

'HE CAME TO DWELL AMONG US' (Jn 1:14)

THERE was a time when the most popular exegesis of Jn 1:14 placed considerable emphasis upon the etymology of the verb *skenoun*, 'to dwell in a tent'. The allusion to nomadic life contained in the term made it a natural and effective symbol of the temporary presence of the enfleshed Word among His own. Many of the older commentaries explicated the verse in this way. So, too, do some of the more recent commentaries, as well as the dictionary of Arndt-Gingrich.¹

Most of the recent commentaries, however, view this interpretation as somewhat inadequate. This type of exegesis ascribes to the verb *skenoun* a connotation which it has in both classical Greek and the Greek of the Septuagint, but which it does not have in New Testament usage. Thus the preponderance of modern commentators on Jn 1:14, instead of drawing our attention to the etymology of the terms, point to the sacral character of the language of the text. To the Jewish mind, and the Christian reader of the Fourth Gospel, the use of the term *skenoun* recalls the presence of God with His people throughout the long history of his dealings with them.

Far from being a banal reference to the short-lived presence of the Word among His own, the expression 'He came to dwell among us' is pregnant with theological significance. It situates the presence of the enfleshed Word in the world within the broad context of salvation history by means of sacerdotal-liturgical imagery. Its implications can be elaborated upon by means of the priestly traditions embodied in the Old Testament. Nonetheless, while Jn 1:14 is full of meaning in itself, it ought not to be separated from the body of the Gospel since it serves as a programmatic statement of one of the major themes of the Fourth Gospel.

'DWELLING' IN SALVATION HISTORY

The coupling of the verb 'to dwell' with the notion of 'glory',

¹Cf. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 1955, p. 138; E.C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 1947, p. 147; W. Arndt-F. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lectionary of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 762.

a favorite Johannine theme, indicates the direction in which the theological significance of Jn 1:14 can be sought. At the time of the Exodus, Moses was ordered to make a tent, the Tabernacle, which would serve as the dwelling place of Yahweh among his people: 'Make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them' (Ex 25:8). When the tabernacle had been constructed, duly erected and properly appointed, the ark of the covenant was carried into it (Ex 40:21). Then, on the day of its inauguration, the glory of Yahweh filled the Tabernacle so that not even Moses could enter into it: 'The cloud covered the Tent of the Presence, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle' (Ex 40:34-39). By this manifestation of His glory, Yahweh wishes to show that He was taking possession of His Tabernacle. He had come to dwell among His own people in a tent, not totally dissimilar to those in which they dwelled. Thus Yahweh's glory in the Tabernacle was a sign of his divine presence among the nomadic Israelites during the period of their deliverance.

Once the Israelites had conquered Canaan, Yahweh gave a new command to the appointed leader of his people. As a tent had been his dwelling place among a nomadic people, a permanent structure was to be his dwelling place in a nation established on its own territory, his own land. Thus Yahweh spoke to David through the prophet Nathan: 'I have never dwelt in a house since I brought Israel up from Egypt; I made my journey in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I journeyed with Israel, did I ever ask any of the judges whom I appointed shepherds of my people Israel why they had not built me a house of Cedar? (2 Sm 7:6-7). In fulfillment of Yahweh's promise (2 Sm 7:13), Solomon built the Temple as the new dwelling place of Yahweh among his people (1 Kg 6:13). When the Temple was completed and properly furnished, the glory of Yahweh filled the Temple so that the priests could no longer fulfill their duties within it: 'Then the priests came out of the Holy Place, since the cloud was filling the house of the Lord, and they could not continue to minister because of it, for the glory of the Lord filled his house' (1 Kg 8:10-11). The motif is similar to that associated with Yahweh's presence in the Tabernacle.

Against this Old Testament background, Jn 1:14 implies that the Word made flesh is the new localization of God's presence among men. It is no longer a house made of human hands, neither Tabernacle nor Temple, that is the localized presence of God on

earth. Rather the enfleshed Word has succeeded and replaced both Tabernacle and Temple as the glorified sign of the divine presence among men.

Beyond this, Jn 1:14 has an eschatological connotation. According to Old Testament tradition, Yahweh's dwelling among his people was a sign of his covenant love. Were Israel to become unfaithful to the covenant, this gracious benefaction would be withdrawn. Thus Ezekiel who had a vision of Yahweh's glory filling the Temple (Ez 8:4; 9:3; 10:3-4) also saw the glory of Yahweh leave the Temple defiled by Israel's sins (Ez 10:18-19). For the era of the new covenant, there was promised a new Temple which would be the place of Yahweh's throne where he would dwell forever among his people: 'The glory of the Lord came up to the temple towards the gate which faced eastwards. A spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple' (Ez 43:4-5).

The notion of this mode of the divine presence was central to the eschatology of the Old Testament and later Judaism. In the post-exilic period the prophets encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple, for it was necessary that Yahweh dwell again among his people. 'Go up into the hills, fetch timber, and build a house acceptable to me, where I can show my glory, says the Lord. You look for much and get little ... Why? says the Lord of Hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while each of you has a house that can run to ... Then the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest and the rest of the people; they came and began work on the house of the Lord of Hosts their God' (Hag 1:8-9, 14).

Indeed, the expectation of the renewed tented presence of Yahweh among his people became a keynote of the eschatological hope of Israel. Thus Joel writes of the future restoration of Jerusalem: 'Thus you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling (*ho kataskenon*) in Zion mu holy mountain' (Jl 3:17). In much the same vein the prophet Zechariah proclaimed: 'Shout aloud and rejoice, daughter of Zion; I am coming, I will make my dwelling (*kataskenoso*) among you, says the Lord' (Zech 2:10).² In brief, the renewed tenting of Yahweh among his people is a characteristic feature of the eschatological era. Thus when John writes that 'He came to dwell among us, and we saw his glory,'

²Cf. Zech 8:3.

he has equivalently stated that the eschatological era has dawned with the enfleshment of the Word.

These themes which form the Old Testament background of Jn 1:14 were developed in different manners within Judaism. On the one hand, apocalyptic thought looked to the establishment of a new Temple in which God would dwell with his people in the eternal age to come.³ This train of thought was adapted by the Johannine church, in which the Book of Revelation was composed shortly before the Fourth Gospel. In his Christian apocalypse, the visionary uses the verb *skenoun*, 'to dwell', to describe God's presence among his redeemed people: 'He who sits on the throne will dwell (*skenosei*) with them (Rv 7:15). Having seen the new Jerusalem, the prophet 'heard a loud voice proclaiming from the throne: 'Now at last God has his dwelling (*skene*) among men! He will dwell (*skenosei*) among them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them"' (Rv 21:3).

On the other hand, the rabbinic strain of Judaic orthodoxy developed a theology of the *shekinah* after the destruction of the Temple. In an era when the temple, now destroyed, could no longer function as a sign of Yahweh's presence among his own, the *shekinah* was construed as God's presence among his people. The *shekinah* represented the reality of the divine presence among those who had come together to study the Torah or to pray. As such, the *shekinah* was a rabbinic equivalent of the divine name, almost a periphrasis for Yahweh himself.

Thus, in a fashion similar to that of his contemporaries still within Judaism, the author of the Fourth Gospel drew from the biblical theme of Yahweh's 'dwelling' among men to articulate dimensions of his faith. In Jn 1:14 he presents the enfleshed presence of the Word as the new mode of the divine presence among God's people. Even in its newness, it implies God's fidelity to his sworn covenant whose lasting validity is attested by his tented presence among men. For the author of the Fourth Gospel, however, there is more than mere fidelity to the covenant of old which is implied in his affirmation of the Word's presence among men. In John's perspective, Yahweh's Old Testament presence in Tabernacle and Temple is less a reality in itself than it is a sign of the reality to come. Yahweh's tented presence in the Old Testament is a waiting which will be fully realized in the Word's

³ Cf. *Apoc. Moses* 29:4-10 (Lat.); D. Barthelemy-J.T. Milik, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, I, 1955, pp. 134-135.

tenting among his own people. Even though John does not explicitly describe Jesus as the *alethine skene*, the 'true tent', his thought is that the Word is indeed the true Tabernacle. His tented presence is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies which foretold the tented dwelling of God among his people in messianic times. The affirmation of the tented presence of the divine Word in Jn 1:14 is a proclamation of that divine presence among men which is characteristic of the final days. The Word's presence among men is an anticipation of the eschatological presence of God among his people who perceive his glory and dwell in eternal life. In a word, Jn 1:14 is a first statement of the realized eschatology of the Fourth Gospel.

GOD'S 'DWELLING IN THE PRIESTLY TRADITION

If its Old Testament background and the eschatological expectations of the Jewish people shed considerable light upon Jn 1:14, the context of the verse is not without significance. For some time scholars have recognized the points of contact between the prologue of the Fourth Gospel and the Old Testament's Wisdom literature.⁴ Some commentators have even drawn our attention to a sapiential tradition that Wisdom sought to pitch its tent in Israel.⁵ Yet, while most commentaries note that the opening verse of the prologue hearkens back to Gn 1:1, they fail to note that all of the prologue's allusions to the Genesis story of creation are to the priestly version of the narrative (Gn 1:1-2:4a). Thus they fail to draw our attention to the specifically priestly dimensions of the Old Testament tradition as a key to the understanding of the prologue's biblical allusions.

On the other hand, not a few authors have pointed to the priestly and liturgical influences on the body of the Fourth Gospel. Its chronological setting within the liturgical calendar, its description of the Beloved Disciple's access to high priestly circles (Jn 18:15-18), and Papias' enigmatic reference to 'John the Presbyter' all point to some sacerdotal influence on the composition of the Gospel. Interest in the priestly provenance of the Gospel has been whetted further still in recent years because of the manifold points of similarity between the Fourth Gospel and the 'priestly circles' of sectarian Judaism.

⁴ Cf. J. Rendel Harris, *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*, 1917; C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 1963, pp. 274-275; etc.

⁵ Cf. Sir 24:8.

Whence, it seems to me, we can draw from the Old Testament's Priestly tradition on the 'tented' presence of Yahweh among his people to elucidate further the meaning of Jn 1:14. These traditions point to the tent as the place of revelation, as the resolution of the problem of the presence of the Transcendent, as covenant-related, as centre of unity, and as place of worship.

As a matter of fact, 'tenting' expressed by means of the Hebrew verb *sakan*, usually rendered by the verb *kataskenoun* in the LXX, has become almost a technical term within the priestly tradition to describe Yahweh's presence among his people. The Priestly tradition always uses *sakan* in this sense, and never uses the verb in any other sense. Conversely, the priestly tradition uses the verb *yasab* to speak of men 'dwelling' and never uses this term in reference to any manifestation of Yahweh's presence among his people on earth. The Priestly tradition, moreover, uses the theme of the tent to describe Yahweh's abiding presence within Israel, whereas the earlier Elohistic tradition draws upon this theme to indicate that Yahweh has paid a visit to his people.

The oldest tradition had stressed the role of the Tabernacle in oracles. The tent of meeting, the '*obel mo'ed*', is the place where Yahweh meets with Moses and speaks with him. Anyone who wanted to consult with Yahweh went to the Tent, but only Moses entered. Still today the tradition of a portable tent which can be set up and serve as a tent of oracles in a camp of nomads is preserved by some Bedouin tribes. The Old Testament's priestly tradition also looked to the Tabernacle as the tent of revelation. 'You shall make the offering at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence before the Lord, where I meet you and speak to you. I shall meet the Israelites there, and the place will be hallowed by my glory' (Ex 29:42).⁶ For the priestly author, the '*obel mo'ed*' is the place of Yahweh's revelation to his people. The Tabernacle is the locus of Yahweh's self-revelation. There God speaks; there his word is conveyed to his people.⁷

In the Fourth Gospel, the enfleshed Word is likewise the locus of God's self-revelation to man. Indeed, the Word is called the *Logos* because he is the one who reveals the Father. He is the bearer of the Word of God and is himself the Word of God. That Jesus is the Revealer is most forcefully expressed in the

⁶ Cf. Ex 25:22; 30:36.

⁷ Cf. Ex 25-26; 36-40.

Fourth Gospel's celebrated 'I am' formula. This revelation formula characterizes Jesus as the Self-revealer, as the one who reveals and who is at the same time the object of his own revelation. This notion is foreshadowed in the prologue which calls Jesus the *Logos*, the Word of God.

Since the notion that Jesus is the Revealer is most significant in Johannine thought, it may well be the notion that the Tabernacle is the locus of God's self-revelation which led to the introduction of the Word's 'tenting' into the prologue. It has already been noted that the function of the Tabernacle was eventually taken over by the Temple. This is no less true of the oracular function. The Temple is the place where oracles are given and God's word conveyed. Thus it is not altogether surprising that in the Fourth Gospel the temple (*hieron*) is the place where Jesus teaches.⁸ John's temple is the place where the Word of God is given to men. Jn 1:14 adumbrates the notion by pointing to the Word himself as the tabernacled presence of God. It is in him that the revelatory Word of God for man is personally present. Jesus is himself the locus of divine revelation, the tent of meeting – the tent of testimony. He is, in a word, the true Tabernacle, the real Temple. This concept concurs with the basic perspective of the prologue which presents Jesus under the formal aspect of the one who reveals.

There is yet another aspect of the Old Testament's priestly understanding of the tented presence of Yahweh which throws light upon Jn 1:14. In the history of Israel there always existed a tension between the absolute otherness and supreme freedom of Yahweh and his presence among his people. Israel's totally other, free and all-powerful God could not be confined to any earthly sanctuary. Yet the very existence of the covenant which Yahweh had made with Israel required his presence among his people. The priestly authors also struggled with the problems of Yahweh's immanence and transcendence. For them the ideas of Tabernacle and Temple in which Yahweh dwelled and which He filled with his glory both assured Israel of his active presence within the nation and avoided too crude a notion of the presence of Yahweh. First, for the nomads in the desert, and then for the inhabitants of Jerusalem a happy solution to the problem of the divine transcendence and the divine immanence had been found.

The paradox of the divine transcendence and the divine pre-

⁸ Jn 7:14; 8:2, 20; 10:23; 18:20.

sence is also a problem for which the author of the prologue had to find a solution. The prologue is run through with the tension between the verb 'to be' (*en*) and the verb 'to become' (*egeneto*), the one used of the divine, the other of the creaturely. The author's first mention of the Word affirmed his presence in the divine sphere (Jn 1:1); his second mention of the Word pointed to his participation in weak and mortal humanity (Jn 1:14). For the Johannine author, the notion of the divine tenting among us, already rich with pertinent Old Testament resonance, was a happy solution to the paradox of the divine Word present among men. The very construction of Jn 1:14, in which the verb *skēnōn* unites two contrasting notions, the enfleshment of the Word and the glory of the only God, indicates how well the divine tenting was a convenient idiom for expressing the presence of the Transcendent in the world of creation.

Moreover, the tenting idiom could also serve to allude to the relationship between the Word and the covenant. While the Tabernacle is sometimes called the *'obel* or the *miskan* by the authors of the priestly tradition, they seem to be more comfortable with the designation *'obel mo'ed*, an epithet which means 'the tent of meeting'. This designation harkens back to the amphictyony,⁹ when Yahweh was considered to be the head of the covenant assembly. The expression thus implicitly recalls the history of the covenant which Yahweh had established with his people, Israel. What is implicit in the expression is sometimes explicitated by the association of covenant themes with the Tabernacle.¹⁰ This Old Testament, and priestly, tradition is continued by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Mention of the tented presence of the Word is followed by the proclamation that he is 'full of grace and truth' (*pleres charitos kai aletheias*). The binomial, slightly adapted by John, is a typical Old Testament expression of covenant-minded disposition, of Yahweh's fidelity to the covenant oath which he had sworn. Thus the enfleshment of the Word as the new mode of the divine presence among men is construed not only as an indication of God's eternal fidelity to the covenant, but also as the fulfillment of the covenant itself. The covenant itself is brought to its consummation in the new Tabernacled presence of God among his people.

⁹ Cf. F. Cross, 'The Priestly Tabernacle', p. 224, in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* (G.E. Wright and D.N. Freedman, eds.), 1961, pp. 201-228.

¹⁰ Cf. Lv 26:12, 1 Kg 8:8-9, etc.

This mention of the covenant and the ancient amphyctiony draws our attention to the unity of the people as a covenant motif. The members of the amphyctiony were formed into one people by the covenant which was established. In the priestly tradition, however, the unity of the people is no less a motif in the description of the Tabernacle and Temple. The sanctuary is viewed as the central and unifying factor of Israelite life. The architectural symmetry of the Tabernacle,¹¹ centred about the holy of holies, was a symbol of the unity of the people. So, too, was the fact that the tribes were stationed on all four sides of the Tabernacle.¹² According to the latter prophets and some documents of Jewish Apocalyptic,¹³ the eschatological Temple was also expected to function as the center of unity of the new people of God. As the center of the people of God, there can only be one Temple. Little wonder, then, that the prologue is quick to proclaim that the new Tabernacle is 'the Father's only Son'.¹⁴ The notion that Jesus is the unifying center of the new people of God will be further developed in the body of the Gospel, particularly in Jn 12:32.

Mention of the covenant also recalls that the covenant is the bond by which God has linked himself to his people in faithful loyalty and according to which He has addressed his commandments to his people as covenant prescriptions. It is particularly within the Deuteronomic tradition that these covenant stipulations are described as 'commandments' (*entolai*). Nonetheless any idea that the covenant is consummated should entail as a correlative the notion that the commandments themselves have also been superseded. Within the context of Johannine theology, when the time has come for the old Temple to be replaced, Jesus

¹¹ Cf. Ex 25-27; 37-38. The meaning of the priestly author's symmetrical plan was essentially the same as that of Ex 40-48 with this difference that Ezechiel projected his plan into the future whereas the priestly author thought of a past execution of the plan.

¹² Cf. Nm 2.

¹³ Is 56:6-8; 60:4-7; 66:18-21; Zech 14:16-19; 1 En 90:33; Syb. Or. 3:702-718; 773-776; 808; 5:426-433; etc.

¹⁴ The translation given is that of the *New English Bible*. It must, however, be noted that there is a dual problem affecting the expression: (i) the state of the Greek textual tradition and (ii) the interpretation of *monogenes*. The matter is treated in the standard commentaries and by D. Moody, in 'God's only Son', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 72, 1953, pp. 213-219.

announces a new commandment: 'I give you a new commandment: love one another, as I have loved you, so you are to love one another' (Jn 13:34).¹⁵

Finally, it ought to be noted that the Priestly tradition connects the Tabernacle with worship in the desert, just as the Temple itself would later be considered the privileged place for the worship of Yahweh. Indeed, the term *mo'ed*, originally meaning 'meeting', came to designate an assembly that had come together to celebrate a feast. Some Old Testament texts even use the term as a metonym for feasts, especially for the great feasts of the Israelite nation. In this sense, *mo'ed* is used alongside the 'new moons', 'sabbaths' and the 'great feasts' of Israel. Thus, as the '*ohel mo'ed*', the tent of meeting, the Old Testament was the locus for festal celebration. The Tabernacle was the tent for feasts.

The Johannine tradition, which proclaims Jesus as the tabernacled presence of God, also shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament cultus. Successively John writes that the feast of Tabernacles, the Dedication, and the Passover are consummated in Jesus. In him the great feasts of the Israelite nation find a new meaning and are fulfilled. As he is the new Tabernacle and the replacement of the Temple, Jesus must necessarily be the locus of the new worship of the Father. This theme will be developed in the body of the Fourth Gospel, but it is already geminally present in Jn 1:14, whose full significance can only be appreciated in the light of the Old Testament's priestly tradition and the theology of the Fourth Gospel.

A KEYNOTE OF JOHANNINE THOUGHT

That Jesus is the replacement of the Temple is, in fact, one of the principal themes of the Fourth Gospel. Hence our attention should dwell briefly upon the principal passages (viz., 1:51; 2:13-25; 4:21-24; 10:7-9; 11:48-50; and 12:41)¹⁶ which explicate the theme keynoted in Jn 1:14.

Since the time of Augustine, exegetes have recognized the connection between Jesus' enigmatic statement to Nathanael (Jn 1:51) and Jacob's vision at Bethel (Gn 28:12). At Bethel, Abraham had built an altar to Yahweh (Gn 12:8; 13:3-4). There Jacob had his vision (Gn 18:10-22). There the Israelites had con-

¹⁵ Cf. Jn 15:12.

¹⁶ Cf. Also Jn 7:37-38; 19:34.

sulted the Lord (Jgs 20:18, 26; 21:2-5; 1 Sm 10:3). In short, Bethel was, according to ancient tradition, the place of Israel's primitive sanctuary, the locus of an ancient theophany, and the place of divine revelation.

According to the Fourth Gospel, however, it is in Jesus that true worship of the Father takes place (Jn 4:21-24). In Jesus man is enabled to see the Father (Jn 14:9) and perceive his glory (Jn 1:14; 2:11; 5:41; etc.). In Jesus the Word of God is conveyed to man (Jn 1:1; etc.). The functions which had primitively accrued to Bethel have finally been fulfilled in Jesus. Thus Jesus has taken the place of Bethel of old. Not only has Jesus replaced the Tabernacle (Jn 1:14); he has also superseded Israel's most ancient sanctuary. As Jesus is the true tabernacle, so he is the real Bethel, the authentic 'dwelling place of God'. In a word, Bethel was the prototype, Jesus the reality.

Jn 2:13-25 contains the Johannine description of the cleansing of the temple and Jesus' prophetic statement: 'Destroy this temple (*naon*),¹⁷ and in three days I will raise it again' (Jn 2:19). The Synoptic traditions allude to both the incident and the saying, but John has departed from the traditional order so that he can highlight the theological significance of the incident as a dramatic statement of one of the major themes of his gospel: the replacement of Jewish institutions.

The prophetic logion itself is best understood against the background of a notion that was already current in Judaism before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.¹⁸ No matter how magnificent the Temple was, it was only a material reality and so could not serve as the definitive dwelling place of God on earth. During the general renovation of all things, the Temple must disappear in order that it be replaced by the perfect sanctuary — the one not made by human hands, the one which does

¹⁷ In the New Testament *naos* is not generally distinguished from *hieron*. If a distinction is to be made, *naos* must refer to the central sanctuary, *hieron* to the Temple and its precincts. In Jn 2:13-25, the Temple cleansed by Jesus is cited as *hieron* or 'my Father's house'. The designation *naos* is first introduced into the narrative in Jesus' logion (v. 19). Subsequently it appears in the context of the commentary of the Jews (v. 20) and John's own commentary (v. 21). These three verses contain the only use of *naos* in the Fourth Gospel.

¹⁸ Cf. M. Simon, 'Retour du Christ et reconstruction du Temple dans la pensée chrétienne primitive,' in *Aux Sources de la tradition chrétienne* (Mélanges Goguel), 1950, pp. 251-252.

not properly belong to the created order. The actual destruction of the Temple by the Roman armies served to reinforce this tradition and strengthened the eschatological-apocalyptic expectations that were current in first century Palestine. Thus, in itself, Jesus' proclamation of the disappearance of the Temple was a prophetic utterance, consistent with the expectations of the times. What was striking in his proclamation was the suggestion¹⁹ that the Jews themselves would destroy the Temple, God's dwelling place among his people. Not even Jeremiah who had foretold the destruction of the sanctuary of God as a punishment for Israel's sins (Jer 7:11-15) had dared to make such a statement.

Even more striking was Jesus' claim that he would raise up the sanctuary in three days. This aspect of his prophetic utterance took on new meaning in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection. The essentially Christological import of the prophetic utterance is understood by the author's explanatory addition in Jn 2:21. Already, however, the prophetic logion itself implied that the new locus of the divine presence would be an improvement over the old. To 'raise again' is not merely to replace. It is to do something different, to change the floor plan, to make improvements, etc. Yet the significance of the utterance goes beyond this to a Jewish tradition that the restoration of the Temple is one of the chief offices of the Messiah.²⁰ As Messiah, Jesus will raise up the new Temple. Thus Jn 2:19 is one of the clearest affirmations of messianic claims by the Johannine Jesus.

According to John's explanation, the new Temple to be raised by the Messiah Jesus was the temple of his body. Already some Old Testament texts had suggested that Yahweh himself had become the Temple.²¹ The resurrected Lord would take the place of Yahweh himself as the Temple. There is little wonder, then, that the Johannine tradition proclaims that there will be no Temple in the new Jerusalem since 'its temple was the sovereign Lord God and the Lamb' (Rv 21:22).²² This passage, along with Jn 2:19,

¹⁹ Of the various versions of the logion preserved in the New Testament, Jn 2:19 is the only one which attributes the responsibility for the destruction of the Temple to the Jews. I would consider John's version as the most authentic rendering of the saying.

²⁰ Cf. Ps. Sol. 17:32-34; Sib. Or. 5:424-425.

²¹ Ez 10:18; 11:15-16; cf Jer 17:12-13; Is 8:14.

²² Passages such as Rv 7:15-17; 11:19 and 16:17 do, however, speak of a heavenly temple. This discrepancy is not entirely unexpected in a book

21, is the clearest *Johannine reference to the idea that the resurrected Jesus is himself the new Temple.*

Implicit in Jn 2:19-21 is, therefore, an affirmation of Jesus' divinity²³ as well as an affirmation of his messianic claims. These and other implications of the passage are not spelled out by John, but they are apparent to those who insert Jn 2:19-21 into the mainstream of Old and New Testament tradition. What the passage further implies is that Jesus is the new place in which occurs the encounter between God and man. In him God and human nature are joined in one. In him the cult at Jerusalem has been fulfilled and superseded. With him and in him the time of the worship of God in spirit and in truth has dawned. In him the Church²⁴ is the new assembly of God in which Jew and Gentile are but one people before the Lord. Jesus is the house of God; he is the place where God is to be adored.

Thus the implications of Jn 2:13-25 go far beyond the purification of the cultus at Jerusalem. The author of the Fourth Gospel generally avoids an explication of these implications, but does develop one of them within the context of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:20-24). From the Johannine dialogue it appears that it is the manner in which men are to worship the Father rather than the place where worship is to be offered which is the focal point of interest. Those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth (v. 24). Here the 'spirit' can only mean the Spirit of God which Jesus is to give as living water. The 'truth' is the revelation which Jesus has given. It is the Spirit which Jesus gives and the truth which is Jesus himself which makes possible true worship of the Father. Not only has Jesus replaced the Temple; he also animates the worship which replaces the Temple cultus.

Although the emphasis of the dialogue lies on the manner in which true worship is offered to the Father, there underlies the notion that neither Mount Gerizim nor Jerusalem will subsist as places for authentic worship of the Father. The Samaritan temple on Gerizim had been destroyed under John Hyrcanus. Jesus had reiterated the prophetic utterance that the Temple at Jerusalem

of apocalyptic writing, yet in this instance it may be due to the author's use of sources in the composition of Rv.

²³ That the Tabernacle-Temple theme points to the divinity of Jesus is already apparent from the first introduction of the theme at Jn 1:14.

²⁴ This Pauline concept is not found in the Fourth Gospel. Nonetheless John's association of the Temple theme and the resurrected body of Jesus attests to traditional material out of which the Pauline notion developed.

would be destroyed. Divisive worship in competing sanctuaries would come to an end. Worshipping communities comprised of 'you' and 'us' would be no more. The hour was coming when there would be but one true cult, the worship that takes place in and through Jesus himself.

The perspective of the conversation is that of eschatological promise. The Jews hoped that in the days to come all would worship on Zion. The Samaritans believed that all would worship on the mountain that was sacred to them.²⁵ Their respective beliefs were but different articulations of a common eschatological hope characterized by a vision of a single worshipping community comprising all the righteous. Jesus reiterated the promise, but announced that it would be realized neither on Zion nor on Gerizim. It was to be realized in himself who would enable all men to worship in Spirit and in truth.

The theme of Jesus as the new Temple is even more subtly developed in the second part of the Book of Signs (Jn 1:19-12:50). According to Jn 10:7,²⁶ Jesus proclaimed 'I am the door of the sheepfold.' The Greek text does not read 'the door of the sheepfold', but *thura ton probaton*, the 'door of the sheep,' i.e. the gate for the sheep. The image is not so much that of a gate which gives a third party access to the sheep, but the gate through which the sheep themselves pass. Commentators who appreciate this meaning of the text have usually identified the gate to which Jesus makes reference in this solemn proclamation with the gate of heaven.²⁷ Even this would seem to be inadequate since it is hardly likely that the sheep go in and out through the gate of heaven (vv. 3, 9). Entrance into heaven ought to be one-way.

Thus I am inclined to look to the little parable (Jn 10:1-6) which precedes the double reference to Jesus as the 'door' as providing the key to its meaning. There the sheepfold appears as a means of protection in the night. The door has the function of assuring this protection. The door also is the means by which the sheep come in and out. The door is the way to the pasture as well as the means of protection. In other words, the gate is the means by which salvation is assured. In the Old Testament this notion is associated with Jerusalem or the Temple, as well as with the gate of the Temple used metonymously of the Temple itself. Ps 118:20 refers to

²⁵ Cf. J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, 1964, pp. 385-386.

²⁶ Cf. Jn 10:9.

²⁷ Cf. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, pp. 307-308; J. Marsh, *The Gospel of St. John*, 1968, p. 400, etc.

the gate of the Lord, through which victors shall make their entry. The psalm refers to the gate of the Temple as a *pule*. John has preferred the use of the term *thura*. This more generic term is better adapted to the pastoral imagery of the Johannine parable. It is, nonetheless, a term used in the Old Testament in reference to the entrance to the Tabernacle (Ex 29:4; 33:9).

Thus Jn 10:7, 9 is a double affirmation that Jesus has taken over the function of the gate of the Temple. He is the means by which the sheep find protection and pasture. He is the source of their salvation. Thus Jn 10:7, 9 might well be translated 'I am the place of salvation for the sheep.'²⁸ By the use of metonymy, Jesus has proclaimed that he is the new Temple. Comparison of these verses with the preceding parable and the subsequent expatiation reveals that Jesus is the only gate for the sheep. There is only one flock which belongs to him. The point is clear. Jesus, as the gate, is the means by which the sheep are gathered into one. Jesus is the new collection point for salvation. The theme of the Temple as a unifying center has recurred.

In the perspective of the Fourth Gospel neither the theme of unity nor that of Jesus as the new Temple can be dissociated from the thought of Jesus' death and resurrection. Thus even the metonymous reference to Jesus as the new Temple calls for mention of his laying down his life and receiving it back (vv. 11, 15, 17, 18). In fact, it is the risen Jesus who is the door for the sheep. No longer is the Temple the source of salvation. It is Jesus himself who is the true door, that is, the gate of the true Temple, the locus of salvation. With the death and resurrection of Jesus the Old Temple will have become useless.

Ironically it is the Pharisees who introduce the thought of the irrelevancy of the Temple by reflecting about its destruction: 'If we leave him alone like this the whole populace will believe in him. Then the Romans will come and sweep away our temple (*ton topon*) and our nation' (Jn 11:48). Both Old and New Testament tradition indicate that it is the temple which is 'the place' (*ho topos*) *par excellence*.²⁹ The Pharisees and the high priests were ready to sacrifice one man in order to preserve their hegemony over the Temple and their privileged status as the people of Yahweh. In fact, the death of Jesus was decreed. Then, by way of supreme irony, what the Jews had sought to avoid actually befell them. The

²⁸ Cf. A.J. Simonis, *Die Hirtenrede im Johannes-Evangelium (Analecta Biblica, 29)*, 1967, p. 206.

²⁹ Cf. 2 Mc 5:19; Jer 7:14; Neh 4:7; Mt 24:15; Acts 6:13, 14; 7:8; 21:28.

Temple was destroyed by the Romans. The effective universalization of Jesus' mission was brought about by his death-exaltation (Jn 12:24, 32). With his death came the end of the privileged position of the Jews. The exalted Lord would draw all men to himself. By his death the scattered children of Israel were gathered into the unity of the true Israel. The irony of it all is that it was the Pharisees and priests who linked the death of Jesus with the destruction of their beloved Temple.

With Jn 12:41, the Johannine Tabernacle-Temple theme is brought to a close.³⁰ Isaiah's vision of the heavenly Temple allows him to perceive the glory of the Lord, which John explicates as the glory of Jesus. According to this piece of Johannine theology, Isaiah had no more difficulty in appreciating the divinity of Jesus than did Abraham (Jn 8:56). His vision of the heavenly Temple is a vision of the glory of the Lord which dwells within it – the glory of Jesus himself. To see the Heavenly Temple is to perceive the glory of Jesus.

With this affirmation, John's thought has come full-cycle. He had begun by announcing that Jesus was the true Tabernacle, come to dwell among us (Jn 1:14), and endowed with the glory as of the only Son of the Father. In the history of salvation, the Tabernacle had given way to the Temple as the locus of God's presence among men. According to John's theology, not even the Temple could be the definitive locus of God's presence among men. At most it was a prototype and foreshadowing of the true Tabernacle, the true Temple, Jesus himself. He is the eschatological mode of God's presence among men, the locus of revelation and the place of salvation. In him all men can contemplate the glory of the Lord.

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³⁰ i.e. apart from the problematic reference in Jn 19:34.