

upon early Christianity already before the discoveries at Qumran, especially in his 1930 dissertation on the Pseudo-Clementines; later, he stressed the relationship between the Gospel of John and the Samaritans.

(2) In opposition to Rudolf Bultmann, who attempted to “demythologize” salvation history, Cullmann understood this history as the insoluble core of the NT and saw in Christ the center of time, to which Christian eschatology gives its special character: the decisive event *already* has occurred with the cross and the resurrection; the final victory over evil is *still* to be expected at the end of time.

(3) Cullmann based his conception of ecumenism (unity of the church in diversity) upon his understanding of the Holy Spirit in the NT, which promotes the diversity of the *charismata*.

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Matthieu Arnold

Cult

- I. Ancient Near East
- II. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- III. New Testament
- IV. Judaism

I. Ancient Near East

One cannot speak of a uniform ancient Near Eastern cult. Cultic practices varied from land to land, city to city and even from temple to temple, and underwent chronological development in individual places. In fact, each god or goddess could be worshipped in his or her own unique manner. Understanding the different cults also varies because of capriciousness of discovery, some cults being well documented in many aspects, and others hardly known at all. The most coherent, comprehensive ancient depiction of a single cultic system is in fact that of the tabernacle presented by the so-called Priestly Source (P) in the Pentateuch; but even this portrait is not entirely complete, is hierocentric and undoubtedly utopian, and although not fully fictitious its background and historical referent are subjects of scholarly debate. Nonetheless, certain basic features characterizing the where, who, when and what of all ancient Near Eastern cultic systems can be delineated based on copious evidence gleaned from archaeological remains of temples and cultic implements, contemporary pictorial representations of ritual performances, and texts deriving from or relating to the cult.

The cult practiced among the various peoples of the ancient Near East can be best described by the phrase coined by Assyriologist, A. Leo Oppenheim’s, “the care and feeding of the gods.” This basic role was fulfilled by offering the gods “sacrifices” of food stuffs and was expanded to include prayer as well as paying them homage through hymn, gesticulation, prostration and presenting gifts of various sorts. The cult was not performed silently for rites of all sorts also entailed prayers, hymns, and lamentations which could be accompanied by music. In return for human support and adoration it was hoped that the gods would behave benignly and even favorably towards the worshippers, granting them prosperity, well-being and cosmic stability.

The main locus of cult was the temple. Temples were supported by the community but were built by kings who expected to reap the benefits of divine blessings such as longevity and stable reign; but the ultimate beneficiary was the public at large. Unlike modern synagogues, churches and mosques, the temple's primary function was not a house of worship where the people gathered to serve or beseech a transcendent, omnipresent deity or one dwelling in heaven. Instead, it was a grand divine residence, referred to as the "House of God X" where the god or goddess was immanent, represented or embodied in the form of some physical object, usually an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic cult statue. The essence of all ancient Near Eastern temples is expressed concisely by Exod 25:8: "They shall make me a sanctuary and I will be present among them." In biblical religion this concept undergoes refinement and tangible signs of divine presence eventually disappear, but even while becoming a "house of prayer" the link between the divine presence and the temple is never totally severed. When a new or rebuilt temple was initiated the divine symbol was introduced, the deity thereby establishing residence, and continued presence was ensured by ongoing sacrifices as well as purgatory and prophylactic rituals aimed at maintaining the temple's purity and suitability for permanent divine presence. Temple architecture varied from place to place, reflecting differing concepts of the relationship between the deity and the worshipper; some temples providing intimate contact between the two, other temples shielding the god from contact with the mundane and profane. The idols or symbols of the gods were sometimes displayed outside the temples as well.

So as not to force human will upon the divine, the god's permission had to be received before building a temple or restoring a cult statue, and the temple layout or form of the statue was often determined in consultation with the god. If the resident deity became angry or displeased with the people, he could abandon the temple, leading to its destruction.

Lay people frequented the temples as individuals or in groups on holidays, public occasions, or for various private reasons, but their presence was not essential for the temple's running. Temples were operated by well-pedigreed, professional "priests" or "priestesses," trained and expert in properly performing the cult. These officiants were not spiritual leaders who preached to or pastured the people in the ways of God, religiosity and morality, but, rather divine servants on the one hand, and members of the divine retinue on the other. In addition to those who engaged specifically in performing the cult, temples maintained numerous laborers, crafts-people and bureaucrats involved in the physical aspects of temple maintenance and

providing for its needs. These people and their families were supported by income derived from the cult, sharing in the sacrifices after first giving the deity his portion.

The cultic calendar consisted of regularly occurring rituals, performed daily or upon fixed dates throughout the month and year, as well as *ad hoc* rituals when marking one time events was necessary. The regularly occurring events could be coordinated with agricultural life or astral events reflecting the natural world order, but could also be given mythical or historical significance.

In addition to their role as divine residences where the needs of the deity were attended to, the temples also were given symbolic meanings. The Jerusalem temple was a divine garden as expressed in its décor, while Mesopotamian temples were given special Sumerian names expressing their cosmic role as links between heaven and earth, microcosms or embodiments of the gods. Egyptian temples were expressions of the process of creation and cosmic order and sometimes rehearsed mythic events.

Apart from their specifically religious roles, the activity in controlling the flow of goods used in running the cult and supporting the temple staff led to temples becoming dominant forces in the economy. Some temples also became centers of government or administration of justice or even places of asylum.

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Victor Avigdor Hurowitz

II. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Cult in the HB/OT can be defined as public worship of a regularized kind, in which the people of Israel attest their particular relationship to YHWH, their God, and vice versa. The cult is a system of ritual acts and words by which the presence of YHWH is mediated, asked for, and praised.

Priestly theology locates YHWH's presence to the tent of meeting in the sanctuary in the wilder-

ness of Sinai, and links it with the ark of the covenant, on the top of which was the mercy seat (Heb. *kapōret*), where YHWH met (Niphal, *y-ʿ-d*) with Moses and the community. The terminology conveys the idea of revelation comparable to that on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:16; 25:8, 10, 17, 21–22; 29:42; cf. 40:34).

In the Priestly source (P) the sacrificial regulations (Lev 1–7), the installation of the priesthood, and of the first offerings (Lev 8–9), attest to the significance of these institutions and their personnel for the cult. This is emphasized by the reference to YHWH's glory (Heb. *kābōd*), which appeared to the people after the priests had brought the first offerings and Aaron and Moses came out from the tent of meeting (Lev 9:22–24; cf. Exod 29:43). The sacrificial regulations in this part of P end with the ritual for the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). Central recurring notions in them are the confession of sins and the atonement (Piel, *k-p-r*) for the sanctuary, the tent of meeting and the altar, for the priests and all the assembly of Israel, because of their impurity and all the people's sins (e.g., Lev 4:20, 35; 5:5, 16, 18; 7:7; 8:15; 14:53; 16:6, 16–17).

The comprehensive need for atonement explains the ordinances concerning purity/impurity, which in Lev 11–15 is closely connected to holiness: "you shall not become unclean ... sanctify yourselves, and be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:43–45). In P, holiness and impurity are dynamic, the people are sanctified in a continual process, through ritual, by which (cosmic) order is created (Regev 2001). The idea of election is also included: the promise to Abraham (Gen 17:7–8) and the Israelites (Exod 6:7) is fulfilled by YHWH's presence and the cultic acts in the sanctuary; the people shall know (*y-d-ʿ*) that YHWH is their God, who brought them out of Egypt in order to dwell among them (Exod 29:42–46).

It seems that the service of the priests was conducted in silence, since P makes no reference to the spoken word in describing the sacrificial cult. Priestly speech is found only apart from the essential cultic act, for instance in the instruction on cultic affairs (Lev 11:4–5, 7, 37–38; cf. Hag 2:11–19). Also the priestly blessing was performed after the completion of the sacrificial act (Lev 9:22); the same applies to the prayer recited by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:20–21). However, the verbal cult, which is attested in many prayers, confessions, and hymns of praise and thanksgiving, flourished outside the priestly realm of the temple precincts, in the sphere of the people, who probably recited their own prayers at the time of the daily offerings (1 Kgs 18:36; Ezra 9:5; cf. Ps 141:2; Dan 9:21). The songs and other duties of the Levites attested in the Second Temple period (1 Chr 15–16; 23–24), complemented the worship. The acts of priests and Levites in the cult were fixed and ob-

ligatory, while the above-mentioned performances of the people were not.

The tent of meeting as described by P was constructed according to the dimensions of the First Temple and is obviously fictitious. Also the sacrificial regulations reflect the offering practice in the temple. The Deuteronomistic History (abbreviated as Dtr) draws a connection between the two sanctuaries in the account of the temple dedication: after the priests had brought the ark of the covenant to the most holy place, they came out, and YHWH's glory filled the house (1 Kgs 8:1–11; cf. Exod 40:20–38).

The destruction of the temple in 587 BCE made it necessary in certain circles to define more precisely the nature of YHWH's presence. The Deuteronomistic History's contribution is that YHWH's name is in the temple, and the divine dwelling place is in heaven (1 Kgs 8:27–30). This view conforms to the command to worship only in the place that YHWH chooses as a dwelling for the divine name (Deut 12:5–12); this centralization of the cult was also the ideological basis for King Josiah's reform (2 Kgs 22–23).

The Dtr introduces other aspects to the cult too: the law shall be read every seventh year during the Festival of Booths (Deut 31:11–12); the three annual pilgrimage festivals, which in Dtr include the Passover, shall be celebrated in accordance with the centralization ordinance, and all the people, including also the strangers, shall participate; these festivals – which other sources present as agricultural events accompanied by offerings (Exod 23:14–19; 34:18–24; Lev 23; Num 28–29) – shall be celebrated for the people's freedom from slavery; they shall rejoice before YHWH, commemorate the exodus from Egypt, and express their belief in YHWH who gave them the land (Deut 16:1–17; 26:1–15). Moreover, the Deuteronomistic writer pleads that YHWH will hear the prayer of foreigners who come to the temple, so that all the peoples of the earth may know the name, and fear the power, of YHWH (1 Kgs 8:41–53). Here, the notion of knowing YHWH, which P applies to the Israelites, includes the nations. This universal aspect, as well as the emphasis on prayer, gains increasing importance in the postexilic cult (Isa 56:7; 63:7–64:11; Ezra 9:6–15; Dan 6:11; 9:4–19; Zech 14:16–21).

The prophets contend that the offerings are useless if they are not joined with righteousness in the community (Isa 1:10–17; Amos 5:21–24; Jer 7:1–4). But they do not reject the cult; they expect a purification of it (Mal 3:1–18) and a worship by all the nations in Jerusalem (Isa 2:2–22; Micah 4:1–2; Zech 8:20–23), especially at the Festival of Booths, when holiness will become all-pervasive (Zech 14:16–21).

The cult was important in the formation of the biblical literature; in the historical writings the fes-

tivals are chronological markers (Smith; Weyde): the Passover occurs in the first month (Exod 12), the Festival of Harvest/Weeks comes in the third month, which was the time for the arrival at Mount Sinai (Exod 19), the temple dedication took place in the seventh month at the Festival of Booths (1 Kgs 8), and Josiah's reform coincided with the Passover (2 Kgs 23). Recent research shows a (renewed) interest in rituals and their significance in the context of the cult (Klingbeil; Gane; Watts).

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Karl William Weyde

III. New Testament

The Jesus movement takes root in an extensive cultic enactment initiated by John the Baptist. He concentrates the entire symbolic system of Judaism on repentance leading up to the day of judgment and provides those who repent with the effective symbol of one decisive baptism for forgiveness, thereby attractively simplifying the complicated washing rituals of contemporary rural Baptist circles. Thus, a marginal purification rite moves into the center of religious self-definition, whereas the urban sacrificial cult shifts to the margins. Jesus also bases the relationship with God solely on divine initiative, so that he shares John's distance from the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Mark 11: 27–33). He presupposes the Jewish cult system, to be sure, without rejecting it in principle, but salvation depends on the immediate nearness of the heavenly Father, as it is experienced non-ritually in Jesus' proclamation of the

kingdom of God. It is the prerogatives of this kingdom he claims in the temple action (Mark 11: 15–18), which eventually leads to his execution. Until 70 CE the first Christian generation obviously keeps continuity with the Jewish cult (e.g., Matt 5: 23–24; Acts 2: 46), but it also develops its own ritual system, i.e., baptism in resumption of John's "eschatological sacrament," the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus' last dinner with his disciples, which may well be understood as an alternative to, or the ultimate fulfillment of, the simultaneous sacrificial rites in the temple area.

Early Christian theology shows an ambivalent attitude towards the cultic system. The term *θρησκεία* is used rarely and with caution against pagan connotations. In the line of the Old Testament prophets, cultic practice is criticized ethically and theologically. This criticism is rooted in the double commandment of love (e.g., Mark 7: 1–15; Luke 10: 25–37) and insists upon "worship in spirit and truth" (John 4: 23–24). More radical is the theocentric rejection of the Jewish temple cult among Hellenistic Christians (e.g., Acts 7: 47–50; Heb 8: 13). Pagan cults are generally rejected a *limine* (e.g., 1 Cor 10: 19–21), although they subliminally influence the conceptual and symbolic development of the cultic representation of the Christian belief system. By contrast, since Christians do not participate in the public cult they arouse suspicion of impiety and ritual malpractice.

In the history of biblical reception it was not so much the cultic practice of primitive Christianity that influenced liturgy and theology but the cognitive universe provided by the main trajectories of NT literature. The basis and norm of any worship is Christ as the crucified, exalted, and pneumatically present *κύριος*, who, being the proper "relational space" of God, replaces both the temple (e.g., Mark 14: 58; 15: 29, 37–38) and any soteriologically relevant determination of ritual involvement. Thus, what we observe in early Christian treatment of the subject of cult is neither the much discussed spiritualization nor the often postulated profanization but a dynamics of universalization and personalization. The *temenos*, as it were, is left behind: The (defensive) cultic boundaries of sacred places and ritual purity are removed, and in an offensive approach to sanctity the whole Christian life is seen as a personal self-sacrifice based on God-given holiness in communion with Christ. It is in this sense that Rom 12: 1–2 may be called the "golden rule" of NT cultic theology. Since those who are baptized have immediate access to the one holy God, they consider themselves the *ἄγιοι* and an eschatological priesthood (cf. 1 Pet 2: 4–10; Rev 1: 6; 5: 10; 20: 6).

The Levitical cult, however, as preserved also in the Christian Bible, remained a source of inspiration for imaginative speech, theological reflection, and the gradual elaboration of ritual Christian wor-

ship. We may differentiate between analogous, metaphorical, and typological figurations of cultic ideas and notions, which do not function as a derivative or second-level mode of speaking but express, in their own right, the numinous experience in the Christian community.

The analogous use of cultic language describes the enactment of a heavenly liturgy as the true cult which human worship anticipatorily participates in (e.g., Rev 7:9–12). The metaphorical use of cultic language includes spiritual (e.g., Heb 13:15) and ethical (e.g., Heb 13:16) devotion, apostolic ministry (e.g., Rom 15:16), the dignity of the faithful community or individual (e.g., 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19), and even martyrdom (e.g., Phil 2:17). Typological uses of cultic language establish a relationship between Jesus' death on the cross and the sacrificial cult of the Jewish Scriptures (e.g., Rom 3:25). It is the book of Hebrews that most comprehensively describes Jesus' death as opening a priestly access to the heavenly realm (esp. 9:1–14). A preliminary antitype, an earthly "sketch and shadow" (8:5) of the self-sacrifice of the heavenly high priest Jesus, the atoning cult (cf. esp. Lev 16: the Day of Atonement) reveals the anthropological premises and soteriological structures of any mediation of salvation. The "new covenant" fulfils from heaven that to which the earthly and now obsolete cult has pointed (cf. 8:13). Embracing all believers from the beginning of time, the wandering people of God, sanctified by Jesus' obedient life and death (cf. 10:1–10), is now entitled to approach God's heavenly sanctuary (cf. 12:22–24).

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Knut Backhaus

IV. Judaism

The temple cult, namely the sacrificial and other ritual practices associated with the Jerusalem temple, was central to the identities of postbiblical Jews. Jewish sources from the Hellenistic and early Roman periods often place the temple cult at the center of ethnographic or historical descriptions of Judaism (*Letter of Aristeas* as well as the works of Philo and Josephus; see Hayward for references) and describe political conflict centering on correct temple worship (1–2 Macc; 4QMMT; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.409–29; *Ant.* 18.29–30). For these writers and for the practitioners they describe, it was important to know the details of the rites so that they could be performed correctly (see also the laws in the *Temple*

Scroll). But the rituals could also be symbolically meaningful, as in Philo's allegorical method, which finds philosophical truths in them. Further, the significance of the temple and its worship could be mapped onto new social structures such as the (Qumran) sectarian community (1QS VIII, 4–12; IX, 3–8). Although the Jerusalem temple was not the only one in existence during the Second Temple era (there were also the Elephantine temple in the Persian era, the Samaritan temple, and the Temple of Onias) it is considered the premier temple in all surviving Jewish sources; Onias' temple, for instance was merely secondary and derivative (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.70–73; *J.W.* 7.426; *mMen* 13:10).

When the temple was destroyed in 70 CE, its worship ceased, and yet, surprisingly, the cult retained its centrality. Numerous hypothetical laws in the Mishnah (including nine full tractates in the order Qodashim) as well as narratives in the Mishnah purporting to recount how rituals were performed when the temple still stood show the continued importance of the temple and its memory, beyond the simple desire that the temple "be rebuilt speedily in our days" (*mTam* 7:3; cf. *mTaan* 4:8). In the subsequent amoraic (talmudic) period, when the memory of the temple was more distant, the significance of the temple cult was often displaced onto other, available, actions. Thus various passages speak of acts of kindness, humility, prayer, non-temple ritual, or study (especially of texts about sacrifice) taking the place of temple worship, the one doing them considered "as if" he had done the worship (*ARN* A 4; *WayR* 7:3; *bSuk* 45a; *bTaan* 27b; *bSot* 5b; *bMen* 110a).

Such a spiritualized view of the temple cult, however, hardly seems to have predominated, and in later periods there was a continued interest in its actual practice. Maimonides, for instance, codified numerous laws about the temple cult (*Mishneh Torah*). In contemporary times, especially since Israel's recapture of the Temple Mount in 1967, a number of (fringe) Jewish groups have adopted as an ideology and invested efforts into the reinstitution of the temple cult (see Inbari).

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Naftali S. Cohn

See also → High Place; → Liturgy; → Rituals;
→ Temple (Sanctuary); → Sanctuary, Sanctuaries;
→ Worship

Cult Controversies

The Bible is usually seen through the eyes of the orthodox majority in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. In all traditions, however, there are