



CORNUCOPIA

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LOOKING AT THE SALT LAKE TEMPLE THROUGH A HEIDEGGERIAN LENS

IN THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART (ORIGINALLY delivered in lecture form during 1935 and 1936 as *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*), German philosopher Martin Heidegger contrasts the “work-being” and “object-being” of works of art. When artworks are displayed in museums and galleries, Heidegger argues, they are treated as artifacts, as objects, severed from the context in which they were created: “The Aegina sculptures in the Munich collection, Sophocles’ *Antigone* in the best critical edition, are, as the works they are, torn out of their own native sphere. However high their quality and power of impression, however good their state of preservation, however certain their interpretation, placing them in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world.”

Consider this example: one walks into a Mormon home, encountering pictures of early LDS temples arrayed on the walls. Viewing a number of these pictures in tandem discloses a hint of the milieu these structures were created in, much more so than if one were viewing only a single picture. But even viewing them in a group, we come in contact more with the temples’ object-being than their work-being. Seeing them removed from the world of the late nineteenth-century American West and placed in a suburban home as objects of art obscures their work-being.

In order to discern the work-being of a work of art, we need to understand the social and natural setting within which the work was created. If, of course, the artwork was not created within our own socio-historical horizon, it is difficult to fully apprehend the atmosphere in which the work was made. Yet, in spite of our inability to fully imagine a work’s bygone world, to a great degree we can behold the work-being of a work by projecting a horizon of intelligibility from our knowledge of the culture in question and then interpreting the work accordingly—the enterprise of hermeneutics. (The importance of discerning a cultural horizon indicates Heidegger’s later emphasis on a whole

people rather than the lonely individual of the earlier *Being and Time*.)

For Heidegger, the work-being of an artwork consists of two essential features: the “setting up of a world” and the “setting forth of the earth.” What is the setting up of a world? The world (*Umwelt*, meaning environment or surroundings) is a conglomerate of the possibilities and destiny of a historical people: possibilities actualized or unactualized, possibilities recognized or unrecognized. The world is the meta-network, the totality of all the relations and associations in the history of a people.

Heidegger illustrates the concept of setting up a world with the Doric temple of Poseidon at Paestum (south of present-day Salerno, Italy). The work-being of the temple evokes the world of ancient Greek colonists who came to Paestum in 600 B.C.E. “It is the temple-work,” Heidegger says, “that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline, acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people.” The temple sets up a world by defining the horizon of the elements of destiny of a given historical people’s existence. The temple, standing in the valley and looking out over the ocean, is the locus of the settlers’ Being and from it opens up the horizon encircling their world, circumscribed by the hills and sea. The temple, as the center of the encircling horizon, sets up a world.

What does Heidegger mean by the setting forth of the earth? Heidegger equates earth (*Erde*) with ancient Greek *φύσις* (*phusis*, usually translated in English as “nature”). In simple terms, “earth” amounts to Heidegger’s concept of matter. Earth is that which gives things their thingliness, their presence. The earth is set forth in a work of art as the material instantiation of a people’s hopes, fears, desires. The temple at Paestum embodies the collective will of the colonists, their effort to create order—albeit temporarily—in the face of the impending chaos of the pounding surf and stormy sky: “Standing there, the building rests on rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock’s clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence.”

As the setting up of a world and the setting forth of the earth, the temple oriented the lives of these ancient colonists. Standing between heaven and earth, the temple

orients soil and sky, life and death, holiness and heresy, Being and nothingness, certainty and angst. "The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves." This is to say that "setting up" and "setting forth" should not be thought of in strictly spatial terms, but more important, in religious terms. The temple consecrates life by providing a meaning for the colonists' existence. It opens up the world of Poseidon and his people, gathering together and projecting the possibilities of their Being onto the horizon, and drawing the world back to the temple and grounding it in the rude temporality of corporeal existence.

IN LIGHT OF the foregoing interpretation of the temple at Paestum, it is hard for anyone who has spent much time in Salt Lake City to not think also of the temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Salt Lake Temple, constructed out of large granite blocks cut and hauled from nearby Little Cottonwood Canyon, rises up into the arid desert air from the valley floor to which the Mormon pioneers descended from the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains on 24 July 1847. By the time leader Brigham Young declared "This is the right place," it was too late in the summer to cultivate a robust harvest or build substantial housing. But these pioneers who had traveled across the plains on foot and in wagons managed to eke out a living, survive the winter, and eventually build their city and temple. Built over the next several decades, the temple rises from the vastness of the Salt Lake Valley, with Ensign Peak to the north, the towering Wasatch to the east, Draper Ridge and Traverse Mountain to the south, the Oquirrh in the southwest, and the Great Salt Lake and Antelope Island hemming in the valley to the northwest. The mountains encircling the long valley provide protection from the dangers of frontier.

This was the Mormon pioneers' new home, from henceforth their native land. This was Zion, Jerusalem of the latter days. The temple represents the human participation in the eternal, and in this way consecrates Salt Lake City, the Mormon's city of God on earth. The temple rests in the sheltering valley, on the land from which the pioneers coaxed just enough food to survive the winter. The temple rests below the protective mountains, which provided lumber to make homes and fuel to burn through the Rocky Mountain winter. By setting up the world of the Latter-day Saints' promised land, the temple sets forth the earth, this valley in which they formed their small civilization. As this people's world rises up from the temple and out to the surrounding mountains and across the lake, incarnating the horizon of their Being, the density of the mountains and the valley floor draws the world back in and down to earth, down to actuality, down into Temple Square. The earth provides the sheltering seclusion which enabled the Mormon pioneers to create a life here, grounding divine aspirations in earthly temporality.

Truth emerges in the work-being of both the Greek and

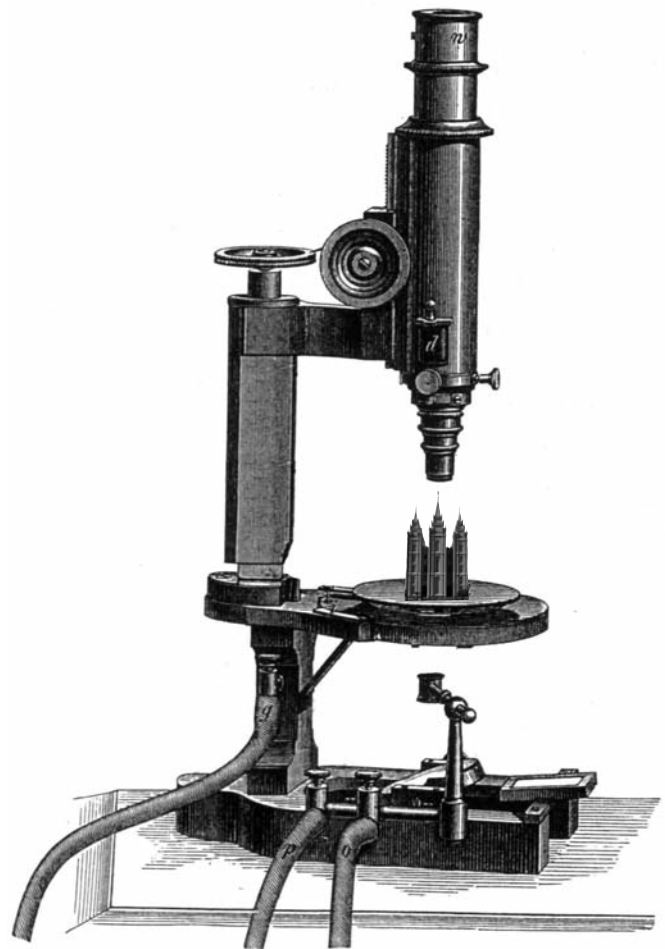


Fig. 20.

Mormon temple-works. Both temple-works set up the worlds of the respective historical peoples in which and for which the works were created. By setting up worlds, the works set forth the earth: the ancient hills and sea of the Mediterranean and the towering mountains of the Salt Lake Valley. These temple-works anchor the ancient Greek colonists' and Mormon pioneers' worlds, the worlds that embody their native ground, and the earth on which they made their homes. Thus, in art, human Being is unconcealed.

NOTE

This essay benefited greatly from the comments of Jacques Taminiaux, professor (now emeritus) of philosophy, Boston College.

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A place for every truth

DISPUTING THE WITNESSES

This regular Cornucopia column features incidents from and glimpses into the life and ministry of Elder James E. Talmage as com-

iled by James P. Harris, who is currently working on a full-length biography of this fascinating Mormon apostle. The column title is adapted from the statement inscribed on Elder Talmage's tombstone: "Within the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is room and place for every truth thus far learned by man or yet to be made known."

IN 1914, JAMES E. TALMAGE WROTE THREE journal entries regarding Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Watchtower Tract and Bible Society, now more commonly known as Jehovah's Witnesses.

On 17 May 1914, while visiting an LDS stake conference in Milwaukee, Talmage attended a meeting at the Great Auditorium where he heard "Pastor A. H. Macmillan of New York, who spoke on the subject, 'Pastor Russell's Teachings Examined.'" Pastor Alexander Hugh Macmillan was an official in the early Watchtower Bible and Tract Society movement. He and others in the movement thought that the end of the world/Second Coming would happen in October 1914. Captured in his journal entries is Elder Talmage's concern that LDS Church members were being influenced by Charles Taze Russell's writings.

Talmage's somewhat lengthy journal entry about the lecture reads in part:

This occasion afforded another of the many evidences I have observed of Pastor Russell's influence and popularity with certain classes of people. [. . .] Some of the Pastor's teachings have been seized upon with favor by multitudes; and needless to say he has been assailed by the ministers of orthodox churches. The fact is beyond effective contradiction that Pastor Russell has been a student of 'Mormon' literature, and most of the telling points in his so-called system are based upon the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, or the scriptures given to the world through that Prophet's instrumentality. For example, Russell proclaims the possibility of repentance and progression beyond the grave; the absolute kinship of man and deity; the ultimate celestializing of the earth whereby this planet shall become the abode of the righteous who have dwelt upon it in tabernacles of flesh. These doctrines and others are regarded by many as original discoveries to be credited to Pastor Russell and his associates, whereas they were taught and published in the early days of the history of the restored Church. It is regrettable that in many instances, the Pastor changes the plain simple truth as revealed and colors it with the indelible dye of his own error. Notably is this the case in his teachings regarding the resurrection, which he declares does not comprise an actual reuniting of the spirit with the body, but is simply a spiritual awakening from the sleep which begins with bodily death.

Talmage concludes the journal entry by stating "Such doctrines as Pastor Russell proclaims to the world are dangerous in that they embody enough truth to be attractive combined with error in toxic amounts."

About three weeks later, on 8 June 1914, Talmage was addressing a Monday night priesthood meeting in the Ensign Stake in Salt Lake City. In his remarks, he

warned the brethren against careless and indiscriminate reading, pointing out that much of current literature, particularly on theological subjects, is a mixture of truth and error. I mentioned the work being done by Charles Taze Russell, of Brooklyn Tabernacle, and expressed the belief that he had been a student of Mormon literature. Today [9 June 1914] I received a letter from Brother Gomer M. Richards, who was present at the meeting. Brother Richards states that he and Elder William E. Pugh were missionaries in Pennsylvania in the late autumn of 1901, and that they met both the Pastor and his wife from whom, however, he had been separated on the wife's complaint. Both Mr. and Mrs. Russell stated that they had read the 'Mormon publications,' and believed they had in their separate possession all important books published by the Church.

Talmage made his final remark on this subject on 23 August 1914, when he wrote: "I attended a lecture at the Salt Lake Theatre by a representative of Pastor Russell of New York on 'The Second Coming of Christ.' The address was replete with misapplications of scripture and garbled truth."

Scripture notes

HOW SEXY IS THE SONG OF SOLOMON?

In this regular column, Michael Vinson, a master's graduate of the Divinity School of the University of Cambridge and resident of Star Valley, Wyoming, delves into personal and scholarly aspects of scripture.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine.

SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2

OK, I ADMIT I WROTE THAT TITLE TO SEE HOW many readers I could grab. But you must admit that of all the books in the Old Testament, the Song of Solomon is looked upon with the most suspicion in the Church, and some of you may remember Church leaders warning against studying the Song of Solomon.

At first glance, the title, "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's," leads us to believe that Solomon wrote the song.



But the Biblical Hebrew construction of placing two nouns side by side usually indicates a superlative like “the best.” When the two nouns are followed by a possessive sign, as Solomon is here, the title could be read as “Solomon’s best [or favorite] song.”¹ Though he is mentioned twice, Solomon is probably not even one of the main characters in this song. Ancient Jews believed it was a song that he enjoyed either hearing or singing in his court. One Jewish tradition has it that Solomon is one of the names of God in the Song, so the title could also be rendered as “God’s Favorite Song.”²

Many have wondered what a book like the Song of Solomon is doing in the Bible, period. Joseph Smith’s Bible has a note reading “the Songs of Solomon are not inspired writings,” and he did not include the poem in the Joseph Smith Translation. Daniel H. Ludlow (former director of Church Correlation) gets right to the point for many LDS scholars: “This brief book of eight chapters contains virtually nothing that is edifying so far as the gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned.”³

But “not inspired” is not the same as “not of value,” so I would like to consider here what the Song of Solomon offers Latter-day Saints. After all, the Lord found the Song of Solomon inspiring enough to quote a verse from it three times in the Doctrine and Covenants, referring to the young

Church as a beautiful wife: “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (Song 6:10; D&C 5:14, 105:31, and 109:73).⁴

If the Lord quotes from the Song of Solomon, you might wonder when he would have heard it during his earthly lifetime. The Song of Solomon is one of the five “little scrolls” or Megilloth, which are sung on festive occasions and holy days. The Song of Solomon was sung on the eighth day of Passover as a celebration of God’s love for his bride, the covenant people. In addition, four different manuscripts of the Song of Solomon have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were roughly contemporary with Jesus, indicating that the Qumran sect of antiquity also perceived the book as holy.

Some scholars believe the Song of Solomon was sung at ancient wedding banquets; in fact, at least one rabbi’s complaint about singing the Song in banquet halls has been preserved. Rabbi Akiba (who lived just after the time of Jesus, around 50–135 CE) said, “He who recites a verse of the Song of Songs and treats it [in a secular manner] and one who recites a verse at the banqueting table [making it the subject of secular amusement], brings evil upon the world.”⁵

The Song may also have been sung by young women dancing out of doors in a courtship celebration during the fall harvest when they could woo young men. Rabbi Simeon

ben Gamaliel (ca. 140 CE) writes of those celebrations, “There were no happier days for Israel . . . for on them the daughters of Jerusalem used to go forth in white raiments . . . and the daughters of Jerusalem went forth to dance in the vineyards.”⁶ So it perhaps not too surprising that the Lord was familiar with the Song and would quote it in Latter-day revelation.

Though the Song of Solomon is largely ignored in Church today, the twelfth century saw an explosion of interest in it, when more commentaries were written about this book of the Bible than any other. Why the intense interest in the Song? The twelfth century was when “romantic” love was being re-discovered (as compared to arranged marriages for wealth, status, or advancement). A debate raged about whether the Song was an allegorical expression of God’s love for the Church, or whether it was just a poem about the physical love of a woman for her man. Perhaps not ironically, the twelfth century’s greatest commentator on the Song, Bernard of Clairvaux (who wrote 82 sermons about it), was also the fiercest critic of the greatest love affair of the 12th-century, that of Abelard and Heloise: Bernard tried to secure the death penalty for Abelard.⁷

The same dualistic interpretation of the Song of Solomon that provoked the 12th century still makes many Latter-day Saints uncomfortable today—is it an erotic love story or an allegory of God’s love for his Church? The most compelling and productive answer is, “Both.” Without the Song of Solomon, we would lack a Biblical basis for a positive consideration of one of the most beautiful human experiences—sexual love, and we would also be deprived of a compelling metaphor for the love of the Lord for his Church.

Our tendency in Church meetings is to avoid discussion of sexuality (even in adults-only classes such as priesthood meetings and Relief Society). The only place it might be discussed is in marriage counseling, and even there I have my doubts. Perhaps the greatest harm from ignoring the Song of Solomon in Church is that we deprive married couples of a sexual discourse that they could use to approach and resolve their own problems of intimacy. It might be possible to use the Song of Solomon to fill this void. After all, the poem does not celebrate adultery or fornication; it is clear from the context that though the young maiden (the primary voice in the Song) yearns for a young shepherd whom she loves, no sexual intimacy occurs between them until they are married.

What if we used the Song of Solomon as a text for the Marriage and Family course? Imagine a class discussion based on these five words: “thy love is better than wine.” We could talk about how the Hebrew word for love here, *dodim*, means intimate caresses and lovemaking—and we might also mention that it is plural, meaning multiple acts.⁸ The word “wine” is also idiomatic in ancient Hebrew, referring to “banquets of pleasure.”⁹ The best translation for this verse might be “our lovemaking is better than drinking or feasting.”

Perhaps that discussion could lead to current research on

the benefits of an active sexual relationship with one’s spouse. One study found that couples who have sex twice or more per week reduce the risk of fatal heart attack for men by half, compared to couples who have sex less than once a month.¹⁰ An active sexual relationship can also raise immunity levels by promoting production of immunoglobulin A, which can help protect people from colds and other infections. Sex also promotes trust and intimacy in marital relationships by releasing the hormone oxytocin, also associated with pain relief and sleep promotion—the more physical contact, the higher the levels of oxytocin.

The Song leads us to ask how many of us are still so deeply in love with our spouse that we would celebrate his or her beauty and charms so poetically? Remember that verse from the Song that the Lord quoted three times in the D&C about his Church? It came, appropriately enough, from chapter 6, the husband’s celebration of the awesomeness of his wife.

How does this sound? Let’s strengthen the marriages in our church as well as the health of its members by reading the Song of Solomon together with our spouses, remembering to follow the advice of our prophets and apply the scriptures to our daily lives. Who said obedience is onerous?

NOTES

1. See a great new book by Joel M. Hoffman, *And God Said: How Translations Conceal the Bible’s Original Meaning* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Thomas Dunn Books, 2010), 78–81. The most exhaustive study of the Song of Solomon remains Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Song of Songs* (New York: Doubleday, 1977).

2. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) 6: 277.

3. Daniel H. Ludlow, *How to Get the Most from Your Study of the Old Testament*, cited at ldslibrary.org. He later revised his thoughts and agreed with the LDS Bible Dictionary definition that the Song was a useful metaphor of the love of the Lord for His Church.

4. Though I note here the small group of LDS scholars who insist (in yet another violation of Occam’s Razor) that these scriptures in the D&C are not quoting the Song of Solomon; instead they come from a now-lost and unknown book of scripture which the author of the Song of Solomon must have quoted from (implying, of course, that the Lord would not quote from the Song of Solomon).

5. B. Sanhedrin 101a in Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1935) VI: 684.

6. M. Taanith 4: 8 in Herbert Danbury, ed., *The Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 201.

7. Ann W. Axtell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 10, notes that in the Middle Ages, the soul was considered feminine; hence monks at this time identified their souls as feminine and God as the Bridegroom. See also Betty Radice and M.T. Clanchy, eds., *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

8. See Ezekiel 23:17, which uses this word to refer to the “bed of love,” and Proverbs 7:18, where the harlot says to the foolish young man, “let us take our fill of love till the morning.” The root of the word used for lovemaking here appears to signify “to move by thrusts or pushes” (see C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) 6: 512).

9. Dr. A. Cohen, *The Five Megilloth* (London: Soncino Press, 1974), 1.

10. See www.webmd.com/sex-relationships/features/10-surprising-health-benefits-of-sex

Notes from inside

FOURTEEN DAYS

IN THOSE FLEETING MOMENTS BETWEEN dreaming and consciousness, relief appears real as my mind says, “Oh, it was only a dream.” But the short reprieve dissipates as I have to account for the giant knot in my guts. Unwanted images scroll through my head, and I realize that my nightmare is still here. It’s my real life.

Heartache consumes my chest, and once again I find that it takes nearly everything I have just to breathe. Sleep-deprived reasoning suggests that if I can just make the thick air move in and out, something will eventually heal. It has to, right? So I just focus on drawing in the next breath.

The support group assures me that I will not feel like this forever. “Two years” they say, “is what it usually takes. You have to give it some time.” That word. Ugh! “Time” implies a future, and the future is well beyond my ability to process. They say that I should take care of myself for now and see how I feel in two weeks.

I once thought that only losing a child could cause someone to hurt this deeply. Some of the people in the support group have lost children. One lost her only child, but she said

that for her, this hurt was more devastating. I groaned at the implication. First for me, but then for her. One man in the group declared, “I have more heart than this has hurt!” Strong and inspiring words, but . . . I don’t know.

Two weeks?

I focus on my breathing, I do the “time” and find that, even if ever so slightly, I do feel different. “Two more weeks” the strangers tell me. In my mind I scream, “But this is going to take forever!” Out loud, I ask myself, “How do people do this? Would she have done this if she knew it would do this to me? How could this have happened to us?” Again I breathe, I listen to the words of the group, and do as I am told, “OK,” I tell them, “I will report back in two weeks.”

In two weeks she realizes that *this* is not just an initial reaction. Two weeks later, with my head on her lap, I sob as she confides in me with all the wrong words. Two weeks more and I continue to cry—just not for hours at a time. Another two weeks, and I run out of paid leave. Two more weeks, and I still can’t stop asking her why. Two weeks, and more truth trickles in, and I cry very hard. Two weeks, and I find the will to stand up for myself. Two weeks, and I resist scouring her phone records one more time.

Two weeks, and I’m thirty pounds lighter. Two weeks, and I pass one whole day without tears. Two weeks, and I come to accept that I will never be able to time travel, I can’t go back and stop them, and I will never forget what they did. Two weeks, and I consider forgiveness as an option. Two weeks, I wonder if I am deluding myself. Two weeks, and she whispers sincere apologies in my ear as she holds me tight at night.

Two weeks, and the knot in my stomach begins to loosen. Two weeks, and I tell her I will never go through this again—ever! Two weeks, and I tell her I still love her. Two weeks, two weeks, two weeks . . .

In increments of fourteen days, two years have nearly passed. I am sad to report that most days, I still think about what happened, and I still carry sunglasses—just in case. The two of us walk in a sober world, we do take better care of each other, and it is better to be together than apart. It is hard to define exactly what I lost, or how I would value it now. I would like to think that I have become wiser in the past two years. But instead, I am only aware of just how far behind I was, and how much further I may still have to go.

How am I doing now? I’m not really sure. Maybe check back in a couple of weeks.

ANONYMOUS

