

TEMPLE ECCLESIOLOGY IN CORINTHIANS:
“I WILL DWELL IN THEM”

Michael J. Ruzala, M.A.
Franciscan University of Steubenville

INTRODUCTION

Important for Paul's ecclesiology and hence for his pastoral theology in Corinthians was the image of the Church as a spiritual Temple – the suitable place not made by human hands for the divine indwelling. According to 2 Samuel 7:5-6, the Lord said, “Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: 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....’” (RSV). God's proper dwelling is not in a Temple of stone, since according to Thomas Dubay, humanity is the only suitable place in visible creation for God's indwelling. He writes, “If the glorification of the earth is the result of its orientation to man, and if the transfiguration of man is due to his immersion in the beauty of indwelling Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it follows that the final splendor of the whole universe is a consequence of the trinitarian dwelling in man, the pinnacle of visible creation.”¹ If this is so, this has profound implications for man's view of himself and how he should conduct his life – something we see emerging in St. Paul's letters to the Corinthians as well as in his other epistles. In this paper, I intend to present Paul's view in Corinthians of the divine indwelling among the people of the New Covenant in terms of a spiritual Temple founded in Christ, foreshadowed in and supported by the Old Testament, built up in unity by cooperating with grace and as extending from Christ to his Church to the individual members.

THE DIVINE INDWELLING AND THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Though not finding many converts among the worldly-wise in Athens during his second missionary journey, Paul actually met with more success at Corinth – a large Greek port city known for its immorality – and founded a church there around AD 51, even converting one of

¹ Thomas Dubay, “The Indwelling of Divine Love: The Revelation of God's Abiding Presence in the Human Heart,” *Letter & Spirit – Temple and Contemplation: God's Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart.*, no. 4 (2008): 188.

the rulers of the synagogue.² Paul writes to the Corinthians, “When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified... that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:1-5 [RSV]). The power of God touched the hearts of many at Corinth. According to the *Navarre Bible*, “To judge from the information St. Paul provides in his letters, the Christian community at Corinth was one of his largest foundations. Seemingly, Christians of pagan birth were in the majority, most of them humble folk, although some of them were educated and even well-to-do; it was a community of some considerable size, with all walks of life represented.”³

But as might be expected given Corinth's background, many of the people fell back into their old ways after Paul moved on. As Mary Healy puts it, the church at Corinth became Paul's “problem child.”⁴ Having been informed of the church's situation by several members of the church, Paul responded with his First Letter to the Corinthians.⁵ The problems which arose included factionalism, a case of incest, involvement in prostitution, having grievances among the brethren settled in pagan courts, and turning the liturgy into a party for the upper class. Many who were involved in sexual immorality justified their behavior by claiming that “food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” (1 Cor. 6:13 [RSV]).⁶ Paul may have written his Second Letter to the Corinthians in the same year he had written the First – AD 56 – in part to denounce false teachers and reestablish his apostolic authority in Corinth which was being

² The Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre. *The Navarre Bible: St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians in the Revised Standard Version and New Vulgate* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1991), 25.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴ Mary Healy, “The Mystery Revealed by the Spirit in First Corinthians,” (paper presented at the Fourth Annual Letter and Spirit Conference, St. Paul Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA, November 22, 2008).

⁵ Navarre, *The Navarre Bible*, 27.

⁶ Raymond Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” *Letter & Spirit – Temple and Contemplation: God's Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart*, no. 4 (2008): 160.

threatened.⁷

What was Paul's response to the problems at Corinth? Part of that response was found in Paul's temple ecclesiology. The Corinthians did not understand their own dignity as God's church and as his children since they trusted in human wisdom and put aside divine wisdom. According to Healy, Paul identified the common source of the Corinthians' problems as a failure to be open to wisdom of God, which is the mystery of God's plan as revealed by his Spirit.⁸ Paul, who, according to 1 Corinthians 1:16, had the "mind of Christ" (RSV), wanted them to understand themselves as a profound spiritual unity in Christ and with one another. In this vein, he speaks of the Church as being a single Body of Christ with many members (as in 1 Cor. 10) and also of the Church as spiritual Temple built up by faith, hope, and charity as a place of indwelling for the Presence of God among the people of the New Covenant. The Corinthians, too, had access to the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:16 [RSV]), but they were slow in tapping into it. According to Healy, if only they would open themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they too would be able to discern what they must do and what they must avoid.⁹

But how is the mystery of God's plan revealed? Paul writes, "Do you not know that *you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* ...Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God" (emphasis added) (1 Cor. 3:16, 18-19 [RSV]). Thus it seems grasping the mystery of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within them will lead to their further coming to know the mysteries of God. Hence it seems Paul is saying that the time has come for what was foretold by Jeremiah:

⁷ Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, Revised Standard Edition, Second Catholic Edition*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 51.

⁸ Healy, "The Mystery Revealed by the Spirit in First Corinthians."

⁹ Ibid.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:33-34 [RSV]).

“I WILL DWELL IN THEM”

As we saw above, Paul speaks of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in terms of a “temple” in 1 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians, he continues the temple theme. In support of his command – “do not be mismatched with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14 [RSV]) – he argues in this way:

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For 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. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:16-18 [RSV]).

Paul is actually referencing and compiling at least three Scriptures including Ezekiel 37:26-27, Isaiah 52:11, and Leviticus 26:12.¹⁰ In reference to Ezekiel, Paul paraphrases, “I will live in them” (2 Cor. 6:16 [RSV]), but Ezekiel actually says, “My dwelling place shall be with them” (Eze. 37:26 [RSV]). In Greek, while Paul writes *ενοικησω εν αυτοις* (2 Cor. 6:16 [Greek NT]), Ezekiel writes that God's dwelling place will be *□ν μ□σ□ α□τ□ν* (Eze. 37:26 [LXX]). Thus Paul's gloss makes the jump from dwelling *with* them to dwelling *in* them.¹¹ But Raymond Corriveau comments, “...it provides an excellent paraphrase of the idea in both the Ezekiel and Leviticus texts.”¹² In Leviticus 26:11-12, we find a similar statement to the one in Ezekiel: “And I will make my abode (Hebrew: *miškān*¹³) 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.” According to

¹⁰ Navarre, *The Navarre Bible*, 205.

¹¹ Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” 151.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Strong, *Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, under “H4908.”

Coriveau,

Skēnēn in Leviticus 26:11 also corresponds to *miškān*. All these words refer to the 'presence' or the 'dwelling,' the *Shekinah* or glorious presence of God which was linked particularly to the meeting tent and the Temple. This is the 'presence' that Paul refers when he writes: 'I shall dwell among them,' as a scriptural proof that Christians are now the new Temple. The people of God among whom he walks has become the Temple in which he dwells.¹⁴

Thus with Leviticus 26, Paul connects God's dwelling with the Temple – the place where God dwells. But how can Paul make the jump from God dwelling *with* his people to dwelling *in* them? According to Coriveau, the notion of the temple was in a process of evolving until the time of the New Testament.¹⁵ Holiness was seen in Jewish tradition as in terms of the Temple and as spiraling out from it, since it came to be the resting place for the presence of God.¹⁶ The evolution of the notion of “temple” depended on an understanding of where God's dwelling is. Coriveau says that the first tendency was to see the presence of the Lord as fixed at the Temple in Jerusalem¹⁷ as seen in Isaiah 2:3: “...many peoples shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths'” (RSV). In the time after the Babylonian exile and the destruction of the Temple, the tendency was to see God's earthly presence as not strictly bound to the Temple, as seen in Ezekiel 37:27: “My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (RSV). There was still another tendency which developed: “...a current of thought grew which saw the material Temple at Jerusalem as disappearing with the fulfillment of messianic prophecies.”¹⁸

According to Coriveau, “The destruction of the Temple (Jer. 7:1; 21) brought to light the

¹⁴ Coriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” 151.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

necessity of a more spiritual cult in accordance with the religion of the heart, when God would be present to his people in a new way (Jer. 31:31-33). It was not the building of a Temple which mattered, but a contrite heart sacrificing itself by obedience to the Word of God.”¹⁹ In fact, “The existence of such currents explains how the Essenes at Qumran could break with the cult of the Temple, which they saw as having been defiled by the wicked High Priest and his people.”²⁰ We read in the writing of the Essences at Qumran:

In the formal congregation of the community there shall be twelve laymen and three priests schooled to perfection in all that has been revealed of the entire law.... So long as these men exist in Israel, the formal congregation of the community will rest securely on a basis of truth. It will become a plant evergreen. *Insofar as the laymen are concerned, it will be indeed a sanctuary* (translated in Corriveau as “Temple”); *and insofar as the priesthood is concerned, it will indeed constitute the basis for a true 'holy of holies.'* The members of the community will be in all justice the witnesses of God's truth and the elect of His favor, effecting atonement for the earth and ensuring the requital of the wicked...As for the priesthood, they shall... all of them be qualified *to offer what will be indeed 'a pleasant savor' to the Lord* (emphasis added).²¹

Thus for the Essene community at Qumran, the congregation was seen as a kind of temple, and their way of life was seen as a way of offering pleasant sacrifice to the Lord. According to John Bergsma, there is a theme in the Old Testament that God's proper dwelling is not in a building made by human hands.²² He points out several Scripture passages. In Deuteronomy 27:5-6 we read, “And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall lift up no iron tool upon them. You shall build an altar to the Lord your God of unhewn stones; and you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God” (RSV). In fact, even in the building of the Temple itself at Jerusalem, care was taken not to have the cutting of

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 148-149.

²¹ Theodore H. Gaster, nn and intro, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), no. viii, 1-19.

²² John Bergsma, “Nuptuality in Paul,” (paper presented at the Fourth Annual Letter and Spirit Conference, St. Paul Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA, November 22, 2008).

stone within the area of the Temple so as to symbolize that God will not dwell in a building made by human hands.²³ According to 1 Kings 6:7, “When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry; so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple, while it was being built” (RSV). But there is something in visible creation that is not merely symbolic of being constructed “without human hands.” In Psalm 139:13-14 we read, “For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works!” (RSV). In Psalm 8:4-6, we read, “What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet...” (RSV). Unlike other embodied creatures, man is a person who can know and love. Thus, Bergsma concludes, humanity is a fitting dwelling place for God within visible creation.²⁴

DAVIDIC TYPOLOGY AND THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE

An important mark of Paul's spiritual temple is that it is a fulfillment of the Temple of David's son Solomon. Prominently, we see that like the Temple built by Solomon, this spiritual Temple is built up by Jews and Gentiles together. According to Hahn, this is why Paul never refers to the spiritual “tabernacle” – because the tabernacle, which also was a place of God's presence, was built only by Jews.²⁵ According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (RSV). Referring to this, Cerfaux writes, “In the foreground we see the picture of a new race (distinct from Jews and the gentiles) which is formed in virtue of the fact that it has

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Scott W. Hahn, “Theology 721: The Theology of St. Paul,” (class lecture, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, OH., October 14, 2008).

been made fit for Christ and all its members identified with the body of Christ by a mystical identification, which is one of identity and likeness at one and the same time.”²⁶ According to Hahn, “...the Temple was the embodiment of God's covenant with David.”²⁷ Yves Congar points out that the title “son of God” was given for the first time ever to David's son, Solomon, the builder of the temple – and it was given in that context .²⁸ Hahn argues that unlike the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant was one through which the Chosen People were to spread the Covenant with God to the other nations.²⁹ Many of David's Psalms speak of spreading God's Name throughout the nations. For example, in Psalm 22:27, we read, “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him” (RSV). According to Hahn's translation of the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 7:19, David speaks of his covenant as giving a “law for humanity.” Hahn writes, “King David thus announced a greater covenant blessing than God had ever given before, a 'torah' for all nations, not just Israel. In other words, what the *torah* of the Mosaic covenant was to Israel, namely, a charter of divine guidance and blessing, the *torah* of God's covenant with David – and his son – would be for the Gentiles!”³⁰ Thus, in choosing the Davidic Temple as the image for God's indwelling in the Church rather than the Tabernacle, Paul is showing how it is both Jews and Gentiles together who build and make up this temple and extend God's covenantal promise and blessing throughout the world.

Another distinguishing mark of this temple as typified by the Davidic Covenant is that

²⁶ Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, 246.

²⁷ Scott W. Hahn, “Temple, Sign, and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John,” *Letter & Spirit – Temple and Contemplation: God's Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart*, no. 4 (2008): 109.

²⁸ Yves M. J. Cardinal Congar, “Church, Kingdom, and the Eschatological Temple,” *Letter & Spirit – Temple and Contemplation: God's Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart*, no. 4 (2008): 301.

²⁹ Hahn, “Theology 721: The Theology of St. Paul.”

³⁰ Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 1998), 213.

the Presence of God in it will be one of a Father and his sons and daughters. In 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, we read, “For 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... and *I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters*, says the Lord Almighty” (emphasis added) (RSV). According to Corriveau, Paul is referencing 2 Samuel 7:14 and the making of the Davidic Covenant – “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (RSV). Ultimately, this would be fulfilled in Christ, as Congar writes: “The Temple of God is this unique person, both Son and King, Jesus Christ, and ourselves in and with him.”³¹ But through him, we too become sons. In Galatians 4:6-7 Paul writes, “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir” (RSV). Corriveau writes, “Thus we see, woven into the notion of the Christian community as Temple, all the tenderness of the Father's presence and saving love for his children. In turn, the cult of this new Temple must become a loving response of sons and daughters in the service of the Father.”³²

Before the church could be called “temple” in the Pauline sense, Christ himself was temple in the Davidic sense. Christ's response to the Pharisees' accusation regarding his disciples' picking grain on the Sabbath in Matthew 12 is quite aside from the issue of the strictness of interpreting the Torah.³³ Rather, Christ implies that he is the Davidic temple and that his disciples are like the priests in it who are permitted to eat of the Bread of the Presence. Christ says, “Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here” (Mt. 14:5-6

³¹ Congar, “Church, Kingdom, and the Eschatological Temple,” 301.

³² Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” 152.

³³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 2007), 107.

[RSV]). Elsewhere, in the Gospel of John, Christ speaks of the divine indwelling in man as involving himself: “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14:23 [RSV]). Congar writes, “The Gospel meaning is that Christ (immolated and risen from the dead) is the Temple. The meaning in the teaching of the apostles is that the Temple is the community of the faithful. The synthesis provided in 1 Peter combined these two statements.”³⁴ Thus, the fact that Christ as temple is prior to the notion of Church as temple sheds light on Paul's temple ecclesiology. As we will see, if we build anything lasting in the spiritual Temple, we build on the one foundation which is Christ. Likewise, if we are members of the Body of Christ, he is head and his Spirit dwells in us.

BUILDING THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE

While Paul speaks of individual members' bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, the primary sense of spiritual temple for Paul, from which the other is derived, is that of the Church. Thus in the Pauline sense, the temple of the Holy Spirit is first to be understood as the universal Church, then as the particular church, and finally as the individual. Lucien Cerfaux points out that the Greeks often used the image of the body as a metaphor for unity of purpose in a group.³⁵ He says Paul goes beyond this since the Body of Christ is enlivened by the same Spirit which gives it life.³⁶ Speaking of the charismatic gifts, Paul writes, “All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11 [RSV]). Cerfaux writes, “But this theme of the individual and inner temple (which comes first from Philo with his Greek taste for what is individualistic) is secondary for Paul.”³⁷ After all, in Ezekiel 37:27 we read, “My dwelling place shall be with *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be

³⁴ Congar, “Church, Kingdom, and the Eschatological Temple,” 301-302.

³⁵ Cerfaux, Lucien, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, trans. Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), 148.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

my people” (emphasis added) (RSV). Cerfaux writes, “The totality of Christians, as a Church, is the body of Christ. The Church comes before Christians.... Whether we think of ourselves as members of Christ individually or collectively (in the Church), we are doing so always in terms of the same union with Christ.”³⁸

In 1 Corinthians 3:9-17, Paul speaks of constructing the Corinthian church as a temple:

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw-- each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are (RSV).

The Church is a spiritual building – God's temple. Cerfaux writes, “...this building has Jesus Christ for its foundation, and this makes us think of a sacred building, the temple.... The community of the Corinthians was a building, just as it was the temple. But this picture, although it is applied to Corinth, is universally valid.”³⁹ Thus, the Corinthian church is a temple of the Holy Spirit – part of the whole Temple of Christ which is universal. Against factionalism, Paul says while he is their spiritual father and “master builder;” the foundation upon which everything is built is Christ. Everything which does not securely stand on that one foundation will be destroyed. Factionalism had arisen over some claiming to belong to Paul and others to Apollos, who continued Paul's work after he left.⁴⁰ Rather, Apollos was one of the builders, laying on the one foundation of Christ, and he will receive his reward if the work is found worthy. But

³⁸ Ibid., 381.

³⁹ Ibid., 241-242.

⁴⁰ Hahn and Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*, 17.

participating in factionalism or boasting of “knowledge” is like building on the foundation of Christ with straw. Paul writes, “Knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1 [RSV]). Unsuitable materials will be burned up and the perpetrators “will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” – purgation.⁴¹ Those who tear down the Temple will be destroyed.

For Paul, baptism is how one becomes part of the spiritual temple and its graces are what the temple is built up with. He writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (RSV). According to Bergsma, Paul connects the images of temple and body.⁴² Likewise, Cerfaux writes, “...head and key-stone correspond in position and function, since both give strength and unity to the whole. The design of the temple and the plan of the body overlap. The Church as the body of Christ is thus the heavenly temple which God built, for the new and spiritual temple replaces the old one.”⁴³ In Ephesians 4:15-16 we read, “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love” (RSV). In 1 Corinthians 14:4, Paul writes, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies (*oikodomeō*⁴⁴) himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church” (RSV). *Oikodomeō* is derived from the same word Paul uses to say the Church is “God’s building” (*oikodomē*⁴⁵). Thus if we are baptized into one body, we are also baptized into the one temple. In this context we can understand 1 Corinthians 13:13: “So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (RSV). Faith, hope, and love are

⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

⁴² Bergsma, “Nuptuality in Paul.”

⁴³ Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, 346.

⁴⁴ Strong, *Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, under “G3618.”

⁴⁵ Ibid., under “G3619.”

materials such as “gold, silver, precious stones” which “will be revealed with fire” and will last (1 Cor. 3:13 [RSV]). Thus, “If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward” (1 Cor. 3:14 [RSV]).

HOLINESS IN THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE

In 2 Corinthians 6:17, we find Paul's quote from Isaiah 52:11: “Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean” (RSV). Of course, Paul is not speaking about reverting to the provisional kosher laws. In Romans 14:20 he says, “Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for any one to make others fall by what he eats” (RSV). This same theme is found in 1 Corinthians. Rather, Paul is talking about the holiness code of Levitical priesthood.⁴⁶ Paul is taking this verse from Isaiah 52:11 in the context of a prophecy on the new Exodus from Babylon: “Depart, depart, go out thence, touch no unclean thing (*akathartou* [LXX]); 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 before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard” (RSV). Hence it seems that this is primarily in reference to priests who guard things which are holy in the presence of the Lord. Referring to the word used both by Paul and the Septuagint to refer to an “unclean thing,” Corriveau writes, “*Akathartou* is 'that which makes it impossible for a person to come into the presence of God; it shuts him off from God.' In the Old Testament, the notion also underwent a process of moral spiritualization. It is used of sexual impurity (Hos. 2:10), of the moral uncleanness which destroys a nation (Mic. 2:10), and of sin generally (Ezek. 36:29).”⁴⁷ Hence by including the admonition to “touch nothing unclean,” Paul is drawing an analogy to the holiness code of the Levitical priesthood to the holiness required of Christians since they are priests of

⁴⁶ Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians, 154.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 153.

their bodies which are temples of the Holy Spirit and must maintain priestly purity to make their bodies a suitable dwelling place for God.⁴⁸ Coriveau writes, “So from the more intimate and personal 'dwelling' in the Christian community there arises a new cult that comprises the whole moral life of the believer. It demands a separation from the godlessness and depravity of the pagan world.”⁴⁹ Cerfaux writes, “The bodies that are promised for our resurrection already take on a higher mode of life that is divine. They have something of the holiness that belongs to buildings consecrated for worship. A Christian can be thought of as the priest in the temple of his own body, in which sanctuary he serves God and keeps out whatever might profane it.”⁵⁰

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, we read the practical moral theology that flows from Paul's temple ecclesiology:

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”--and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two shall become one flesh.” But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (RSV).

According to Coriveau, “This text...is perhaps the most developed moral exhortation of all the Pauline letters. Paul condemns fornication, calling on theological motives of the highest order.”⁵¹ As members of the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, we are united to it

⁴⁸ The priesthood of believers does not conflict with the one sacrifice of Christ once for all as in Heb. 7:27, but is the believer's subjective dimension of Christ's objective sacrifice, the merits of which are infinite.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 156.

⁵⁰ Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, 148-149.

⁵¹ Coriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” 160.

such that even our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit. Speaking of Paul's reference to the human body as a temple of the Holy Spirit, Corriveau writes, "What is important here is the application of the identity of the Church as Temple to the body of the individual member of the Church. The message is that we cannot separate the community and its members."⁵² And since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, we are priests of our bodies, required to maintain priestly holiness in our bodies. Sexuality is not to be equated with hunger or thirst because marital intercourse and procreation is the God-like action man performs with his body. Hence, as Corriveau recalls Paul's words: "The body is not for immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. There is a mutual relation between the two realities."⁵³

Because our bodies have become living temples of the Holy Spirit and are members of Christ's own body, we must use our bodies to offer spiritual sacrifices of a holy life to Christ who is the Lord of our bodies and who dwells there. Thus, according to Paul, "The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor. 6:14 [RSV]). Cerfaux writes, "Holiness is essentially connected with worship. Paul's teaching is definite on this point and the idea of sanctity is represented by the presence of the Spirit, union with Christ, etc. and in part by the theme of righteousness."⁵⁴ Christ's resurrection has special significance for us. Since we are members of his body, and he rose, so shall we. Ultimately, in Heaven, we will be united with our bodies and will glorify God with them to the fullest in the Beatific Vision. Paul alludes to this in the very next verse, after speaking of our bodies as meant for the Lord: "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power" (1 Cor. 6:14 [RSV]). Cerfaux writes, "Christian holiness is derived from eschatology. Man is called to salvation which will raise him to the

⁵² Ibid., 162.

⁵³ Corriveau, "Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians," 160.

⁵⁴ Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul*, trans. Lilian Soiron. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 281.

transcendence of God. Furthermore, the gift of the Holy Spirit, in this life, brings him into contact with the holiness of God.”⁵⁵ Cerfaux writes, “In another series of texts, the life of Christ comes into us, and it transforms us into itself. We become Christ. We are created in him as new men (Eph. 2:15). We put on the new man (or the life of Christ) (Eph. 4:24). Christ is our life (Col. 3:4). He is all in all (Col. 3:11).”⁵⁶ Christ's Incarnation is firstly “temple,” then the Church both universal and particular, of which we are individually members. We are transformed more and more by Christ as we participate in the building of this Temple through the freely given gifts of faith, hope, and charity – the building materials which will last as “revealed with fire” (1 Cor. 3:13 [RSV]).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Paul, is writing in response to the problems of the Corinthian church, emphasizing the theme of unity in Christ as understood according to the mind of Christ. Paul wanted the Corinthians church to know that it was God's spiritual Temple – a dwelling place of God – a statement with great moral implications. Paul's shift from God's dwelling *among* his people to God's dwelling *in* his people provides an important foundation for the notion of the spiritual Temple of the New Covenant and it is supported by the sources. While the basic Jewish conception of holiness was clearly in reference to the Temple, the notion of “temple” progressed throughout the Old Testament and Jewish tradition from a fixed place of God's presence to one which was more mobile and personal. The destruction of Solomon's Temple by the Babylonians reshaped the way Jews thought of the Temple such that the Qumran community was able to speak of itself as offering spiritual sacrifices by means of holy lives in the context of the community, which it saw as a kind of temple. Also, throughout the Old Testament there is a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 282.

⁵⁶ Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, 380.

theme that God will not dwell in a temple made by human hands – a theme which prefigures God's dwelling in the hearts of his people in the spiritual Temple. Considering the nature of this spiritual Temple, we can see that it is more than just an analogy – it is a fulfillment in Christ of the Temple built by David's son Solomon. This is seen in part by the fact that it is built up by both Jews and Gentiles and that those who are part of it have a relationship with God as sons. We also see how it is firstly Christ who is the fulfillment of the Davidic Temple and the promises of that Covenant, and hence his Church and members also. In this way we can see how Paul understands Christ as the foundation for this spiritual Temple and teaches that only the works built on that foundation will stand. Only the works cooperating with the graces first poured into us at baptism will be of any value for this Temple. This applies not only to the Church but also its individual members who are inseparable from it. In sum, Paul presents his view in Corinthians of the divine indwelling among the people of the New Covenant in terms of a spiritual Temple founded in Christ, foretold by the prophets and foreshadowed by Solomon's Temple, built up in unity by cooperating with the graces of baptism, and as extending in the order of being from Christ, to his Church, then to his members joining to Christ's suffering in their own bodies, thus offering spiritual sacrifice to God. Lucien Cerfaux writes,

Christ is the new temple of God. A new sacrifice is offered. The old priesthood is replaced by a new, and eternal, high priest. The three essential elements in worship – temple, sacrifice and priesthood – are to be found... 'Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'⁵⁷

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⁵⁷ Ibid., 145-146.

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