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The ancient temple is central to the economic structure of society

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18. “The temple and its cult are central to the economic structure of ancient Near Eastern society”¹¹⁶

The word “cult”¹¹⁷ means simply the ceremonies and ordinances performed in conjunction with sacred space. Some fundamentalist Christians like to say that the Mormons are a cult, but when we use the word correctly, so are the Catholics, and the Baptists, and any other group that performs rites as a part of religious their beliefs. The entire ceremonial function of the Temple of Solomon is appropriately be called “cultic” by Bible scholars.

The primary object of the Book of Mormon is to help prepare people to come to Christ—an invitation whose ultimate realization is reserved for the pure in heart—for people who are, individually and collectively, Zion (3 Nephi 12: 8, D&C 97: 21). In the Book of Mormon, one of the last and most important stations along the way toward eternal life is charity.¹¹⁸ In the Doctrine and Covenants the goal to which we reach is the law of consecration. Charity is what one *is*, the law of consecration is what one *does*. They are simply two sides of the same coin. The Book of Mormon leads its readers to charity and thus to the personal fulfillment of the law of consecration. It invites each one to be a part of the eternal, celestial society where the law of consecration is the bases of the central economic structure of a Zion society.

Here again, in its objective, function, and fulfillment, the Book of Mormon comes closer to the legitimate economic function of a temple than did the three dimensional temples of the ancient Near East. There, the temple's symbolism was often the authority by which the priests collected offerings and directed the economic affairs of the temple property and sometimes even of the state. The Book of Mormon offers no such symbolism. In reality it leads every individual who will, to personally participate in the most sacred and exalting economic order of heaven.

¹¹⁶Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 59.

¹¹⁷For a discussion of the meaning of “cult” see Baker and Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord* (2011 edition), 118-20.

¹¹⁸For a discussion of the meaning of faith, hope and charity see Baker and Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord* (2011 edition), 696-722.