could cure the illnesses brought by the fallen angels (Jubilees 10.12-13). Another archangel visited Noah and taught him how to build the ark (1 Enoch 89.1). The archangel Uriel taught Enoch the complex movements of the sun, moon and stars, and how to calculate a calendar (1 Enoch 72.1). Bezalel, the man who master minded the building of the tabernacle, has been given the divine gifts of metalworking and wood carving: 'I have filled him with the Spirit of the 'elohim, with Wisdom and discernment and knowledge and all craftsmanship.' (Exod.31.3, my translation). This word

'craftsmanship' is in fact the feminine form of the word for angel; just as man and woman were a couple, so an angel and crafts skills were a couple. The combination of inspiration and craft skills led to creation.

To live a full and happy life, the ancient Hebrew had to be part of the temple and what it represented. In his culture, the craftsman had received his skills from God; the doctor had been taught by angels; the mathematicians had been taught by angels. Their wise men had been entrusted with the vision of God and creation which they had to teach faithfully to their people. Each person was made in the image of God, with all that that entailed by way of rights and responsibilities. Each was responsible for maintaining the covenant that gave him security. If the priests failed in their duty to guard the tradition, and the people acted in ignorance, the whole system was in danger. When Adam was set in the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it, (Gen. 2.15), the ancient Hebrew would also have recognised that Adam, the human, was set in the creation as its high priest, to preserve the traditional teaching. The words 'till and keep' can also be understood as 'lead worship and preserve tradition'.

The greatest joy of the ancient Hebrew was pilgrimage to the temple: 'Blessed is he whom thou dost chose and bring near, to dwell in thy courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, thy holy temple (Psalm 65.4). 'For one day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.' (Psalm 84.10). The greatest blessing the Hebrew could desire was to recognise the presence of God. In Hebrew, the word for 'presence' is the same as the word for 'face', and so 'seeing the face of God' was the greatest joy. The high priests used to bless the pilgrims to the temple:

May the Lord bless you and keep you

May the Lord make his face shine on you and give you life

May the Lord lift up his face on you and give you peace.'

(Numbers 6.24-26, my translation).