

University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

**UST Research Online**

---

School of Divinity Master's Theses and Projects

Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity

---

Spring 5-2021

## **The Temple Revealed as the Place Where Man Is with God**

David L. Hottinger

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ir.stthomas.edu/sod\\_mat](https://ir.stthomas.edu/sod_mat)



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

THE SAINT PAUL SEMINARY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

The Temple Revealed as the Place Where Man Is with God

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Divinity

Of the University of St. Thomas

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in Theology

© Copyright

All Rights Reserved By

David L. Hottinger

St. Paul, MN

2020

This thesis by David Hottinger fulfills the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Theology approved by Rev. Kevin Zilverberg, SSD, as Thesis Advisor, and by Dr. John Martens, Ph.D.. and by Dr. Paul Niskanen, Ph.D., as Readers.

*Kevin Zilverberg*

---

Rev. Dr. Kevin Zilverberg, S.S.D.,  
Thesis Advisor

*Paul Niskanen*

---

Dr. John Martens, Ph.D., Reader

*John W. Martens*

---

Dr. Paul Niskanen, Ph.D., Reader

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
I. Identifying the Temple in Scripture.....	3
A. Relevant Attributes of the Jerusalem Temple.....	4
i. Locale.....	5
ii. Builder.....	6
iii. Design.....	7
iv. Ornamentation & Furnishings.....	9
v. Access & Domain.....	11
vi. Purpose, Function, Use.....	13
vii. Conditional Permanence.....	18
B. Identifying Other Biblical Temples.....	18
i. The Tabernacle of Moses.....	20
ii. Mount Sinai.....	24
iii. A Heavenly Sanctuary?.....	28
iv. The Garden of Eden.....	30
v. Two Quasi-Temples.....	35
vi. The Christian Temple.....	38
vii. Preliminary Synthesis.....	49
II. The Temple As the Place where Man Is with God.....	50
A. Place of Mutual Presence.....	52
B. Place of Mutual Recognition.....	61
C. Place of Shared Willing.....	67
Concluding Synthesis.....	76
Bibliography.....	81

## **Introduction**

The temple of God fills the Scriptures. Practically the entire corpus of written Revelation can be related to it. But what exactly is the temple? More precisely, what do the Sacred Scriptures reveal to be the essence of the reality known as the temple or sanctuary of God?

Various iterations of the temple appear throughout the course of salvation history, some of which appear to be quite different from one another. Nevertheless, as temples, they all ought to share, and indeed do share, an essential form. This study formulates a theological definition of the temple on the basis of these biblical iterations, according to their revealed characteristics.

The thesis that shall be advanced is that the temple is simply where man is with God. To say it “is simply” is not, however, to say it *is* with the divine simplicity; the temple is where man participates in the divine act; where one knows with God’s knowing, wills with God’s willing because he shares in God’s own divine being. Obviously, this “being with” God will be realized to different degrees of perfection depending on the instance of the temple in question. All the same, I argue that all genuine instances of temple are essentially characterized by man’s being with God in this existential (and not merely, for example, proximal) sense.

Part I of this study proceeds inductively. Beginning with the temple of Solomon (an obvious instance of the biblical temple, if there is one) and its identifiable attributes, it will identify, on the basis of those same attributes, other revealed instances of the biblical temple of God.

Part II completes the inductive process. On the basis of the various iterations of temple identified in Part I, it seeks to define the essential form of the temple by first abstracting three essential characteristics shared by all the biblical sanctuaries, and then by synthesizing these into a proper definition of the theological reality.

As to sources: because the object of this study is the revealed nature of the temple, dispositive evidence will be drawn from the canonical books exclusively, with non-canonical and scholarly works utilized only for assistance interpreting the sacred texts.

As to methodology: First, because the revealed form of the temple is presumed to be consistent throughout the canonical books, the unity and inspiration of holy Scripture is axiomatic.<sup>1</sup> There would be no reason for attempting to distill a single definition for a theological concept from the testimonies of the various books unless one is firmly convinced that those books all share a common (indeed divine) author and intentionality.

This approach, moreover, may be considered “canonical” in the sense that it will seek (borrowing the phrase of the Pontifical Biblical Commission) to “situate each [biblical] text within the single plan of God,” particularly as this plan pertains to the revelation and establishment of the temple within God’s creation.<sup>2</sup>

This method obviates, to some extent, the need to engage the scholarly debate regarding the historicity of a given biblical text, or to prize the witness of one book over another.<sup>3</sup> If it is in the Bible, it has all the weight to which the Word of God is entitled.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, just as the

---

<sup>1</sup> As *Dei verbum* has it, “cum Sacra Scriptura eodem Spiritu quo scripta est etiam legenda et interpretanda sit, ad recte sacrorum textuum sensum eruendum, non minus diligenter respiciendum est ad contentum et unitatem totius Scripturae, ratione habita vivae totius Ecclesiae Traditionis et analogiae fidei,” which I translate, “Since Holy Scripture is also to be read and interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written, to find of the right meaning of the sacred text no less diligent attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the entire living Tradition of the Church and the analogy of faith”). Second Vatican Council, *Dei verbum* (18 November 1965), §12.

<sup>2</sup> Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (23 April 1993), §C1, *Origins* 23, no 29 (1994).

<sup>3</sup> For example, there is a marked trend among scholars to consider 1 Kings 6-7 as a more reliable account of the temple of Solomon than 2 Chronicles 3-4, on the supposition that Chronicles is from a later period, when the First Temple was no longer standing.

<sup>4</sup> Obviously, this does not side-step difficulties of interpretation—which are abundant. Simon J. DeVries comments on the account of the construction of the First Temple, “The literary composition of this material has long been a puzzle to biblical interpreters. The Hebrew text is difficult, while the LXX only adds to the confusion. The Greek translators are at their very worst in rendering the plethora of arcane architectural terms found in these two chapters.” *1 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 89. These questions will be engaged when relevant.

canonical approach is intended to complement the historical-critical method, and not substitute for it,<sup>5</sup> neither can one conflate the various books into one, ignoring their different origins, human authors, and audiences which all bear upon a correct interpretation of the literal sense. These differences too will be addressed when relevant. Yet, as will be shown, even where there are real or apparent discrepancies between the accounts, there are no cases in which this puts in question the revealed characteristics of the biblical temple.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the temple and man's salvation (understood as his ultimate deliverance from alienation from God) are so closely related that what *Dei verbum* says about the inerrancy of the Scriptures with regard to salvific truth in general can be applied to what is revealed about the temple in particular: "the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation."<sup>7</sup>

Lastly, the method pursued in this study is inherently analogical. While there are ample attributes of the various temples studied here whose predication could be considered near-univocal, it is sufficient (and often necessary, given the distinct natures of the temple in question) that these attributes manifest themselves in an analogical way across the various temples. This should not be surprising, especially due to the typological relation between the temples in evidence.

## **I. Identifying the Temple in Scripture**

The difficulty inherent in an inductive study of the temple is to know where to begin.

Where is the temple, that we might learn what it is? Obviously, it is not a question of a simple

---

<sup>5</sup> *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, §C1.

<sup>6</sup> For example, compare 1 Kings 7:26 and 2 Chronicles 4:5: did the bronze "Sea" just south of Solomon's Temple hold 2,000 baths or 3,000? Perhaps both! Yet the reader is content to know that it held a great deal of water. Again, was the vestibule of the Solomonic temple really one hundred and twenty cubits tall, as the Chronicler has it, while the rest of the building only thirty? (2 Chr 3:4) The silence of the account in 1 Kings is not evidence to the contrary, and even if there has been a scribal error, the height is not of salvific moment.

<sup>7</sup> *Dei verbum*, §11.

word-search through the Scriptures. Were one to attempt such a search, he would first have to grapple with the fact that many words are used to refer to temple or sanctuary of God. In the Greek Scriptures alone, the reality is referred to as the *naos* (“sanctuary,” derived from the verb *naiō*, to dwell),<sup>8</sup> the *hieron* (“the sacred [place]”),<sup>9</sup> the *hagion* (“the holy [building]”),<sup>10</sup> and simply the *oikos* (“house” [of God]).<sup>11</sup>

However, the premise of this study is that there exist also instances of the temple that are not called so explicitly. For this reason, I shall proceed as a taxonomist, identifying the members of the “species” based on shared identifiable characteristics before discerning genus and specific difference. But, again, where to begin?

Thankfully, while the “temples” that will be identified in this study have “matter” as disparate as a mountaintop garden and the human body, there is one biblical entity that must have the “form” of the temple, whatever its definition: the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. It is there one must begin in order to catalogue the salient features that will help us to identify its analogues in the rest of the Scriptures. The working assumption here is that the authors of the Scriptures—the divine if not the human—have inserted textual parallels between other (less obvious, perhaps) “temples” and this most evident instance of the reality.

#### A. *Relevant Attributes of the Jerusalem Temple*

With its two constructions and subsequent amplification under Herod, the Jerusalem temple was not a static reality. Its essential attributes and functions, however, were more or less

---

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Tob 1:4.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Matt 4:5.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Heb 9:1.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Ps 65:5. In the New Testament, *hieron* is used most often for the entire sacred compound; *naos* for the temple proper (containing the vestibule, holy place, and holy of holies) and for the Christian temple; and *oikos* for the *hieron* and *naos* together generally, or for the “family of God” (cf. Heb 3:6). Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, trans. Reginald F. Trevett (New York: Newman Press, 1962), 108-110. *Hagion* is only infrequently used for the temple and has a meaning similar to *oikos* (see Acts 21:28).



constant across the periods in which it stood. Nevertheless, because our focus is to distill the divinely revealed nature of the temple in Scripture, I shall limit myself to cataloguing the attributes of the temple of Solomon in particular. The Scriptures themselves suggest that the original construction was more perfectly in accord with the divine plan for the temple.<sup>12</sup> The features of this plan I shall limit myself to are: 1) where it was built; 2) who built it; 3) its design; 4) its ornamentation and furnishings; 5) who had access and use of it; 6) for what it was built and how it was used; and 7) the conditions God placed on its enduring as “temple.”<sup>13</sup>

#### i. Locale

Solomon built his temple on a mountain; specifically, “on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed” (2 Chr 3:1 RSV).<sup>14</sup> King David had purchased it from Ornan the Jebusite, and there, at God’s command, he had erected an altar and offered sacrifice in appeasement for his sinful census (1 Chr 21). His sacrifice was accepted with fire from heaven, and forthwith David decided that the temple his son was to build would be upon the site (1 Chr 21:26 to 22:1). The site was outside the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> “Its isolation,” says DeVries, “symbolized the uniqueness of the deity to whom it was dedicated.”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ezra 3:12: “But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first [temple], wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of [the second] being laid.”

<sup>13</sup> The particulars of the Solomonic temple receive extensive treatment in 1 Kings and both books of Chronicles, and ample indirect information comes through in the Psalter. According to John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, this intensive focus is due to the fact that the construction of the temple “represents the high point of the historical narrative of the Old Testament from Genesis through Kings” and is “a kind of preliminary fulfillment of the promises of all previous divine covenants.” John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: the Old Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2018), 415.

<sup>14</sup> All biblical quotations will be from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) unless otherwise noted. 1 Kings, in contrast, does not mention this patristic connection—or any details about the location of the temple, except that it was not on Zion, where the ark had been previously kept (see 1 Kgs 8:1).

<sup>15</sup> See 1 Chr 21:14-16: before the angel of the Lord arrives to Jerusalem and the pestilence with him, God stays his hand, while the angel was “standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”

<sup>16</sup> DeVries, *1 Kings*, 97.

Mount Moriah has a patriarchal pedigree, being the place where Abraham had been instructed to slaughter Isaac (Gen 22:2). Nevertheless, in the poetic imagination of the Psalms, the temple sits atop Mount Zion, the “holy mountain” (Ps 48:1), and an epithet for Jerusalem in general: “Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion” (Ps 9:11); “For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation: ‘This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it’” (Ps 132:13-14). Regardless of whether it is called Moriah or Zion, the temple is portrayed in the Scriptures as sitting atop “God’s holy mountain” (Ps 99:9) on a site designated by God (see Wis 9:8)<sup>17</sup> and consecrated by patriarchal and royal worship.

## ii. Builder

King Solomon built the house of the Lord.<sup>18</sup> But the project does not originate with him. David, his father, had first conceived, but God had checked his initiative, eventually permitting the project but in a way that made clear that the temple comes from God and not man. Thus David relates in 1 Chronicles 28:6, “[The Lord] said to me, ‘It is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be a son to me, and I will be a father to him.’”<sup>19</sup> The one chosen, Solomon, is a *man of peace* or *of rest*, as his name is thought to mean:

Behold, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace (*menuha*). I will give him peace from all his enemies round about; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. <sup>10</sup> He shall build a house for my name. (1 Chr 22:9-10a).<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> “You have given command to build a temple on your holy mountain, and an altar in the city of your habitation.”

<sup>18</sup> See 1 Kgs 6:1ff.

<sup>19</sup> See also 2 Sam 7:13.

<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere, the root *menuha* is translated “rest.” For instance, Psalm 132:14: “This is my resting place (*menuhateka*) for ever.”

This man of “rest” will be the one who builds the place where the Lord, in turn, takes up his rest among his people.<sup>21</sup>

Solomon, moreover, is a messianic figure. Anointed as king of Israel (1 Kgs 1:38), he prays and offers sacrifice on behalf of the people like a priest at the dedication of his temple (1 Kgs 8; cf. 2 Chr 8:12), and he is remembered, at least in his youth, as the prophetic mouthpiece of the wisdom of God (1 Kgs 4:29-34; cf. 2 Chr 9:23; Sir 47:14-17).<sup>22</sup> Though his splendor was not long to last, Solomon’s “messianic”<sup>23</sup> reign is portrayed in the Bible as something of a down-payment on the fulfillment of all God’s promises to his people.

Thus, the temple was built by the man chosen by God for the project, a messianic king and man of peace, who was to be favored by God to the point of being called his own son.

### iii. Design

The design for Solomon’s Temple was dictated to King David by the Lord Himself: “All this [the Lord] made clear by the writing from the hand of the Lord concerning it, all the work to be done according to the plan” (1 Chr 28:19). The design of the temple as a whole, with its entrance apparently facing east,<sup>24</sup> is notable for its distinct partitions. The principal structure was

---

<sup>21</sup> See 2 Chr 6:41 and Ps 132:8: “Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place (*menuhati*), you and the ark of your might.” The root here, again, is *mnh*. For a fuller study of *menuha* in relation to the temple of Solomon, see Larry J. Kreitzer, “The Messianic Man of Peace as Temple Builder: Solomonic Imagery in Ephesians 2.13-22,” in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 484-512. Says Kreitzer, “It seems undeniable that the Chronicler is intent on stressing the role of Solomon as a ‘man of peace’ and the theological significance of this may be greater than we often appreciate.” Kreitzer, 491.

<sup>22</sup> Congar argues that Solomon was remembered not as a prophet but merely a wise man. Yves, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 30. Yet the fact that inspired works of scripture are attributed to him would seem to belie this, at least in the broad sense of prophecy.

<sup>23</sup> I use “messianic” to denote one specially “anointed” to mediate God’s salvation to his people, typically through the exercise of kingly, priestly, and prophetic roles.

<sup>24</sup> Ambiguous in the text of 1 Kings but see Ezek 8:16; see also Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, “YHWH’s Exalted House—Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon’s Temple,” in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark, 2005): 63-110, 69. The only indication of the direction of the temple entrance in the descriptions of its construction comes at 1 Kgs 6:8, which says the entrance to the side chambers was on the “right” side of the building, which many English translations interpret as the “south” side, indicating an eastern-facing entrance. (“The left-right orientation is one of standing inside the temple and looking out,” Hurowitz, “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 80). 2 Chronicles 29:4 places the court outside of the temple (presumably in front of the

divided between the *hekal*, that is, the nave or holy place, and innermost sanctuary, the *debir*, also referred to as the “holy of holies” (1 Kgs 6:16).<sup>25</sup> A transitional portico or vestibule, the *'ulam* (1 Kgs 6:3) separated the nave from the inner court or “the court of the priests” (1 Kgs 6:36, 2 Chr 4:9), which was in turn surrounded by the outer or “great” court, which was technically outside of the sacred precincts (1 Kgs 7:12).<sup>26</sup> Hence three principal sections can be identified in the temple proper: the inner sanctum, the sanctuary nave, and the inner court.<sup>27</sup>

The structure of the temple building, shaped in a rectangular box, was built of stone and enveloped on three sides by three stories of wooden side chambers, recessed into the stone wall of the temple (1 Kgs 6:2, 5-7).<sup>28</sup> The temple building (not including side chambers) ran sixty cubits in length, twenty in width, and thirty in height (1 Kgs 6:2). The holy of holies was a cube of twenty cubits (1 Kgs 6:20), meaning its floor was either flush with that of the holy place and had a cavity above (see 2 Chr 3:9), or that it was elevated in relation to the nave, or that it was elevated but so much as to be flush with the ceiling.<sup>29</sup> The nave of the “house” was of equal width as the holy of holies but double the length (1 Kgs 6:17). The ten-cubit deep *'ulam* equaled the nave in width but apparently soared to a height of one hundred and twenty cubits, dwarfing the rest of the structure (2 Chr 3:4). Though most scholars presume the figure is the result of a

---

entrance) on the east as well. Also, the bronze “sea” was located “on the right side of the [house] eastward opposite the south” (1 Kgs 7:39, *Orthodox Jewish Bible*).

<sup>25</sup> *Debir* probably means literally “innermost room.” Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 242. Also known as the “holy of holies,” we might translate it more loosely as “the chamber most set apart.”

<sup>26</sup> That there were two initially courtyards, only the first of which was part of the temple proper, see Hurowitz, “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 92. See also Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 24. The division of the inner courtyard into the Court of Israelites and the Court of Women was subsequent (see, possibly, 2 Chr 20:5, “Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court”). Likewise, while Gentiles may have been permitted into the outer court, the appellation Court of Gentiles is subsequent and extra-biblical. But see Steven C. Smith, *The House of the Lord: A Catholic Biblical Theology of God’s Temple Presence in the Old and New Testaments* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan, 2017), 155-157, applying these terms to the temple of Solomon.

<sup>27</sup> Hurowitz clarifies that the *'ulam* or vestibule was not properly a room. “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 70.

<sup>28</sup> That the side chambers were of wood and not stone, see Hurowitz, “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 71.

<sup>29</sup> Hurowitz thinks the first possibility is the more likely. “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 74.

corruption in the text (1 Kings does not offer a height for this part of the building), John Jarick suggests that, taking the text of 2 Chronicles independently, there is nothing strange about the Chronicle depicting “Solomon’s [original] portico” as a structure towering into the heavens, as a medieval cathedral’s bell tower might.<sup>30</sup> The dimensions of the courts are not given; DeVries says that the temple proper stood in the middle of the court.<sup>31</sup>

#### iv. Ornamentation & Furnishings

Solomon’s Temple displayed gradation in both the materials and the elaborateness of its ornamentation and furnishing. This was to reflect the gradation of the holiness of its distinct spaces. For example, while the floors of the *hekal* and the *debir* were both laid with cypress wood (or juniper, perhaps, 1 Kgs 6:5), the floor of the *debir* only was covered in gold.<sup>32</sup> And while the cultic implements and furnishings of the inner court were of bronze and made by the gentile Hiram of Tyre (1 Kgs 7:13-44), those of the interior of the temple were made of gold and are accredited to Solomon himself (1 Kgs 7:48-50).<sup>33</sup> And though the walls of both of the *hekal* and *debir* were covered in gold, only those of the *debir* were overlaid in “pure” gold<sup>34</sup> of

---

<sup>30</sup> John Jarick, “The Temple of David in the Book of Chronicles,” in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 365-381, 369. Jarick, observing that the 2 Chronicles account gives no other measure for the height of the temple, and that the punctuation provided to 2 Chronicles 3:3-4 imposes a meaning that might not be native to the text, go so far as to suggest that the Chronicler may intent to portray the entire structure as one hundred twenty cubits in height. This would obviously not square with the account in 1 Kings. However, Jarick is not interested in harmony or historicity, but rather with the depiction of the temple in Chronicles, which presumably comes decades, perhaps centuries, after the temple itself was destroyed.

<sup>31</sup> DeVries, *1 Kings*, 94.

<sup>32</sup> Though the RSV has it that “the floor of the house [Solomon] overlaid with gold in the inner and outer rooms” (1 Kgs 6:30), Hurowitz clarifies that “house” here refers to the *hekal* and that the italicized words should actually read *within and without*, as the *King James Version* has it (“rooms” is an interpolation). Hurowitz, “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 89. The meaning apparently, is that the floor of the inner sanctuary was covered in gold from both above and below, a detail that makes more sense if the *hekal* was elevated from the floor of the House.

<sup>33</sup> As Cogan notes, it is highly unlikely that Solomon did more than produce them “executively.” Cogan, *1 Kings*, 269.

<sup>34</sup> “*Zahab sagur*.” According to Hurowitz, this term refers to gold that has been smelted in a special way. “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 75.

impressive weight (1 Kgs 6:21; 2 Chr 3:8); indeed, even the nails (or pegs) of the *debir* were gold (2 Chr 3:9).<sup>35</sup>

In addition to large amounts of gold, Solomon adorned the house with “great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones, and marble” (1 Chr 29:2). The adornments expressed motifs both heavenly and earthly. The interior walls and doors of the *hekal* were adorned with carvings of gourds and flowers (1 Kgs 6:18), while those of the *debir* had cherubs, palm trees, and flowers (1 Kgs 6:29-32). The two great bronze pillars in front of the temple were laden with networks of pomegranates and were topped with capitals shaped like lily-flowers and “tangled branches”<sup>36</sup> (1 Kgs 7:17-19). The great bronze “Sea” in the inner court and was also adored with gourds and its brim was “like the flower of a lily” (1 Kgs 7:26). The Sea stood upon twelve bronze oxen, while other bronze furnishings were adorned with “lions, oxen, and cherubim” (1 Kgs 7:29). According to the Chronicler, the *debir* was veiled by a linen curtain “of blue and purple and crimson” and adorned with cherubic patterns (2 Chr 3:14). Before the curtain and the inner sanctuary it veiled stood ten tree-like gold lampstands (2 Chr 4:20), while within it loomed two enormous carved cherubs made of oil-wood and covered in gold (2 Chr 3:10). Beneath these sentinels rested the ark of the covenant, which contained “the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb” (1 Kgs 8:6-9).

Though not exhaustive, this review of the Temple’s ornamentation is sufficient to indicate the logic behind the design in general. As Victor Hurowitz puts it, “the Temple was not merely YHWH’s residence, but a divine garden on earth. ... [T]he bronze implements of the courtyard ... represent the Sea and rivers of the divine residence, the natural tranquility of the

---

<sup>35</sup> “Inside of the house” here refers to the holy of holies only. Cogan, *1 Kings*, 243. See Hurowitz “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 88-89 for a more exhaustive listing of the material and technological gradations of the temple.

<sup>36</sup> So Hurowitz translates *sebakah* in 1 Kgs 8:17. “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 84.

holy mountain, and possibly the Trees of Life and of Knowledge.”<sup>37</sup> Yet the temple, with its gold-gilded wood interior, floral motifs, and artificial “trees,”<sup>38</sup> was meant to resemble more than God’s enclosed garden: it was a veritable microcosm of creation, a building with cosmic significance because it recapitulated the universe itself.<sup>39</sup> This view of the cultic shrine was not unique to the Israelites.<sup>40</sup> Yet it helps to make sense of the other major cultic furniture on the campus: the bronze “sea” represents the great (primordial?) sea itself; the ten large portable basins or lavers positioned on wagon-like “stands” nearby (1 Kgs 7:38) are the rivers of the earth;<sup>41</sup> the darkly-colored curtain standing before the holy of holies represents the firmament, dividing man’s abode from the divine.

Lastly, a description of the furnishing of the Solomonic temple would not be complete without mention of the altars. The largest was the immense altar of bronze (a ten-cubit high square measuring twenty cubits on each side) that stood outside the temple entrance (2 Chr 4:1; 3:15). In the *debir* stood an altar of cedar, overlaid with gold (1 Kgs 6:20, 22), used for burning incense (see Isa 6:6). Finally, in the *hekal* was placed an altar (“table”), also covered in gold, on which the bread of the presence was to be placed (1 Kgs 7:48).

#### v. Access & Domain

Just as the ornamentation of the temple became more elaborate the deeper one entered, so did access to its sacred spaces become more restricted. The familiar division of the spaces—

---

<sup>37</sup> Hurowitz “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 87. For Hurowitz, in contrast to many patristic commentators, the bronze columns at the entrance to the temple (more or less in the middle of the compound) represented the trees of Life and Knowledge that stood “in the middle of the garden” of Eden (Gen 2:9).

<sup>38</sup> It is reasonable to assume—as many scholars do—that the lampstands were *menorah*, that is, seven-branched lampstands according to the pattern prescribed for the lampstand of the Mosaic tabernacle in Ex. 25:31-40, whose design was overtly tree-like (in addition to branches, it also had almond shaped “cups” and flowers). After all, Solomon made the lampstands “as prescribed” (2 Chr 4:7). However, a detailed description of the Solomonic lampstands is not given in the biblical account.

<sup>39</sup> Brant Pitre, “Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood,” *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005): 47-83, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Ben Meyer, “The Temple: Symbol Central to Biblical Theology,” *Gregorianum* 74 no. 2 (1993), 223-240, 229.

<sup>41</sup> See Hurowitz, “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 79-81, and Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 156, for support.

namely, that Israelite men only could enter into the inner court; priests and Levites only into the *hekal*, and the high priest only into the *debir* (and this only once a year)—is not immediately apparent from the biblical texts relating to the temple of Solomon itself. Nevertheless, that entry to the *debir* was so restricted can be inferred from the rubrics in Leviticus 16 for the Day of Atonement, since the temple of Solomon was built to be the cultic equivalent of the tabernacle of Moses (see, for example, 2 Chr 5).<sup>42</sup> More succinct, however is the witness of the Letter to the Hebrews. Though the author is referring immediately to the Mosaic tabernacle (presumably), his summary of the “clearance levels” to both the *hekal* and the *debir* ought to be valid for the temple period as well: “the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year” (Heb 9:6-7).

However, that only men (and not Israelite women) were permitted into the inner or “priests” court is not at all clear from the Scriptures, and, indeed, seems to have been a later development necessitated by the breaches of decorum in which mixing the sexes too often resulted.<sup>43</sup> Regardless, the limitation of access to the inner court to ritually-pure Israelites only (a law that would lead to Paul’s arrest for allegedly bringing Gentiles into the temple in Acts 21) must have been operative from the earliest days of the Jerusalem temple. To enter before the Holy One, one had to be holy himself (cf. Lev 19:2).

---

<sup>42</sup> Earlier in Leviticus, sons of Aaron were consumed by fire after attempting to offer incense “before the Lord” in the holy of holies (Lev 10:1-5). This is the context for the command in Lev 16 regarding the Day of Atonement, which reads, “The Lord spoke to Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died; and the Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron your brother not to come at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy seat which is upon the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. ... And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small; and he shall bring it within the veil and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat which is upon the testimony, lest he die ... And it shall be a statute to you for ever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves, and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you; for on this day shall atonement be made for you, ... And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father’s place shall make atonement, ... And this shall be an everlasting statute for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins” (Lev 16:1-34).

<sup>43</sup> Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, *The William Davidson Talmud - English*, digital edition, Sukkah 51b.



Courtyard aside, the temple was reserved to the priestly class. Before commissioning his son to build the temple, David reorganized the Levitical priests and the Levites in order to fulfill the precepts of the Mosaic ceremonial at the house of the Lord (see 1 Chr 28, esp. v. 21). In general, they were to “keep charge of the Tent of Meeting and the sanctuary, and ... the service of the house of the Lord” (1 Chr 23:32). This “custody and service” would involve everything necessary to fulfill what had been commanded regarding the sanctuary of God and the worship thereat, including:

- To offer the various offerings and sacrifices prescribed by law on behalf of themselves and the people;
- To lead the people in the keeping of the Sabbaths and liturgical feasts;
- To stand every morning and evening, to thank and praise the Lord;
- To enforce and maintain the holiness of the grounds and furnishings;
- To perform, within the temple grounds, those ancillary tasks necessitated by all the above. (see 1 Chr 23:28-31).

G.K. Beale has observed that the Hebrew roots of the words used in 1 Chr 23:32 to summarize priestly and Levitical service at the sanctuary, *shamar* (“to attend to, to keep [charge/watch]”) and *abad* (“the work/service”), when paired in the Old Testament text, always refer “either to Israelites ‘serving and guarding/obeying’ God's word ... or, more often, to priests who ‘serve’ God in the temple and ‘guard’ the temple from unclean things entering it.”<sup>44</sup> Not only was the temple only for those who were holy. In a particular way, it was the domain of the priests whom God had instituted.

#### vi. Purpose, Function, Use

A matter inseparable from the priestly service at the temple was the use or function of the temple as a whole. Broadly speaking, its use can be considered from two perspectives: human and divine.

---

<sup>44</sup> G. K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 48 no. 1 (2005), 5-31, 8. See Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; Ezek 44:14

The (intended) use of the temple can already be gleaned from the duties of the priests and Levites. To systematize, however, three basic uses are discernable: sacrifice, prayer, and assembly.

Prior to the construction of the temple, Israel offered acceptable sacrifice (especially by means of the Lord's chosen leaders and prophets) in many places—though not, perhaps, in just any place.<sup>45</sup> Yet once it was constructed, the temple at Jerusalem was the only place where Israel was to offer sacrificial worship to the Lord:

But when you go over the Jordan, and live in the land which the Lord your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you live in safety, then to the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, thither you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you present, and all your votive offerings which you vow to the Lord. ... Take heed that you do not offer your burnt offerings at every place that you see; but at the place which the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. (Deut 12:10-14)<sup>46</sup>

Hence Pitre's conclusion that though "God could be honored through prayer, song, and Scripture reading in the local synagogues [or, I would add, anywhere else], the essence of religious worship—sacrifice—took place only in the Temple."<sup>47</sup>

The temple was also a privileged place of prayer: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (Isa 56:7). Many of the Psalms, indeed, give voice to the prayer which the Israelites, or the Levites on their behalf, continually offered there before the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 16:37-42). And in Solomon's lengthy dedicatory prayer on the day the temple is consecrated, though the king says nothing at all about offerings or sacrifices, he beseeches God at length that he hear the prayers offered at, or merely toward, the house built "for thy name" (1 Kgs 8:22-53).

---

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Josh 8:30-31; 1Sam 16:4-5.

<sup>46</sup> See also Deut 12:26-27. Prophets, however, seem to be exempt from the injunction: Elijah *rebuilds* an altar of the Lord at Carmel and offers pleasing sacrifice there, though the Temple stands in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 18:30-38). See Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: the Old Testament*, 397.

<sup>47</sup> Pitre, "Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood," 64. Simon DeVries claims that in building his temple, "Solomon was deliberately breaking with the ancestral tradition that Yahweh could have no central shrine, no 'house' to dwell in" (DeVries, *1 Kings*, 96). But the existence of the Mosaic tabernacle seems to undermine his argument.

In Daniel Lioy's phrase, the temple is thus conceived as the "axis of glory," where heaven meets earth; the most fitting place for addressing words of prayer to God.<sup>48</sup>

Lastly, the temple was the place *par excellence* where the people of Israel as such were to gather. At the various "sacred assemblies" prescribed by the Mosaic law, the Israelites were to present themselves before the Lord at his sanctuary. There they were to offer sacrificial worship, yes, but also manifest and renew their identity as Israel: acting and speaking as one, remembering, seeking and receiving as one the gracious favor of their God. Hence the importance of the many prescribed gatherings and feasts (see Lev 23), and hence various precepts regarding who might enter the assembly (cf. Deut 23:1-7).

What does God "use" the temple for? First and foremost, as the place of his divine rest. As Ben Sirach prays, "Have pity on the city of thy sanctuary, Jerusalem, the place of thy rest" (Sir 36:13). The notion of God's rest is a rich one in the Scriptures. It is introduced, if not typified, by the Sabbath "rest" which God commences on the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3). The parallel to God's rest in the temple at Jerusalem is made quite explicit in the account of its construction: Solomon builds his temple over the course of one "week" of years (1 Kgs 6:38), and in the seventh month of the seventh year, on the day Solomon brings the ark into the holy of holies, God takes up his rest in the temple, manifesting his presence by a dark cloud: "And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kgs 8:10-11; see also 2 Chr 7:1-3).

In the biblical lexicon, God's place of "rest" is not where he stops working, but rather the seat of his divine governance and power.<sup>49</sup> "God is in the place where he reigns ... God's

---

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Lioy, "The Garden of Eden as a Primordial Temple or Sacred Space for Humankind," *Conspectus* 10 no. 1 (2010), 25-58, 40.

dwelling-place is linked to his rule.”<sup>50</sup> Just as history only really begins once God has taken up his “rest” after the work of creation, so too the age of “fulfillment” (which Solomon temporarily inaugurates) commences only once God gives his people “rest” from their enemies (1 Chr 22:9) and the glory of the Lord has come to rest upon the sanctuary built for his name. The temple is therefore the “house” (*oikos*) whence emanates the divine *oikonomia*; the throne-room (or at least the footstool, see 1 Chr 28:2; cf. Matt 5:34 and Ps 11:4) of his heavenly reign.

Closely related to the theme of God’s rest is the notion of God’s dwelling at the temple. In his dedicatory prayer, King Solomon recognizes that no earthly dwelling can possibly contain God (1 Kgs 8:27); in both Kings and Chronicles it is God’s “name” that fills the house (1 Kgs 8:29; 2 Chr 5:5). Nevertheless, though the temple does not limit the divine presence, God is depicted as uniquely present in his “dwelling;” perhaps in the sense that he is especially accessible and operative at it. In this way, as Yves Congar observes, the very fact of the temple conveys both God’s immanence and his transcendence at the same time.<sup>51</sup>

As the locus of God’s special operative presence, the temple “was the place where Yahweh was consulted and in which he uttered his oracles.”<sup>52</sup> Preeminent among those oracles were the commands which God communicates and reiterates from his sanctuary. For example, on the night of the Temple’s inauguration, the Lord appears to Solomon and, after promising that he will, as requested, “hear from heaven” those prayers offered via the temple, God tells the king:

And as for you, if you walk before me, as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, “There shall not fail you a man to rule Israel.” But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will pluck you up from the land which I have given you; and this house, which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of

---

<sup>49</sup> See John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 72-75.

<sup>50</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 65.

<sup>51</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 9-10.

<sup>52</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 12.

my sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. (2 Chr 7:17-20).<sup>53</sup>

The prophet Isaiah and Zechariah (the Baptist's father) also receive commands from the Lord in the temple (Isa 6; Luke 1:8-17). Indeed, it is no coincidence that in the *debir* of the temple was placed the ark of the covenant and the tablets of the Law it contained: they symbolized God's enduring commands to his people. Whether written or oral, the temple was "for" divine oracles. If modern translators do not follow Jerome in his rendering of *debir* ("oraculum" in the Vulgate; the "place of divine utterances")<sup>54</sup> this translation still expresses something characteristic about the temple and its innermost chamber.<sup>55</sup>

Lastly, the temple was "used" by God as the place from where he dispensed his mercies. The "mercy seat," after all, was the name for the upper portion of the ark of the covenant (see 1 Chr 28:11; cf. Exod 25:17). The theme of mercy is reflected in Solomon's prayer of dedication as well. "Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place their prayer and their supplication," he prays God, "and maintain their cause and forgive thy people who have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions which they have committed against thee; and grant them compassion" (1 Kgs 8:49). Indeed, already by Solomon's time the altar of the Lord is a place of asylum where men expected to receive mercy not only from God, but from his servants.<sup>56</sup> Centuries later, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, Jesus depicts the sinful tax collector going to the temple to seek the Lord's mercy (Luke 18:9-14). Moreover, the fact that beggars gathered at the

---

<sup>53</sup> The biblical text does not state where this locution occurred. However, just as it was for the Lord's first apparition to Solomon (2 Chr 1:2-12), the connection to the sanctuary is plain.

<sup>54</sup> "Oraculum," in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1389. The word originally referred to the divine utterance itself, though came to include the place where it was given. See III Reg 6:19-21, *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, ed. Roger Gryson, Robert Weber, et al., 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 466.

<sup>55</sup> Depending on how the Hebrew root is vocalized, *dbr* can mean either "to speak" or "to be behind." "DBR," in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol 1, ed. Walter Baumgartner, et al. (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 209-210. Today scholars tend to prefer the latter derivation.

<sup>56</sup> See Adonijah's flight to the tent of meeting in 1 Kgs 1:50-53.

temple's entrance (see Acts 3:1) reveals an expectation to receive mercy not only from God directly, but that it come through those who frequented the temple.<sup>57</sup>

To summarize the temple's use: it is the place where man offers sacrifice, prays, and assembles, and where God rests/dwells, speaks, and shows mercy to his people.

#### vii. Conditional Permanence

There is one final revealed aspect of the Solomonic temple. As the passage from 2 Chronicles 7 quoted above indicates, the privileged status of the temple, and God's presence in it, are conditional upon the king (and, by extension, the people) fulfilling the commands God has given or rather reiterated from the temple (see also 1 Kgs 6:11-13). In particular, Solomon was to "walk before" (*telek*) God as King David had done, doing all that was prescribed in the Lord's commands, statutes, and ordinances (2 Chr 7:17). In other words, the king is to ensure that the Torah is obeyed. If not, God would cast both Solomon and the "house" he had built from his sight (2 Chr 7:19-20). Indeed, as the prophets warned and history confirmed, the very existence of God's dwelling among his people was contingent on the king's fidelity to the law of the Lord.

#### *B. Identifying Other Biblical Temples*

This rather lengthy (and yet still abbreviated!) review of the features of Solomon's Temple will now enable us to recognize the other "temples" in the Bible. Again, the working assumption here is that the Holy Spirit, in wishing to indicate that something should be understood as a temple of God, will do so via textual parallels to the most "obvious" temple. Clearly, there is no need (or possibility) of complete correspondence of attributes. Our vehicle of transport, after all, is analogy. Nevertheless, sufficient correspondence must be detected (a few

---

<sup>57</sup> In this light, Christ's command, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful," (Luke 5:36) may have been more reminder than innovation.

“quasi-temples” will be identified in passing). For all the full-fledged sanctuaries here identified, however, there is such an abundance of parallels connecting them to the temple of stone as to make analogical identification rather straightforward.<sup>58</sup>

As the Solomonic temple represents the “fulfillment” of the notion of temple in the Old Testament, our study will first take us backwards in time to the “temples” which preceded, before jumping forward to the Christian temple.

A word, however, about two apparent omissions in our catalogue of biblical temples: namely, the two prophetic temples, that of Ezekiel and the eschatological temple of Revelation 21-22. That the New Jerusalem (in which no *temple* was seen)<sup>59</sup> which John describes at the end of his apocalypse is itself a sanctuary can be readily shown on the basis of the relevant attributes above identified.<sup>60</sup> I have not done so here because it is apparent that the New Jerusalem is simply the eschatological Christian temple in its fullness. Nevertheless, John’s vision of the Church’s ultimate condition will be highly relevant to Part II’s discussion of what the temple is essentially, because it reveals what the temple is ultimately.

Ezekiel’s detailed description of a new temple at Jerusalem could likewise be shown to possess the relevant parallels with the temple of Solomon.<sup>61</sup> In fact, his temple is so similar to

---

<sup>58</sup> This analogical hermeneutic has recently been championed in Protestant scholar Richard B. Hayes’ *Reading Backwards* (Waco: Baylor, 2014) as the “figural” reading of Scripture: all the contents of the Scriptures are to be interpreted as “images and figures” of Christ, their fulfillment (Hayes, 78, 90-91). Yet this is simply the allegorical interpretation of the Fathers under another guise.

<sup>59</sup> “For its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb,” (Rev 21:22).

<sup>60</sup> Located on “a great, high mountain,” (Rev 21:10), built by God (comes from heaven), the entire city is the holy of holies (shaped as a perfect cube, Rev 21:16-17). It is adorned with pure gold and precious stones (Rev 21:18-21), bisected by the “river of life,” which is flanked by the tree of life (Rev 22:1-2), and is “the dwelling of God with his people” (cf. Rev 21: 3), where they gaze upon his face (Rev 22:4). All its inhabitants are holy, all are priests (for they have access to His glory); all bear his name on their foreheads, worship him, and reign with him (Rev 22:3-4).

<sup>61</sup> Ezekiel’s temple was built on “a very high mountain” (Ezek 40:2), seemingly by God according a plan which Ezekiel’s very account “reveals” (Ezek 40:4). It is on a much larger scale, but similar in design to the temple of Solomon. It features an outer court, inner court, vestibule, nave, and Most holy place (Ezek 40-41), has angelic and floral ornamentation (Ezek 41:25), is furnished with altar of sacrifice (Ezek 40:47) a table for bread (Ezek

Solomon's in its essentials that it really does not offer many new "facets" by which one may gain insight into the essence of the temple as such.<sup>62</sup> Of far more interest will be other passages from this prophet and others which speak to the relationship between God and his people in the time of fulfillment, i.e. in the age of the everlasting covenant which Ezekiel prophesies (especially chapters 34, 36, and 37). These will be mentioned in the next section, especially in order to chart the "trajectory" of the temple between its man-made iterations and the Christian sanctuary.

i. The Tabernacle of Moses

The most readily-identifiable "temple" besides the Jerusalem sanctuary is the tent of meeting that accompanied the Israelites on their journey from Sinai into the promised land. As mentioned above, this portable sanctuary is the cultic equivalent and immediate predecessor of the temple of Solomon.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, that the tabernacle was a "sanctuary" hardly needs to be established in relation to its successor. Doing so, nonetheless, will serve to establish the formal unity of the biblical temple throughout the Scriptures.

During the sojourn through the wilderness, the Mosaic tabernacle was located "in the midst" of God's people (Exod 25:8). The camp was arranged in three concentric rings: the twelve tribes were to encamp on every side of the tent, with their familiar tents facing the Lord's (Num 2:2), with the tribe of Levi acting as a "buffer" roundabout between the sinful people and the holy place (Num 2:17; 3:21-28). Thus the tent's relative position within Israel's "war camp"

---

41:22) (no ark!), and is a source of life-giving water (Ezek 47). It is also the domain of priests (Ezek 40:46), the place of approved sacrifice (Ezek 32:18ff), and the resting place of God's glory (Ezek 43:4-5).

<sup>62</sup> As Congar explains, "The Temple whose plan Ezechiel draws is not an architectural project, it has a prophetic meaning. He foretells the messianic establishment of a sphere of purity which will be the place of God's dwelling and transcend the material existence of Israel and the Mosaic institutions." Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 69.

<sup>63</sup> If the latter has any other significance, it is the incorporation of the symbolism relating to the Davidic Covenant, not extant, obviously, at Moses' time.



was fixed,<sup>64</sup> even if its geographical location varied. Nevertheless, the liturgical “location” of the Mosaic tabernacle might be said to be Sinai itself: its biblical description, opine Bergsma and Pitre, make it clear “that the Tabernacle is intended to function as a *portable Mount Sinai*.”<sup>65</sup> By means of it, Israel would carry with them (literally) the experience they had of God on his holy mountain, an experience which they renewed in the ritual worship prescribed in the covenant God made there with them. Indeed, its twice-ringed position in the camp, with the Levites surrounding it and the tribes surrounding them, evokes the pattern of Sinai, with the seventy two elders upon the mountain, Moses at the summit, and the people gathered around its base (see section B.ii, below).

The tent’s “builder” is not Solomon but Moses, a messianic, patriarchal figure who rules God’s people as his representative on earth, and who exercises both priestly and prophetic functions, and who delivers the people out of their turbulent ordeal in Egypt into the relative peace of the wilderness. The project itself, however, is God’s initiative and gift. God himself gives Moses the design for it during the theophany upon Sinai (Exod 25:8-9). Moses therefore plays the parts which David and Solomon split, both amassing materials for the temple and overseeing its construction.<sup>66</sup> Like the sanctuary built by Solomon, Moses’ has a tripartite design of ascending holiness and ornamentation, moving from the court, to the holy place, to the most holy place. The dimensions of the tent itself are proportionate to those of the First Temple, only

---

<sup>64</sup> As Bergsma and Pitre observe, the tent of meeting’s position mirrors that of pharaoh’s sanctuary in the Egyptian war camp, evidently as a theological polemic against Pharaoh and his gods. *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*, 234.

<sup>65</sup> Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*, 183 (emphasis in original).

<sup>66</sup> See Exod 35. It is worth noting here that though nowhere is the tabernacle itself said to be adorned with precious stones, God instructs Moses to call for the collection of onyx, in addition to other precious materials such as gold, silver and bronze, for the construction of the sanctuary (Exod 25:7).

on half the scale.<sup>67</sup> The structure itself was of wooden boards overlain with gold (Exod 26:29), adorned from within with embroidered linen curtains (Exod 26:1) and enveloped from without in animals skins and curtains of goat hair (Exod 26:7, 14).

As was the case for Solomon's Temple, the *debir* was built to contain the ark of the covenant, flanked by golden cherubim, and the tablets of the law which it contained, as well as the altar of incense (Exod 25:10-22; 26:33; 30:1-6).

The *hekal* of the tent was separated from the *debir* by an elaborate veil "of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen" embroidered with cherubs (Exod 26:31-33). The space of the nave contained a gold-covered table for the bread of the presence and the dendronic lampstand of pure gold with its floral motifs (Exod 25:23-40; 26:35).

The east side of the *hekal* opened on the court (Exod 36:20-30), from which it was screened by another curtain of blue, purple and scarlet linen (Exod 26:36). The court, as the one at Jerusalem, contained the square altar of sacrifice covered in bronze, as well as a large bronze basin for washing (Exod 27:1-2; 30:17-18). The court itself, a hundred-by-fifty-cubit rectangle, was set off from the surrounding area by a "fence" made of bronze pillars, between which were stretched linen hangings (Exod 27:9-18).

Access to the tabernacle was limited according to the same rubrics indicated in Leviticus 15-16 and summarized in Hebrews 9:6-7. The entire compound was holy relative to the world outside; only the ritually clean could enter its court.<sup>68</sup> The tent interior was holy relative to the

---

<sup>67</sup> The measurements of the *debir* and *hekal* must be calculated from number and the dimensions of their parts given in Exod 26 and 36. As Steven C. Smith reports, the former was a ten-cubit cube and the latter had twice the length and identical height and width. Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 142.

<sup>68</sup> See Num 17:13, 19:20.

surrounding courtyard; only priests and Levites could enter the holy place, on pain of death.<sup>69</sup> The most holy place could be entered by the high priest alone, and he but once a year.

The tabernacle was therefore the domain of the priest: it was there that they and the Levites “served and kept” the sacred precincts (see, for example, Num 3:7-9). In fact, woven into Exodus’ account of the fabrication and assembly of the tabernacle is the detailed description of the priestly garments which the Lord commanded Moses to make (Exod 39:1-30). These vestments (along with the priesthood itself) are therefore viewed as an essential part of the sanctuary. It is noteworthy, therefore, that these vestments are adorned with gold and precious stones (see Exod 39:8, 10-13).<sup>70</sup>

It has already been noted that the tabernacle was the cultic predecessor of the temple. There individuals went to seek the Lord;<sup>71</sup> there the men assembled as a nation;<sup>72</sup> there the priests offered prayer and sacrifice to God with the people or on their behalf (see Lev 1-7).<sup>73</sup> For his part, God “uses” the tabernacle to manifest his abiding presence among his people: as soon as Moses finishes the work of erecting the tabernacle, installing the ark, and offering the first sacrifice upon its altar,

the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ... [T]hroughout all their journeys the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel. (Exod 40:34-35, 38)

The parallel here to the later inauguration of Solomon’s Temple is evident. The cloud, moreover, would continue to “rest” over the tent (appearing as fire in the night) throughout Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness (Num 9:16-18).

---

<sup>69</sup> See Num 18:1-6.

<sup>70</sup> Such would have been the case during the Temple periods as well.

<sup>71</sup> Exod 33:7.

<sup>72</sup> Exod 34:23

<sup>73</sup> Though it seems the moveable tabernacle is the only place for offering sacrifice prior to the people’s entry into Canaan, there is still no proscription of offering sacrifice elsewhere. The provisions of Deuteronomy 12 are not yet in effect.

As God's "resting place" the tabernacle, and the *debir* in particular, was also the place of revelation, from whence the Lord utters commands to his people through their leaders. As God said to Moses,

There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel. (Exod 25:22)

Was the Lord's presence in the tabernacle conditional? It would seem so. Though the divine presence, manifest by the cloud and the fire, accompanies God's people continually during their forty-year trek through the wilderness despite their many rebellions, there was a limit to his forbearance. In the days of Samuel, on account of the iniquity of Eli's sons, "the glory of the Lord" departs from Israel when the ark is lost to the Philistines (1 Sam 3-4).<sup>74</sup> The crucial factor here, it would seem, is the fidelity of the leaders and priests, rather than the people themselves.<sup>75</sup>

These many parallels to the relevant temple-attributes suffice to show that the tent of Moses was a sanctuary of God, just like the temple of Solomon which eventually replaced it.

## ii. Mount Sinai

Moving backwards in time from the tabernacle leads directly to the foot of Mount Sinai. In the book of Exodus, Sinai is unmistakably portrayed as a sanctuary, one established by God himself. Its use as such is only temporary (Elijah, however, would return to experience a theophany here), yet nevertheless its "temple features" abound.

---

<sup>74</sup> 1 Samuel makes no explicit mention of the tabernacle, but rather of the "temple of the Lord" (*hekal Yahweh*) at Shiloh (1 Sam 3:3, 4:4). It is entirely possible that some other structure had functionally replaced the tent of meeting during the time of the judges. Nevertheless, the "glory"—and therefore the temple reality—is depicted as having abided with Israel up until this time.

<sup>75</sup> Granted that the conditions of the covenant demanded the fidelity of the people as well (see Deut 29-20). Nevertheless, as their history would show, as the leaders went, so went the people.

First, and most obvious, is the fact that Sinai/Horeb is a mountain. Specifically, “the mountain of God” (Exod 3:1, 18:5, 24:13). It is, therefore, the natural place of encounter with “God Most High” (cf. Gen 14:18-22).

Sinai is also an enclosed sacred space: God commands Moses to “set bounds” about the mountain and to consecrate it (Exod 19:23). It exhibits the three-tiered structure characteristic of the sanctuaries which succeed it: the people, under pain of death, remain at its base (Exod 19:12-13, 24:2); the seventy “priests” (“elders” in RSV but *presbyterōn* in the *Apostolic Bible Polyglot*) along with Aaron and his two sons ascend some way up its slope to where they can “eat and drink” as they behold God (Exod 24:9-11); but only Moses, a messianic “high priest,” is permitted to ascend beyond and enter the cloud of the Lord’s glory which veils the summit (Exod 24:12-18).<sup>76</sup> As elsewhere, this tripartite structure evidently reflects an ascending gradation of holiness. Still, the entire mountain is holy relative to its surroundings. All of the Israelites must be consecrated before coming to stand at the foot of the mountain (Exod 19:9-17). The priests, who come nearer to the Lord’s presence, however, must be consecrated further (Exod 19:22), and not even they may ascend to the top.

Regarding the “ornamentation” and cultic furniture of the Sinai-shrine, I note first that an altar of sacrifice, with twelve pillars “according to the twelve tribes of Israel” (the altar of Solomon, it will be recalled, had twelve bulls) was erected by Moses in the “court” of the sanctuary, at the foot of the mountain (Exod 24:4). There is no mention of a table at the “nave” of the mountain, but the fact that the elders ascended to eat and drink here with God (as the priests would in the *hekal*) suggests at least an equivalence of function: the divine dining room. There, moreover, the ground is seen to be bejeweled with “a pavement of sapphire stone” (Exod 24:10). Atop the mountain, there is no need for an altar for incense that will symbolize ascending

---

<sup>76</sup> Joshua is said to go up with Moses, but he is not said to enter the cloud.

prayer,<sup>77</sup> for the Lord himself descends upon the mountaintop to speak with Moses directly (Exod 19:18). Nor is there need of artificial ornamentation on the mountain; presumably, it is naturally covered with flora and blanketed each night by the stars of heaven. Like the temple of Solomon, yet even more so, Sinai is God's enclosed, microcosmic "garden"

Sinai is also the domain of the priests whom God has instituted. We have already seen that only the consecrated "elders" were allowed to ascend its slopes. It is also, however, a site of priestly ministry: when God calls Moses from the burning bush, he tells him: "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exod 3:12). The root of the word translated in the RSV as "serve" is *'abad*, the same used elsewhere for priestly ministry.

Lastly, as a consecrated space, Sinai's "use" was wholly sacred. There God's people assemble to hear his commands and to ratify the covenant (Exod 24:3-8). There Moses offers the sacrifice by which the covenant was ratified (Exod 24:4-8). It is also a place of prayer, for there Moses spends forty days and nights in intimate converse with God on two occasions (Exod 24:18 and 34:28), and there he pleads with God on behalf of the people when they had sinned (Exod 32:11-14).

The mountain is also the place of encounter with God's presence. Moses and the elders are given to "see" God there (Exod 24:11). God, in his turn, uses Sinai as the site of theophany, manifesting there his special presence and activity by means of trumpets blasts, thunder and lightning, smoke, fire from heaven, earthquakes, and, most tellingly, the "glory of the Lord" in

---

<sup>77</sup> See Ps 141:2.

the appearance of a consuming fire, which “rests” upon the mountain enveloped in the thick cloud (Exod 24:16).<sup>78</sup>

Sinai is also the “oraculum” *par excellence*: from atop Sinai, God dictates to Moses not only the building plans for the tabernacle (Exod 25-30), but the moral law (20-23:9) as well as the major elements of the ceremonial (23:10-19).<sup>79</sup> Sinai is also the place where God has mercy on his people, and forgives them their sin after the incident with the golden calf, thanks to Moses’s intercession (Exod 32:30-33; 33:12-17).

Finally, there is indication that, in a sense, God’s presence with his people at Sinai was “conditional.” To be sure, the Sinai theophany was only ever intended to be temporary. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, after the incident of the golden calf, the Lord threatens to abandon the people: “Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people” (Exod 33:3). Ultimately, the threat is averted through Moses’ intercession. Even so, the incident points to the general principle, in play at Sinai as elsewhere, that God’s special presence among his people is conditional on their fidelity to him.

From the foregoing, it is clear the Mount Sinai was something of a “proto-temple”<sup>80</sup> which gave birth, as it were, to the tent of meeting. And so, on the very shores of the Red Sea, as they looked forward to that place at where they had been commanded to offer sacrifice to the

---

<sup>78</sup> The root for “rest” (*wayyishkon*) in Exod 24:16, while distinct from the “rest” in Gen 2:2 (*wayyishbot*) is of the same semantic field, nonetheless.

<sup>79</sup> The verse prior to the giving of the moral law and the first ceremonial precepts, Exod 20:1 (“And God spoke all these words, saying...”), has Moses “going *down* to the people” to communicate a warning to the people, and the verse after these initial ceremonial precepts has God calling Moses *up* to Himself (24:1). If the narrative sequence is to be followed, then it would seem these locutions did not come at the top of the mountain, but at its bottom. However, the whole narrative of Exod 19-40 gives the impression that the top of the mountain is the place where God speaks to Moses. Afterwards, it will be the tent of meeting itself (see Lev 1:1, where the remainder of the ceremonial precepts are given). It is clear that at least some ceremonial precepts came to Moses at the top of the mountain (Exod 24:18ff), and that the two tablets of the law were given there as well (31:18). In any case, it matters little whether the locutions occurred at the top of the mountain or at its base; the important point is that God gave commands to His people from His “sanctuary” at Sinai.

<sup>80</sup> Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 101.

Lord (see Exod 3:18), the Israelites sang, “Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them on thy own mountain, the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thy abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord will reign for ever and ever” (Exod 15:17-18).

As G. K. Beale observes, the prophets themselves allude to Sinai in such a way as to indicate that they “understood [it] to be a mountain temple, after which the tabernacle was modeled.”<sup>81</sup> In truth, the purpose of the tabernacle was to prolong and renew the Sinai encounter, a task which its mountaintop successor of stone was even more apt to accomplish.<sup>82</sup>

### iii. A Heavenly Sanctuary?

Exodus 25:9 says that God shows Moses a “pattern” which Moses was to follow with exactitude in constructing the tabernacle. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews says that this blueprint was based on the “heavenly sanctuary” (*latreuosin tōn epouraniōn*) of which Moses’ was to be “a copy and a shadow” (Heb 8:5). The existence of a “temple” in heaven (if this is what we are to understand) would certainly undermine the definition of the biblical temple advanced here. How can the temple be the place “where man is with God,” if, at least until the Ascension, there was no man in its heavenly archetype?

We are touching upon a mystery that is not without its degree of obscurity. Yet it appears the best solution comes from the Letter to the Hebrews itself. Chapter 9 treats of the contrast between the first covenant with its earthly sanctuary and the new covenant and the sanctuary “not made with hands” opened by Christ (cf. Heb 9:24). It begins:

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the holy place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the holy of holies... These

---

<sup>81</sup> Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 29. See, for example, Isa 4:5: “Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion.”

<sup>82</sup> If the temple did not succeed in surpassing the tent for long, from the foregoing it would seem that the fault lies with the kings entrusted with preserving the purity of its cult.



preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people. *By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age).* (Heb 1-3, 6-9 [parentheses original to the translation])

What the RSV translates “not yet opened” (*mēro pephanerōsthai*) is better rendered in the NAB as “not yet been revealed.” (One can see the relation to “epiphany” in the Greek). The difference is important because the thrust of the passage is that only the high priest enters behind the second curtain, into the *hagia hagiōn*, only once a year; therefore one can say that the way into the inner sanctuary had not yet been made manifest to all, though it was “opened” to the high priest in that limited sense. For in truth, according to the sacramental mind of the Jews, the *debir* which stood behind the “second curtain” of the tabernacle and temple really was the “heavenly” sanctuary. Accordingly, Margaret Barker, basing herself on texts such as Psalm 11 and the LXX version of Isaiah as well as Josephus, asserts that for the Jews, “the veil which screened the holy of holies was also the boundary between earth and heaven” and that those who entered it entered the heavenly sanctuary itself.<sup>83</sup> The four colors of the curtain—blue, crimson, purple, and the white of the linen—which represented the four elements of material existence, and the cherub embroidery reflect this symbolism.<sup>84</sup>

If this be true, then it is not the case that on Sinai Moses was shown a vision of a celestial sanctuary in the sense of an otherworldly “structure”. Rather, I argue, the “pattern” he was shown was the Sinai experience itself, the experience of God’s immanent (and therefore *heavenly*) presence. Bergsma and Pitre concur: “what happens to Israel in the covenant ceremony

---

<sup>83</sup> Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 188-189 (emp. in original). Isaiah 6 in the LXX and Ps 11, argues Barker, suggest an understanding not that God is really on earth, but that the holy of holies of the temple (on earth) is really in heaven.

<sup>84</sup> Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 190. Scarlet represented fire, blue the air, purple the sea, and white the earth from which the linen flax had grown.

of Mount Sinai is meant to be represented in the liturgy of the Tabernacle.”<sup>85</sup> Thus: “see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain” (Exod 25:40).

It is not to be supposed that Moses saw a “heavenly” ark, altar, or lampstand, for these he was not “shown” (and what would those be, even?). What was he shown? The very presence of God:

Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank. (Exod 24:9-10).

Then Moses ascended higher, alone, and entered the cloud which had covered the glory of the Lord, “and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights” (Exod 24:15-18).

Moses entered “heaven” itself, “the spiritual place of perfect communion with [God], and also the place of his Presence,”<sup>86</sup> outwardly manifested on Sinai in sensible signs by the cloud and the “glory.” In the Sinai event Moses was enveloped by “the holy tabernacle which [the Lord] didst prepare from the beginning” (Wis 9:8). This is the tabernacle which the plans in Exodus 25-30 were meant to “copy,” as well as those for the temple in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Chr 28:19).<sup>87</sup>

#### iv. The Garden of Eden

Looking backwards in time from Sinai, one spies in the distance another “proto-temple”: the garden of Eden, primordial sanctuary of God. A growing body of literature evinces fascination with the recognition that Eden was a temple.<sup>88</sup> Yet the identification, though perhaps surprising, is anything but a stretch given the scriptural data.

---

<sup>85</sup> Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*, 183.

<sup>86</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 174.

<sup>87</sup> It is worth recalling here that St. Paul relates his “friend” was caught up “to the third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2). This enigmatic phrase seems to suggest a true heavenly sanctuary, complete (like earthly sanctuaries) with a three-tiered structure! The phrase may simply be a Jewish idiom for “highest heaven”, yet its most straightforward sense is that Paul in paradise experiences intimacy with the deep things of God.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 35-94. See also Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: the Old Testament*, pp. 102-103.

The geographic “locale” of Eden, and whether one is even intended, is a matter of perennial scholarly dispute.<sup>89</sup> No matter. It can at least be asserted that the garden was on a mountain, or at least had a mountain at its center. A close reading of Genesis 2 reveals this. From Eden a river rose which divided into the four primary rivers of the earth, flowing in different directions (v. 10), indicating that Eden is “the highest point in the known world.”<sup>90</sup> More explicit are the words of Ezekiel addressed in poetic register to the king of Tyre:

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering... With an anointed guardian cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked... [but] you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God. (Ezek 28:13-16, emphasis added)

Eden’s “builder” is God himself: “And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed” (Gen 2:8). Its “design” parallels that of the sanctuaries we have already seen: as a garden (*gan*) it is by definition an enclosed area for cultivation.<sup>91</sup> Within its enclosure, the gate of which faced to the east (Gen 3:24), a tripartite division of space can be discerned, especially when the other mountain sanctuary of Sinai is kept in mind.<sup>92</sup> Inside the enclosure is the “inner court” which in turn encircles the “middle of the garden” where the Tree of Life was located (2:9). This parallels the *hekal* of the temple/tabernacle and the golden lampstand(s) there contained. The “holy of holies” is then the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, whose existence is mentioned directly after that of the Tree of Life in the Genesis 2 narrative. Its location is not given, but that fact that the man and woman were prohibited from touching it “lest they die” (Gen 3:3), and that it mysteriously

---

<sup>89</sup> See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987), 66.

<sup>90</sup> Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: the Old Testament*, 102.

<sup>91</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 61.

<sup>92</sup> Smith (*The House of the Lord*, 39-47) and Beale (“Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 9) proffer alternative ways of seeing the tripartite temple-design in the garden of Eden. Yet Smith fails to account for the inner court, and Beale places much emphasis on the supposed distinction, based on Gen 2:10, between “Eden” and the garden itself. Alternatively, the holy place, with both trees, might be understood as the mountain summit, and the holy of holies as the heaven directly above: God’s “dwelling” which man may approach but not, as yet, enter.

contained/communicated divine knowledge puts it in close parallel with the *debir* and the ark of the covenant contained therein, both of which could not be entered or touched on pain of death, and both of which contained divine knowledge.<sup>93</sup>

The garden is lushly “ornamented” with “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Gen 2:9). It is well to note here that the most probable derivation of the garden name is its homonym, “pleasure, delight.”<sup>94</sup> The sacred author also makes a point to observe that Eden is geographically “adorned” with “good” gold, bdellium and onyx stone (Gen 2:12), the first and last of which will be employed in large quantities to beautify the tent and temple, and the second of which may have been used for incense.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, as cherubs adorned the curtains of the tent and tabernacle and two golden cherubs “guarded” the *debir*, at least two cherubs were stationed at the entrance to the garden after man is expelled (Gen 3:24).

As several scholars have noted, the biblical description of the garden suggests its true nature as the primordial, even archetypical, sanctuary; the divine residence itself. One detail regarding the description of the garden deserves further attention: the rivers. “A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers,” the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates (Gen 2:10). There is no scriptural evidence that the sanctuary at Sinai, or those of Moses and Solomon, contained sources of water. Hence the need for the large basins for washing placed near the altars of sacrifice, which represented natural water sources.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Wenham reviews several interpretations scholars have given this tree’s mysterious name. Ultimately he sides with those who understand it to refer to the wisdom of God to which man has no right: “to pursue it without reference to revelation is to assert human autonomy and to neglect the fear of the Lord” *Genesis 1-15*, 63.

<sup>94</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 61. See, for example, Isa 51:3, “[he] will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her.”

<sup>95</sup> Bdellium “is a translucent aromatic substance to which the manna is compared in Num 11:7.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 65.

<sup>96</sup> Steven C. Smith says that the First Temple was built over the Gihon Spring (not the river in Gen 2:13, which circles Cush), and its waters were used “to wash away vast amounts of blood from the Temple sacrifices.” *The House of the Lord*, 52. But this is untenable. The Gihon is an underground spring, access to which was under the

Nevertheless, other biblical sanctuaries, such as Ezekiel's and the temple-city of Revelation 21-22, are notable for being sources of rivers containing life-giving waters (see Ezek 47; Rev 22:1). "In every case," says Gordan Wenham, "the river is symbolic of the life-giving presence of God."<sup>97</sup> In this context, then, it is significant that Eden was the "headwaters" for the major rivers of the known world.

Like the other sanctuaries of God, Eden was holy and only the holy could remain in it. Thus, after the man and the woman sinned, they were expelled. Prior to man's expulsion, however, it was the domain of God's priest. God explicitly commissions man to "till" (*le'abadah*) and to "keep" (*uleshamerah*). Here we have again, for the first time, the priestly *shamar* and *'abad* that denote the cultic ministry. As Wenham observes, "it is striking that here and in the priestly law these two terms are juxtaposed, another pointer to the interplay of tabernacle and Eden symbolism already noted."<sup>98</sup> Though Adam will later fail to "guard" the temple from the unclean serpent's entry, the fact that this was his duty suggests that the primordial human vocation had a priestly rather than agrarian character.

What was the intended use of the Edenic sanctuary? Admittedly, evidence of man's prelapsarian activities in the garden is scarce, and in any case, he fails to do whatever he was supposed to do. Yet the instructions he receives from God are telling, at least with regard to man's vocation: beyond his priestly duties conveyed in Gen 2:15, man and woman together are to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28). If in the postlapsarian sanctuaries man was to offer prayer and sacrifice to God, here he is

---

City of David, not the temple mount. Hurowitz says flatly, "Jerusalem has no natural river, and even the Gihon spring is not on the Temple grounds," "YHWH's Exalted House," 82.

<sup>97</sup> *Genesis 1-15*, 65.

<sup>98</sup> *Genesis 1-15*, 67.

to play the role of God’s vice-regent on earth, ruling in God’s stead and according to his laws as he and the woman “cultivate the earth” and orient all things to the glorification of the Creator. In fact, the terms “subdue” (*kavash*) and “have dominion” (*radah*) are used later in the Bible to express the kingship of David and Solomon (see 2 Sam 8:11, 1 Kings 2:24).

These divine instructions also indicate that the sanctuary of Eden was a place of oracles. The commands in Genesis 2:15-16 are given there explicitly, not to mention the punishments God metes out in Genesis 3:14-19. Another significant detail regarding the divine use of the garden comes in Genesis 3:8: God’s “walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” As the narrative seems to suggest, “Maybe a daily chat between the Almighty and his creatures,” Wenham muses, “was customary.”<sup>99</sup> Moreover, as Beale points out with Wenham: “The same Hebrew verbal form (*hithpael*), *hithallek*, used for God’s ‘walking back and forth’ in the garden (Gen 3:8), also describes God’s presence in the tabernacle.”<sup>100</sup> Elsewhere the Scriptures employ the verb to express man’s fidelity to the Lord’s commands as well.<sup>101</sup> *Hithallek*, therefore, conveys both God’s unique, even friendly presence in the garden in a way that makes a subtle connection to his abiding presence in other biblical sanctuaries.

Lastly, the conditional permanence of the Edenic sanctuary is perhaps its best known aspect: Adam and his wife could stay there in God’s garden shrine only provided they obeyed his commands. Failing that, they were cast out; paradise was lost.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 76. See Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14; 2 Sam 7:6-7.

<sup>100</sup> Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 7. See, for example, Lev 26:11-12: “And I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk (*wehithallalti*) among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” See also Deut 23:14 and 2 Sam 7:6-7.

<sup>101</sup> See Psalm 26:3, “For thy steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk (*wehithallalti*) in faithfulness to thee”; see also Gen 5:24, “Enoch walked with God,” Gen 6:9, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God,” 17:1, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,” etc.

<sup>102</sup> Smith argues that Eden was, at least temporarily, recovered on Sinai: “Sinai represents in its entirety a recapitulation of the Garden Temple of Eden. What Adam (along with his wife and his descendants) had forfeited at Mt. Eden was being renewed at Sinai, and graciously gifted to Moses and the Israelites.” *The House of the Lord*, 103.

On all accounts, Eden's description corresponds to the salient features of the biblical temple: paradise was the lushly-adorned mountaintop garden sanctuary which God made for his priest-regent Adam and the rest of his stock who were to minister within it even as they extended its bounds beyond its initial limits. They were to do this by walking with God and fulfilling his commands, garnering God's blessing if they were faithful and hazarding death and the end of the temple-relation if they were not.

v. Two Quasi-Temples

Lying between the mountain sanctuaries of Eden and Sinai are two species of "quasi-sanctuaries": cultic centers that approximate the temple, yet seem to fall short of a sufficient correspondence of features.

The first is Noah's ark. The ark's design came directly from God, its construction was his initiative, and its builder was Noah, a messianic patriarch who "walked (*hithallek*) with God" (Gen 6:9). Shaped as a rectangular box, its measurements are not proportionate to either the tent of meeting, or the temple, or the ark of the covenant (Gen 6:15).<sup>103</sup> It did, however, have three decks, reminiscent of the tripartite temple design (Gen 6:16). Though its description lacks any mention of precious materials or ornamentation (it was made of "gopher wood" covered inside and out with pitch, Gen 6:14)<sup>104</sup> its contents were a veritable zoological garden (Gen 6:20-21). Only the holy, the family of the righteous Noah, are allowed to enter it (Gen 7:7). Though hardly containing a life-giving river, the ark saves its occupants from universal extinction (Gen 7:21).

---

<sup>103</sup> Wenham points out that the "deck" area of the ark was three times that of the tabernacle courtyard. *Genesis 1-15*, 173.

<sup>104</sup> The identification of the Hebrew translated as "gopher wood" is far from clear, but most commentators suppose it to have been timber for shipbuilding. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 173. It bears mention that Noah's "ark" is not called by the same word as the ark of the Covenant.

Noah, moreover, is a priestly figure, building an altar and offering pleasing sacrifice to the Lord, likely atop the “mountains of Ararat” upon which the ark came to rest (perhaps in the vicinity or “court” of the ark itself) (Gen 8:4, 20). God, in his turn, renews to Noah and his sons the command he gave to Adam and Eve, adding additional ones at the same time, and establishing a covenant with Noah (Gen 9:1-17).

The ark narrative as a whole would seem to fulfill the minimum threshold of correspondence with the temple features. These ample conceptual and phraseological parallels “suggest that both ark and tabernacle were seen as a sanctuary for the righteous.”<sup>105</sup> Yet key temple-elements fall outside of the ark itself. For example, God is specially present to Noah, who “walks” with the Lord, but not in the ark itself; the sacrifice occurs outside of the ark, as well God’s utterances to Noah. It would be better to say that the flood narrative contains a sanctuary, or rather that the Lord himself was a sanctuary to Noah and his family.<sup>106</sup>

Noah’s mountaintop altar points to the second variety of quasi-temple in Genesis: the altar-shrines of the patriarchs. After Noah, Abraham (four times), Isaac (once), and Jacob (twice) erect altars to the Lord, whence they offer sacrifice and “call on the name of the Lord” (cf. Gen 13:8).<sup>107</sup> Admittedly, these altar-shrines appear far too primitive to be considered “temples;” the “shrine” of Bethel is merely a stone monument, at least initially (Gen 28:18). Even so, these shrines display a remarkable number of parallels to full-fledged biblical sanctuaries: invariably, they are sites of theophany where God gives commands and promises to the leader of his fledging people, who then “builds” a shrine in order to offer prayer and sacrifice to God. Take,

---

<sup>105</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 172.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Ezek 11:16, “Thus says the Lord God: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.”

<sup>107</sup> See Gen 12:7, 8; 13:18, 22:9; 26:2; 33:20; 35:7. It should be noted as well that Moses and Joshua erected altars apart from those at Sinai and of the tabernacle (see Exod 17:15, Josh 8:30), and that Gideon (Judg 6:24), Saul (1 Sam 14:35), and David (2 Sam 24:25) all did the same.



for example, the brief account of Abram's altar-building at Shechem (where, interestingly, stood a venerable, if not venerated, tree): "Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him" (Gen 12: 7).

These shrines lack the more sophisticated accretions of the later man-made sanctuaries, such as those pertaining to design and ornamentation. They nevertheless illustrate perhaps what is most essential to the form of temple. As Hayward argues, a close reading of the LXX's interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures reveals an understanding that the biblical sanctuary is, essentially, the holy place prepared by God where God is seen, where his Name is invoked, where the priestly blessing (a prayer that God show his face to his people) is imparted, and where God is made known.<sup>108</sup> As an example, he points to the altar Abraham built on Mount Moriah: the name he gives the site, *yhwh yir'eh*, may be interpreted as the place where God sees or has appeared, or even the place where he shall be seen.<sup>109</sup> There, Abraham obeys God's command, offers sacrifice, and receives a renewed promise of God's blessing (Gen 22:13-18).

The most extensive account of a patriarchal shrine is that of Jacob's at Bethel.<sup>110</sup> In a dream, Jacob sees a "ladder" to heaven. Actually, as Brant Pitre argues, what Jacob sees is probably a "heavenly" temple resembling the hill-like stepped-shaped design of ancient Near

---

<sup>108</sup> C. T. R. Hayward, "Understandings of the Temple Service in the Septuagint Pentateuch," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 385-400.

<sup>109</sup> Hayward, "Understandings of the Temple Service," 387-388.

<sup>110</sup> Bethel is particularly significant because of the parallel created between it and Jesus in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Just as Jacob saw the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending from a heavenly temple, so Nathanael "will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51), the true sanctuary of God on earth. It is immediately after this that the episode at Cana occurs, leading Christopher Rowland to comment, "The manifestation of divine glory exemplified by the sign at Cana in Galilee means that the locus of that divine glory is now focused pre-eminently, and perhaps exclusively, in the Word become flesh," rather, I add, than in the temple made of stone. Christopher Rowland, "The Temple in the New Testament," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 469-483, 472.

East ziggurats.<sup>111</sup> Atop its summit stands the Lord himself, who speaks his name and imparts to Jacob a blessing which includes the promises to be with him wherever he goes (Gen 28:12-15). Jacob awakes with amazement and cries out, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen 28:16).

Surely, the stone he sets up as a marker (his pillow!) leaves much to be desired (he will return to erect the altar in Genesis 35). Nevertheless, Jacob’s actions reveal man’s instinctive desire to establish on earth a correspondence to the heavenly sanctuary (“house of God”) that has been revealed to him. It is an episode in which God invites man to reestablish the temple relationship with man, and man, however dimly, responds.<sup>112</sup> As will be explored at greater length below, this pattern, evident from Noah to Solomon and beyond, points to nothing less than the original vocation of man and the final cause of creation.

Despite all these parallels with the temple of Solomon, it would still be a stretch to classify Noah’s ark and the altar shrines of the Patriarchs true “sanctuaries.” Yves Congar observes, “At this point ... God does not yet dwell among men. He does not even announce his intention of doing so.”<sup>113</sup> We do see, however, a strong intimation, a prelude, perhaps, of the form of the biblical temple, coming in such a way as to indicate something of its essence. Namely, that the biblical sanctuary is, at bottom, a relationship between God and man.

## vi. The Christian Temple

The notion that the sanctuary of God is not just a place but a place where a relationship is enjoyed sets the stage for the last that temple that I wish to identify before proceeding to the

---

<sup>111</sup> Pitre, “Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood,” 55.

<sup>112</sup> Says Beale, “Though they built no buildings, these patriarchal sacred spaces can be considered ‘sanctuaries’ along the lines comparable to the first non-architectural sanctuary in the garden of Eden, which may be enhanced by observing that a ‘tree’ is often present at these sites.” Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 14.

<sup>113</sup> *The Mystery of the Temple*, 4. In view of Eden, perhaps Congar should have said, “God does not yet dwell *again* among men.”

theological analysis of the temple form itself. By way of introduction, let us turn to the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

The bulk of Acts 7 is the lengthy discourse which St. Stephen gives in his defense before the Council and the high priest. At first glance, the subject matter seems rather inappropriate: Stephen rehearses the history of Israel, well-known to all his hearers, from Abraham to Solomon. Reading his account in light of the foregoing discussion of the temple in the Old Testament, however, provides a different perspective. God's promise to Abraham is that his descendants will possess "the land which I will show you," in order that they should "worship me in this place" (Acts 7:7). Moses was the "ruler and deliverer" of God's people, who foretold another prophet like himself, and thanks to whom the Israelites "had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it" (Acts 7:44). David "found favor in the sight of God" and desired to build him a house; Solomon was the one who actually did. But even this high point of Israel's history, and the history of the temple, was insufficient, for, "the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands, as the Prophet Isaiah has said" (Acts 7:48). With that, Stephen concludes his narrative, and rebukes his interlocutors for their stubbornness to accept the witness of the Scriptures.

Stephen's discourse is about the temple.<sup>114</sup> This becomes all the more clear when we recall the accusation against which he was defending himself: "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us" (Acts 6:13-14). Stephen's argument is directed at the disparity between the way God has in fact fulfilled his

---

<sup>114</sup> Yves Congar concurs in this interpretation of Stephen's discourse before the Sanhedrin. "When we read this text today we have the impression that Stephen's speech lacks balance or is even cut short. Not at all; Stephen said what he wanted to say. With perfect clarity—and this shows us that this inspired martyr was a real theological genius—he dwelt with the accusations brought against him and clearly formulated the Christian Church's thought on the temple and the Presence of God." *The Mystery of the Temple*, 47.

promises to his people and the hard-heartedness of those same, who “always resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51).

It is certainly significant that the first major conflict between the early Christian Church and Judaism is over the temple. Despite the accusations, Jesus’ followers did not actually seek to destroy the architectural heir of Solomon’s Temple. Rather, they argued that it had already been ‘destroyed’ because it was no longer *the* temple: it had been replaced by a new and more perfect one.<sup>115</sup> As Joseph Ratzinger comments, Jesus had already foretold this in the episode of the Cleansing of the Temple: by conflating the destruction of the temple with the destruction and resurrection of his own body, Jesus declared that

the era of the Temple is over. A new worship is being introduced, in a Temple not built by human hands. This Temple is his body, the Risen One, who gathers the peoples and unites them in the sacrament of his body and bloody. He himself is the new Temple of humanity. The crucifixion of Jesus is at the same time the destruction of the old Temple.<sup>116</sup>

Such a claim, for Stephen’s opponents, seemed all the worse.

Naming this temple that supersedes the one of stone presents something of a difficulty. In the first place, it is the body of Jesus. This is made most clearly in the second chapter of the Gospel of John: “he spoke of the temple of his body” (John 2:2). Yet it is also the body of believers baptized in his name, the Church. This too is explicit in the Scriptures:

[Y]ou are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

Finally, the body of the individual believer himself is also a temple, according to the words of St. Paul, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,

---

<sup>115</sup> The Gospels themselves bear witness to the precise moment the new Temple supersedes the older. See, for example, Matthew 27:50-51: “Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two.”

<sup>116</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week, from the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011), 21-22.

which you have from God?” (1 Cor 6:19). Yet though the Scriptures seem to present three distinct “temples” here—the Body of Jesus, the Church, and the body of the individual member of the Church—they all form an organic unity as the Body of Christ, as St. Paul says to the Romans, “we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom 12:5). Mindful of this complexity, I will refer to this new temple as the Christian temple, distinguishing its component “parts” when necessary.<sup>117</sup>

Like the Mosaic tabernacle, comparison with the Solomonic temple is not necessary to prove that the Christian temple is indeed such; the passages cited above are sufficient for that, and many more could be adduced as well. I will content myself with doing so for each dimension of the Christian temple in a summary manner, with due attention to how the temple features identified above find expression, and fulfillment, in the mystery of Christ.

First, the body of Jesus. The assertion that Jesus’ body is the temple of God is a veritable hermeneutic for understanding the four Gospels, especially those of Matthew and John.<sup>118</sup> If we recall that the temple is the locus of God’s reigning on earth, then Luke’s gospel, with its emphasis on the kingdom (*basileian*) of God, is right there with them. Often, the evangelists or Jesus himself transfer key Jewish beliefs about the temple—its nature, its feasts, its priesthood,

---

<sup>117</sup> Congar puts it, “all Christians as persons are God’s temple. Where there is a believer, there also is a temple of God. Yet several believers are not several temples, for One Person dwells in and sanctifies them all.” Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 161.

<sup>118</sup> It would be impossible here to adequately set forth the many ways Jesus is presented as the new and definitive temple in the Gospels—or rather, the ways Jesus presents himself as such in the Gospels. Steven C. Smith, in his book-length study of the temple, sets forth a good number of these, of which the following may serve as examples: 1) the sayings of Jesus (e.g., “I tell you something greater than the temple is here,” Matt 12:6); 2) textual parallels to Old Testament temples (e.g., Jesus, his chosen three apostles, the twelve, the seventy, and the many disciples parallel the concentric groups of Moses and Israel on Sinai); 3) Jesus’ temple-like activities (forgiving sins, removing what is unclean from God’s people through exorcism; 4) Jesus’ suspending the temple sacrifices during his “cleansing” of it and instituting a new Sacrifice; 5) Jesus’ transformation of the temple feasts to refer to himself in the Gospel of John; and, most forcefully, 6) the abundant scriptural allusions and citations which the evangelists made to temple-worship during Jesus’ passion. To give just one example of the last, Smith interprets Jesus’ promise to the good thief as he hung upon the “tree of life,” “this day you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43), in light of Adam’s being shut out of paradise through sin. Jesus, the high-priestly “keeper” of the ultimate temple of God, by his death opens paradise for those who believe in him. See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 260-313.

etc.—to the person of Christ and the community of disciples he is establishing. Brant Pitre comments:

The implication of this transferal is quite simple: Jesus did not simply see himself—as he is so often portrayed nowadays—as a mere “eschatological prophet”—much less as a moralizing teacher of prudential wisdom. Rather, he was himself as the new Temple, the eschatological Temple that had been spoken of by the prophets and was awaited by many Jews of his day.<sup>119</sup>

In the passion narratives, the evangelists are keen to make parallels between Jesus’ body and the Jewish temple. Matthew, for example, has the passersby make mention of Jesus’ prophecy to rebuild the temple in three days and notes that the curtain of the temple was torn in two the moment of Jesus death (Matt 27:39-40, 51). And John presents Jesus’ death and resurrection as the destruction and rebuilding of the true temple, and the definitive “sign” of Jesus’ true identity.<sup>120</sup>

Like the temples which preceded it, the body of Jesus has a divinely-selected location: following the Ascension, at least, the Sacred Humanity is in heaven, “standing at the right hand of God” (on the testimony of Stephen himself, Acts 7:55). This temple’s “builder” is God, who “knit it together” in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and who, after it had been destroyed on the cross, “built” it again.<sup>121</sup> Its “design” is the form proper to human nature, whose author is God directly. Perhaps it would not be too extravagant, I suggest, to see in this design a tripartite division, imagining Jesus seated as he gives the Sermon on the Mount or nailed to the cross on Good Friday: the “court” is his immediate vicinity, the “holy place” is his body itself, the “holy of holies” is his heart, symbol and sacrament of the very inner life of God. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews, after all, refers to Jesus’ flesh as the veil of the temple (Heb 10:20) and

---

<sup>119</sup> Pitre, “Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood,” 82.

<sup>120</sup> Scott Hahn, “Temple, Sign, and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John,” *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005): 107-143, 113.

<sup>121</sup> Y. Congar points out that the verb John employs in verse 2:19 of his Gospel, *egerō*, though usually translated “raise up”, can also mean “erect” (as in “... a building”).

Christian piety has identified his heart as the true “holy of holies”.<sup>122</sup> From the fullness this *debir* came the words of his teaching on the Mount that so clearly parallels that of Sinai; from it flowed, Jesus said, “rivers of living water” (John 7:38);<sup>123</sup> and out of it poured the blood and water from atop Calvary, that other “mount” which has come to dwarf nearby Zion.

This temple, made of bone enveloped in flesh, rather than stone encased in wood, has no need of gold or costly stones, for when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, he came “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) and thus revealed his glory, “the glory he had with the Father before the world was made” (cf. John 17:5). He is therefore both “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) and microcosm on all creation. He is, furthermore, like all temples, holy: “holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens” according to Hebrews 7:26. He is holy, but not on account of another who dwells in him (cf. Matt 23:21), but rather because he possesses the holiness of God himself. As the angel said to Mary, “the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

This temple is also the “domain” of the priest. Jesus is the “great high priest ... one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which is set up not by man but by the Lord” (Heb 4:14, 8:1-2).<sup>124</sup> In Jesus the

---

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, William of St. Thierry, *On Contemplating God*, I, 3, trans. Sister Penelope, Cistercian Fathers Series 3, The Works of William of St. Thierry I (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications 1971), 38. Contemplating the humanity of Christ, William weaves together biblical imagery both old and new: “I want to see and touch the whole of him ... to approach the most holy wound in his side, the portal of the ark that is there made, and not only to put my finger or my whole hand into it, but wholly enter into Jesus’ very heart, into the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant”).

<sup>123</sup> The referent in John 7:38 is famously ambiguous, yet Hippolytus and Irenaeus, among others, understand Christ to be the “him” from whom living waters flow. See Hugo Rahner, “On the Biblical Basis of the Devotion,” 31-46, in *The Heart of the Savior: A Symposium on Devotion to the Sacred Heart*, ed. Josef Stierli (New York: Herder and Herder, 1957).

<sup>124</sup> Books could be written about the identification of Jesus as high priest in the Gospels. I mention only two examples, one well known and the other less. First, St. John makes a point to mention that the garment Jesus wore to Calvary was woven seamless from top to bottom, just like the high priests tunic woven from a single thread. Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 316. Second, Peter declares Jesus to be “the Holy One of God” after the bread of life discourse (John 6:69), a phrase used exclusively for Aaron the high priest in the Old Testament. *The House of the Lord*, 295.

temple and the priesthood converge into one. As priest and temple, “he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25), and his prayers are always heard (cf. John 11:42). Moreover, his is a more perfect sacrifice for the remission of sin, for he offered up himself (cf. Heb 7:27), and entered “once for all into the holy place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12).

The body of Jesus is not merely where the “name” or “glory” of God rests in a special way, “For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell bodily” (cf. Col 1:19; 2:9). St. Paul might also have said “substantially,” for through him men “become partakers of the divine nature” (1 Pet 2:4). In Jesus, God speaks to his people directly (see Heb 1:1), giving them greater commandments, and entering into with them a new and better covenant, “since it is enacted on better promises” (Heb 8:6) and ratified with his own blood, blood “that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel” (Heb 12:24). If the covenant formed at Sinai promised long life to those who kept it (Deut 32:46-47), Jesus promises nothing less than life eternal. Jesus, moreover, dispenses God’s mercy directly, healing the sick, forgiving sins, and casting out demons. Finally, while in other temples, the special presence of God is conditional on the fidelity of its priests and kings, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb 13:8) and therefore his is a temple that stands forever as well.

The Church founded by Christ is also a temple. In the words of Yves Congar, “The faithful all together form one unique and holy temple in the Lord, each in the same way and all as one man.”<sup>125</sup> If the body of the faithful are collectively a temple, it is because they live “in

---

<sup>125</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 162.



Christ,” who is the principle of the Church’s relationship with God.<sup>126</sup> They are, as it were, “the fullness” of Christ who fills all things.<sup>127</sup> This Church-temple is the true “city set on a hill” (Matt 5:14) and “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22). Its builder is Jesus the Messiah, the divine craftsman (*tektōn*) (cf. Mark 6:3), whom the author of the Letter to the Hebrews refers to as “the builder of the house” (*ho kataskeuusas tou oikou*, Heb 3:3). This is the church of God which Jesus promised to build upon Peter (Matt 16:18), the “house of his Father” which the boy Jesus told his parents he must be occupied with (Luke 2:49).<sup>128</sup> In fact, Ben Meyer characterizes Jesus’ messianic act of building the eschatological house of God as “a comprehensive account of the mission of Jesus.”<sup>129</sup> Everything he does can be interpreted in light of establishing the Church qua temple.<sup>130</sup>

The three “chambers” of this temple could be considered the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant (those who have entered already into the heavenly in the holy of holies); outside its limits lies the “outer darkness” (cf. Matt 8:12). Or, perhaps the three levels can be seen as the laity, ordained hierarchy, and its head, who is Jesus the High Priest himself.<sup>131</sup> Its construction is

---

<sup>126</sup> The phrase *en christō* occurs over 80 times in the letters of Paul, summing up for the reality of the Christian for the Apostle. See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 337.

<sup>127</sup> See Eph 1:23, “the church . . . is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.”

<sup>128</sup> Compare Luke 2:49 in the NKLV (“I must be about My Father’s business”) with the same verse in the RSV (“in my Father’s house”). More on this verse in Section II.C and the concluding synthesis.

<sup>129</sup> Ben F. Meyer, “The Temple: Symbol Central to Biblical Theology,” 236.

<sup>130</sup> Jesus’ giving Peter the “keys” to the kingdom (see Matt 16:13-20) is a prime example of a moment in Jesus’ ministry greatly illuminated by the temple hermeneutic. Or, we might recall the patristic and scholarly attention given to the parallels between Adam’s sleep during which God forms Eve from his side and Christ’s “sleep” on the cross, during blood and water—in which are seen symbols of the Church’s sacramental life “in Christ”—are “taken” from his side (John 19:31-25). As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam’s side just before man is shut out from paradise, so the Church was born from the “sleeping” Christ’s side, just as he is opening the gates to paradise again. See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 318-319, citing St. Ambrose, *In Lucam*, 2, 85-89: *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina* 15,1666-1668.

<sup>131</sup> The New Dispensation far exceeds the Old: in the latter, the priesthood was reserved to the firstborn of the tribe of Levi, whereas in the former, all of the members of the “messianic people” partake of Christ’s priesthood, with real access to the “holy of holies” (cf. Heb 12:22-24). Nevertheless, as *Lumen gentium* reiterates, the ordained presbyterate differs “in essence and not only in degree” in its participation in Christ’s priesthood, and therefore, it can be said, in the proximity to which the ordained hierarchy enter into the Christian mystery. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium* (21 November 1964), §10. This is most evident in the Christian liturgy, in which the priest acts and speaks in the person of Christ.

of “living stones” (1 Pet 2:5), that is, those believers out from whose hearts flow “living water” (cf. John 7:37). Its ornamentation is not gold but “good deeds” (1 Tim 2:10; cf. 1 Pet 3:4).

In this temple, though there is but one High Priest, all have access to the holy of holies:

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart... (Heb 10:19-22a).

Accordingly, St. Peter refers to Christians generally as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet 2:9). In this “holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5), “the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23), praying to God not only on one mountain or another, but “in every place” (1 Tim 2:8) and “offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). And though its members may be dispersed throughout the world, it forever remains the *Church*, the assembly of God’s people called out from the nations “into one body” (cf. Col 3:15).

After Jesus’ inaugural sacrifice on Calvary, the Spirit of God also came in visible form to “rest” on this ecclesial temple:

And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:2-4)

As a result of this outpouring of the Spirit, St. Paul tells the Corinthians, “we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’” (2 Cor 6:16). Through the Church, God continues to speak his oracles to his people, according to the words of Jesus to the apostles, “He who hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16), or again those of Paul to the Thessalonians, “you received the word of God

---

As to Christ revealed as the head of the Church qua temple, see it is certainly noteworthy that in Matthew 21:42 and 1 Pet 2:7, Christ is referred to as the *kephalēn gōrias*, literally, the “head of the corner” (thus translated in the RSV but often “cornerstone,” cf. *New American Bible, New International Version [NIV]*). Christ as head of the Church qua body is amply testified elsewhere in the New Testament (see 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 4:15, 5:23). In the Christian sanctuary, however, the body *is* the temple.

which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thes 2:13). As a result of the same Spirit dwelling in the Church, her ordained members are able to forgive sin and dispense mercy in God’s name: “Receive the Holy Spirit,” Jesus told his disciples after the Resurrection, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (John 20:22).<sup>132</sup> Finally, while God’s presence within any single member of the Church on earth is provisional, Jesus promised the Church as a whole, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt 28:20). In other words, God will never forsake this temple.

The manner by which the individual Christian, a “living stone” in the temple of the Church and a member of the Body of Christ, is also a temple in his own right can already be understood from the foregoing. The body itself is the temple on account of the Holy Spirit who mysteriously dwells within it. As Paul reminds the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?” (1 Cor 6:19).<sup>133</sup>

The builder of this temple is God. Its “design” is on the likeness of Christ’s body, its ornamentation is the most precious of materials, the spirit-infused human body. Its “minister” is the believer himself, who participates in the priesthood common to all Christians, whose “service” is one’s participation in the prayer and sacrifice of the Church. St. Paul speaks of it when he writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual (*logikēn*) worship” (Rom 12:1).

---

<sup>132</sup> As Scott Hahn observes, the import of Jesus’ words to early Christians would have been clear: before, sins were forgiven through the sacrifices offered at the temple in Jerusalem; now, Jesus’ apostles were the dispensers of God’s forgiveness in the new temple, the Church. Hahn, “Temple, Sign, and Sacrament,” 138.

<sup>133</sup> The notion that the individual was a true temple of God does not seem to be a Christian, much less Pauline innovation. Diverse Jewish texts from the Second Temple period present the motif, especially the writings of Philo of Alexandria and those of the Essenes. These texts, in which both the individual and the elect community are presented as the locus of indwelling of God’s Spirit or his glory (*shekhinah*), seem to provide a literary bridge between the prophetic books, in which the motif is barely mentions, and the New Testament passages in which the motif is already presented as a reality. See Serge Ruzer, “From Man as Locus of God’s Indwelling to Death as Temple’s Destruction,” *Revue Biblique* 119 no. 3 (2012): 383-402.

That God himself takes up his rest in the hearts of men as in a temple can be seen in the phenomena of being “filled by the Spirit” so frequent in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>134</sup> Yet not only the Spirit: “If a man loves me, he will keep my word,” Jesus says in John 14:23, “and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

The manifestations of the divine activity in the Christian temple are more diverse than those at the Old Testament sanctuary. Like the Church at large, the individual Christian may be a locus of divine oracles: “whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God” (1 Pet 4:11). Yet God does not limit himself to speaking. In his discourse on the morning of Pentecost, Peter characterizes Jesus as “a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst” (Acts 2:22). Likewise in the Church, St. Paul instructs the Corinthians that the same Spirit works in many ways:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Cor 12:7-11)

And yet the presence of God in the temple of the believer is conditional: “If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are” (1 Cor 3:17). St. Paul affirms later in the same letter that immoral conduct “profanes” the Christian temple and, in a real sense, desecrates it (1 Cor 6:12-20). Hence, just as the priests, and to a lesser extent the people, at the old tent and temple were required to live according to a code of holiness (see Lev 17-26), Paul lays down for Christians a new holiness code—indeed, several.<sup>135</sup> For Paul, this new Christian ethic flows from what Raymond Corriveau identifies as the essential

---

<sup>134</sup> In addition to Acts 2:4, see Acts 4:31, 7:55, 8:17, 9:17, 10:44, and 19:12.

<sup>135</sup> See Rom 6; 1 Thes 4:1-8; 2 Thes 5:12-24; see also 2 Cor 7:1.

reality of the temple, the divine presence now resting within the body of the Christian.<sup>136</sup> Its demands, in turn, underscore the priestly and consecrated nature of the Christian believer.<sup>137</sup>

Let this suffice to illustrate the ways in which the Christian temple, in all its richness, is truly a temple in a way similar to those of the Old Testament, and yet also something completely new. Surpassing the previous temples which foreshadowed it, the Christian temple is eminently corporeal: it is made of “living stones”, i.e. men and women, who together form a visible, organized body, the Church. At the same time, it is preeminently spiritual: it is characterized by the presence of God’s spirit, and the priestly activities realized in it are primarily acts of the soul’s faculties. I shall pursue this “hylomorphy” at greater length below.

#### vii. Preliminary Synthesis

Five biblical sanctuaries thus come to light: the temple(s) at Jerusalem, the tabernacle in the wilderness, Mount Sinai, the garden of Eden, and the Christian temple (Christ-Church-Christian). That all five share the revealed form of the *naos theou* is evident from the abundance of shared attributes related to the nature of the biblical temple. These are:

- God’s gift: the temple is always from God: built according to a heavenly design, on the site of God’s choosing, and erected either by God himself or the man of his choosing;
- Located on a “mountain of God,” or prolonging the experience thereof;
- Constructed by or for a patriarchal/messianic priest;
- Holy: only those who are holy, and exhibiting a three-chambered graduation of holiness;
- Adorned with precious materials and nature motifs, furnished with altars and symbols of the source of life;
- A domain of priests who are instituted by God to “serve and guard” by offering acceptable prayer and sacrifice in it;
- A place of divine oracles, especially commandments, blessings, and invitations to covenant; and
- Permanent but on the condition of man’s fidelity to God’s commands.

Not all temples, however, are created equal. The words of St. Stephen quoted above (pg. 38) puts in strong form a temple-criterion that runs throughout the Scriptures: namely, that

---

<sup>136</sup> Raymond Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005): 145-166, 162.

<sup>137</sup> Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” 154.

temples built by human hands are inferior to (or mere “copies of”) those temples built not by human hands but by God himself.<sup>138</sup> Thus, two classes of biblical temples emerge: those not made by human hands (the Christian, Eden, and Sinai), which are superior, and those made by human hands (the tent of Moses and temple of Solomon, and the altar shrines, for that matter), which are inferior. Among the first category, the Christian is evidently the superior, since it is the fulfillment of the temple-type (accordingly Hebrews calls it “the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord,” 8:2). Any further hierarchical precision, however, must await the elucidation of what is the essential form of the temple (see the concluding synthesis, below). Even so, in I will keep this preliminary hierarchy in mind in the process of abstracting that form in the next section. More “weight” will be given to the superior sanctuaries, on the grounds that they reveal more fully the nature shared by all five.

## **II. The Temple As the Place Where Man Is with God**

My argument thus far has been that just as the Temple of Solomon is clearly a biblical temple, so too these other four biblical “sites” identified above must clearly be temples, because of the many relevant parallels in their make-up. On the basis of these five temples, then, it remains to define precisely what a biblical temple really is, in essence. The process of doing so can be likened to (if not identified with) the process of human intellection as described by St.

---

<sup>138</sup> Paul, who witnessed Stephen’s execution and probably his last discourse, takes up the same theme in Acts 7: “Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations which God thrust out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, who found favor in the sight of God and asked leave to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. *Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands*” (Act 7:44-48). The distinction is also placed on the lips of Jesus by His accusers (Mark 15:58). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews employs it as well in chapter 9, where he refers to the man-made sanctuary as “a copy of the true one” (Heb 9:24). But the notion that God cannot be properly housed in a man-made structure is already present in the Old Testament. Thus the dedicatory prayer of King Solomon, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!” (1 Kgs 8:27), and in the words of Isaiah which Stephen and Paul both quote: “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?” (Isa 66:1).

Thomas Aquinas: the intellect grasps the essential form of a thing by abstracting it from the sensible features of the species in question.<sup>139</sup> Beholding the five exemplars of the temple, then, the task is to abstract or “distill” the essential nature of the “species” in question, the biblical temple. Doing so, I argue that three essential characteristics come into view which will point us to an ultimate definition: 1) the temple is the place of encounter and mutual presence between God and man; 2) the temple is the place of mutual recognition between God and men; 3) the temple is the place of shared willing between God and man. I will discuss these features in turn.

First, however, let us observe what all of these essential elements of the temple have in common. For one, they exhibit mutuality between God and man. They are all fruits, or aspects perhaps, of communion. Communion is, in Yves Congar’s words, “first of all a mutual exchange.”<sup>140</sup> It is an exchange of self, an existential reciprocity summed up biblically in a covenantal formula which so often expressed God’s main purpose for his people in the Old Testament: “I will be their God and they will be my people.”<sup>141</sup> Its model is the union of the Father and the Son: “All that the Father has is mine” and vice versa (John 16:15).

Second, as has already been observed above, the formal elements of temple are spiritual. Mutual presence, knowledge, and will are phenomena of the spirit. This is in no way, however, opposed to the instrumentality or accompaniment of embodied existence; man is an essential element of the temple, after all. It does indicate, however (and as will be explored below more fully), that the temple is something that exists, first and foremost, according to the nature of God, “who is Spirit” (cf. John 4:24) and therefore elevates man—body and spirit—to life in the spirit.

---

<sup>139</sup> More precisely, the form is abstracted from the “phantasm” (image) produced in the mind by the sensible species. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 85, a. 1 in *Latin-English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012), vol. 14, 346-347.

<sup>140</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 230.

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, Gen 1:8; Lev 26:12; Exod 29:45; Jer 11:4, 24:7; Ezek 11:20

### *A. Place of Mutual Presence*

We have already seen that in the primordial sanctuary of Eden, God is depicted as “walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen 3:8). This seems to indicate an easy familiarity existed between God and man, though, in point of fact, by this time man had forfeited and fled from that original fellowship. Nevertheless, a trademark characteristic of the original temple was intimate communion with God; God was present to man and vice versa. Only after his expulsion from paradise did estrangement from God come to characterize man’s existence, and encounters with God became the extraordinary exception rather than the rule.

As the altar shrines of the patriarchs indicate partially, and as the more full-fledged sanctuaries do more fully, the temple is the place where that original fellowship with God is remembered and, at least imperfectly, recovered. Textually, this has been seen in the fact that God is depicted as once again “walking back and forth” within his man-made tabernacles.<sup>142</sup>

Prior to, and more fundamental than, the recovery of “walking with” God is the notion of the temple as the place of God’s rest. We have seen how God’s leisurely presence in the garden was consequent to God’s having taken up his rest there upon the completion of the work of creation. After man is driven from the garden, only seldom can he catch a glimpse of God’s “restful” reign over the work of his hands; perhaps, for example, at the theophany of Mamre in Genesis 18 (where Abraham invites his visitor(s) to “rest themselves” at his tent), or in Jacob’s vision at Bethel. Such is his lot, at least until the Exodus theophany when the Lord “descends” to rest upon Mount Sinai (Exod 19:20), a marvel repeated at the inauguration of the tent of meeting and again at that of Solomon’s Temple.

Admittedly, the significance of the “cloud” and the “glory of the Lord” (cf. Exod 24:15-16) is somewhat hazy; perhaps this is the point. Yet it seems undeniable that a special

---

<sup>142</sup> See above, pg. 18.



manifestation of God's presence is indicated. As Yves Congar explains, the cloud "signifies both the presence and transcendence, it presupposes that God *comes* down to earth but that he *is* in Heaven," whereas the glory, often enveloped by the cloud, "makes [the Lord's] transcendent Majesty and his presence visible to men by means of a phenomenon of light."<sup>143</sup> Both phenomena powerfully express the fact that the temple is God's initiative; the result of his free gift. No man can endow an earthy structure with God's very presence. Both the cloud and the glory, moreover, point to what is perhaps the most salient attribute of the temple reality: that it is the place where God dwells among men.

This notion is certainly related to the previous two: God's dwelling is precisely where he can be found "walking" or "resting". Thus the structure favored with God's presence is known as his "tent" or his "house" or even his "throne." Taken in this vein, the various rituals carried out at the sanctuary in the wilderness and at Jerusalem—the holocausts, the showbread, the incense, the drink-offerings, and the playing of music—are at least susceptible to a rather prosaic interpretation: they are the daily chores related to feeding and entertaining God at his divine residence.<sup>144</sup> And this is, in fact, intentional. Gary Anderson explains,

Anyone who has worked on the problem of the cult in the Bible knows that there is a highly realistic quality to the liturgical language used therein. The Temple is God's home and hence the spot where he dwells among men. In order to breathe life into this belief, the Bible provides legislation for how to prepare the home for God's dramatic entrance, how to provide God with food in a way that befits his dignity, and finally, how to keep his home clean so that he will remain there and offer his blessing to the worshippers and pilgrims who desire to revere him.<sup>145</sup>

The notion that the temple is God's "habitation" on earth certainly expresses a profound truth, one that God himself reveals: that God "abides" among his people in a special way, since his power is specially operative in their history and specially manifest in their midst. The Psalms

---

<sup>143</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 9-11 (emphasis in original).

<sup>144</sup> Such was the "logic" of pagan ancient near-eastern temples as well. See Hurowitz, "YHWH's Exalted House," 87-88. Psalm 50 seems to contain a polemic against this mentality however: "Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" (Ps 50:13).

<sup>145</sup> Gary A. Anderson, "To See Where God Dwells: The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition," *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005), 13-45, 14.

in particular are rife with “evidence of the belief that God was present in the Temple, where his presence can be enjoyed.”<sup>146</sup> Perhaps most poignant is Psalm 84:

How lovely is thy dwelling place / O Lord of hosts! / My soul longs, yea, faints / for the courts of the Lord / my heart and flesh sing for joy / to the living God / Even the sparrow finds a home / and the swallow a nest for herself / where she may lay her young / at thy altars, O Lord of hosts / my King and my God / Blessed are those who dwell in thy house / ever singing thy praise! / ... The God of gods will be seen in Zion / For a day in thy courts is better / than a thousand elsewhere / I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God / than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Ps 84:1-4, 7b, 10)

Nevertheless, there is an inescapable anthropomorphism about the whole notion, of which the Scriptures themselves are keenly aware. Solomon, recognizing that “heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain” the Almighty, refers to the temple that he has built as the place of God’s name (1 Kgs 8). Hence Stephen’s flat denial of the possibility when he affirms that “the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands” (Acts 7:48). Such, indeed, is the substance of the rebuff that David received from the Lord through the prophet Nathan:

Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” (2 Sam 7:5-8)

The lesson, according to Congar, is that “God dwells, not in one particular place, even a temple, but among his people.”<sup>147</sup> Hence: “it is not man’s place to build a temple for God. [The Lord] himself makes his own temple by dwelling in the midst of his people, and his presence cannot fail to be supremely active.”<sup>148</sup>

If God does not physically dwell in earthly structures, if his presence cannot be confined to a particular place, why does he command his people to build him a sanctuary, and promise to make his “abode” among them?<sup>149</sup> And after those places are built, why does he favor them with

---

<sup>146</sup> Hurowitz, “YHWH’s Exalted House,” 97.

<sup>147</sup> Congar, 15 (emphasis in original).

<sup>148</sup> Congar, 30.

<sup>149</sup> See Exod 25:8, Lev 26:11, Ezek 37:27.

extraordinary manifestations of his presence through the cloud and the glory? After all, God is everywhere by his essence, presence, and power; Catholic theology does not recognize another special mode of God's presence which might be applicable to the sanctuaries of the Old Dispensation as such. How, then, such commands, signs, and promises?

A beginning of an answer lies in the recognition that all these things were for the sake of man. As St. Thomas Aquinas observes, man's tendency is to admire and revere those things which are distinctive in virtue of their excellence.<sup>150</sup> An especially excellent structure, exquisitely ornamented and furnished, was therefore most convenient in order to impress man by the trappings of divinity, and thus move him to greater reverence, thereby facilitating proper worship. Moreover, whereas God is not confined to any particular place, man is. It is congruent with man's corporeal nature to have a particular place whereat he might worship God, so that "God might be made known there by means of things done and said there; and that those who prayed there might, through reverence for the place, pray more devoutly, so as to be heard more readily."<sup>151</sup>

It is by divine condescension, therefore, that God established his temple among his chosen people, and revealed it at the place where He, somehow, dwelt among them. This is the logic behind all the adornments of the temples, whether they be precious materials, ornate carvings, or supernatural manifestations of God's presence and power. Thus, "When all the children of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord upon the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the earth on the pavement, and worshiped" (2 Chr 7:3).<sup>152</sup> This also explains the mountain locale of the ideal temple: as the natural "habitat" of God is the heavens, it

---

<sup>150</sup> *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 102 a. 4 trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 16, 329.

<sup>151</sup> *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 102, a. 4, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 16, 330.

<sup>152</sup> The prophet Ezekiel, too, "fell on his face" in fear and reverence when he beheld the glory of the Lord fill the temple (Ezek 44:4).

is fitting that he would “descend” upon a mountaintop, the natural “portal” between heaven and earth and which possesses something of the majesty and permanence of the heavens.<sup>153</sup>

According to this line of reasoning, then, what is actually special about the old sanctuaries of God is the access they provided man to the God who is present everywhere. God’s “name” dwells at the temple because there he has allowed himself to be invoked by mortals. Thus, in the temple, “[God] is truly present, yet always remains infinitely greater and beyond our reach. ‘God’s name’ is God himself insofar as he gives himself to us.”<sup>154</sup>

Yet this is not the whole of the answer. Granted that the various expressions relating to God’s “dwelling” in the Old Testament sanctuaries are to be understood as accommodations to man’s condition, nevertheless, when the “fullness of time” arrives what was spoken in analogy and in figure is fulfilled with literal exactitude: in the Christian temple, God really does dwell among his people and walk about with them, even to the point of truly eating and drinking what is set before him (cf. Luke 24:42-43). As St. Thomas observes, what had been said and commanded by God regarding his former sanctuaries “was instituted that it might foreshadow the mystery of Christ.”<sup>155</sup>

This development had in fact been foretold by the prophets, according to St. Paul’s interpretation of the same. Generally speaking, the prophets of Israel foretold a time when God, who had previously “walked” among his people amid the cloud and the glory which rested upon his sanctuary set up in their midst, would abide with them via his Spirit, which he would pour

---

<sup>153</sup> Moreover, the mountaintop aptly conveys how God’s condescension *elevates* the condition of the man who he comes to meet.

<sup>154</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 91. This explains why for Solomon it was sufficient that the Israelites pray “towards” the temple at Jerusalem for their needs to be heard: spatially, it was a circuitous path to reach the God who is everywhere present; nevertheless, the remembrance of the monument of God’s loving condescension towards his people was sure to inspire the fervor and faith which help one’s prayer to be heard. And thus St. Paul declares that Jesus Christ is he through whom men have obtained access to God (cf. Rom 5:2).

<sup>155</sup> *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 102, a. 4 trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 16, 329.

into their hearts.<sup>156</sup> Fundamental to these prophecies were covenantal promises such as the one found in Leviticus, “I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev 26:11-12).

Through the prophet Ezekiel, writing when the temple of Solomon was in rubble, God promised:

I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, *and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore*. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore. (Ezek 37:26-28)<sup>157</sup>

One discerns here both a renewal of the original Edenic blessing and commission of man, now linked to the definitive establishment of God’s sanctuary among his people. This sanctuary, moreover, will reestablish the Edenic intimacy between God and man, when they would “walk” together on a daily basis.

This walking together will result from the infusion of God’s Spirit into man’s heart, as the Lord says through Ezekiel regarding the “everlasting covenant” mentioned in Chapter 37:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezek 36:26-28)

These words suggest that the eschatological “dwelling with” between God and man will feature a degree of intimacy never before attained: man himself will become the sanctuary, the locus of God’s presence on earth. The prophet Joel speaks in a similar vein, linking God’s presence (often manifest by portents such as fire and smoke) to the outpouring of his Spirit:

---

<sup>156</sup> On the continuity between God’s presence via the Cloud, the Glory, and the Spirit, see Joseph R. Greene, “The Spirit in the Temple: Bridging the Gap between Old Testament Absence and New Testament Assumption,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 55 no. 4 (2012): 717-742. Greene notes that, although nowhere in the Old Testament is God’s presence as such depicted as the “Spirit,” the Spirit of God was often used to portray God’s power at work in the leaders and prophets of His people. The term, therefore, was preferred by the authors of the New Testament (and extra-biblical writers such as Philo of Alexandria and the authors of rabbinic and Qumran literature) to portray God’s abiding presence in His people in the age of fulfillment.

<sup>157</sup> It is worth noting that this prophecy will take place when “My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd” (Ezek 36:24).

“You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is none else... And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh ... And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke” (Joel 2:27-30).

Jeremiah, like Ezekiel, speaks of a new covenant, one that is characterized by God putting his law (*torah*) within his people, writing it on their hearts (Jer 31:33). Evidently, God’s presence will not be inert, but will enable man to fulfill the covenantal requirements that are requisite for man to abide in God’s presence. Isaiah, too, foretells a time when God would “walk with” a holy, priestly people:

Depart, depart, go out thence, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord. For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the Lord will go [*halak*] before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. (Isa 52:11-12)<sup>158</sup>

Through these and many other texts, the prophets evidence a spiritualizing and universalizing trajectory for the temple of God.<sup>159</sup> “Spiritualizing,” not in the sense that the temple would be any less “corporeal.” The eschatological temple was to be more spiritual *and* more corporeal than its predecessors. Rather, this tendency was spiritualizing in the sense that it foretold a temple that would be more according to the nature of God. “That is spiritual,” writes Yves Congar, “which corresponds to the nature of God.”<sup>160</sup> Thus, when Christ dialogues with the Samaritan woman regarding temple worship, he states that the hour has come when the Father will be worshipped not (only) at Jerusalem, but in the Spirit: “God is spirit,” he explains, “and

---

<sup>158</sup> As Joshua Greever shows, this text from Isaiah foretelling a “second exodus” depicts the returning exiles as dressed in priestly garments and bearing the vessels of the temple; in other words, “The significance of Isaiah 52, then, is that all of God’s people are described as priests before him.” Joshua M. Greever, “‘We are the Temple of the Living God’ (2 Corinthians 6:14-17): The New Covenant as the Fulfillment of God’s Promise of Presence,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no. 3 (2015): 97-118, 107.

<sup>159</sup> Congar points out that this universalism is not an innovation of the prophets. It is implicit in the promises to Abraham, for example. “There is no doubt, however, that it finds explicit expression in the prophets from Isaiah onwards.” *The Mystery of the Temple*, 77.

<sup>160</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 179.

those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). The prophetic vision of the temple was “universalizing” both in that the definitive temple would be for all peoples (and so Isaiah declares, “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,” in verse 2:2), and in the sense that within this temple, all the holy ones would have access to the sanctuary.

St. Paul, heir to the prophets, seizes on both the universalizing and spiritualizing prophetic tendencies with regards to the temple in the Corinthian correspondence. There, in a compact catena, he goes so far as to summarize the major Old Testament promises as fulfilled in Christian temple:

We are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.’ Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.” (2 Cor 6:16b-7:1)<sup>161</sup>

In short, Paul declares that God’s promises to dwell among a faithful people have been fulfilled “in the body” and “in the spirit” in Christ.<sup>162</sup> For Paul, those who live in Christ are God’s people, his priests, and his temple all at once; how much more are they obliged to live in reverence and holiness of life, in view of the One now resides in their bodies!

While no less a form of divine condescension, the presence of God in the Christian temple is no mere figure of speech. Though God was not actually uniquely present in the temples

---

<sup>161</sup> For a detailed analysis of the component texts of this catena, see Greever, “We are the Temple of the Living God,” *passim*.

<sup>162</sup> It is certainly noteworthy that Paul weaves into his catena a modified citation of 2 Samuel 7:14. In keeping with the universalizing tendency of the prophets, God’s promise to be a father to David’s son—the one who would build “a house for my name”—now appears in the plural, and, significantly, is made gender inclusive in the Pauline text. The connection for a Christian is obvious: by baptism one is made both a temple of the Spirit and an adopted son or daughter of the Almighty.

of skins or stone, he is certainly so in the Christian temple.<sup>163</sup> Foremost in Christ, in whose humanity God dwells in a singular way through the hypostatic union. God is also uniquely present the individual Christian in virtue of sanctifying grace. St. Thomas Aquinas explains:

Since the rational creature by its operation of knowledge and love attains to God Himself, according to this special mode God is said not only to exist in the rational creature but also to dwell therein as in his own temple [*etiam habitare in ea sicut in templo suo*]. So no other effect can be put down as the reason why the divine person is in the rational creature in a new mode, except sanctifying grace. Hence, the divine person is sent, and proceeds temporally only according to sanctifying grace.<sup>164</sup>

This special presence of God by grace is over and above his universal presence by essence, presence, and power.<sup>165</sup> It results in a “formal, physical, analogous and accidental participation” in the divine nature itself, according to the astounding words of 2 Peter 1:4.<sup>166</sup> This participation in the divine nature by (created) grace, moreover, results in the mysterious indwelling of Uncreated Grace itself, as Jesus promised in John 14:23. As a result, God truly dwells in the souls of the just, in a way only intimated by the biblical temples of old. Indeed, the ultimate reality far surpasses what was said figuratively of the types that preceding it:

When we say that God dwells in our souls as in his temple ... we must take care not to imagine that God’s presence in us is like that of the Eucharist in a tabernacle, inert and with only a spatial relationship to the tabernacle. The presence of God in the just is infinitely superior to this; we are living temples of God, and we possess the three Persons in a vital manner.<sup>167</sup>

This is why the temple must always be from God. David cannot build it on his own initiative, nor can anyone else. The temple is always a gift, and that gift communicates God’s own self.

---

<sup>163</sup> God is everywhere by his essence, power, and presence. He was not present in the pre-Christian temples by grace or hypostatic union; there is no other kind of divine presence which might be attributed to those other temples. See *Summa Theologica* I, q. 8, aa. 1-4, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 13, 67-73.

<sup>164</sup> *Summa Theologica* I, q. 43, a. 3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 13, 440 (emphasis added).

<sup>165</sup> Though this universal mode of God’s presence in the world might still be considered a “weak” form of temple; the temple of the cosmos Isaiah speaks of when he says, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool’” (Isa 66:1).

<sup>166</sup> Antonio Royo Marin, *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, trans. Jordan Aumann (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 32-35.

<sup>167</sup> Royo Marin, *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, 48. 2 Pet 1:3-4 runs, “[God’s] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.”



Thus the temple, and especially the Christian temple, is revealed as the place where God is with man and where man is with God. The first movement of this revelation was to show the temple as the place where man has access to, or awareness of, God's abiding accompaniment (his "walking with") those whom he especially loves. Yet, in the New Testament, the temple relation is fully revealed as the state in which man has vital contact with and possession of the very Spirit and substance of God. The temple is the place of mutual presence between God and man, and that "place" is, ultimately, man himself.

Congar, speaking with respect to the union God effects with man through grace, writes,

It would seem that God can go no further, cannot *be with his* creatures more intimately than this. Yet he can be and is, by united himself to humanity personally and in his own being, through the mystery of the Incarnation. In the presence and indwelling of grace God is with the just according to his very substance, but he is not one with them according to his very being. By the working of grace man may come into contact with him and have him present within his soul as the living and real object of his knowledge and love. In Jesus Christ, on the other hand, God unites himself in the field of existence itself to a human nature which becomes the human nature of the Word.<sup>168</sup>

In Christ this "being with" reaches its apogee. Jesus, "God with us," is the man who is completely with God, to borrow a phrase from Joseph Ratzinger;<sup>169</sup> in him God and man are fully present to one another, to the point of being united in a single Person. No closer union can possibly be had or conceived.

### *B. Place of Mutual Recognition*

The second essential revealed characteristic of the biblical temple is that it is the place of mutual recognition between God and man. A typical moment of "mutual recognition," albeit merely anthropological, is found in ecstatic poetry of Genesis 2:23, when the man lays eyes for the first time on his divinely-fashioned help-mate, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of

---

<sup>168</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 240 (emphasis in original).

<sup>169</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "Concerning the notion of person in theology," *Communio*, 17 (1990): 439-454, 452.

my flesh!” It is the moment when man knows and acknowledges the other, and himself, for what he or she is.

Tellingly Genesis narrates no moment of mutual recognition between God and man in the garden. On the contrary, Adam flees from such an encounter: “I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gen 3:10). One sees an inkling of it in the “quasi-temples” of the patriarchs, where God had appeared to man and where man, in turn, “called on the name of the Lord.” At Beersheba, for example, God appears to Isaac, identifies himself, and promises his blessing: “I am the God of Abraham your father; fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your descendants for my servant Abraham’s sake” (Gen 26:24). Isaac responds (naturally) by erecting a sanctuary: he builds an altar, pitches a “tabernacle” (his own), and calls on the name of the Lord (Gen 26:25). It should be recalled, as well, the name Abraham gives to the site he almost sacrificed his son on Mount Moriah: *yhwh yir’eh*, “the Lord will be seen,”<sup>170</sup> and the awe-struck Jacob awaking at Bethel.

In this line, it is certainly striking that in the Septuagint, when God commands Moses to build the tabernacle (Exod 25:8), he says, “you shall make for me a holy place, and I shall be seen/appear among you.”<sup>171</sup> Throughout the LXX, in fact, the translators evince an understanding of the sanctuary as the place where God is recognized as God. According to C.T.R. Hayward, this understanding is closely related to the fact that the sanctuary contained the Torah, in virtue of which, it was “invested with the properties of Mt Sinai as a place of revelation.”<sup>172</sup> When God gave the Torah, he gave much more than just the “law.” Its revelation, says Louis Bouyer,

---

<sup>170</sup> See text corresponding to fn. 109, above.

<sup>171</sup> Hayward, “Understandings of the Temple Service,” 386 (emphasis added). The Hebrew has “that I may dwell in their midst” (Exod 25:8, RSV).

<sup>172</sup> Hayward, “Understandings of the Temple Service,” 394.

is closely connected with the revelation of the divine name, and with all [that] this revelation supposed, not only of condescension but communication, of God's handing over of himself, of his supernatural innerness, of his life, of his inaccessible light. The revelation of the Torah, understood this way, is the principle of 'the knowledge of God' in the sense developed by the prophets.<sup>173</sup>

The Torah, then, is most appropriately housed in God's sanctuary, for it is there where God wishes to reveal not only his law, but his very self. It is where he desired to "beheld," to be seen. For similar reasons, the tree and river of life are therefore also appropriate "furnishings" for house of God. They serve as symbols—aids to recognition—of the fact that God is the source of life and being. As Psalm 36 has it:

How precious is thy steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings. They feast on the abundance of thy house, and thou givest them drink from the river of thy delights. For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light. (Ps 36:7-9)

Even the tripartite design of the temple and its gradated divisions of holiness can be understood in light of the theme of mutual recognition, especially in light of St. Thomas' insight regarding accommodating human nature. Just as man knows things through the medium of time and space, so his mind is best suited to ascend to the infinite holiness of the Creator through a gradation of holy things. For though God's perfection is simple, the participation creatures in that perfection is manifold, so that the invisible attributes of God might be more fully manifest through them.<sup>174</sup>

The Old Testament high point of "recognition" in the biblical sanctuary, however, is the worship carried out in it, particularly sacrificial worship. In addition to their role in atoning for sin and re-presenting the covenants by which God had bound himself to his people, through sacrifice God's people "recognize [their] total dependence on God and acknowledge the supreme

---

<sup>173</sup> Louis Bouyer, *The Church of God: Body of Christ and Temple of the Spirit*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (San Francisco: Ignatius 2001), 198.

<sup>174</sup> See *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 47, a. 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 13, 484.

authority of God over [their] lives.”<sup>175</sup> In other words, sacrifice was a ritual encounter in which man acknowledged that God was God, and he was not. Sacrifice affirms that God is greater than both the priest and the victim, for he is Creator and Lord of both these and all that they represent. In the case of the priest, the people on whose behalf he makes the offering; in the case of the victim, the class of goods from which it comes.<sup>176</sup>

This, perhaps, reveals why God commanded that sacrificial worship be carried out only at the temple after it had been constructed. It is more fitting that sacrifice be offered in the place that was most conducive to the recognition of Who was being worshipped. As Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). The Samaritans may have had access to some or all of the Torah, but they did not have the temple. Moreover, only the one who adheres to God’s stipulations regarding worship evinces knowledge of who God really is; just as “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7), so too, “by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3).

With the advent of the Christian temple, its identity as the place of mutual recognition between God and man is even more apparent. When Elizabeth and the unborn Baptist “stand” before the Blessed Virgin Mary, portrayed as the ark of the New covenant, they exult and leap with joy as David did before the ark (cf. 2 Sam 6:5). Jesus is not yet manifest; John is still an unborn babe. Yet the Holy Spirit moves both John and Elizabeth to recognize the presence of the One who gives them their identity and purpose: “Why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy” (Luke 1:43-44).

---

<sup>175</sup> “Sacrifice” in *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, ed. Scott W. Hahn (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 791-802, 794.

<sup>176</sup> On the theory of representation, the offering represented the offeror himself. Hahn, “Sacrifice,” 794.

Finally, the mutual recognition of the temple is fully revealed in the Trinitarian theophanies which occur at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration. At the former, the Spirit of God descends to rest upon the Body of Jesus—thus revealed as the new and definitive temple of God—as a voice from heaven recognizes, “Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). And at the transfiguration, the Spirit, now manifest as a “bright cloud,” envelops the new temple as he dazzles with the splendor of the sun. From the cloud comes the voice of recognition again: “this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Matt 17:5). As in other mountain top theophanies, the three disciples who are present “fall on their faces,” says Matthew, and are filled with awe. Peter, beside himself, offers to erect a sanctuary: “Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here...” (Matt 17:4).

In both these scenes (all the Synoptics relate them) the Father and the Son are revealed in the Spirit through the Father's loving recognition of the Son. The others present in the “inner court” (one might say) are also moved to the recognition of who Jesus is—the Son of God, the Lord, the One on whom God's Spirit and favor rest—and, to an extent at least, enter into that same mystery. In both episodes, Jesus is “seen” for who he really is by those whom he invites to share the encounter: “Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Rise, and have no fear.’ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only” (Matt 17:7-8).

The idea of “seeing” God is admittedly mysterious. After all is said and done, John still flatly asserts several times in his writings that “no one has seen God” (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 John 4:12, 20). Therefore, the many instances in which people are said to “see” God demand interpretation. Moses, for example, “saw God” with the seventy elders who “ate and drank with God” (Exod 24:10-11), and he is said to have spoken with the Lord face to face (Exod 33:11).

These encounters, however, left Moses desiring still more: “Show me thy glory,” he begs. Yet God responds, “you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live” (Exod 33:18-20).

Likewise, other occasions in which the Lord is said to have “appeared” to individuals must be understood in an attenuated sense. In Genesis 16, for example, Hagar, after her theophany by the spring of water, “called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, ‘Thou art a God of seeing,’ for she said, ‘Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?’” (Gen 16:13). Yet she was merely spoken to by the Lord through an angel (Gen 16:7, 13). However, if sight is understood cognitively (to “see” things of an intellectual or spiritual nature is to know them) the difficulty fades away: evidently, whatever the sensible manifestation by which God’s presence is “seen,” what is truly imparted is a supernatural knowledge and recognition of God, frightful and awe-inspiring as he is.

The biblical temple, though not exclusively, is preeminently the place where God is known; i.e. recognized for who he is. In the case of the Christian temple, this knowledge is granted to an unparalleled degree. “Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matt 13:17). St. John, decades after the Ascension, still marvels as he affirms, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14).

The same evangelist, however, just verses later, still admits, “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (John 1:18). No one has ever known God fully. Yet though John is adamant that the extent to which man may “see” God in this life is possible now, he is also the one who most clearly declares the final fulfillment of this deepest of human longings in the eschatological temple in the life to come: “Beloved, we

are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2), And again, "There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads" (Rev 22: 3-4). St. Paul, writing earlier, speaks in the same manner: "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror," he tells the Corinthians, "[but] then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:12).<sup>177</sup>

We have seen, then, that the temple is the place of theophany, the place where God is "seen" by man. Just as God does not act without reason, so theophany is always ordered to an end: it is an invitation to an encounter of mutual recognition between God and man. From this recognition flow acts of worship (reverence, sacrifice, praise) on the part of man and, invariably, acts of blessing on the part of God. Yet it is only in the Christian temple that this "visual" encounter arrives at its highest "resolution", and only in the eschatological "then" that this vision is finally shorn of all analogy and the mediation of creature or sacrament, and man knows God (as St. Paul indicates above) with the very knowledge of God, and on account of his union with Christ finds himself among the referents of those same words spoken from eternity, "this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17).

### *C. Place of Shared Willing*

Joseph Ratzinger referred to the essential reality of the temple as being "the place of encounter between God and man."<sup>178</sup> This definition can be seen to contain the two essential features of the temple presented above, for *encounter* implies both mutual presence and mutual

---

<sup>177</sup> Note here how Paul uses *seeing* and *knowing* as synonyms.

<sup>178</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 26. The four essential temple traits identified by C. T. R. Hayward (see above, pg. 108), i.e. that it is the place where God is seen, invoked, made known, and where his blessing imparted, also lack this essential element, the meeting of human and divine wills.

recognition. A personal encounter, after all, is a conscious meeting of at least two parties. Nevertheless, this definition would seem to leave out something essential to the temple reality. At the temple, human and divine persons do not only encounter one another; they will together.

We have seen that the biblical sanctuaries were sites of divine communications to man. Generally, these communications took the form of commands and promises of blessings. And these two kinds of oracles were not unrelated: the blessings were conditional on fidelity to the commandments. Chief among these promised blessings was the establishment of God's sanctuary on earth or man's continued access thereto. Hence Adam and Eve were to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and to refrain from eating of the forbidden tree; provided they did so, they would remain "serving" in the sanctuary of the garden, eating freely of its produce. If Moses and the Israelites served the Lord and kept his commands, God would bless and multiply them, make his abode among them and walk among them (Lev 26:3-13). If Solomon walked before the Lord as his father David had, then God would bless his line in perpetuity. Yet if he or his sons strayed, then God would "cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and the house which I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight," and converted into a heap of ruins (1 Kgs 9:7). And according to the prophet Ezekiel, it would only be after God ensured the fidelity of his people by infusing into them a new heart and a new spirit, "causing them to walk in his statutes" (cf. Ezek 36:27) that he would bless them and multiply them and "set his sanctuary in their midst forevermore" (cf. Ezek 37:26).

These conditions were no empty threats. Adam and Eve really were expelled from the garden after they broke faith and disobeyed. When Israel failed to keep the Lord's commands after their arrival in the promised land, the Lord no longer drove out their enemies, but instead handed them over to them in punishment (Judg 2), and eventually the ark as well (1 Sam 4).



After Solomon descends into idolatry, the lion's share of his kingdom is torn away from his lineage (1 Kgs 11:9-13) and when the resulting kingdoms of Israel and Judah persist in their infidelities, they too are abandoned to their enemies. In the case of Jerusalem, its temple is destroyed.

In the Christian temple, this pattern holds true but only to a degree. The individual Christian, in this life, remains so on the condition that he keep the Lord's commands. But "if any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (1 Cor 3:17). As shown above, the believer is a temple of the living God in virtue of sanctifying grace. Should grace be lost through sin, the Spirit of God will vacate the soul, just as the glory of God was seen to abandon the temple in Ezekiel 10.

The universal Church remains always the spotless bride of Christ. Yet in any given locale, she must steer clear of immorality and false doctrine lest that local church be "desecrated" and cease to be what it is: "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ... Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." (Rev 2:1-5)

In the case of Jesus Christ, however, there is no question of even the possibility of infidelity. He is God dwelling among men *as* man, and just as "what God has joined no man may put asunder," the hypostatic (personal) union will never be broken: "he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:13).

The relation between fidelity to God's commands and the blessing of the temple is more than that of cause to effect. As we saw above, St. Paul interpreted all the major Old Testament promises as being already fulfilled for those who have been constituted "temple" through their membership in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1). Yet a growing number of scholars have noticed that

the temple is not simply the reward God promised to those who kept his commands: it was, profoundly, what he commanded in the first place.

We have already seen that Adam was commissioned by God to minister as priest in the primordial temple. And yet, man was also to “fill the earth and subdue it.” How could he manage both? The answer, according to G.K. Beale, is that man’s original task, the innate human mission, was to expand the temple by acquiring dominion over the wild territories outside of the holy enclosure, subduing these and incorporating them into the sanctuary in which God was encountered and recognized as God.<sup>179</sup> As Steven Smith puts it, Adam, the high priest of the Edenic sanctuary, “was called to multiply the holiness of the temple over the face of the earth , and to ‘subdue’ it, that is, to continue with the ordering and perfecting of everything towards its end, which is the worship of God in his holy Temple.”<sup>180</sup> It is no coincidence, then, that later temples were designed not just as a “divine pleasure garden” but as a microcosm: a symbol, or a reminder, perhaps, that the sanctuary was supposed to fill the entire earth.

Adam fails in short order and is cast out of the sanctuary. The mission, though, remained, both as an inchoate instinct evident in the righteous sons of Adam,<sup>181</sup> and as an invitation which God renews time and again. Throughout the Old Testament history, but especially in Genesis, God renews the command to “renew, multiply, and fill the earth” in the context of a theophany to a favored man who erects an altar shrine to the Lord, if not a full-ledged sanctuary.<sup>182</sup> In other words, at the biblical temple, man’s primordial commission to make the world a sanctuary of the Lord is renewed and, to some small extent at least, realized.

---

<sup>179</sup> See G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission* (Downers Grove: IntraVarsity Press, 2004).

<sup>180</sup> Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 17.

<sup>181</sup> Even the wicked betray an instinct, however misguided, for temple-building: recall the episode of the towering shine to Man begun at Babel.

<sup>182</sup> See, for example, Gen 9:1-7; 12:18; 26:23-25; 28; 35:9-15. Beale comments, “The patriarchs appear also to have built these worship areas as impermanent, miniature forms of sanctuaries that symbolically represented the notion that their progeny were to spread out to subdue the earth from a divine sanctuary in fulfillment of the commission in Gen 1:26-28,” Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 14.

When a more permanent temple was finally erected at Jerusalem, that original mission was by no means accomplished. If anything, there was now again a locus from which the temple-reality, the mediated reigning of God, could again emanate out into the profane, untamed, world beyond. Though currents with Judaism resisted this universal mission, a number of the prophets, as we have seen, seized on it:

And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered. (Isa 56:6-8)<sup>183</sup>

In the prophetic writings the sanctuary of God, at least in terms of whom it was destined for, begins to take on its proper dimensions. Yet only Jesus Christ, “ultimate” Adam (cf. 1 Cor 15:45), the true *tektōn*, erects a temple that is in fact capable of doing so. The Christian temple, with its members who are vessels bearing within themselves the substantial presence of God, was in turn commissioned by Christ to fill the earth by baptizing all the nations (cf. Matt 28:19-20), a mission to which it has carried out with more or less success ever since. Wherever its “living stones” go they bring the kingdom (and the temple!) of God within them, sanctifying their environs and transforming their surroundings (provided they are faithful to the Spirit dwelling within them) into places where God is, and is known, and is served.

The temple of God is therefore the mission of man; it always has been, even if it is only in Christ that that mission becomes realizable in truth. The temple is also the final cause of creation itself: as man has been divinely commissioned to subdue the earth and have dominion

---

<sup>183</sup>In the Hebrew, the root of “servants” is the priestly *abad* of Gen 2:15 and elsewhere; “minister” (*sharath*) here, though not *shamar*, is nevertheless a word often employed for the priestly service. See Exod 28:43, for example.

over lower creation, so all the cosmos exists to become part of the sanctuary in which man glorifies his maker as God's vice-regent on earth.<sup>184</sup>

There is no separating the various commands God gives at the temple from the command he has given man to build the Temple. All is ordered to the same end, which, not coincidentally, is what is promised to those who keep God's commands: intimate fellowship between man and God, on the model of their familiar concourse only hinted at in the account of the short-lived garden sanctuary.<sup>185</sup>

Finally, then, the third essential characteristic of the temple-relationship comes into focus: the temple is where man conforms his will to God's through obedience to his commands. The temple is both the mission and the reward. It is where the mission is communicated in the first place, and is what endures as long as man does not abandon the project. This, of course, implies a progression in the degree to which the temple is manifest: at first, it is temporary and extremely provisional; a moment of grace, an unmerited invitation. When man responds with obedience—serving and keeping in the sanctuary of God—his environ becomes more truly temple: a place where man dwells with God, recognizes him as such, and worships him through willing service to his commands. Lastly, through sustained fidelity, the temple-reality waxes, “filling the earth” according to the measure of God's grace and man's receptivity to it. Yet should that grace fail or man rebel against it, the “house” collapses. This is why, invariably, biblical temples are only erected by (or for) men chosen by God who, at least initially, are faithful to him.

---

<sup>184</sup> The glory of God is properly speaking the final cause of creation, yet that glory is “produced” or manifest precisely in the temple relationship between man and God within creation.

<sup>185</sup> To say that man was made to “serve and guard” the sanctuary of God, put another way, is to say that he was made for the liturgical worship of God. This calls to mind, then, the thesis of Joseph Pieper, that insofar leisure is what man does for the sake of nothing else, liturgy is “leisure” par excellence. See Josef Pieper, *Leisure: the Basis of Culture* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009). It is therefore not circular to say that God commands man to “temple” in order that he may “temple.” For the temple is “where” man does what he does for no other purpose: worship God.

To say that the biblical temple is the place of command-fulfillment, however, does not state the full reality strongly enough, which is manifest only in the Christian temple. The sad experience of the people of Israel was to prove themselves, time and time again, to be sons of Adam indeed: despite the many blessings God had bestowed on them, by and large they would not remain faithful to what he commanded. Or, as St. Paul remarks, they could not; at least, not without extraordinary help from God. Without his grace, man—whether gentile or Jew—cannot not conform his will to God’s perfectly enough to accomplish man’s temple-building mission.

As branches are vivified by their vine, or members of the body are quickened by the spirit they share, so the members of the Christian temple have access to this grace as a result of their union with their head, Jesus Christ. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). We have already seen with what sort of language the prophets had foretold this new dispensation. Jeremiah had said that in the days of the New covenant, the Lord would write his law upon his people’s hearts, such that all, “from the least to the greatest” would know him (Jer 31:33-34). As Scott Hafemann explains, “For Jeremiah, the ‘law written on the heart’ is the Sinai law itself as the embodiment of God’s will.”<sup>186</sup> And Ezekiel, in his turn, had said that God would infuse into the hearts of his people his own Spirit, “and *cause* you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 34:26).<sup>187</sup> Paul, in fact, alludes to this prophecy in 2 Corinthians 3:3. “The problem,” says Hafemann, “is not with the law itself, but, as Ezekiel and Jeremiah testify, with the people whose hearts

---

<sup>186</sup> Scott Hafemann, “The ‘Temple of the Spirit’ as the Inaugural Fulfillment of the New Covenant Within the Corinthian Correspondence,” *Ex Auditu* 12 (2006) 29-42, 32.

<sup>187</sup> It is certainly significant that both these oracles end with the covenantal formula, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” whose fulfillment they prophesy. Lev 26:3-13, which promises the temple as the reward for fidelity, does as well.

remained hardened under it.”<sup>188</sup> For both prophets, the divine solution is that God will capacitate his people to do his will by supernatural means.

By the time Paul writes, those “means” have been revealed: they are Christ and the Spirit:

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you. (Rom 8:7-11)

In the Christian temple, God really does dwell in man as in a temple. Already it was said that, even in the temple of stone, God was not thought to “rest” inertly, but that he reigned from there as a king from his throne. So too in the Christian temple: God does not abide in man in inactively, but truly reigns in man by becoming the vital principle of man’s operations, such that man is supernaturally empowered to obey God’s commands.

God’s substantial presence in the soul is brought about by sanctifying grace and the resulting indwelling the Holy Spirit. Concomitant with this habitual grace “hardware” is the infusion of the supernatural virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the “software” which enable man to do what is beyond his natural power. Among the supernatural virtues is charity, on account of which (according to St. Thomas) man participates in the divine will, becoming transformed into the same.<sup>189</sup> By means the gifts, God becomes the direct cause principle of man’s operations, fulfilling Ezekiel’s prophecy with startling exactitude.<sup>190</sup> In the (individual) Christian temple, therefore, at least in the state of mystical perfection, man does not only obey

---

<sup>188</sup> Hafemann, “The Temple of the Spirit,” 38. As Hafemann notes, there can be no question of a dichotomy between Law and Spirit here; the Spirit, in fact, is what empowers men to fulfill the Law.

<sup>189</sup> *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 62, a.3, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 16, 552.

<sup>190</sup> St. Thomas explains, while the infused virtues “take counsel according to human reason,” by the gifts God moves man according to a divine “instinct” or mode of operation. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 68, a.1, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 16, 607.

God, *he wills with God*, because his will has been transformed into God's. Hence, St. John of the Cross calls man's supernatural union with God perfect when there is perfect conformity of his will with God's, with nothing in one opposed to what is in the other.<sup>191</sup>

This explains why the temple is the place of divine oracles: God's will must be communicated to man so that man may make it his own. This is also why the temple is appropriately the place of God's mercies. Mercy is the greatest divine attribute, the virtue most properly God's and most expressive of his omnipotence.<sup>192</sup> God wills to be merciful, and therefore in the temple he wills man to be merciful as well: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

Of course, this union between the Christian soul and God—a union which should be called actual, as opposed to substantial—is infinitely surpassed in the case of the Hypostatic Union. In the latter, the sacred humanity wills "with" God fully and perfectly. In fact, if it could be said that Jesus Christ has a "spirituality," it would be none other than wholeheartedly willing with God his Father. A dozen of biblical passages could be offered as proof.<sup>193</sup> Let this one, most relevant to our study, suffice: "And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.' And he said to them, 'How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'" (Luke 2:48-49).

---

<sup>191</sup> John of the Cross, *Subida del Monte Carmelo*, v., 3. In *San Juan de la Cruz: Obras Completas*, ed. Burgos Carmel. (Burgos: Imprenta Monte Carmelo, 1982), 262.

<sup>192</sup> See *Summa theologica*, II-II, q. 30, a.4, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 18, 304: "With regard to its subject, mercy is not the greatest virtue, unless that subject be greater than all others, surpassed by none and excelling all." Such is the case only for God.

<sup>193</sup> For example, Luke 22:42 ("Not my will, but thine, be done"); John 4:34 ("My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work"); 6:38 ("For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me"); 8:29 ("he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him"); 8:54-55 ("it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God. ... I do know him and I keep his word"); Heb 8:9, ("Lo, I have come to do thy will").

Evidently, the boy Jesus—*the* Temple, bar-none—experiences an existential mandate to devote himself to the business of his Father’s “house.” What that business is can remain undefined for now (we will return to the question in a moment, however). Suffice it to say that whatever the Father is up to, Jesus absolutely must be involved: “My Father is at work until now, so I am at work” (John 5:17).

What the RSV translates “I must be,” *dei*, is used by the evangelist Luke to express the divine imperative.<sup>194</sup> When Christ uses it, it often signifies what he takes as the inexorable decrees of his Father’s plan for him. For example, the Son of Man *must* suffer and be killed in Mark 8:31. Already as a boy in the temple, however, Jesus reveals that what his Father wills, he too wills with his whole heart. At every moment, he “inclines his heart to perform God’s statutes” (cf. Ps 119:112) in order to establish on earth the kingdom of God, the sanctuary of *ta hagia*, “the holy things,” (cf. Heb 9:24), in which all those who believe in him would have access to God (cf. Rom 5:2), know him whom they worship (cf. John 4:22), and be empowered by his Spirit to “always do what is pleasing Him” (John 8:29).

### **Concluding Synthesis**

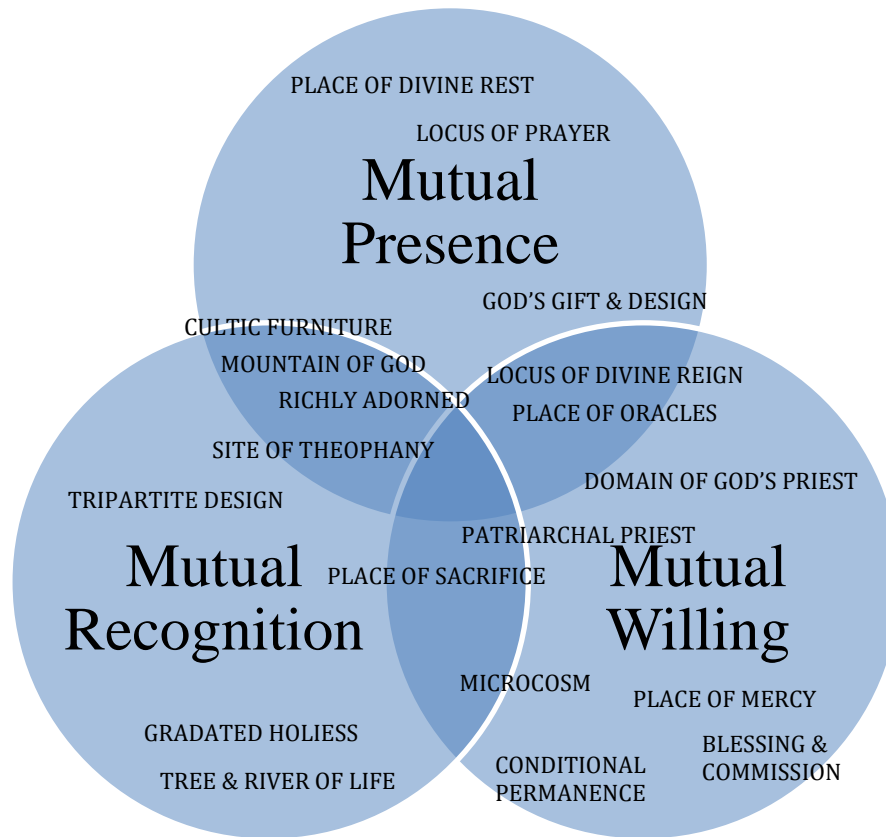
The essential form of the temple of God, the biblical *naos theou*, is thus shown to have three essential characteristics: it is the place of mutual presence, recognition, and willing between God and man. Throughout Part II, I have related these three essential traits of the temple to the “exterior” or even “accidental” attributes<sup>195</sup> of the temple which were identified in Part I. Graphically, this relation can be visualized thus:

---

<sup>194</sup> W. Grundmann, “*Dei*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged ed., eds. G. Kittel, G.W. Bromiley, G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 140-141.

<sup>195</sup> Not that they are haphazard or unimportant, but only that one of these can be lacking without destroying the nature of the temple. Eyes are “accidental” to man, for without them he is still a man, although they are certainly very much related to the perfection of his rational nature.



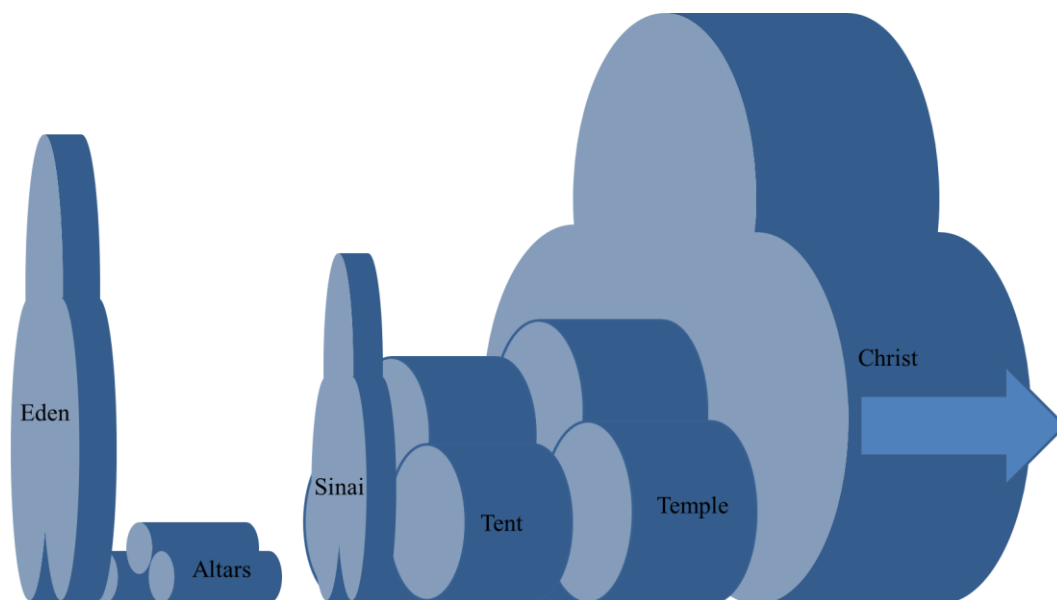


Many, if not all, these attributes are related to more than one essential characteristic, even if they are more closely related to a particular one. The adornments of the temple, for example, are symbolic of God's presence, though they also dispose man to recognize it. Nevertheless, the graphic shows that, just as the body is the expression of the soul, so the essential form of the temple can be seen "expressed" in the exterior features identified in Section I.

In each of the five biblical temples I have examined, these elements are all more or less manifest, depending on the perfection of the temple itself. Already we have seen that temples "not made by human hands" are presented in the Bible as superior to those made by human hands, and that the Christian temple is superior to them all. We are now in a position to further delineate this hierarchy. With regard to temples not made by hands, Eden is superior to Sinai. At Sinai, God's presence and commands are mediated to the people through Moses, whereas in

Eden (as in the Christian temple) all were to enjoy intimate concourse with God. Moreover, Sinai was limited both geographically and temporally. Eden, like the Christian temple, was to fill the earth, was to last forever (on the condition of man’s obedience). Between the two temples made by hands, the temple of Solomon would seem to be superior. Its structural superiority and mountaintop locale better facilitate the recognition of the One whose name dwells there, and its existence is a monument not only to the Mosaic covenant but also the Davidic. It therefore for fully “communicates” God’s will for his people and their rulers. Consequently, in order of perfection the hierarchy among the biblical sanctuaries is 1) the Christian, 2) Eden, 3) Sinai, 4) Solomon’s temple, 5) Moses’ tent.

Thinking diachronically, we the manifestation of God’s temple on earth through the course of salvation history might also be depicted graphically (without any precision with regard to relative proportions) across its several iterations:



As the graphic illustrates, God’s temple on earth, the *telos* of creation as a whole, wanes and then waxes over the course of biblical history as God steadily reestablishes on an even

grander scale the temple-relationship which was first severed in Eden.<sup>196</sup> What is not reflected here is the fact that across the duration of any given temple, except in the case of Christ himself, the degree to which the temple is actually realized may wax or wane as well. Its perfection, according to any inherent limitations, will depend on how faithful God's people, and particularly their leaders, are to the Lord's commands to build up the temple.

One might also identify another pattern across the temple's history: the three essential characteristics of the temple, already interrelated by the accidental attributes they often share, in the end collapse into one and the same thing.<sup>197</sup> I have argued that the temple is where man and God are together, where they recognize/know one another, and where they will together as one. Yet one must not think that they do so as equals, or each in the same way. If man and God are present to one another, it is because man shares in God's existence; if they know one another, it is because man participates in divine knowledge; and if they will together, it is because man participates in the divine will. Not vice versa. Now, on account of the divine simplicity, operation in God is the same as substance. And so, God's being *is* his existence *is* his knowledge *is* his willing.<sup>198</sup> God is Pure Act, knowing and loving. To say that in the temple, man is in God's presence, knowing and willing with Him, is simply to say that the temple is where man *is* with God.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>196</sup> For this reason, the Christian religion is not caught in the "eternal return" by which others may be, which long for a dimly perceived paradise lost. On the contrary, Christianity is forward-looking, awaiting with anticipation as its members work to "build up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13).

<sup>197</sup> Joseph Ratzinger offers this regarding the union of these three elements: "[Under] the Old Testament concept of recognition, recognizing creates communion; it is union of being with the one recognized." *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 83.

<sup>198</sup> See, for example, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 14, a. 2, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 13, 148: "God is a pure act in the order of existence, as also in the order of intelligible objects; there He understands Himself through Himself;" as well as I, q. 14, a. 4, 150-151: "the act of God's intellect is His substance ... His essence itself is also His intelligible species, ... hence ... His act of understanding must be His essence and His existence."

<sup>199</sup> Or, to speak less anthropocentrically, it is where God "is" with man.

“Is” in this definition is no mere copulative. It contains all the rich simplicity of the divine life of the One who identified Himself to Moses as “I AM” (Exod 3:14). We catch a glimpse of this, perhaps, in the episode of the boy Jesus in the temple mentioned above. Given that translations often interpret Jesus’ words to his mother as “I must be in my Father’s house” (RSV) or “about my Father’s business,” (*New King James Version*) one might expect the Greek here to be *oikos/oikonomia*, and so to express a veiled reference to the temple “house” in which the words are uttered. The actual text is more profound: *en tois tou patros mou dei einai me*; “in the matters of my Father it is necessary for me to be” (Luke 2:29). Translators have great difficulty deciding what they are to understand by the pronoun *tois* here: the Father’s “affairs,” or “stuff” (i.e. his property or “house”), “associates”?<sup>200</sup> I propose that the pronoun is intended to have all the infinitude that the infinitive *einai* expresses here. Jesus must *be* about all that his Father is about: the divine being, knowing, and loving. For Jesus, after all, is the Temple, where man is with God.

Let us conclude calling to mind the words of St. Peter at the scene of the Transfiguration, words which seem to echo the words of Genesis 1:31, when God has just finished the construction of the primordial temple: “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” Peter, awestruck as he beheld the brilliant epiphany of the definitive Temple, revealed to man in its glory for the first time, can only state the obvious, “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” (Matt 17:4, NIV). Indeed, how good it is for man *to be* with God!

*ad maximam Trinitatis gloriam*

August 8, 2020, Feast of the Transfiguration

*Domine, bonum est nos hic esse*

---

<sup>200</sup> See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 59-61.

## Bibliography

- Anderson, Gary A. "To See Where God Dwells: The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition." *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005): 13-45.
- Barker, Margaret. *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy*. London: T&T Clark, 2003.
- Beale, G.K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission*. Downers Grove: IntraVarsity Press, 2004.
- Beale, G. K. "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (2005): 5-31.
- Bergsma, John and Brant Pitre. *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: the Old Testament*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2018.
- Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*. Ed. Robert Weber, Roger Gryson, et al. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007.
- Bouyer, Louis. *The Church of God: Body of Christ and Temple of the Spirit*. Trans. Charles Underhill Quinn. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2001.
- Baumgartner, Walter, et al., ed. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. New York: E. J. Brill, 1994.
- Cogan, Mordechai. *1 Kings*. The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- Congar, Yves. *The Mystery of the Temple*. Trans. Reginald F. Trevett. New York: Newman Press, 1962.
- Corriveau, Raymond. "Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians." *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005): 145-166.
- DeVries, Simon J. *1 Kings*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003.
- Glare, P.G.W., ed. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University, 2012.
- Greene, Joseph R. "The Spirit in the Temple: Bridging the Gap between Old Testament Absence and New Testament Assumption." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55 no. 4 (2012): 717-742.
- Greever, Joshua M. "'We are the Temple of the Living God' (2 Corinthians 6:14-17): The New covenant as the Fulfillment of God's Promise of Presence." *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no. 3 (2015): 97-118.
- Grundmann, W. "Dei." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged ed. Eds. G. Kittel, G.W. Bromiley, G. Friedrich. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. 140-141.

- Hafemann, Scott. "The 'Temple of the Spirit' as the Inaugural Fulfillment of the New Covenant Within the Corinthian Correspondence." *Ex Auditu* 12 (2006): 29-42.
- Hahn, Scott W., ed. *Catholic Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday, 2009.
- Hahn, Scott W. "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John." *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005): 107-143
- Hayes, Richard B. *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*. Waco, TX: Baylor, 2014.
- Hayward, C. T. R. "Understandings of the Temple Service in the Septuagint Pentateuch." In *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*. Ed. John Day London: T&T Clark, 2005. 385-400.
- Hurowitz, Victor Avigdor. "YHWH's Exalted House—Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon's Temple." In *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, Ed. John Day. London: T&T Clark, 2005. 63-110.
- Kreitzer, Larry J. "The Messianic Man of Peace as Temple Builder: Solomonic Imagery in Ephesians 2.13-22." In *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*. Ed. John Day. London: T&T Clark, 2005. 484-512.
- Jarick, John. "The Temple of David in the Book of Chronicles," In *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, Ed. John Day. London: T&T Clark, 2005. 365-381.
- John of the Cross. *Subida del Monte Carmelo*. In *San Juan de la Cruz: Obras Completas*. Ed. Burgos Carmel. Burgos: Imprenta Monte Carmelo, 1982.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Gospel of Luke*. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991.
- Lioy, Daniel. "The Garden of Eden as a Primordial Temple or Sacred Space for Humankind." *Conspectus* 10 no. 1 (2010): 25-58.
- Meyer, Ben. "The Temple: Symbol Central to Biblical Theology." *Gregorianum* 74 no. 2 (1993): 223-240
- Myers, Jacob M. *II Chronicles*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973.
- Pieper, Josef. *Leisure: the Basis of Culture*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009.
- Pitre, Brant. "Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood." *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2005): 47-83.
- Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. (23 April 1993) *Origins* 23, no 29 (1994).
- Ratzinger, Joseph. *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week, from the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011.

- Ratzinger, Joseph. "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology." *Communio* 17 (1990): 439-454.
- Rahner, Hugo. "On the Biblical Basis of the Devotion." In *The Heart of the Savior: A Symposium on Devotion to the Sacred Heart*. Ed. Josef Stierli. New York: Herder and Herder, 1957.
- Rowland, Christopher. "The Temple in the New Testament." In *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*. Ed. John Day. London: T&T Clark, 2005. 469-483.
- Royo Marin, Antonio. *The Theology of Christian Perfection*. Trans. Jordan Aumann. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011.
- Ruzer, Serge. "From Man as *Locus* of God's Indwelling to Death as Temple's Destruction." *Revue Biblique* 119 no. 3 (2012): 383-402.
- Second Vatican Council. *Dei verbum*. (18 November 1965).
- Second Vatican Council. *Lumen gentium*. (21 November 1964).
- Smith, Steven C. *The House of the Lord: A Catholic Biblical Theology of God's Temple Presence in the Old and New Testaments*. Steubenville, OH: Franciscan, 2017.
- Steinsaltz, Adin Even-Israel. *The William Davidson Talmud - English*, Digital Edition.
- Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae*. In *Latin-English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Trans. Laurence Shapcote. Eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon. Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012.
- Walton, John H. *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, TX: Word, 1987.
- William of St. Thierry. *On Contemplating God*. Trans. Sister Penelope. Cistercian Fathers Series 3, The Works of William of St. Thierry I. Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications 1971.