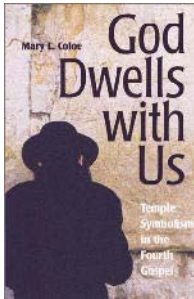


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Coloe, Mary L.

God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel

Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001. Pp. x + 252, Paperback, \$24.95, ISBN 0814659527.

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For one who has spent the last four years researching the history of John's Gospel, Coloe's thesis, directed by Francis Moloney at the Australian Catholic University of Melbourne, came as a breath of fresh air. It is a masterly and well-written study in which she examines John as a unified whole against the background of the years following the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. John's community in the middle of a Torah-centered Jewish community also sought to interpret the meaning of the destruction of the Temple by transferring the meaning of the Temple to the person of the absent Jesus. Further the Spirit-Paraclete (14:17, 26; 16:14) will ensure that the meaning of the Temple will live on in the community through the ongoing presence of Jesus in their lives. Her proposal provides a much more concrete background for John's Christology that is generally common. Following the lead of Sandra Schneiders she does not begin with an established methodology but rather with two questions that she wants to answer: "In what way does the Temple reveal the identity and mission of Jesus in John?"; "In the absence of the historical Jesus, what is the significance of the Temple for the Christian community?"

The community of John is looking to the symbol of the Temple as a basis for expressing its new faith in Jesus. Its members are experiencing God's indwelling as promised by Jesus and relate it to the symbol of the Temple in the events of Jesus' life. Coloe provides unique treatment of John 14:2 and concludes that the new Temple is the household of believers on earth (4:46-54; 11:1-44). She also provides a fresh reading of the Crucifixion in John and of the scene with Jesus' mother and the Beloved Disciple. In the absence of the historical Jesus, John is reassuring his community that they still have access to God who dwells in their midst. They will have lost nothing because their traditions can still be celebrated now in their fulfillment. God dwells in Jesus and realizes a communion of life with us, which Israel sought through its cultic rituals. John's uniqueness is seen in the use of the Temple as the major christological and ecclesial theme. His Gospel is a progression of witnesses to the revelation of God from

the Prologue (‘firstly the logos/Son/Jesus, then the Baptist, followed by the Johannine community present in the use of the first-person pronouns’), and ‘finally as the author announces, “these things have been written” (20:31) – there is the witness of the Gospel itself’ (p.29).

The ten chapters of this study provide the equivalent of a fresh up-to-date methodological reading of almost the whole gospel, following the order of the text, after an introduction: The Prologue (1:1-18); God’s Dwelling Place In Israel; The Temple of His Body (2:13-15); The Supplanter (4:1-45); The Tabernacling Presence of God (7:1-8:59); The Consecrated One (10:2-42); My Father’s House (14:131); Raising the New Temple (18:1-19:42). While many scholars see in the community of John the fulfillment of Jesus’ words about a raised Temple (2:19-21), few try to show how John’s narrative actually depicts this (p.178).

For Coloe John 15:4 (“Make your home in me, as I make mine in you”), has been the basis of her own ongoing spiritual journey, leading her to plunge into the experience of John’s community and their sense of God’s indwelling as promised by Jesus. They use the Temple as their major Christological and ecclesial theme: “The community-as-Temple is not an image about how the community is to live or what its function is, but the image describes the very essence of the community, what it is because of the divine indwelling” (p.170). The image is not unique to John but predates John’s writing and has a basis in both first century Jewish and Christian thinking. While the human flesh of Jesus fulfils and replaces Israel’s Temple traditions, God achieves in Jesus the communion of life with us, which Israel had sought through its cultic rituals. John’s genius is to give this Christian experience and language a narrative shape which can be celebrated in ‘its fulfillment and not merely in its promise’. This is a study to which I will often return with profit and with questions also. She concludes with a succinct expression of her thesis from Augustine’s Tractate on John 14:1-3:

“In my Father’s house are many dwellings”, what else can we suppose the house of God to mean but the temple of God? And what that is, ask the apostle, and he will reply, “For the temple of God is holy, which (temple) ye are.”