

[Print page](#)

[Discuss page](#)

[Join mailing list](#)

[Email editors](#)

Don't forget to bookmark us! (CTRL-D)

The Final Temple

Edmund P. Clowney

From the baroque columns of Bernini's altar at Saint Peter's to the podium of the largest drive-in church in California, the church has been so identified with architecture that most people give no other meaning to the word "church." Tourists therefore expect to find Christian shrines and sanctuaries at sacred sites in the holy land.

But Christians have not always sought these shrines as tourists. Once they came as pilgrims, and again they came as Crusaders. The bitter vision of a Christian holy war still scars the memory of nations of the Near East. Today we cannot conceive of making war to possess a Christian sanctuary. (Whether that measures a real gain in theology or only a loss of conviction might be difficult to determine!)

Yet how are we to understand the Israeli struggle for independence and nationhood? From a furnace of affliction a people with the ancient name of Israel has come to the ancient land of promise. Jerusalem is again their possession.

The Old Testament people of God were formed by God's covenant as a theocracy. They were called to holy war and to festive celebration at the holy place where God set his name. Is modern Israel called-at whatever cost in political relations with the Arab states-to clear the sacred rock and build a new temple?

Many Christians would answer, "Yes." They believe that the restored worship at such a temple has a central place in the prophetic future that is part of the Christian hope.

We must consider soberly and prayerfully what the Bible teaches on this question. We dare not trifle with the mysteries of God's Word, and surely the tensions of a situation about which so few of us are well-informed calls for responsible discussion.

Differences may remain among us that will lead to further study and discussion. But above all let us be found faithful in our witness to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the blessed hope of his return. With reverence, then, let us approach the theme of the temple in Scripture, seeking to be taught of God.

I. The Meaning of the Temple

To seek the meaning of the temple, as the Old Testament presents it, is to inquire not into the history of religions but into the history of redemption. It is commonly assumed that the critical reconstructions of the history of Israel's worship may be made without prejudice to the faith content of Old Testament theology. Actually the demands of Scripture upon the interpreter are not so lightly evaded. The Old Testament does not purport to be a full history of the life and culture of ancient Israel. It claims to be the Word of the Lord; its unity is in the Divine purpose. The initiative is always with God. "Salvation is of the Lord!" cries the prophet (John 2:9). What God makes known is not only his purposes but himself.

The God of the Word is the Lord of history, who has set the seasons in his authority. Kings and empires, languages and cultures, institutions and rites, all are present in his time and serve his purpose. The present cannot put chains on God's future. The bright purposes of God, like the treasure of a fortified city, are inaccessible to the imagination of man (Jer 33:3); far less can any man stay his hand or declare that the zeal of the Lord of Hosts cannot accomplish all his will. Under the rainbow of his promise God not only brings the new out of the old, but anticipates and prefigures it. The prophets find in the first Exodus a model of the final deliverance of the people of God (Hos 2:14ff; Jer 23:7; Isa 40:3; 43:17; 52:12); they foretell a new David (Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23; 37:24); they behold a new temple filled with glory (Ezek 43:1-5) [1]

To seek the meaning of the temple, as the Old Testament presents it, is to ask: What has God revealed through this symbolism he has instituted?

Temple symbolism, along with sacrifice, was common in ancient religion. The Egyptian temple provided a secluded shrine from which the image of the god might make a seasonal procession, [2] the Babylonian sanctuary opened through majestic gates to the court of a temple-palace where worshipers assembled. [3]

But the symbolism of the dwelling and gate of God is completely transformed by the presence of the living God of Israel. Not the absence of an idol but the presence of the Lord sets Israel's worship over against heathenism. It has often been remarked that Old

Testament religion is grounded in history. Unlike the seasonal celebrations of the fertility cults, Israel's feasts recalled an historical deliverance by God's hand. But we must realize that it is not history as such but reality that makes the difference. The God who marched before his people through the desert now dwells with them in his holy hill. At the temple Israel worshiped the God who was there.

Scripture continually shows that the presence of God comes first. God first reveals himself to the patriarchs and then they build altars; he appears at the bush and on the mount before the tabernacle is constructed. This is the contrast between Babel and Bethel: the stairway of human temple-building and the stairway of God by which he comes down to reveal himself to Jacob. [4]

Jacob's amazed confession as he anoints his memorial stone bears witness to the initiative of God's grace: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not" (Gen 28:16). God's presence makes Bethel the house of God and the gate of heaven.

When Stephen defends early Christian teaching against charges of blasphemy toward the temple he surveys the Scriptures to show this point: God's living presence, not the temple, comes first. God's call to Abraham and to Moses came before the temple and outside the land of promise. At the burning bush of God's appearing the desert was holy ground. The angel of God's presence brought the living oracles of God to the assembly at Sinai; the tabernacle itself had a heavenly pattern. Even when the temple was built according to God's promise, it was dedicated with the confession that God does not dwell in a temple made with hands. [5] Stephen concludes with a quotation from Isaiah against temple-centered rather than God-centered worship.

The priority of God's presence over the place of his dwelling is beautifully expressed in God's election of Mount Zion. Throughout the Old Testament it is continually confessed that God is the God of heaven. [6] He cannot be constrained or contained, and it is heathenish impiety to suppose that he can be carried into battle in a box. How then can God dwell on Zion, if the heaven of heavens cannot contain him? To be sure, it can be said that God has set his name, or his glory there, but while this points to a mysterious richness in God's revelation of himself, it still affirms the reality of God's presence in the sanctuary. [7] The answer Scripture gives is that God has chosen Zion, that his dwelling there is determined by his own good pleasure (Deut 12:5, 11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2).

God's choice of Zion compares with his election of Israel. There is nothing in Israel to compel God's choosing. They are not more in number than other peoples, but are chosen in the good pleasure of God's free love (Deut 7:6-8). So Zion is not the highest of the mountains or a cosmological hub where God must dwell. [8] Rather, God has desired Zion for his abode; the high mountains dare not scorn God's holy hill (Ps 68:16).

God's election of Zion flows from his election of Israel. Israel is not called to serve the temple, but the temple is established as the meeting-place between God and his people. This is the explanation of the name "tent of meeting" for the sanctuary in the desert. It could be called the tent of the assembly in view of the heavenly assembly of angelic hosts or the earthly assembly of human "holy ones. [9] But God's grace joins the heavenly and earthly assemblies into one, for in his sanctuary he appears in the glory of the cherubim to meet with his people (Exod 29:42f; 25:22; 30:36).

Since God's dwelling with his people is determined by his own purpose of grace we find that the temple symbolizes not only the dwelling of God but also the gate of God. Here the way is opened to enter the courts of the Lord and appear before his face. After the primordial sin the gate of the garden of God was barred by the flaming sword of the cherubim, the guardians of the throne. In the tabernacle and the temple the sword continues to keep the gate. But the altar of sacrifice offers a victim for the knife so that the worshiper may come before God.

The peril and threat of God's presence is dramatically portrayed in Exodus after the sin of the golden calf (Exod 33, 34). The question is posed: Shall the tabernacle be built? Can the holy God dwell in the midst of his people?

God's verdict is "No!" He will go before the people in the angel of his presence to drive out their enemies and give them the promised land. [10] He will meet with Moses in a tent pitched outside the camp. But he will not go up in the midst of the camp lest he consume them in a moment (Exod 33:3, 5).

Here is formula for suburban externalism in religion: a qualified cleric ministers at a convenient distance to a God of national security. It is rejected with horror by Moses, and with mourning by the people: "If thy presence go not, carry us not up hence" (Exod 33:15). Here the longing for God that comes to such full expression in the Psalms furnishes a background for the tabernacle. In prayer Moses seeks the only possible assurance of God's presence in the midst: the fresh revelation of his glory. God proclaims his name of grace to Moses with the fullest revelation of glory that will not consume his servant. The episode concludes with Moses' prayer reversing the initial verdict. Just because Israel is a stiff-necked people, God will go up in the midst, yet in mercy, not wrath, pardoning iniquity. God will not just go before Israel to give them their inheritance, he will go up in the midst to take them as his inheritance (Exod 34:9).

Yes, the tabernacle will be built, and all its symbolism declares God's name of mercy: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious..." (Exod 33:19). The tabernacle is both a barrier and an avenue. As God's hand covered Moses in the cleft of the rock until his glory passed by (Exod 33:22f), so the veil covers God's glory in the most holy place. The priesthood, too, provides a kind of barrier, a ministry of mediation so that men appointed and cleansed might bear the terror of the sanctuary.

But the presence of God is not hermetically sealed off. A gate of mercy is open, an entrance court filled with the smoke of sacrifice and the blood of slaughter from the great altar. The shedding of sacrificial blood is indispensable in the tabernacle-temple symbolism, for only through the blood can there be atonement: "apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb 9:22). The blood stands for life, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls..." (Lev 17:11).

Archaeology has supported the Biblical references to some similar sacrificial rituals among the peoples of Canaan, [11] but nothing has been found to compare to the elaborate blood rituals of Leviticus. The blood from the altar cleanses the whole path of approach

symbolized in the tabernacle; the laver, the curtains, the furniture of the sanctuary—all that spoke of communion and fellowship with God, and even the mercy seat between the cherubim—all are sprinkled and cleansed with blood. “The Lord is God, and he hath given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar” (Ps 118:27).

How does the spiritual delight of the Psalmist accord with the gruesome destruction of animal sacrifice? Ancient Israel doubtless perceived better than modern scholars the personal involvement of sacrifice. There was the lesson of the Passover, the symbolism of expiation and substitution, the ram that was offered in the place of Isaac. The offerer was identified with his sacrifice: he lived before God as the animal died before God.

The presence of the holy God that required symbolism of such deep seriousness also evoked the profoundest praise. Who can read the Psalms without marveling at the intensity of personal fellowship with God that they express? This is heightened by the Psalmist’s experience of anguish: delivered and restored again to the house of the Lord, he will behold the beauty of the Lord forever and offer his thank offerings of praise.

From this exultation of worship flows the eschatology of the Psalter. As God’s name is praised in salvation the nations are called to join in the hallelujahs. Heaven and earth join in Jerusalem’s sacred feast, the trees of the wood clap their hands, and the Philistine, the Ethiopian, the Egyptian have a birthright in Zion, where brethren dwell together in unity.

The spiritual reality of the temple symbolism is revealed in a still more astonishing way in the Old Testament. For there is no long peaceful period in which the joy of temple fellowship can be explored. Instead, from the moment of the dedication of Solomon’s temple [12] there begins a long process of disobedience, apostasy and judgment that issues in the destruction of the temple as the curses of the covenant fall upon an idolatrous nation. The meaning of God’s presence is revealed anew in the face of this catastrophe. Jeremiah stands in the gate of the temple to denounce the lying assurances of those who declared it inviolable (Jer 7:4). “The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary” (Lam 2:7). But this fulfills the covenant judgment God had long ago pronounced (Lam 2:17).

Yet God’s covenant faithfulness triumphs over the storm of destruction. All is swept away except God’s purpose of grace, but that purpose fills the horizon with the rainbow of his promise. God was not consumed in the flames of the temple, nor did his promises perish. Ezekiel, prophet of the exile, sees the cherubim throne of God with wheels. [13] Fiery majesty is joined to sovereign mobility. The throne-chariot appears to the prophet by the river Chebar. Like the cloud in the wilderness, the glory of God ascends from the temple and moves to the East (Ezek 11:22, 23).

There the exiles, far from the ruins of Zion, are not without a sanctuary, for the God who scattered them says, “Yet will I be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they are come” (Ezek 11:16).

Proud Israel was left a sanctuary without the Glory, but humbled Israel found a sanctuary in the Glory. Nothing in the further symbolism of Ezekiel’s prophecy surpasses the implications of this revelation. The indestructible temple is the presence of God in glory with his people. [14]

In the presence of God himself lay the meaning of the temple symbolism, and in the presence of God is the means and end of the great restoration in which all God’s promises are fulfilled. God himself will come to be the Savior, Healer, Restorer of his people, and the restoration will be total, for God will give them a new spirit, hearts of flesh for stone, “and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezek 11:20). God’s presence will raise Israel not only from the death of captivity but from the death of sin (Ezek 37:14). Instead of covenant renunciation “ye are not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hos 1:9), there will be new covenant blessing, “Ye are sons of the living God” (Hos 1:10).

The reality of God’s presence is promised by the prophets in terms of restorative completeness: the temple will be re-established (Isa 2:2-4; Ezek 40:2), sacrifices will again be offered (Isa 56:7; Jer 33:18; 17:26; 31:14; Ezek 43), the priests and Levites will be restored (cf . Ezek 44:9-31), the mediatorial position of Israel among the nations will be resumed (Mic 4:1-3; Isa 66:23; 45:14; Zech 14:16-19).

Yet the fullness of blessing transforms the restoration. It is the heart of the covenant that must be established; restoration becomes renewal. The old covenant, restored by God’s own presence becomes a new covenant.

It is not only the reunited remnant of both Israel and Judah that are to be redeemed (Hos 1:11; 3:5; Isa 11:13; Ezek 37:15-22). The Gentiles are included (Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3). The outcasts of other nations are gathered with the captivity of Israel (Isa 56:6-8) and their sacrifices will be accepted on God’s altar (Zech 14:16-19). From the ingathered Gentiles God will choose priests and Levites (Isa 66:21).

So unthinkable great will be God’s sanctifying blessing that God will be worshiped by sacrifice at an altar in Egypt; Assyrians will pilgrimage there to worship, and Egyptians to Assyria, so that Israel’s position as God’s covenant people will be shared by Egyptians and Assyrians, the former enemies (Isa 19:19-25). The final feast on God’s mountain is for all peoples (Isa 25:6-8). “Many nations shall become his people, and he will dwell in the midst of them” (Zech 2:11; cf . Ps 47:9; 87:4, 6; Zeph 3:9; Amos 9:11, 12 LXX; Acts 15:16, 17).

God’s coming heightens the symbolism of the city and temple to an apocalyptic degree. So holy will the city become that the inscription of the high priest’s tiarra will be on the bells of the horses and the wash pots will be as temple vessels (Zech 14:20). The ark of the covenant, on the other hand, will not be missed, because all Jerusalem will be God’s throne to which the nations are gathered (Jer 3:17).

Ezekiel’s vision of the new temple is part of this prophetic pattern of a restoration so total that it sublimates the ceremonial structure in glory. Ezekiel’s restoration returns David to the throne, and sees a temple that is a sanctuary of Paradise where the river of life flows

from God's throne past trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations (Ezek 47:1-12). [15] Consummation glory burns in the name of the city, "The Lord is there" (Ezek 48:35). God's coming creates a new heaven and earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22). Peace will prevail (Hos 2:18; Isa 9:4-7; Mic 4:3, 4), even among the animals (Isa 11:6-9; 35:9); the heavenly bodies will have their light increased (Isa 30:26), there will be no longer day and night (Isa 60:20) but only God's glory.

If all this results from God's coming, we cannot describe the glory of that coming itself, when the Lord appears, amidst the rejoicing of his creation, to dwell in Zion and rule over all, filling the city with his glory. [16]

But the coming of God is identified with the coming of the Messiah. God's presence in Jerusalem was linked with the rule of God's Anointed there, for God chose the city of David as the place of his throne. When David would build God a house, God promised to build David a house.

When God comes to be the Shepherd of his scattered flock, David too will be raised up as Shepherd (Ezek 34:11, 23; cf. Isa 40:9-11 with 42:1-9).

The heightening of the promises does not make the Lord's Anointed unnecessary, like the ark of the covenant, but more glorious. He bears divine rule over the nations (Zech 9:10; Dan 7:14; Isa 11:1-6; cf. Ps 45, 2, 110, 72), for his name is the mighty God, the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6).

Just as the restoration of the temple by the returning exiles still points to a more glorious future, so the blessings on Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest in Zechariah anticipate the coming of the King who shall speak peace to the nations (Zech 4:9; 6:12; 9:9, 10).

The coming Lord is also the coming Servant in whom Israel's sonship is fulfilled. He is the Seed of the promise, the Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), of Abraham (Gen 13:15; 17:8), of David (Ps 89:35, 36), who enters through suffering into the triumph of eternal dominion (Isa 53; Ps 110). His rule is at God's right hand (Ps 110:1, 2), he is anointed with God's Spirit (Isa 11:2ff; 61:1-3), and if in the day of glory the feeble of God's people shall be as David, then the Prince of the house of David, shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them (Zech 12:8)

II. The Fulfillment of the Temple in Christ

"The Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple" promised the last of the prophets (Mal 3:1). The witness of the New Testament is to the coming of the Lord.

Luke's Gospel begins in the temple: his nativity narratives center on Jesus' presentation in the temple as an infant and his being found there as a boy of twelve. The days are fulfilled from the going forth of the word from Gabriel; [17] the infant Savior is blessed by Simeon, who proclaims not only that he has seen the Lord's anointed, but that the holy child is the glory of Israel (Luke 2:32). As God's glory filled the temple of old, so now Simeon sees the light revealed to the Gentiles.

Yet the Savior in Simeon's arms brings not only the divine glory but the divine offense. "This child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel..." (v. 34). In Isaiah God is said to be "for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel,...and many shall stumble thereon, and fall..." (Isa 8:14, 15).

Before the chapter ends sorrow has touched Mary's heart. She finds her missing Son in the temple after an anxious search and hears his gentle but disturbing rebuke, "How is it that ye sought me: Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). [18]

In the tapestry of Scriptural fulfillment that Luke unfolds in these chapters we see the motifs of Jesus' relation to the temple as they are developed in the New Testament. The themes are Lord and Servant-Son; sufferings and glory; raising up and casting down. The themes are interwoven in the rich harmonies of revelation; they can be distinguished but not isolated.

The One who has come is not only the Son of David (Luke 1:69), he is the Son of God (Luke 1:35). He is not only the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:26); he is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11). The one who is presented as the Light and Lord in the temple is also the obedient Son in the temple, subject to Joseph and Mary, yet so profoundly aware that the temple is his Father's house, [19] that he expects to be sought there, and that he could be expected to remain there.

The mystery of these chapters is deepened by the relation of sufferings and glory to the coming of the Lord. We cannot make a simple correlation of Lord and glory as over against Son and suffering; that is impossible because the Lord is the Son; the sign of the Lord's birth is the feed-bin of rejection (Luke 2:12; Isa 1:3). The sword that will pierce Mary's soul will be more than a mother's grief. On the other hand, the raising up and casting down marks division over the Christ-with both judgment and exaltation emerging.

To relate Jesus to the temple in the Gospels we must remember these interwoven themes of Divine Lord and Messianic Servant, suffering and glory, lifting up and casting down.

Jesus, who appeared in the temple as an infant and a boy, must come again at the climax of his ministry as the Lord's anointed. Again we are astonished at the contrasts. Jesus, whose glory was hailed in the temple, is not glorified in the temple. Rather at a mountain far from Jerusalem his own glory appears while he prays to the Father. Apart from the temple, apart even from the cloud of the Presence, Jesus is transfigured. Not unnaturally, Peter, aroused by the glory and the heavenly visitors, considers that the last feast of tabernacles has come. But three tabernacles are not to be built; this mount cannot be the place of glory. Of course, for that must be mount Zion! But

when Jesus immediately sets his face to go to Jerusalem, it is with the prediction that he goes to suffer and die.

The same strange contrasts fill John's Gospel. In Bethany Jesus claims Mary's gift of devotion not as a royal anointing for triumph, but as embalment for the tomb. When the Greeks come seeking him, he recognizes it as a sign of the ingathering of the Gentiles, but interprets it as showing the nearness of the cross. The Father's name will be hallowed and glorified, not in delivering the Son from the hour of disaster, but in a "lifting up" that is a casting down-the lifting up of the cross. [20]

Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem is possible only as his ministry comes to the cross. Under other circumstances, when thousands marshalled in the desert would march to Jerusalem to set him on David's throne, Christ refused. Jesus did not come to use or command the sword, whether borne by Simon Peter or legions of angels. He comes meek and lowly, riding upon an ass (Zech, 9:9).

Christ's combination of Lordship and meekness has been as baffling to many today as it was to the men of that generation. If he comes in meekness, why does he so vividly recall Zechariah's Messianic prophecy (Matt 2:1-7)? Why should he enter the temple and cleanse it, in a sign that so evidently pointed to Messianic authority? [21] Why did he condemn the fruitlessness of the nation in his cursing of the fig tree?

Jesus fulfills his Messiahship in the terms of his own kingdom. He must fulfill all righteousness, as the anointed Servant. At the point in history where reality supersedes symbol there must be fulfillment, not abandonment. Jesus does not condemn the temple, he cleanses it. But Christ claims Messianic authority, not as it was traditionally conceived, but as he himself realized the Old Testament promises. Receiving him meant rejecting the popular expectation of political Messiahship and taking his yoke. In the eyes of his enemies the lowly king invited Roman reprisal without hope of successful resistance. To follow such a fanatic would indeed be to take up a cross, for the Roman rulers would soon enough suppress such dangerous demonstrations with a forest of crosses.

Jesus' sign in the temple reveals the intensity of his claim. The zeal of God's house consumes him. God the Holy One cannot be robbed of total worship (Matt 21:13; Jer 7:11); God's presence, exalted in glory, must draw the nations to prayer and praise (Mark 11:17; Isa 56:7). The zeal of the Messianic Servant is the very zeal of the Lord, the holy jealousy that burns in judgment and in blessing (Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; cf. Zech 1:14; 8:2; Isa 9:7). From the standpoint of practical temple administration, a good case can be made for the convenience of having sacrificial animals and acceptable coinage available in the courtyard of the temple. [22]

But from the standpoint of the Messianic realization of God's covenant promise, no such distractions from total worship can be tolerated. There is a better use of the courts of the Lord-Jesus heals the blind and the lame, purifying and renewing the afflicted and disqualified (Matt 21:14). [23]

Above all, it is only in the temple that Jesus raises a scourge of judgment. The Lord has come to his temple and judgment begins in the house of God. Because his deed is a sign, the emphasis falls on his own authority to order that which concerns the temple.

Because judgment must begin, the purpose of suffering with which Jesus entered Jerusalem is still before him as he cleanses the temple. He who uses the scourge must soon bear it. John's report of Jesus' word in the temple reminds us from the beginning of that purpose: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The final cleansing must take place in Christ's body; the building of the New Temple by this Messiah is not an architectural miracle on the hill of Zion but the ultimate miracle from the empty tomb. [24] At the last, Christ cannot serve a temple made with hands; his is a different priesthood, and the temple that he raises on the third day is the temple of his own flesh, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

In his priesthood and kingship alike Jesus transforms even as he fulfills. This must be so, for David's Son is David's Lord. The throne that he inherits is as much beyond the typical dominion granted to David as his heavenly intercession is beyond the ministry of the sons of Aaron in a temple of stone. As a minister in the temple made with hands, Jesus cannot enter upon those duties reserved for the Levitical priesthood. (Imagine, for example, a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem where the Risen Lord, returning to rule, would be barred from the sanctuary while sons of Levi mediated between him and the Father!) But Jesus is not a royal Messiah to be matched (as in the Dead Sea literature [25]) by a priestly Messiah. He is royal as David could never be, priestly as Aaron could never be. Far more than a minister of the temple, he is Lord of the temple.

This appears in Jesus' teaching about the Sabbath. When he is criticized for permitting his disciples to pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath, he replies with an amazing claim. Recalling that David was permitted to eat of the showbread reserved for the priests, and to give it to those that were with him, Jesus declares, "But I say unto you that one greater than the temple is here" (Matt 12:6). [26] The argument is from the lesser to the greater. David as the Lord's Anointed, with no priestly privileges, was sustained physically in the fulfillment of his calling through the setting aside of cultic restrictions. In this limited way, and in an emergency situation, David was "greater" than certain temple regulations. Then how much more is David's greater Son made to be Lord over all those symbols that prepared for his coming? Indeed, the Son of God is greater than the temple itself, for he is Lord of the Sabbath. [27] Christ's Lordship is as the Son of David and as the Son of Man. He is the Seed of David and the Second Adam. Even the Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Much more, then, is the Sabbath made for the Son of Man, [28] who is not only true man but true God. Lord of the Sabbath: greater than the temple-the attributions can be transposed. Jesus is the Lord of the temple. No longer is the temple bread reserved for the sons of Aaron. Jesus breaks the bread of life and distributes it to those who follow him. The manna reserved in the heavenly ark is his gift to his people (Rev 2:17; John 6:49f).

Christ, the Lord of the House of God, is also the builder. The promise that God's house would be built by the Son of David naturally pointed to the final building of the temple as the task of the Messiah. This is heightened in the prophecy of Zechariah: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it..." (Zech 4:9). The "Branch" (a Messianic title) [29] shall build the temple of the Lord, and there reign in glory (Zech 6:12, 13). [30]

A passage in the Sibylline Oracles still reflects the hope of a glorious Messianic rebuilding of the temple after its destruction by Titus. [31] But Christ's claim is of a very different order. The temple that he will "raise up" is the temple of his own body. Jesus' reference to Psalm 118:22, 23 relates closely to this claim: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17). Jesus applies this passage to his rejection by the "builders" of Israel and to the exaltation of his resurrection. [32] Not only this passage but the full scope of the Psalm is in view. The Psalmist is delivered from deadly suffering by this exaltation, and offers a thank-offering of praise. As applied by Jesus, the Psalm joins his sufferings, death, and resurrection to the image of building the temple of God. His resurrection puts the top-stone in place, the new temple is completed. [33] The figure, of course, presents Christ as the chief Stone of the edifice rather than as either the whole temple or the builder. But all the figures of building have in common a new understanding of the relation between the Messiah and the temple. In Jewish eschatology the glorification of Jerusalem held the central place, and the renewal of the temple was a necessary part of this glory. But the glorified city was sometimes viewed as coming from heaven as God's gift. At other times the work of the Messiah was described, in establishing peace or in building the city. Yet the emphasis was never on the person of the Messiah himself. Jesus, in opening the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the sufferings and glory of the Messiah, introduces a completely different perspective. The Messiah is "he that cometh to seek and to save that which is lost. He is the Son of Man whose is the glory and the rule, but who is also the Suffering Servant who gives his life a ransom for many. The work of the Messiah in fulfilling the Scriptures is to take the cup of suffering and bear the wrath of Divine justice. So profound is this saving conflict that world dominion is not an end in itself, but an outcome.

No longer can the Messiah remain a featureless apocalyptic figure, symbolized, for example, by a wild bull. [34] No, the Messiah accomplishes the triumph of the kingdom in himself and draws the son of the kingdom to himself. The symbolic temple yields to the person of the present Lord. He is the top-stone, his body is the temple, he bears the glory and exercises the dominion.

Precisely because Christ builds the temple in himself he can build it in his disciples. The significance of the temple symbol is the reality it symbolized: the dwelling of God in the midst of his people and their gathering together to meet with him. Christ builds the temple in himself as he actualizes the saving presence of God. Christ builds the temple in his people as he gathers them to himself.

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18).

In speaking of the church, Jesus uses a familiar concept from the Old Testament. The ecclesia is the qahal, the assembly of the people of God. Of the various terms that describe the congregation, this best expresses the people of God as assembled in the presence of God. The great assembly at Sinai is the prototype, but every assembly of covenant renewal and every festival assembly in the courts of the Lord expressed this active concept of God's people standing together before his face. Since the Messiah is speaking to the disciple who has just confessed him, the eschatological character of the assembly must be in view. Jesus will build his church, the Messianic gathering of the people of God. He will build it by his death and resurrection, for it is by this ordeal and triumph that his saving power is established. Just as the resurrection sets the top-stone in place, raising up the temple of his body, so the resurrection joins into one the new temple of the people of God, those who rest upon the apostolic foundation, confessing not only that Jesus is the Christ, but that he is the Son of the Living God. [35]

The Gospels lead us from the theme of the Lord's coming to his temple to the understanding that the Lord fulfills the temple. As the presence of the Lord gave meaning to the Old Testament temple, so that God himself was the temple of his exiled people, so in realization the Son of God is not only Lord and builder of the temple. He is the temple.

John's Gospel makes strong this emphasis on fulfillment: "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

In the transformation of fulfillment, Christ is himself the Sanctuary, the dwelling of God with men. Before the tabernacle was built, God appeared in glory to Moses and proclaimed his name: "Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness and truth" (Exod 34:6). That Divine glory, that fullness of grace and truth, has come to dwell in the midst of the people of God. John witnesses that he beheld that glory dwelling, "tabernacling" among us. What the tabernacle foreshadowed, Christ actualized. No image appeared between the cherubim over the mercy seat, but the appearing of God's glory shines at last from God's image-bearer, the Son of man who is the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, the Word and Wisdom of God. The mystery of the angel of the Lord who bears the name and presence of God now finds clear expression. In God's own Being dwells the glory of eternal fellowship: the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Moses could not look upon God; the tabernacle did not so much reveal him as conceal him. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, [36] who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

Before God was set forth as Father by the eternal Son, curtains and stone could symbolize a dwelling for that light in which God was yet concealed. But when the Son came the glory of God was seen in the face of Jesus Christ; the Lamb on the throne is the light of the city of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

But, of course, the Beloved Son does not reveal the Father simply by appearing in the flesh among men. For such a manifestation, no real incarnation would seem necessary. God's glory is revealed not simply in the appearing, but in the giving of His Beloved Son. Christ more abundantly fulfills all that the temple meant, for he is not only the tabernacle of God's glory but the lamb of God's sacrifice. We have seen that the altar at the gate is essential to the symbolism of the tabernacle. Without an offering for sin God cannot dwell among sinners, nor can they enter his courts to worship. Christ provides not only the glory of God's presence but the way of approach into God's presence, the altar at the gate of God. When the glory of God tabernacles among men, then his prophet cries, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The eternal love that joins God the Father and his only Son is manifested

among men in amazing grace. That God should give the world to the rule of his Anointed we may understand from the Old Testament (Ps 2:7, 8; 110:1, 2). When we perceive that God's Anointed is his own eternal Son, then we may understand that God so loved His Son that he gave him the world (John 3:35). But before John 3:16 we are silent: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...." The measure of God's glory is the staggering grace of his love expended at the cross. Beyond the shadows of animal sacrifice, beyond the symbolism of Abraham's agony as he lifts the knife over Isaac, there stands the reality of Calvary. Not as a sign but in fact God's own Son was made the sacrifice, for the Judge bore the judgment.

Here above all the reality forever sets aside the symbol. When God's sacrifice was offered the veil of the temple was torn in two. Judgment is certainly expressed, but judgment that marks the end of an era. The darkening of the heavens, the trembling of the earth, the resurrection of the dead-these are all promised signs of the ushering in of the messianic age (Matt 27:51f). [37] With the passing of the old the barrier falls. The Son of God has fulfilled the symbols and torn away the veil.

What this means is anticipated in Jesus' teaching about worship. When the Samaritan woman questioned him about the competing claims of Mount Gerizim and Mount Zion as the place of worship, Jesus declared that "the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not; we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshipers" (John 4:21-23).

This reply is often misunderstood by ignoring the meaning of "the hour cometh and now is." Jesus is not advocating universal spirituality in the place of a Divinely appointed way of approach. Least of all is this a Vedanta spirituality with every path leading at last to God. To the contrary, salvation is of the Jews. But how can salvation be of the Jews without being centered at Jerusalem?

Because of the coming hour. Here, as throughout the Gospel of John, the coming hour means the hour of Jesus' death and resurrection. [38] Samaritans and Greeks are brought to worship by way of the cross. Why does the cross remove the necessity of coming to the Jerusalem temple to worship? Because through the cross, and not through the temple, salvation comes from the Jews. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up!" (John 2:19). Through the cross the search of the Father for true worshipers is satisfied. The coming hour is already present because Christ is already present. Jesus does not direct the woman from Gerizim to Jerusalem, but from Gerizim to himself: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10).

The life-giving water that flows from the true temple is the gift of the Son of God. The worshipers sought by the Father are found by the Son. True worship is not temple-less but centers in the true temple, not made with hands. Worship in Spirit is worship in the Holy Spirit, given by Christ. Worship in truth is worship in reality, not merely in promise. The law given by Moses pointed to the fulfillment; but the grace and truth proclaimed through Moses came in Jesus Christ. He is the temple, the place of worship. Salvation is of the Jews not because the temple is in Jerusalem but because the Messiah is in Sychar, sitting on the curbing of the well-"I that speak unto thee am he!"

All that the temple means, then, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ: the dwelling of God's glory in the sanctuary; the provision of atoning sacrifice at the gate; the meeting of fellowship where the praises and prayers of Israel ascend from the holy feast; the flowing water of life that comes forth from the threshold of the house-all are realities in Christ. The grand affirmations of the New Testament name Christ as the tabernacle, the glory, the Lamb, and the Way. Like the precious stones of a majestic mosaic the details of the symbolism all build the same representation. When the temple of his body is lifted up on the cross water flows with the blood from his side; the bread and the cup from the holy table are given to memorialize his broken body and blood; he is the vine that fulfills the symbol from the temple facade. The priesthood and the lamp, the sweet savor of sacrificial offering, and the cleansing laver, all these and more focus on Jesus Christ.

But above all we must recognize that this is not spiritualization in our usual sense of the word, but the very opposite. In Christ is realization. It is not so much that Christ fulfills what the temple means; rather Christ is the meaning for which the temple existed. As the symbolic language of the temple cultus continues to be used for Christ and for the heavenly temple of his eternal ministry, we know that our understanding is being drawn from earthly things to heavenly, from the creature to the Creator.

The transformation is spiritual in the biblical sense: that is, we move from earthly shadows to spiritual realities, from that which passes away to that which endures forever. Christ's resurrection body is a spiritual body, not because it is immaterial, but because it is the first-fruits of a new creation. Because Christ is our temple our worship is spiritual: the living power of his Spirit breathes life and joy into our hearts and brings to us now the living fellowship of Christ for which we have been re-created.

Jesus fulfills the feast of tabernacles crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The temple spring of the people of God is the Lord from whom there flows the living water of the Spirit. [39] Whoever drinks of that water never thirsts again, nor can he seek a stream from any other sanctuary.

The words and deeds of Jesus and the reality of his presence in the church transformed the attitude of his disciples to the temple. On the one hand, there was respect for the temple Jesus had cleansed. The apostles did make it a place of prayer as they waited for Pentecost and later as they witnessed to the Lord who had come to the temple. There they healed in the name of Jesus and there they preached to the people. But significantly one charge brought against Stephen was that he had spoken against the temple. Paul, too, was accused of having desecrated the temple by bringing in a Gentile. Gradually the polemic of the church against the Jerusalem temple sharpens until, just before the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. we have in the Epistle to the Hebrews the strongest warning against a return to an externalism of worship necessary under the Old Covenant but now superseded in the New. Before considering the New Temple of the New Covenant we must note the judgment pronounced against the temple of Jerusalem.

Strikingly, it is Jesus himself who prophesies the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. As the disciples at the close of his ministry speak admiringly of the temple structure, Jesus declares, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matt 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6).

Our familiarity with these words has worn away the shock they would bring to those who heard. Since the Messiah was thought of as building the temple, or glorifying it, there is a particular severity in Christ's pronouncing doom upon the temple. It has been suggested that the disciples would be driven to think of a destruction for the purposes of rebuilding, or heavenly renewal [40] and that they therefore ask about his parousia and the consummation (Matt 24:3).

But Jesus says nothing about a reconstruction of the temple. His allusion to the abomination of desolation and the time of trouble from the prophecy of Daniel (Dan 11:31; 12:11, cf. 12:1) does not suggest any further earthly temple.

Rather, in harmony with the rest of Jesus' teaching, the emphasis falls on the Messiah, not on the temple. The discourse of Jesus in response to the question of the disciples warns against false Christs, and of tribulation to be endured for his name's sake while his gospel is preached to the nations. The climax of the discourse is the coming of the Son of Man.

Further, the doom pronounced on the temple is put in the context of judgment on the city of Jerusalem because it did not receive the Son of God. Particularly in the parables this judgment is pronounced—for example, in the parable of the marriage feast of the king's son (Matt 22:7). Jesus shows the deepest sorrow over this judgment—weeping over a Jerusalem that knew not the day of its visitation "Behold, your house is left unto you..." (Matt 23:38). [41] To the warnings of the prophets has been added the yearning of Christ himself, who would have gathered the people as a hen gathers its chicks, "but ye would not" (Matt 23:37). [42]

In the Christian apocalyptic prophecy of Fifth Esra (1:28-33) this gathering as a hen is ascribed to the Lord, the Almighty, who also pronounces the judgment of desolation. [43] The Fifth Esra passage is a catena of Old Testament quotations and references; it points up the fact that Jesus uses a figure that is repeatedly ascribed to God in the Old Testament. Indeed, the temple is seen as the place where God's people find shelter under his wings (Ps 61:4). The contrast is remarkable: not the temple but the Messiah offers the wings of divine protection. When the Messiah is rejected the temple offers no protection, for it is no longer seen as the dwelling place of God, but as part of "your house"—deserted and abandoned with its possessors to judgment. [44]

With stern finality Jesus declares the termination of his ministry to Jerusalem: "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt 23:39). No doubt this reference to the Parousia carries a final warning of judgment. The uttering of blessing toward the returning Christ may be no more than the confession of Christ's Lordship drawn from every tongue when every knee must bow (Phil 2:10; Isa 45:23) and when all the tribes of the earth shall mourn in recognizing the rejected king (Matt 24:30; Rev 1:7). [45] But surely the prophecy in this form also holds out a clear hope: by repentance those who had rejected Christ may yet see and bless him. It is this possibility that is reflected in Peter's sermon in the temple, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons for refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things..." (Acts 3:21).

The times of restoration promised by all the prophets are the times brought by Christ at his coming again. The theme of destruction and restoration applied to the temple now has been intersected by the coming and the return of Christ. When he is rejected, the temple too is to be destroyed and all hope for the future lies in turning to the rejected stone that has been made the head of the corner. If the salutation of that Psalm, "Blessed is he that cometh" be uttered in penitent faith, then a time of restoration beyond all woe can be awaited with the coming Lord.

It is sad to see how the warnings of Christ and the preaching of repentance to Israel by the earliest church led to accusations that Jesus had threatened to destroy the temple. The Gospels report the false testimony brought during the hearing arranged for Christ after his arrest: "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands" (Mark 14:58).

It seems likely that the distortion of what Jesus said lay in attributing to him a direct threat to destroy the temple. If the jeering at the cross was not completely drawn from this testimony we have further evidence of a word from Jesus about the destruction and building of the temple in three days (Matt 27:40; Mark 15:29). Further, the contrast between the temple "made with hands" to be destroyed and the temple "not made with hands" to be raised up (Mark 14:58) is one that fits the pattern of New Testament teaching. [46] Stephen, accused of teaching that Christ would destroy the temple, cites Isaiah (66:1f) to show that "the Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands" (Acts 7:48). Faced with bitter persecution because of this charge of hostility to the temple, the earliest Jewish-Christian church remained faithful to Jesus' teaching, even though they may not have grasped all its implications.

The temple made with hands could not be God's dwelling place in reality, and Jesus Christ had brought reality, fulfillment. The body of Christ was the true temple, raised up on the third day and the temple of stone would be removed by God's judgment. When Jesus had said in the temple court, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," the disciples had not understood. But as John accurately reports, "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2:22).

That belief was not peripheral; it embraced the Lord's interpretation of the meaning of his death and resurrection. It changed the form of the people of God as well as the form of their worship, for with the fulfillment of the temple the way was open to the Gentiles, who need come neither to Gerizim nor Jerusalem, but only to Jesus Christ.

III. The New Temple of the New Covenant

Jesus Christ did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. He sternly rebuked those who failed to obey not merely the outward letter of the law but its inward meaning. The law was to be heard as the voice of the living God. In the same way Jesus demanded respect for the temple-not as a ceremonial institution but as God's dwelling (Matt 23:16-22).

In fulfillment Jesus actualized both the law and the temple in the same way. He brought to life-his life-the very principles and relations that they expressed.

We must understand this to grasp the spiritualizing of the New Testament. It would be easy to slide into a misunderstanding here. We might too readily interpret New Testament spiritualizing as part of the pattern of the times. Demythologizing was in the air in the Hellenistic Age. The pagan myths had been rehabilitated as philosophical allegories. Philo had used this method to present the Old Testament to the Alexandrian intellectual.

Consider, for example, the plea of the Apostle Paul to the Romans to present their bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1, 2). What he seeks is not literal human sacrifice, but a spiritual service. [47]

Taking our cue from such a passage, we might see the whole New Testament as an elaborate and more successful spiritualizing of the Old than Philo had been able to achieve. This might appear to be particularly the case in relation to the Old Testament cult of worship. When we find Christians described as the living stones of a new temple, when their benevolent gifts are "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil 4:18), when their bodies are spoken of as temples of the Holy Spirit, then it might seem that the cult has been spiritualized by transposing into figurative language what was once symbolic action. Such use of figurative language would not, of course, prejudice the importance or usefulness of the actions that furnish the figure. A man may describe an intellectual feast with a whole menu of vivid figures fresh from the kitchen. This would not suggest that he would regard this as a dietary substitute, however.

Our reflection on the claims of Christ has already shown us that his use of the Old Testament is far from figurative. The situation is completely reversed. In the wisdom of God's purpose the earlier revelation points forward to the climax, when, in the fullness of time, God sent his own Son into the world.

Christ is the true temple, the true light of glory, the true manna, the true vine. The coming of the true supersedes the figurative. The veil of the temple made with hands is destroyed, for its symbolism is fulfilled.

At the cross the actualization of the symbolism of sacrifice is particularly clear. It is not a figurative use of Old Testament language to say that Christ is the Lamb of God offered to make atonement for sin. The sin-offering at the temple altar is not being "spiritualized" when we say it is fulfilled in Christ. Neither is the temple being "spiritualized" when we say that in the resurrection the true temple was raised up. No earthly temple made with hands can ever again become the place of God's dwelling, for in Jesus Christ all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form. Stone may be laid on stone, but never, in Gerizim, or in Jerusalem, can a sanctuary be built where God will be pleased to dwell. Indeed any structure so conceived or dedicated can be at best a tower of Babel and at worst a temple of Antichrist.

It is the realization of Christ, his death and resurrection, that provides the meaning of the spiritual realities of the New Testament. What might appear to be merely figurative language proves to be actuality when we trace its source to the person and work of Christ.

It is because Christ is the real temple in his death and resurrection that the church, and individual Christians as well, can be described as temples of God.

This follows from two principles that are drawn together in the Pauline formula "in Christ." The first is the fact that by being united to Christ, Christians share in the realities Christ has accomplished. Those who are joined to Christ are raised from the dead with him and are therefore made with him the New Temple of God. [48]

The other principle is that those who are united to Christ have him not only as their representative-the new Adam heading a new mankind; they have him also as their life. The last Adam is not merely a living soul as was the first (Gen 2:7), he is a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45). Christians are made to be temples because the Spirit of Christ dwells in them; the church is a temple because it is the Spirit-indwelt body of Christ.

Paul's use of the "body" figure for the church begins with the literal body of Christ. Paul speaks of the body of Christ in the same sense as the flesh or the blood of Christ: "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby..." (Eph 2:13-16).

Gentiles are brought near in the blood of Christ; they are reconciled along with Jews in one body, the body of Christ on the cross. It is in the body, the flesh of Christ, that the enmity is abolished.

But Paul also describes the unity of Jew and Gentile, brought together in Christ as one new man, one body. He adds that through Christ "we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" and then proceeds to describe the New Temple: "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom the whole building, fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (vv. 20-22).

The redeemed are one in Christ's body; they are one body in Christ (Rom 12:5) they are a body of Christ (without the article: 1 Cor 12:27); they are the body of Christ (Eph 4:12). The church's existence as the body-temple depends totally on the resurrection body of Christ in which the church is raised up, and on the Spirit of Christ by which the church lives. Paul's appeals for the unity of the church are drawn from the unity of the body of Christ as the true and final temple. For Paul the body and the temple go together: the breaking down of the middle wall of the temple creates one body; the New Temple grows as a body (Eph 2:21); the body is built as a temple (Eph 4:12, 16). [49] Christ is the cornerstone of the structure, the Lord in whom the New Temple exists.

Just as the church is one with Christ in his body and as his body-temple, so the individual believer is a temple of the Lord. The principles are the same. The believer's body is joined to Christ's body. A Christian cannot become one flesh with a harlot because he has become one Spirit with Christ (1 Cor 1:16, 17). Again-this "spiritual" union is not less real, less concrete, even in the deepest sense less physical, than union with a harlot. The man's physical members are members of Christ. "The body is for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (v. 13b).

Therefore the believer's body, like Christ's, is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and God is to be glorified in his body. The glory of Christ was the meaning of the Shekinah in the temple; it now shines from those to whom Christ gives the Spirit.

The individual Christian has a resurrection body, a building from God, a "house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1). Christ's new temple-body is the assurance of the believer's new temple-body. The temple-body of each believer is not subordinate to the temple-body of the church, but both depend in the same way upon the temple-body of Christ. [50]

A clear example of the overwhelming realism that fills the New Testament theology of the New Temple is Paul's use of a series of interrelated Old Testament passages in 2 Cor 6:16-7:1. The apostle is requiring the clearest separation from heathenism on the ground of the temple fulfillment in the new people of God. "And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people..." (v. 16).

It is plain enough that Paul is declaring the realization of the greatest promises of the Old Testament ("Having therefore these promises, beloved..." 2 Cor 7:1). The fullest realization of God's covenant, the eternal and abiding presence of God, binding his people to himself and himself to them forever: these are the promises that are fulfilled in the church-we are a temple of the living God. The Old Testament passages Paul is citing, in particular Leviticus 26:12 and Ezekiel 37:27, join, as Paul does, God's abiding in his temple with God's final fulfillment of the covenant promise. Ezekiel, the priestly prophet, himself echoes the historical promise. Paul blends both passages (adding the "dwelling" from Exodus 29:45); he uses "I will walk among you" from Leviticus, but casts the clauses in the third person as Ezekiel does.

But is Paul only borrowing language? Ezekiel prophesies in the name of the Lord, "I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people..." (Ezek 37:26b, 27). Paul responds, "...we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor 6:16).

No, God who has become our Father and made us sons and daughters in Jesus Christ-the living God has given us with unveiled face to behold his glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:18). Paul's ministry is a ministry of the Spirit, of glory, the glory that surpasses, for how many soever be the promises of God in the Son of God is the yea: "wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (2 Cor 1:20).

Do not propose to the Apostle Paul that God's holy sanctuary of the last days, begun in the Spirit, will be completed in the flesh! The temple which Ezekiel prophesied is the temple of the covenant, of God's presence claiming his people forever. The Apostle labored as a master builder in that temple, working in gold, silver, and precious stones, laying no other foundation than the one which God set in place, Jesus Christ.

No, Paul is not borrowing figurative language. He is proclaiming spiritual realities-dimly perceived when the first son of David summoned workmen from Tyre, but abundantly fulfilled when the last son of David formed the eternal place of meeting in the temple not made with hands.

When we view the glory of the spiritual temple of the New Covenant, it would seem that no further heightening is possible. The true Son of David and true Son of God has come. All that the temple means is fulfilled in him and in his people. The Gentiles are brought in and the temple of living stones grows in glory and holiness.

Yes, the church now has a heavenly glory, tasting by the Spirit the saving realities of the world to come. But there is a world to come, and the foretaste of the Spirit fills our hearts with the yearning of Christian hope. Even as Paul writes of the glory of the church to the Corinthians, he is painfully aware of the sins and weaknesses of that church. He knows too the labors and agonies through which his ministry of glory is exercised. Yet the sufferings of this present time cannot be compared with the weight of glory to come.

In hope the church waits for the final glory to be brought with the returning Lord. The Lord is One, and his presence in the Spirit is no mere sign; yet there is a final fullness when Christ will claim the possession that is sealed by the down-payment of the Spirit. Heaven offers no other Christ, and no temple beyond Christ, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of the New Jerusalem to come (Rev 21:22).

Yet just as the language of the Old Testament symbols can be used to describe the realities that have come with Christ, so they can be used to describe the heavenly realities as they are and as they will come with Christ. The earthly temple at Jerusalem was fulfilled and its meaning passed away. Neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem remained as sanctuaries. But there remains the dwelling of God eternal in the

heavens.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that the tabernacle was built according to the pattern that God showed to Moses in the mount. He then employs the figures of the tabernacle to present these heavenly realities. But his is not an exercise in Philonic speculation. The realities in the heavens are not abstractions nor disembodied ideals. Rather, in the center of the epistle is the glorified Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. By faith the people of God perceive the heavenly city and by faith they journey toward it. But they not only go to it; the city comes to them. It is the city and kingdom of the future, the city that shall remain when every earthly kingdom has passed away.

The city abides because Christ abides, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The pilgrims to the city look to Jesus, the Founder and Finisher of their faith.

“We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after that which is to come” (Heb 13:14). Every earthly capital for the people of God has been superseded by the heavenly reality. The present center of new covenant worship can be no earthly altar, for the real and final sacrifice of Christ has been offered once for all. The people of God cannot enter Jerusalem to sacrifice but must go outside the gate with Jesus, who offered himself once at the end of the ages to put away sin. Their access as they assemble to worship is to the final festival assembly of the heavenly and earthly holy ones, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to his sprinkled blood. Christ, the high priest of good things to come has opened a new and living way into the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. The city that abides is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). We come to it as we come to Christ; it comes to us, for Christ will come again and will bring the heavenly Jerusalem with him.

The living hope of Hebrews is the expectation of the whole New Testament. Paul writes, “For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:30).

Paul, who had witnessed Stephen’s execution as one who spoke against the temple; Paul who so loved his kinsmen according to the flesh that he repeatedly risked his life to speak the truth to them, Paul, the Pharisee, with deliberate emphasis contrasts the Jerusalem above, which is free, our mother, with the Jerusalem that now is, which he likens to Mount Sinai in Arabia, a city in bondage like Ishmael, not in the freedom of the birthright promise of Isaac (Gal 4:21-31).

But Paul does not write to shock his hearers by intimating that Jerusalem is an Arab city. If his words were politically construed, I suppose they would be more offensive to Arabs than to Jews.

No, Paul writes from the urgency of his deepest conviction: that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and men, the full and final Savior. There can be no going back. When Christ’s blood has been shed there can be no further sacrifice for sin. For a generation the temple remained while, beginning in its courts, the gospel of a better sacrifice was preached. Because Christ fulfilled and did not destroy the law, the disciples did not leave the temple until they were forced to do so—even Paul worshiped there in a vain effort to show his continuing love for his people. But the issues were made plain to that generation and to all that follow. No animal sacrifice can be offered that is acceptable to God, who has given his own Son as the Lamb. To offer such a sacrifice cannot repeat or symbolize Christ’s sacrifice, for Christ has appointed another memorial of his death till he come.

If there is a way back to the ceremonial law, to the types and shadows of what has now become the bondage of legalism, then Paul labored and ran in vain—more than that, Christ died in vain. To promise to a people with the covenant name of Israel second-class citizenship in the kingdom of heaven by way of the restoration of an earthly economy with a temple of stone, that is surely to obscure the gospel that is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes, Jew or Greek.

Let us not give the trumpet of the gospel an uncertain sound. The ministry of the gospel is the ministry of the Spirit to the ends of the earth and the end of time. The call of the gospel to the Israeli is the call of God to a heavenly citizenship and to a pilgrimage of faith. May God give us grace after these centuries of hate to make that call the call of God’s love, “O, Ephraim, how shall I give thee up!” (Hos 11:8).

But the hope of Israel is nothing less than the fullness of God in Jesus Christ. The danger of any lesser hope appears in such strange caricatures of prophecy as those that promise the earth to Israel and heaven to the church. No, that mystery which Paul proclaimed to move Israel to jealousy was just this—that the Gentiles have received Israel’s inheritance. Wild olive branches have been grafted into the tree; how much more readily may the natural branches be restored?

But faith and not flesh determines the number of the people of God. To restore the temple would be to offer new reason for confidence in the flesh, to build again the wall of partition and to destroy the unity of the people of God.

No man can lay another foundation: Jesus Christ is the true, the final, the real temple. He is the glory of Israel, and to him must the gathering of the nations be.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Walter Eichrodt, “Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?” in Claus Westerman, ed. *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1963), pp. 234ff.

[2] Harold H. Nelson, “The Egyptian Temple” in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, G. E. Wright, D. N. Freedman, eds. (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 147ff.

[3] A. Leo Oppenheim, “The Mesopotamian Temple,” *op. cit.*, pp. 160,164.

[4] For the parallel between Babel and Bethel, cf. Gen 28:12 with Gen 11:4 (especially the phrase, “the top reached to heaven.” For sullam as “rising flight of stones, stair” see Koehler-Baumgartner *Lexicon* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), p. 660. The Lord appeared beside Jacob,

- not at the top of the stairway. The word *àalayv* in Gen 28:13 should be translated “beside him” as in Gen 35:13. See Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907, 1959), p. 756(6c),
- [5] Alan Cole, *The New Temple* (London: Tyndale Press, 1950), argues that Stephen condemns the building of the temple by Solomon. But Acts 7:48 should rather be viewed as picking up the confession of Solomon’s prayer, 1 Kings 8:27 .
- [6] Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), p. 255. Cf. 1 Kings 8:27; Ps 113:5, 6; Ex 19:11; 20:22 .
- [7] On the “name theology” of Deuteronomy see James C. DeYoung, *Jerusalem in the New Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 1960), p. 46f, note 62.
- [8] Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 328. Cf. R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 6.
- [9] Cf. Frank M. Cross, Jr., “Tabernacle Terminology,” *Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, (1961), pp. 223f.
- [10] The contrast is not between the Lord and the angel, for the angel bears the divine name (Exod 23:20f). For Moses to know the angel is to know God (Exod 33:12). The distinction is between God’s going up in the midst, or going before the people.
- [11] Thereby showing the arbitrariness of the critical opinion carried over from the last century that rejected the antiquity of expiatory sacrifice in Israel’s worship. Cf. DeVaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 424-429; 433f.
- [12] The temple is built in an era of the fulfillment of God’s covenantal blessings. The promised land was occupied (1 Kings 4:21); peace was established (v. 25); Israel was as the sand of the sea (v. 20).
- [13] Cf. Yves M. J. Congar, *Le Mystère du Temple* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1963), pp. 84,85; R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), p. 65.
- [14] The worship of God enthroned between the cherubim is expressed in a beautiful passage in the Qumran Scrolls (4Q S1 40:2-18) translated by G. Vermes, “The Divine Throne-Chariot” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 212f.
- [15] On the meaning of Ezekiel’s temple-vision see: Martin Schmidt, *Prophet und Tempel* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), pp. 158-171; H. L. Ellison, *Ezekiel: The Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 137-144; Patrick Fairbairn, *Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1851), pp. 385-403; A. vandenBorn, *Ezechiël* (Roermond en Maaseik: J. J. Romen & Zonen, 1954), pp. 232-234.
- [16] E.g., Ps 46:5-10; 98:7-9; Isa 10:26; 35:1-10; 40:3-30; 52:12; Ezek 34:11-16. Cf. Jer 32:21, 37-44; Isa 60:20; Zech 14:16.
- [17] René Laurentin has traced the weaving of Old Testament quotation and allusions, including another “seventy weeks” as announced by Gabriel (who had given the revelation to Daniel), in *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* (1957) and *Jesus au temple* (1966), both in the series *Collection d’études bibliques* (Paris: Libraire Lecoffre).
- [18] See Laurentin, *Jesus au temple* for a defense of this translation.
- [19] In clear distinction from Mary’s, “Thy father and I sought thee...” See Laurentin’s treatment, *op. cit.*
- [20] Note that the “troubling” of Christ’s soul (John 12:27) echoes the language of Ps 6:4 and 42:5 (LXX Ps 41:6). The hallowing of God’s name, the first petition of the kingdom, has fulfillment in the atoning sacrifice of God’s Son.
- [21] Cf. Richard H. Hiers, “Purification of the Temple: Purification for the Kingdom of God,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* (March, 1971), v. XC, pp. 82-90.
- [22] See I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (First Series, Cambridge, 1917), “The Cleansing of the Temple,” pp. 82-89.
- [23] Cf. the rules at Qumran, where a priestly community excluded all those with injuries and defects. IQ Sa 2:3ff. See Bertel Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), p. 6.
- [24] A. M. Dubarle, “Le signe du temple,” *Revue biblique XLVIII* (1939), pp. 21-44 argues that “Destroy this temple” refers to the edifice of stone, and “in three days I will raise it up” refers to Christ’s body. In the rich meaning of the prophetic language the transition could be made through a double meaning of “temple” in the first clause.
- [25] Cf. G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962), pp. 47ff. Note the “Messianic Rule” (IQ Sa).
- [26] The neuter form “more than the temple” cannot be pressed as impersonal, for the neuter is used in the same way in Matt 12:41 , 42 in reference to Jonah and Solomon. See Alan Cole, *The New Temple* (London: Tyndale Press, 1950), pp. 11f.
- [27] See A. G. Hebert, *The Throne of David* (London: Faber & Faber, 1941), pp. 143-163; Alan Cole, *The New Temple*, pp. 9-13.
- [28] T. W. Manson, in an article on Mark 2:27f, *Coniectanea Neotestamentica XI* (1947), pp. 138-146, argues that Jesus’ original saying was “The Sabbath was made for the Son of Man,” the Aramaic *bar na,sha,* being taken wrongly in a general sense. Denying that the Sabbath was made for man, he cites rabbinical assertions that restricted Sabbath observance to Israel, according to one exegesis of Exod 31:14. But particularly in the light of the title “Son of Man,” the Sabbath must be taken in its relation to Adam, not just to Israel. However, it is possible that there was a deliberate ambiguity in Jesus’ statement if *bar na,sha,* was the phrase used.
- [29] (Heb. *tsemach* Jer 23:5; 33:15. Cf. Ps 132:17, Isa 4:2 and Isa 11:1 Heb. *ne,tser*). On the Messianic interpretation of “Branch” see E. B. Pusey, *Minor Prophets*, vol. II (N.Y.: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885) on Zech 3:8; 4:12, espec. p. 374, n. 1.
- [30] The close association of Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest fits the prophet’s purpose as he heightens the promise of temple rebuilding toward the Messianic future.
- [31] *Sibylline Books V: 408-433*. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), II, 405. “For there has come from the plains of heaven a blessed man with the sceptre in his hand which God has committed to his clasp: and he has won fair dominion over all... And he has destroyed every city from its foundations with sheets of fire...and the city which God loved he made more radiant than the stars and the sun and the moon, and he set it as the jewel of the world, and made a temple exceeding fair in its fair sanctuary, and fashioned it in size of many furlongs, with a giant tower touching the very clouds and seen of all...” Charles attributes this passage to a Jewish author writing about 130 A.D. or earlier. See references in Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich, 1922-28), I, 1004f, on Matt 26:61 ; and brief discussion in Paul Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde in neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934), pp. 216f.
- [32] On the figure of the “top-stone” see J. Jeremias, *lithos*, in *Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans) IV, 268ff, and R. J. McKelvey “Christ the Cornerstone,” Appendix C in *The New Temple*, pp. 195-204.
- [33] Congar, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-166.
- [34] The figure in I Enoch 90:37. Charles, *Pseudepigrapha*, p. 260.

[35] E. P. Clowney, "Toward a Biblical Doctrine of the Church," *Westminster Theological Journal* 31 (1968), reprinted as *The Doctrine of the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), pp. 11-13.

[36] Or "God only-begotten," *monogenes theos*.

[37] Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), p. 467f.

[38] See John 5:25-29; 12:23; 13:1; 16:2, 32; 17:1. Notice that the hour of resurrection "now is" because Christ is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25 ; cf. 5:25-29).

[39] The fountain of God's house (Joel 3:18; Zech 14:8, cf. 13:1; Ezek 47) is the provision of God, the fountain of life (Ps 36:9; 87:7; cf. Jer 2:13). On the punctuation of John 7:37b, 38 , see C. K. Barrett's commentary on John. Yves Congar shows how all the feasts are fulfilled in Christ, *op. cit.*, pp. 166f.

[40] I Enoch describes the putting away of the former temple to make way for the new (presumably heavenly) structure (90:28, 29. Cf. 14:9-24; 25:4, 5; 26).

[41] Cf. Jer 12:7; 22:5ff ; Enoch 89:56; Apocalypse of Baruch 8:2; Test. Levi 15:1.

[42] Cf. Deut 32:11 (God as an eagle over the nest); Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; Isa 31:5; Ruth 2:12.

[43] See also Fifth Esra 1:28-33 in Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, William Schneemelcher, ed., II (Phila.: Westminster Press, 1964), 692 and comments by Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), p. 344. The passage is: "Thus saith the Lord, the Almighty: Have I not admonished you with prayers, as a father his sons, as a mother her daughters, as a nurse her infants that you should be a people for me and I should be your God that you should be sons to me and I a father to you? I gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing. But now, what shall I do to you? I will cast you forth from my presence! When you bring offerings to me, I will turn my face from you....Thus saith the Lord, the Almighty: Your house is desolate; I will cast you forth as the wind does stubble."

[44] Contrast Matt 23:16-22. God's house has been despised; God's judgment abandons the house and the city.

[45] Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1963) cited by Gaston, *op. cit.*, p. 346, n. 4; cf. Herman Ridderbos, *Mattheus* (*Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift*) (Kampen: Kok, 1954).

[46] Alan Cole, *The New Temple* (London: Tyndale Press, 1950), pp. 23ff; C. F. D. Moule, "Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the New Testament," *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., I pt. 1 (April 1950), 30ff.

[47] *Logikh* is used with this force. See C. F. D. Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 34, and the lexicons.

[48] Clowney, *The Doctrine of the Church*, pp. 39-46.

[49] Cf. J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 71.

[50] George Johnston, in *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1943), well says, "As He is the life of each, so is He the life of the whole; and the compelling link of the Christian society is the abiding of each one in union with the life-giving Saviour" (p. 93).

This article first appeared in *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (1973): 156-191 and is used here with permission. No part of this article may be copied or transmitted in any form without the prior permission of the publishers.