RESTORING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

The Christians saw themselves as restoring Solomon's temple, and Christian theology grew rapidly around this fundamental claim. Some 40 years ago, when dealing with the formation of Christian teaching, Martin Hengel wrote this: '...one is tempted to say that more happened in this period of less than two decades than in the whole of the next seven centuries, up to the time when the doctrine of the early church was completed.'[1] He was writing about the title 'son of God', which was a part of temple teaching, but his observation applies to temple theology as a whole: How did the first Christians know so much, so soon?

There is an ambiguous attitude towards the temple in the New Testament:

- Jesus drove the traders out of the temple, declaring that the house of prayer had become a den of robbers (Matthew 21.12-13; Mark 11.15-17; Luke 19.45-46; John 2.14-16).
- He told parables that condemned the temple authorities: they were the wicked and greedy tenants of the LORD's vineyard who would be punished (Matthew 21. 33-41; Mark 12.1-9; Luke 20.9-16).
- He prophesied that the temple would be utterly destroyed (Matthew 24.1-2; Mark 13.1-2; Luke 21.5-6).

The whole of the Book of Revelation is about the destruction of the temple, preceded by the opening of the seven seals of the little book, the seven trumpets and then the seven vessels of God's wrath tipped upon Jerusalem (Revelation 5—6; 8—11; 16). Despite this, Peter taught newly baptised Christians that they were living stones in a spiritual temple, a royal priesthood, God's own people called from darkeness into light (1 Peter 2.4-10); and the unknown writer of the book of Hebrews used temple symbolism to explain the meaning of Jesus' death (Hebrews 9.1-14).

The explanation for these two very different attitudes lies over six centuries before the time of Jesus, but the results of events so long ago were still important. From the end of the eighth century BCE, the time of the prophets Hosea and Isaiah, there had been pressures building in Jerusalem to change the ways of the temple and to give greater prominence to Moses, rather than to the king, and these pressures finally triumphed in the time of king Josiah a century later. There are two accounts of this period in the history of Jerusalem:

- the biblical one in 2 Kings 24.1-4 says that Jerusalem had been under the rule of wicked kings who did not observe the law of Moses as set out in Deuteronomy, and because of their evil ways, the temple was destroyed and the people were scattered;

[1] M Hengel, *The Son of God*, London: SCM, 1976, p.2.

- the non-biblical one in 1 Enoch 93.9 says that this was a period when the temple priests lost their spiritual vision and abandoned Wisdom, and so the temple was burned and the people were scattered.

Thus the writer of 2 Kings saw the changes as good, and the writer of 1 Enoch saw them as a disaster. Since 2 Kings is in the Bible and 1 Enoch is not, this has coloured most reconstructions of the events.

The crisis came in the reign of king Josiah, who supported the pro-Moses group and in 623 BCE began a series of violent purges to rid his kingdom of the older ways, which he regarded as impure (2 Kings 22—23). He removed many of the ancient furnishings from the temple, because they symbolised certain teachings which he would no longer allow: in particular, he removed all traces of a female figure, represented by a great tree, which he burned by the sacred spring and had its ashes beaten to dust and scattered. We should probably recognise this tree as a great menorah. Then he purged his kingdom, destroying all the hilltop places of worship out in the countryside, the sacred trees and the pillars. Many of the priests of these places were driven out. Finally, Josiah celebrated a great Passover, the major feast of the pro-Moses party.

Then came the disaster. The Babylonians invaded Josiah's kingdom: they came first in 597 BCE, took away all the temple gold and removed the ruling class into exile. They appointed a puppet ruler, but he proved unreliable, and so they returned and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE. They burned the temple and the city, and took more people into exile. Others fled as refugees to Egypt, 2 Kings 24—25. Such a catastrophe was long remembered, and other significant details can be found in Jewish writings as much as nine centuries later. These shed a very different light on Josiah and his cultural revolution. Many people deserted Jerusalem and went to join the invading Babylonians. Jeremiah says that King Zedekiah was afraid of these people (Jeremiah 38.19), and the Jerusalem Talmud, compiled about 400 CE, tells us where they went. It has a cryptic reference to '80,000' young priests who fought with the Babylonians against Jersualem, presumably to regain their position after Josiah had driven them out, and these young priests later settled in Arabia.[2]

What Josiah purged from his kingdom and from the temple in Jerusalem was not a forbidden Canaanite cult; it was the religion of the patriarchs as described in Genesis. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had worshipped where the LORD appeared to them: Abraham saw the LORD by the oak of Moreh and set up an altar there (Genesis 12.6-7); Jacob had a dream vision of the LORD at Bethel and set up a sacred pillar there (Genesis 28.10-18). There are many examples. *The religion of the patriarchs was the religion practised in Judah until the time of Josiah*. Abraham had met Melchizedek the priest-king of Jerusalem who offered him bread and wine (Genesis 14.17-20), and we know that the Davidic kings in Jerusalem had been Melchizedek priests (Psalm 110.4). In other words, the Melchizedek priest-kings serving in Jerusalem were the kings whom later historians condemned for failing to observe the law of

[2] Jerusalem Talmud *Ta'anit* 4.5, written about 400 CE.

Moses. This, then, was the contrast: the older ways of Melchizedek and Abraham which were those of Solomon's temple, purged by Josiah; and the newer ways of Moses and his brother Aaron the high-priest, which were the ways of the second temple.

This sums up the difference between the temple of Solomon and the second temple that was built when some of the exiles returned from Babylon to re-establish Jerusalem in about 525 BCE. Accounts from the period are not clear, but it seems that the people returned from Babylon in several groups over a considerable period of time. A temple was built and the city walls were repaired. The newly established community was then required to expel anyone who had married a foreigner, including a grandson of the high priest (Nehemiah 13.28-31). Many of those who had formerly worshipped the LORD in the first temple were excluded under what must have been new rules, and the prophet [Third] Isaiah spoke for them: foreigners who kept Sabbaths and observed the covenant were acceptable in the temple which should be a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56.3-8). The worship in the newly built temple was a mockery, he said, and the LORD would punish those responsible (Isaiah 66.1-6). Voices in 1 Enoch described this as an apostate generation whose offerings were not pure (1 Enoch 89.73; 93.9). The compiler of the Isaiah scroll, who wrote an introduction to the whole collection of prophecies which is now the first chapter of the book, lamented that the faithful city of Jerusalem had become a harlot (Isaiah 1.21). The Christians agreed with this: Jesus quoted Isaiah's words about the temple being a house of prayer for all people when he drove the traders from the temple (Mark 11.17); and one of the visions in the Book of Revelation is a great harlot dressed in purple and scarlet, holding a golden cup of abominations. This text is in Greek, but underlying it is Hebrew wordplay that was characteristic of temple discourse. In Hebrew, abomination or ritual corruption was *māšḥāt*, and consecration [as in the oil of consecration] was *mišḥâ.* The written forms of the words were almost identical. The harlot of the Book of Revelation, dressed in purple and scarlet, represented the second temple, and instead of pouring out the holy anointing oil from a golden vessel, she poured out corruption. Presumably the harlot had replaced the banished Lady of Solomon's temple, who would have poured out the anointing oil.

Hence the two attitudes towards the temple in the New Testament. Jesus condemned the temple he knew and he prophesied that it would be destroyed; and the Christians saw themselves as restoring the original temple of Solomon. Christian rituals were based on first-temple rituals, Christian teaching developed from first-temple teaching, and when they were eventually able to erect their own buildings, Christian places of worship resembled the temple.[3] They described Jesus as their Great High Priest (Hebrews 4.14), but not as the Aaron high priest. Jesus was Melchizedek restored (Hebrews 7.11-25).

Recovering what can be known of Solomon's temple is therefore more than an exercise in ancient history; it is a key to understanding how early Christianity developed, and, more

[3] See my book temple *Themes in Christian Worship*, London: T&T Clark, 2007.

important, why. What vision inspired Jesus? Why was he described as Son of God, King, Messiah? Why was resurrection a part of the expectation?

Restoring the religion of the first temple was restoring the religion of Abraham, because it was the ways of Abraham that Josiah had purged. Those young priests who settled in Arabia must have taken with them the religion that emphasised Abraham and Melchizedek, and one of the curious characteristics of the Dead Sea scrolls is the amount of extra information they have about both Abraham and Melchizedek. The refugees who fled to Egypt and became the Jewish communities in that country also took with them the older religion, and some of their writings preserved teaching about the female figure whom Josiah removed from the temple. They knew her as Wisdom, as did the Enochic writings, which said that the priests abandoned Wisdom just before the temple was burned. The Wisdom of Solomon extolled her as the guide and protector of their ancestors (Wisdom 10—11); and Philo knew Wisdom as 'the daughter of God, the first-born mother of all things.'[4] Was this just the fiction of a later age, or was it ancient material that was not included in Genesis? The same can be asked of the Targums, the Aramaic translations of biblical texts that sometimes include extra information, and of later texts such as the Life of Adam and Eve. Was the extra material the product of a later author's imagination, or was it as old as the text it embellished, or even older? The 'extra' material is a potentially valuable source of information about Solomon's temple.

In the Old Testament itself there is a striking example of this dilemma, and it does concern Solomon's temple. The Chronicler's description of Solomon's temple is usually said to be later than the account in 1 Kings, the pro-Moses account, but it includes more information than 1 Kings:

- the LORD revealed the plan for the temple to David and he gave this to Solomon (1 Chronicles 28.19);
- there was a golden chariot of cherubim in the temple (1 Chronicles 28.18);
- there was a great curtain in the temple, 'the veil' (2 Chronicles 3.14);
- music was important in the temple (1 Chronicles 16.4-42).

These were not a later fiction; they were details of temple tradition that the writer of 1 Kings did not include because they had no place in his pro-Moses scheme. The veil of the temple and the chariot throne, for example, were items in Solomon's temple that were important for the cult of the anointed king. He represented God with his people, hence his title Immanuel, 'God with us' (Isaiah 8.8). He was the visible presence of the LORD, but Deuteronomy said that this was not possible; the LORD could not be seen. He was not seen when the law was given to Moses; only the voice was heard (Deuteronomy 4.12). Such discrepancies alert us to the possibility that authentic memories of the earlier temple were deliberately excluded from some texts. The Greek title for Chronicles is '*Paraleipomenōn*' which means, literally, 'the things left out', and there must have been a reason for choosing that title.

[4] Philo, *Questions on Genesis* IV.97.

The biblical texts compiled and written by the pro-Moses group all condemn the ways of the older temple, implying that they were adopted from forbidden Canaanite practices. They called the temple tree that Josiah removed an Asherah, but all the Hebrew inscriptions with a similar name have it as Ashratah. The pro-Moses scribes changed the name, but the inscriptions have not been 'edited'. The original Ashratah was the Lady of the temple, the Mother of the LORD, and she had formerly appeared in the ancient poem now called the Blessing of Moses. The present Hebrew text is confused, but usually read as: 'The LORD came from Sinai... with *flaming fire* at his right hand... when *Moses* commanded us a law... thus the LORD became king in Jeshurun (Deuteronomy 33.2-4). The flaming fire is easily read as Ashratah, [*'šdt / 'šrth*, bearing in mind that *r* and *d* look similar in Hebrew]; and Moses looks very like 'anointed' [*mšh/mšḥ*]. It would have been a simple matter to change this poem about the first-temple ceremony when the anointed king, representing the LORD, read out the law and blessed the assembled people. At his right hand was the queen mother, representing the Lady[5] Changing a couple of letters transforms a poem about the old temple into a poem about Moses at Sinai. The Moses tradition celebrated the Law-giving at Pentecost, but there is evidence in the Hebrew scriptures, as we shall, see for the Law-giving at Tabernacles. Presumably this was an echo of the earlier custom.

Another example might be how one of the Lady's titles was changed. When Solomon's son Rehoboam was king, the pro-Moses writer described the state of the land: 'They built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there was also *a male prostitute* in the land.' (1 Kings 14.23-24). This sounds suspicious - one male prostitute - but if the word is read with different vowels, it is the name Qudshu, one of the many names of the Lady. It means 'Holy One'. The same thing happened in the account of Josiah's purges; he removed many *male prostitutes* from the temple, but with different vowels, they become holy ones, angels (2 Kings 23.7). Underneath the account of Josiah and the temple purges there may once have been the Lady and her angels who were driven out.

The practice of changing older Hebrew texts has long been recognised, but described as 'restorations of the scribes'.[6] The scribes removed what later generations perceived as blasphemies. In other words, the religion changed and so the holy texts had to change too. Some of these changes are well known, but there may be more than have been indentified so far. The pattern in the changes is clear: two objects of the scribes' attention were the Lady - as we have seen from the changes to Ashratah - and the 'sons of God'. So sensitive was the matter of the sons of God - the angels - that when the Hebrew text clearly said 'sons of God' it was forbidden to translate it that way. Thus R Simeon b. Yohai, in the mid-second century CE, said the words had to be translated 'sons of noblemen', and he cursed anyone who

[5] For example, in the poem about Wisdom in Ben Sira 24, there is confusion in the text around vv. 22-25, and Moses and the Law have been inserted into a poem about Wisdom.

[6] See D Barthélemy, 'Les Tiqquné Sopherim et la Critique Textuelle de L'Ancien Testament', Supplements to Vetus Testamentum IX (1953), pp.285-304.

translated the words as 'sons of God'.[7] Others simply changed the Hebrew text, and the 'sons of God' in Deuteronomy 32.8 became 'the sons of Israel'.[8] The implications of this for recovering the knowledge of Solomon's temple are very great. Since the Lady and the angels were removed from both the temple and from the Hebrew Scriptures, evidence for other changes to the temple is not likely to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Some non-biblical texts tell a different story, for example about the origin of temple customs. There is a longer version of part of Genesis, known as the Book of Jubilees, small pieces of which have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.[9] An assumption has developed among biblical scholars - maybe an unconscious assumption - that this book is in some way inferior to Genesis as a source of information about Abraham because it differs from the biblical text of Genesis. Jubilees says that some of the later Jewish temple festivals were not established by Moses, but by Abraham and the patriarchs. The feast of Tabernacles, for example, the greatest of the temple festivals, was celebrated in the autumn. The Moses tradition said it reminded the people of the time when they lived in the wilderness (Leviticus 23, 37-44), but in Jubilees, Tabernacles was the great festival inaugurated by Abraham at Beersheba to mark the birth of Isaac who would be the father of a nation of priests and a holy people (Jubilees 16.19-31). Abraham offered sacrifices and incense, and then cut branches of palm and willow to carry in procession around the altar seven times each day.

Solomon dedicated the temple at this time of the year, although the feast itself is not named (1 Kings 8.2, 64-66). As soon as they returned from Babylon, Jeshua and Zerubbabel set up an altar in Jerusalem and kept the feast of Tabernacles (Ezra 3.1-6). Later, Ezra gave a public reading of the Law at Tabernacles, before the people went to gather the branches and keep the festival (Nehemiah 1-18). Disciples of the prophet Zechariah added some of their own oracles to the end of their master's collection, and these show that at Tabernacles the LORD was expected to return with his angels as king of the whole earth. On that day living waters would flow from Jerusalem, and all nations would go to the temple to keep the festival (Zechariah 14). Tabernacles was associated with the return of the LORD as King, and several scholars have argued that the Davidic kings were enthroned at Tabernacles.[10] The Christians believed this. A great crowd waving palms and wearing white robes was one of the visions of heaven in the Book of Revelation. They stood before the throne of God on which the Lamb, that is, Jesus, was enthroned (Revelation 7.9-12). This was their heavenly Tabernacles.

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[7] *Genesis Rabbah* XXVI 5. See also P S Alexander, 'The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God', Journal of Jewish Studies 23 (1972), pp.60-71.

[8] Changing *bny yśr'l* to *bny 'lhym.* The Qumran text is broken, but shows *bny 'l,* so it cannot have had the Masoretic *bny yśr'l.*

[9] Jubilees is part of the Old Testament in the ancient church in Ethiopia.

[10] Starting with S Mowinckel, who argued this on the basis of several psalms and their original setting.

The Mishnah describes the rituals for Tabernacles in the time of Jesus: how the branches of palm, myrtle and willow had to be cut and tied into bundles. People carried them in procession into the temple whilst singing Psalm 118. The whole bundle was called a *lûlâb*, literally a palm, and when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey it must have looked like a Tabernacles procession (Mark 11.1-11). In a separate ritual, people went to gather willow branches which they then set up around the great altar, bent over to form a covering[11] There is no explanation of this ritual, but it was familiar to Christians. Hermas, a Christian prophet in Rome in the early second century CE, described a vision of a huge willow tree that covered all who were called by the name of the LORD. The angel of the LORD cut branches and gave one to each person. Then the angel took the branches back and examined them: the people whose branches were green with buds or green with buds and fruit were allowed into the angel's tower, which represented the temple or church. He gave them crowns of palm and white robes.[12] There were many conditions for the willow branches in Hermas's vision that made them unacceptable, just as there were many conditions that made the willow branches unacceptable for the Tabernacles ritual. Whatever the symbolism of the willow branch, it was an important part of Tabernacles, and for the Christians it was a sign of their status 'called by the name of the LORD' and an indication of their spiritual state.

The Mishnah also describes the all-night music and dancing in the temple courts which were illuminated by four giant candelabra. As dawn approached, two priests sounded their trumpets at intervals as they made their way from the court of Israel to the eastern gate. When they reached the eastern gate, they turned back to face the temple and proclaimed: 'Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs towards the temple of the LORD and their faces towards the east, and they worshipped the sun towards the east; but as for us our eyes are turned towards the LORD.'[13] The priests of the second temple emphasised that they kept Tabernacles differently from the older festival. They no longer turned east to pray at dawn, presumably at this festival. The prophet Ezekiel was the son of a first-temple priest and seems to have supported Josiah. He condemned a temple practice that could well have been the old-style Tabernacles. He received a vision, and the details are precise: twenty five men stood between the temple porch and the great altar, bowing towards the sun, and stretching out branches to their faces. Only priests were allowed to stand in that part of the temple, as Ezekiel would have known. The correcting scribes have changed this text, so that the priests are not holding branches up to *their* faces but sending wickedness or possibly a foul smell[14] into the face of the LORD – '*my face'*. The original 'branches' ritual looking towards the sun had no place in the second temple.

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[11] Mishnah *Sukkah* 4.5.

[12] *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitude viii.2.

[13] Mishnah *Sukkah* 5.4.

[14] The word branch, *zmwrh*, could be word play on *zmmh,* wickedness, reflected in the Lxx *muktērizontes,* sneering, but D J A Clines, *Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Sheffield, 2009, p.101, proposes the meaning 'stench'.

For the Christians, however,[15] the original form of the ceremony was very important. That vision in Revelation 7 of the heavenly feast of Tabernacles, with a vast throng holding palm branches before the Lamb on the throne, begins by describing 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. It was recalling the time of Solomon, before the kingdom divided and only two tribes were left in the southern kingdom. The people of the twelve tribes were waiting for an angel from the sunrise bearing the seal of the living God, who was to mark the servants of God on their foreheads. This would protect them from God's imminent judgement. In other words, they were waiting to be marked with the X, the ancient sign of the name of the LORD that was marked on the priests and protected them. The priests in the vision were not only drawn only from the house of Levi. The vision was the fulfilment of the Jubilees understanding of Tabernacles, which marked the birth of the father of *a nation of priests and a holy people*.[16] This is how Peter described the newly baptised Christians: 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people... called out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Peter 2.9). The Tabernacles vision represented the new temple and the new priesthood; or rather, the old temple and the old priesthood restored, and the King enthroned.

When John the Baptist was preaching to the Jews, he warned them not to think that being children of Abraham would save them from God's judgement: 'God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham' (Luke 3.8). When Jesus himself was debating with the Jews in the temple, they made the same claim – 'We are Abraham's children' - but Jesus said that they did not behave like the children of Abraham (John 8.39-40). Perhaps the most interesting of all is the fact that after Saul was converted and became a Christian, changing his name to Paul, he went away to Arabia for three years (Galatians 1.17). Why Arabia? It is possible that he went to the descendants of those first-temple priests who had settled there after Josiah's purges. What is certain is that when he returned, his understanding of Christianity was clear and he began to teach that the roots of his 'new' faith were in fact in the religion of Abraham and therefore were far older than the religion of Moses and his law. He first outlined this in an early letter (Galatians 3.6-9) and then developed it fully in his great letter to the Romans, where he wrote: 'The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law [of Moses] but through the righteousness of faith' (Romans 4.13). The Christians were building their faith on the promise to Abraham and so they were not bound by the law of Moses. Christianity, then, did not develop from Judaism as it was known in the time of Jesus, but from the earlier 'Hebrew' religion of the first temple that Josiah had purged, and that the 'restoring scribes' were removing from the Hebrew Scrioptures.

Now the transmission of any sacred text is a difficult matter to determine, but there are several clear examples of a Hebrew text used at Qumran being different from the one that

[15] So too the Essenes, Josephus, *War* 2.128, and the Therapeuts in Egypt, Philo, *Contemplative Life* 27.
[16] *Jubilees* 16.19-31.

became the standard 'Masoretic' Hebrew text at the end of the first century CE - the beginning of the Christian era. According to the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran,[17] Isaiah told king Ahaz to ask for a sign from *the Mother of the LORD your God* (Isaiah 7.11), and he gave the prophecy of the Virgin who would bear a son. The Masoretic Hebrew has 'Ask a sign from the LORD your God' - no Mother. This difference requires changing one letter into another that is very similar.[18]. According to the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran, the mysterious servant of the LORD was an *anointed* man, but the Masoretic Hebrew has a disfigured man (Isa.52.14). This difference requires removing, or adding, one letter to the end of the word. The Christians understood the word as 'anointed' and said this was a prophecy of Jesus, but the Masoretic text excludes this understanding. The Targum of Isaiah, however, the Aramaic translation made by a Jew, did have a text that said 'anointed'. So too the texts of Deuteronomy 32.8 and 32.43 are different in the Qumran and Masoretic forms, and in each case, the Masoretic text *excludes the Christian interpretation of the verse*. From this we could conclude that the Masoretic Hebrew text is not reliable as evidence of the scriptures that the Hebrew Christians knew and used, and so not the best source for what they knew about the first temple and its teachings.

It is widely recognised that the texts in the Old Testament include only a part of the older Hebrew traditions. We do not know what criterion was used to make the selection. The writers of the Book of Kings mention other texts, presumably the ones they used as sources: the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11.41); the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings 15.31; 16.20); the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings 22.45). There are several others. The compilers of the Pentateuch [the five Books of Moses] quote ancient poetry: the Blessing of Jacob (Genesis 49. 2-27); the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15.1-18); the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.1-43); there are many more. It is unlikely that the poems included in the Pentateuch were the only ancient Hebrew poetry.

One wonders, for example, if the compiler of Genesis knew the story in the Genesis Apocryphon, another version of Genesis found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which says that Abraham travelled down to Euphrates to its mouth, and then around the coast of Arabia until he reached the northern end of the Red Sea and thence returned to Hebron[19] The phrase 'rewritten scripture' is often used to describe this process, but who was doing the rewriting? Was it the compiler of the Genesis Apocryphon or the compiler of the Book of Jubilees, or was it the compiler of the biblical Genesis? The pro-Moses scriptures might not have wanted to included anything that legitimated the old Adam priests in Arabia. The Enoch tradition is quite clear that the returned exiles who built the second temple and who compiled the texts that became the Hebrew scriptures, were an 'apostate generation' and were rewriting the scriptures (1 Enoch 89.73; 104.10-11).

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[17] 1Q Isaiah A.

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[19] Genesis Apocryphon XXI.

The work of restoring the scriptures lost in the destruction of Jerusalem was linked to the name of Ezra, a controversial figure. The story about him in 2 Esdras is set at the beginning of the second temple period, when the exiles were returning, and it tells how he entered a visionary state and then dictated to his scribes the 94 lost books. He was told by God Most High to give to his people only 24 of the books, and to keep the other 70 only for the wise. The scribes had to write in an alphabet they did not know (2 Esdras 14.37-48). Ezra is also said to have introduced a new alphabet, the square character Hebrew that is the present Hebrew script. Before his time [the fifth century BCE] there had been the older 'palaeo-Hebrew' letters, a form of which is still used by the Samaritans. The new script was introduced to distinguish the 'Jewish' writings from the others.[20]

Most people accept that in its present form the story of Ezra and the holy books was written after the destruction of the second temple, about 100 CE, when Ezra's spiritual heirs were the scribes who decided which books, and also which versions of those books, should become the Jewish scriptures. Seventy books, the majority of the old scriptures, were not given back to the people. Presumably Ezra's scribes were the 'restoring scribes' who produced new versions of the scriptures for the new situation after the temple had been destroyed by the Romans. A significant factor in the new situation was the emergence of the Christians, with their claim to be restoring the older temple, and it was the Christians who preserved this Ezra legend, to explain the existence of far more holy books than became the Hebrew scriptures.

This raises again the question of the sources of material found in later Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Were they simply later elaborations of the biblical stories, or were they remembered and included by the later storytellers? The most famous example is the story of the fallen angels, mentioned briefly in Genesis 6 as the cause of the wickedness that led to Noah's flood. A much more detailed version of the story is told in 1 Enoch, but it would be unwise to assume that Enoch's story was the product of a later imagination. It was in fact the major myth of the first temple. Sins that Enoch attributed specifically to the fallen angels - metal working to make weapons, predicting the future with charms, even the invention of kohl to beautify eyelids - were known to Isaiah in the late eighth century BCE (Isaiah 2.6-8; 3.16-17), and there is much in Isaiah to suggest that he did know the story of the fallen angels. Presumably the story was not included in Genesis because that compiler did not want to include the major myth of the first temple that contradicted a fundamental of the pro-Moses group: personal responsibility for keeping the Law given to Moses. The myth of the fallen angels blamed their influence for human sin. The myth of the fallen angels - the sons of God - is the key to understanding the Book of Revelation, because it had been the myth underlying the day of atonement which preceded Tabernacles in the cycle of temple festivals. The goat who represented their leader Azazel was driven out into the desert, taking with him the sins he had caused. This link between the fallen angels in 1 Enoch and the day of atonement can only be reconstructed, however, from non-biblical sources such as the

[20] Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 21b.

Targums, the Mishnah and 1 Enoch.[21] The pro-Moses group even removed the day of atonement from their festival calendar (Deuteronomy 16.1-17).

It is clear that the world of Solomon's temple is unlikely to emerge from a study of biblical texts, and so we now look at a few examples of this other material, both Jewish and Christian, that may preserve memories of the older temple. Jewish material from a much later period has memories of the temple items that disappeared in the time of Josiah: the fire, the ark, the menorah, the Spirit and the cherubim is one list, preserved in the great commentary on Numbers. All these items, and presumably the teachings they represented, would be restored in the time of the Messiah. The Babylonian Talmud preserves the tradition that in the time of Josiah the ark, the anointing oil, the jar of manna and Aaron's rod were hidden away. [22] Origen, the great Christian biblical scholar who died in 253CE, knew that the temple furnishings represented the temple teachings, 'the secrets of mysterious Wisdom', that only the high priests could see, that is, know.[23] The earliest Christian writings show that these missing items were restored to their temple: the fire and the Spirit returned at Pentecost (Acts 2.1-4); the cherubim formed the throne in the holy of holies that was seen in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 4.1-11); the ark was seen again in the temple just before the Lady appeared (Revelation 11.19); and the menorah was seen by the throne (Revelation 4.5, as the seven torches, and Revelation 22.1-5 as the tree of life). The writer of Hebrews knew about the ark, the jar of manna, Aaron's rod, the ark and the cherubim, and that these things could not be discussed in public (Hebrews 9.3-5). The true temple was restored because the Messiah had come.

The menorah that represented the tree of life was restored to the temple. There had been a menorah in the second temple, as can be seen from the one depicted among the temple loot on the arch of Titus in Rome. Nevertheless, there was a cultural memory that this was not the true menorah: maybe it had stood in the wrong part of the temple, or maybe it no longer represented the tree of life. The true menorah, said the other voices, would only return in the time of the Messiah. Enoch was told by the archangel Michael that after the great judgement, the fragrant and beautiful tree would be restored again to the temple of the LORD, and its fruit would be given to the righteous and holy ones (1 Enoch 24.3-25.7). The menorah, the tree of life, was a symbol of Wisdom (Proverbs 3.18), and restoring the tree to the temple of the LORD represented restoring the Lady to the temple, restoring the so-called Asherah that Josiah had removed and burned. The Christians claimed that the story in Genesis 2—3 had been reversed: Adam and Eve had eaten from the forbidden tree and so lost access to the tree of life, but Jesus promised his faithful followers that they would once again have access to the tree of life (Revelation 2.7; 22.14).

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[21] See 'Atonement. The Rite of Healing' in my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.42-55.

[22] *Numbers Rabbah* XV.10; Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

[23] Origen, *On Numbers*, Homily 4.

The fragrant and beautiful tree also gave oil, the perfumed oil used in the temple was blended by Aaron to imitate the oil from the tree of life, according to an early Christian text.[24] Adam had been anointed with the true oil, not an imitation. When he had been driven from Eden and become a mortal, he knew he was approaching death. He sent Eve and Seth back to the gate of Eden to ask for some of the oil, here called the oil of mercy. Michael refused the request, and said that the oil would be restored only in the last days.[25]

The Garden of Eden where the tree of life had stood was Solomon's temple, and the story of Adam and Eve being driven from the garden encoded the story of the priests being driven from the first temple. These were not the priests whom Josiah expelled, who settled in Arabia; they were the priests who remained in the temple and accepted the new regime, those whom Enoch said had forsaken wisdom and thus caused the destruction of the temple.

The original story of Adam in the Eden/temple has not survived; but there are within the Hebrew scriptures two examples of the Eden story being rewritten.

- First, Ezekiel described an anointed angel figure who was driven from Eden because it[26] had abused its God-given wisdom. The original Hebrew text, as the old Greek translation shows, said the angel wore all the jewels of the high priest, and had been set in Eden as the great seal of the divine plan. But the angel high priest abused its wisdom for the sake of trade; it was driven from Eden, became mortal and died (Ezekiel 28.12.19)[27]. This text was itself rewritten to make it an oracle against Tyre; Tyre and Zion look very similar in the palaeo-Hebrew script, and the list of jewels was muddled.
- Second, there was the familiar story in Genesis 2—3, where Adam, before he was divided into male and female, was set in Eden. Adam had 'to till and to keep' the garden, but these words also mean 'to lead a temple liturgy and to preserved the teachings' (Genesis 2.15). Adam was created to be the high priest, but he ate from he forbidden tree and so lost access to the Wisdom of the tree of life. Like Ezekiel's angel high priest, Adam rejected wisdom, was driven from Eden, became mortal and died.

Adam returning to Eden and to the tree of life meant the original priesthood returning to the true temple.

There is nothing in the Genesis story to suggest that Adam had been created as a glorious angel-figure, and yet the non-biblical texts have considerable evidence for this glorious figure and for the original Eden story. The great Jewish commentary on Genesis notes that in Rabbi Meir's copy of Genesis, Adam had had garments of light, presumably the garments

[24] *Clementine Recognitions* 1.46.
[25] *Life of Adam and Eve* 36, 41, 42.
[26] The text is a mixture of masculine and feminine forms, and so I use 'it'.
[27] Compare Lxx Ezekiel 28.13, which has the full list of high priestly jewels as in Exodus 28.17-20.

he lost when he listened to the snake and realised that he was naked (Genesis 3.7).[28] Rabbi Meir's scroll is thought to be the master scroll that had been kept in the temple, which differed from later Hebrew texts.[29] All the Targums knew that Adam had garments of light. The Christians knew this too: Ephrem in fourth century Syria said that God clothed Adam in glory;[30] and at the same time in Egypt, Christians were reading that Wisdom gave her children high priestly garments woven from every wisdom.[31] These were the vestments for glory and beauty worn by Aaron the high priest (Exodus 28.2), but originally by Adam, the first high priest.

Another text outside the Bible answers the question: why was there a snake in Eden? The story in The Life of Adam and Eve begins with the creation of Adam, the image of the LORD God. The LORD God blew the breathe of life into his image, and the Targums say that this gave Adam the power of speech. Then the LORD God commanded all the angels to worship him. Satan refused, protesting that that Adam should worship him, because he had been created first and was the older. The LORD God then drove Satan and his angels from heaven. On earth, Satan plotted to have Adam expelled from heaven too.[32] Some said that Satan planted the second tree in Eden, and thus contrived to have Adam and Eve driven from Eden. Although this story is not in the Bible and there is no proof of its age, Jesus and the first Christians knew it. When Jesus, the new Adam, was tempted in the wilderness, Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world if he would, at last, worship him. Jesus refused. In the Book of Revelation, Satan worked through exactly the same system. The beast, the deceiver, gave breath to his image so that it could speak, and anyone who would not worship his image was to be killed. The servants of the beast wore his mark, which was his name, on their hands and on their foreheads (Revelation 13.13-17). The servants of the LORD wore *his Name* on their foreheads too; this was the X, used in the first temple to mark the high priests with the holy oil, and adopted by the Christians as their sign of baptism.

This, then, was Adam, the high priest of the first temple. He was the image of the LORD God, vested in glory, marked with the Name of the LORD. He had been the glorious angel figure that Ezekiel described, set in Eden as the seal of the divine plan. The LORD God had commanded the angels to worship him, and then he had fallen from heaven due to the wiles of Satan. The priests who fought with the Babylonians against the new regime in Jerusalem would have known about Adam the high priest. Their leader, recently driven from his heavenly temple and taking refuge in Arabia, would have seen himself as Adam. This may explain why the Kaaba is a cube-shaped structure, exactly like the holy of holies in Solomon's temple which was a 20 cubit cube lined with gold (1 Kings 6.20). The Kaaba is

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[28] Genesis Rabbah XX.12.

[29] J P Siegel, *The Severus Scroll*, Missoula MT: SBL, 1975.

[30] Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 2. So too in *The Book of the Cave of Treasures*, 1.

[31] *The Teaching of Silvanus*, CG VII.4.89.

[32] *The Life of Adam and Eve*, 12—16.

almost exactly the same size as Solomon's holy of holies,[33] and could have been the temple of the refugee priests.

Hints of Adam's original role can be heard underneath the present Hebrew text of Genesis. Adam was commanded 'to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it; and to have dominion...' (Genesis 1.28). Translated in this way, the words have caused many problems. But there is an echo of the older Adam underneath these Hebrew words:

- 'be fruitful' is very similar to 'be beautiful'[34];
- 'multiply', can also mean 'be great'[35];
- fill the earth [with glory];
- 'subdue' is similar to 'harness' or 'heal'[36];
- 'have dominion' implies maintaining peace, as did Solomon(1 Kings 4.21, 24).

This was Adam, the King and High Priest, vested with beauty and glory, and enthroned as the image of the LORD God. But Adam broke the covenant entrusted to him, and so he was not a faithful seal of the plan. This encodes the faithless priests whom Enoch described, those who abandoned Wisdom and so lost their spiritual sight. There is nothing of this in Genesis, but Hosea knew about it at the end of the eighth century BCE, the beginnings of the pro-Moses revolution. In despair at his people's sin, the LORD spoke through Hosea and said:

> I desire steadfast love, not sacrifice,
> And knowledge of the angels, rather than burnt offerings.
> But like Adam they transgressed the covenant,
> There they were faithless to me. (Hosea 6.6-7).

The covenant with Adam must have been based on steadfast love and knowledge of the angels, and this had become nothing more than a cult of bloody sacrifices.

The pro-Moses group redefined the concept of covenant. Scholars recognised long ago that the Sinai-style covenant with the ten commandments appears in the ancient Hebrew texts only from the late seventh century onwards. In other words, it appeared in the time of Josiah. Before that, there had been the covenant upheld by the first temple high priests. This was the covenant that bound the creation into one great system, and when this covenant was broken, the creation began to collapse. Isaiah described such a scene, when heaven and earth were withering away because the people had violated the divine statues and broken the everlasting covenant (Isaiah 24.5). The pre-exilic texts in Isaiah know nothing of Moses and the ten commandments.[37] It was this creation covenant that Adam had to secure with steadfast love and knowledge of the angels, that is, heavenly knowledge. This covenant

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[33] If we reckon a cubit as slightly over 50cm, this would make the holy of holies a cube of approximately 11m. The Kaaba is has a floor area of approximately 11m x 12m and is 13m high. This cannot be coincidence.

[34] *prh*, be fruitful; *p'r*, be beautiful.

[35] *rbh.*

[36] *kbš*, subdue; *ḥbš,* restrain, harness, bind up.

[37] There is a good summary of the history of covent concepts in E W Nicholson, *God and His People. Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

began to collapse when Adam chose knowledge from the forbidden tree, and so the ground was cursed and brought forth thorns and thistles (Genesis 3.17-19). He had rejected the tree of life and the Wisdom that bound all things together (Proverbs 3.20 LXX), he had lost access to the holy oil, the oil of mercy.

This Adam ideology had been the myth of the Davidic kings. Here are examples from three royal psalms.

- Psalm 89: David the servant of the LORD was anointed, and the LORD promised to support him with faithfulness and steadfast love. He became his firstborn son. The foundation of his throne would be righteousness and justice.
- Psalm 72: the people prayed that the LORD would give his justice and righteousness to the king, so that the mountains and hills would prosper and the poor would be helped.
- Psalm 110. The king was born as the LORD's son in the holy of holies when he was anointed with 'dew', the holy oil. He became a priest of eternity, Melchizedek. This was not a name; it was a title, written as two words: the king of righteousness / the king who brings righteousness.

In other words,when the Davidic prince was anointed, he became the firstborn 'son' of the LORD, his image. This was his heavenly birth, and in temple discourse, this was resurrection. The anointed one was, by definition, resurrected. His just rule, based on steadfast love [the gift of the anointing oil], enabled the creation to flourish and human society to prosper. He maintained the everlasting covenant because he was its seal. He was the original Adam.

In the Hebrew scriptures there is only one detailed description of an enthronement ceremony, and this is the Chronicler's account of how Solomon was made king (1 Chronicles 29.20-25). The Hebrew text is damaged, but reconstructing it in the light of the Greek version and also Psalm 110 which describes the same ceremony, something emerges from the confusion. First, it is clear that the assembled people *worshipped* the LORD and the king, but in / as one person. The LORD was the king and the-LORD-and-king sat on the throne of the LORD. The English is invariably a mistranslation because the Hebrew is so unexpected. Second, Solomon was anointed into a double role: as the LORD, the ruler [literally 'the one revealed'[38]] and as Zadok, the priest. This corresponds to the Psalm 110.3, another damaged Hebrew text, where the human prince becomes the son of the LORD - 'I have begotten you' - and also a priest like Melchizedek. Thus Solomon became the king/priest, MelchiZedek.

Zadok/ Zedek was an ancient title for the priest king in Jerusalem and it meant 'the Righteous One', 'the one who makes righteous'. AdoniZedek was king in the time of Joshua (Joshua 10.1, 3), and that name has the same form and meaning as MelchiZedek. Zadok anointed Solomon, but Zadok was the priest's title, not his personal name. The community

[38] Hebrew *ngd* means 'be conspicuous' and so to announce or reveal a mystery. The person is a 'leader', but there is the implication of a revealed leader.

described in the Damascus Document thought of themselves as the true sons of Zadok who had not gone astray, and they claimed for themselves the prophecies of Ezekiel, that they would serve in the true temple when it was restored (Ezekiel 44.15-16). Fragments of a Melchi-Zedek text were found at Qumran, and they show that Melchizedek was a divine figure, expected to appear again at the very time that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. There were high expectations that Solomon's temple would be restored at that time, or at any rate, its high priesthood.

The first Christians knew all this; they proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, as the new Adam (Romans 5.14; 1 Corinthians 15.22, 45), as Melchizedek (Hebrews 7.11-17), and as the Righteous one (Acts 3.14). One of their first hymns describes Jesus as the Adam high priest, upholding the everlasting covenant.

> He is the image of the invisisble God
> The first born of all creation...
> He is before all things,
> And in him all things hold together... (Colossians 1.15,17).

The Christians believed that the high priesthood of Solomon's temple had been restored. They believed too that the Lady had been restored to her temple and so they honoured Mary as the mother of the LORD. Visions in the Book of Revelation describe the seven fiery torches by the throne and the tree of life by the throne (Revelation 4.5; 22.2). Both were ways of describing the true menorah that had been banished from the temple by Josiah. The Lady was seen again in the temple, giving birth to her son who was taken up to sit on the throne of God (Revelation 11.19-12.6). The return of the menorah meant that the tree of life, the Lady, and her son the King had been restored.

For us today it is more difficult to reconstruct and so to restore Solomon's temple. We have to probe beneath the text of the Hebrew scriptures and beneath the many layers of biblical scholarship that have not been willing to look too far beyond the pages of the Bible; and we must be prepared to recognise that texts outside the biblical canon may preserve valuable information about Solomon's temple, perhaps even more information than is in the Bible itself.