

Abstract: *“A Temple Studies Bibliography,” located on the Academy for Temple Studies website (<http://www.templestudies.org/home/introduction-to-a-temple-studies-bibliography/>), boasts over 8,000 entries focused on ancient temples from the Mediterranean and the Near East and modern expressions of temple building and worship, primarily in the Latter-day Saint (Mormon) community. This review details the bibliography’s extensive strengths and comprehensive nature, identifies current limitations that will be resolved with full release of the resource, suggests future improvements, and gives examples of how this bibliography can be used to enhance scholarship in the growing field of temple studies.*

This review hopefully will encourage readers to acquaint themselves with and take advantage of an extensive resource in the burgeoning field of temple studies. “A Temple Studies Bibliography” currently contains over 8,000 entries related to the temple, focusing on ancient temples from the Mediterranean area and the ancient Near East (Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Israelite, Jewish, etc.) and modern expressions of temple building and worship, primarily in the Latter-day Saint (Mormon) community. Danel W. Bachman, the bibliography’s primary creator and editor, began the list in 2006 as an integral part of his own research on temples and has continued to build and improve it since that time. The bibliography was made publicly available on the website of the “Academy for Temple Studies” (www.templestudies.org) in October 2012. It has continued to receive significant additions and editing since 2012, with over 1,200 additional entries over that time and thousands of editing changes, including the addition, standardization, and refinement of key words that aid in the bibliography’s use and other helpful features such as the ability to identify recent additions to the bibliography.

Current Limitations

[Page 86]The list is still, to a certain degree, in its formative stages prior to full publication. This means that users must rely on search functions such as Control+F or Command+F. Advanced search capabilities, such as the ability to refine, maintain, and download or print search lists, are planned for the future. For now, users are limited to searching simple, precise words or phrases in the list. Because of the bibliography’s length, it is maintained in three alphabetic sections, so users must search each of the three pages individually. Additionally, at the time this review is being written, the list shows no additions since late 2013. Thus, the bibliography currently contains limited listings from 2013 and no listings from 2014 or 2015. Bachman, however, has prepared a list of over 500 additional references (bringing total entries in the bibliography to over 8,500), which is scheduled for release concurrently with this review. This extensive addition will bring the bibliography almost completely up to date with the most recent contributions to temple scholarship. Published bibliographies are, by nature, outdated almost from the day of publication; from this perspective, “A Temple Studies Bibliography” is well ahead of its initial 2012 publication date and will continue to receive updates to stay abreast of the current state of the scholarly conversation. The introductory page of the bibliography requests assistance from those who find errors or those who can add additional sources to the list.

Benefits

Notwithstanding these current limitations, the bibliography is easy to use, provides immediate results that will rapidly lead its users to temple scholarship in their particular subset of research interest, and is remarkably clean of typos or other errors. Prepared by those with training and extensive experience in the field, it will save both the academic and the lay user countless hours of research time, will help ensure that relevant scholarship is not passed over or ignored, and will enable scholars to build more effectively on the foundation of what has gone before. For LDS scholars, there is at times a tendency to ignore the best of non-LDS scholarship in their writing and instead superimpose their own, modern viewpoints on ancient practices and settings. On [Page 87]the other hand, there may be a tendency outside LDS circles to ignore or mistrust the vibrant, living insights that come from a modern, temple building religious community. This bibliography can help bridge that gap and act as a corrective to those tendencies by including research on ancient temples side by side with publications on current temple practices within the LDS community. Using the search features can help researchers filter out content that is irrelevant for them, while the content is still accessible as needed. It should be noted that while the bibliography seeks for comprehensiveness, those who are unfamiliar with the scholarly literature on temple studies should not assume that all entries are of equal value or quality. Users will need to be discriminating in their decisions regarding what

As a biblical scholar interested in Ritual Theory, the Day of Atonement, and the Divine Ascent, I was interested to explore how the list could aid my research. In a scan of the prepared list of key words, I immediately located search words that would rapidly lead me to the most helpful sources and bypass other entries. The most important keywords for my unique approach to the topic include “ascent,” “festivals,” “liturgy,” and “ritual.” Several other keywords help point to specific aspects of the divine ascent on the Day of Atonement or point to texts and practices that prepared for, built upon, or connected with imagery and practices from that Jewish holy day. These include, among others, “ablutions,” “anointing,” “cosmology,” “First Temple,” “heavenly temple,” “mountain,” “preparation,” “presence,” “sacred space,” “sacrifice,” and “Second Temple.” Additionally, some words or phrases that have not been listed as keywords are likely to show up in titles and can be easily searched, such as “atonement,” “Day of Atonement,” and “high priest.”

When I pressed Control+F on my keyboard and searched “ascent,” I located 129 references that dealt in some way with the topic. It took me about twenty minutes to scroll through the entire list and identify approximately fifteen articles that I had never found before and that fit my research interests most closely, providing me a focused and comprehensive bibliography (for my purposes) within less than half an hour. Having spent countless hours researching the topic, I was thrilled with these rapid results. Two references were of particular interest: a book from 2011 by Andrei Orlov that I was embarrassed to have missed in prior research, *Dark Mirrors: Azazel and Satanael in Early Jewish Demonology*, and a 1999 dissertation by Seth Sanders titled “Writing, Ritual, and Apocalypse: Studies of Ascent to Heaven [Page 88]in Ancient Mesopotamia and Second Temple Judaism.” As I scanned the references, I was pleased to see the most important references that I had already located and relied on in my past research. A quick search into a secondary theme from the Day of Atonement, “sacred vestments,” provided 133 references, including about ten that appeared most helpful for my studies. A search for Day of Atonement provided twenty-two sources, a few of them new to me and almost all of them relevant. One article I wanted to check for inclusion was there as I had hoped: Belleli’s 1905 article on “The High Priest’s Procession on the Day of Atonement.” I also found an article discussing possible connections between Hebrews and the Day of Atonement, a topic of importance to me.

As mentioned earlier, a surprising and pleasant result of searching the bibliography for relevant resources was finding talks and books by LDS Church leaders that touched upon the subject. As a Latter-day Saint, I was interested to return to these sources to see how Church leaders had approached the topic. For a non-LDS researcher, they provide insight into how a religion that employs modern temple practices describes and relies upon those practices. Scanning and using the bibliography offered other pleasant surprises and side-benefits. For a number of years I have been interested in research on women and the Mosaic Law. Although the topic has clear connections to Israelite temples, I had never purposefully researched the topic using that lens. Since “women” is one of the keywords provided by the bibliography, I performed a quick search to see if any helpful sources would leap out and was pleased to uncover a number of useful references, including one that is most pertinent to my studies: Richard Whitekettle’s “Leviticus 12 and the Israelite Woman: Ritual Process, Liminality, and the Womb.”

Another unexpected side-benefit of using the bibliography was the way it expanded my view of the subject and encouraged me to explore aspects of temple studies that I had previously ignored. My research has always focused more on literature than on archaeology, but the addition of archaeological study is in many ways crucial to provide real-world examples of the often idealized or highly edited descriptions found in texts. The addition of literary studies is at times crucial to provide meaning and context for what is uncovered by archaeologists. My use of the bibliography, however, did not only encourage me to better explore new topics and avenues of research but also introduced me to new names in temple scholarship. As I reviewed the list and found an article title of interest to me, I often found that other articles by the same author were equally intriguing. George Ernest Wright was a name that was already [Page 89]somewhat familiar to me, a scholar from 1930s–40s. Scanning the list of his temple-related publications encouraged me to explore his scholarship further. Scholars who have appreciated Margaret Barker’s approach to temple studies can scan the list to make sure they have accessed the full range of her temple scholarship, and those who have not been introduced to her work can easily identify its importance.

Areas of Possible Improvement

In all, “A Temple Studies Bibliography” provides invaluable tools for researchers with a focus on the temple. Planned improvements — heightened search capabilities and fully up-to-date bibliographic additions — will continue to be put into place as the bibliography moves closer to its full release. As it continues to expand, there are areas that this researcher hopes will be considered for future inclusion, although they would require a significant addition of scholarly material. The material on modern Mormon temples and on ancient temples from the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean is very strong, but the intervening centuries could still benefit from additional attention. The concepts of sacred space (in churches, mosques, and synagogues), of priestly authority (whether priests, pastors, rabbis, or imams), and of ritual and liturgy throughout the centuries provide rich ground for continued temple research in Christianity (particularly in its Roman Catholic and Orthodox manifestations, but also in Protestantism), Judaism, and Islam. Much of the scholarship on these topics is not relevant to temple studies, but other scholarship is clearly connected to and sheds light on the influence of ancient temple practices. Additionally, although Mormon temples have been included as a prominent part of the list, certainly because they are one of the only modern religions that overtly builds upon biblical temple themes, other religious traditions could also provide fertile soil for research, either from a comparative standpoint or to investigate the possibility of ancient points of contact and influence. Again, much of the scholarship on sacred space/temples, religious ritual, and priestly authority from other religious traditions would not be relevant, but scholarship from Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Shinto, Baha’ism, and other world religions could provide useful insights for temple studies. The ability to filter, refine, and focus searches would greatly reduce any concerns of building a list that is too large or too inclusive. If needed, the list could also be tagged with a few headings that would allow users to easily create specialized lists [Page 90]only including Mormon temple studies, Hindu temple studies, Israelite temple studies, etc.

While future possibilities for this list abound, the bibliography as it exists today provides a tool that is ready for use and is specifically targeted to the interests of those most heavily involved in temple studies.