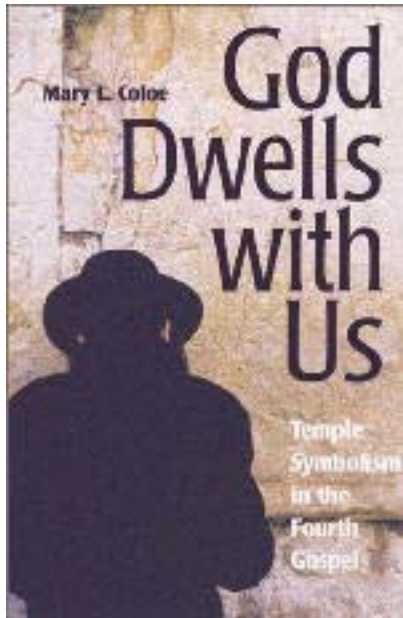


RBL 04/2003



**Coloe, Mary L.**

***God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel***

Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001.

Pp. x + 252. Paper. \$24.95. ISBN 0814659527.

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The thesis of this book (originally prepared as a thesis) argues that due to the destruction of the temple both rabbinic Judaism and the Christians were confronted with the problem of the locus of God and his revelation. Rabbinic Judaism chose the Torah as replacement for the temple, while Christians confessed Jesus as the presence and activity of the living God of Israel in their midst. The Fourth Gospel presents the temple as the “major, consistent, and pervasive symbol of Jesus identity and mission” (214). In this way, the Fourth Gospel articulates the faith of this group of Christians. The Christians were cast out of the synagogue, but through the Gospel they find the reassurance that they have not lost their heritage. Actually, Jesus made it possible for them to be the true inheritors of all that was promised to Judaism, because he is the true revealer of God. “When the Temple Mount has become rubble, and the synagogue is no longer accessible, a Christian community finds it has lost nothing. Their traditions can still be celebrated; celebrated now in their fulfilment and no longer in promise.... a new Temple has been raised up in their midst” (220). Jesus became the temple and with his departure to the Father this temple symbolism was (and is) applied to the Christian community.

The work of Coloe is presented very systematically. After an introduction (with the necessary positioning done), she works through this Gospel systematically, analyzing the

different sections dealing with the topic of the temple. The only real “detour” she makes is in chapter 3: “God’s Dwelling Place in Israel.” This is a necessary detour, since she discusses the different ways in which God was present according to the traditions of Israel. Her discussion follows the chronological development of the traditions and illustrates how changes in situations through history resulted in different approaches to the problem of the presence of God in a particular community. The information gathered and presented in this chapter forms an interesting background to the rest of the book. The Torah and Wisdom are identified as the two most prominent aspects to be kept in mind when reading John.

She follows a rather consistent pattern in analyzing the texts. After a brief introduction, she gives a “structure” of that particular section. Then a detailed discussion of the text follows, according to the suggested structure. She consistently reads the text within a “Jewish” framework, constantly referring to parallels from the First Testament, apocryphal material, or even rabbinic material. She does not follow a specific method in her analysis but reads the text within its literary and historical ecology in order to answer certain questions she poses. She participates actively in the current debate on the different issues and does not hesitate to make use of available material, but also does not hesitate to differ from them. In general, these discussions are thorough, giving attention to the necessary problems and taking note of the most important views in current research. Here and there she jumps to conclusions too quickly, and in some cases arguments are a bit forced to the point of over-interpretation. Other equally valid points of view that do not fit her argument are not always given due attention. This is not said in a negative sense; it is exactly because Coloe has done good work that I make this remark. I think this book should be taken seriously in future, and it will be a pity if her position is relativized—as just another opinion, which usually results in not taking it seriously enough—because she does not always position herself against other valid options when she has the chance. Although she quotes some German authors, she unfortunately misses some directly relevant publications, which makes her opening statement that nobody “to date has traced the Temple symbolism across the Gospel” (3) incorrect. Normally a valuable conclusion or summary ends each chapter (not in, for instance, ch. 6). She also ends the book with a useful review.

Her argument starts with the prologue, where it is said that God came to dwell with us (1:14). However, the prologue is incomplete in itself and requires the rest of the Gospel to explain how God came to dwell with us. In 2:13–25 Jesus identifies his body as the temple. With a good discussion about the money-changers she illustrates that the animals and money do not represent corruption but the perfection of Israel’s cult. With the coming of Jesus, the temple with its cultic functions has been abrogated. In his discussion with the Samaritan woman and in the end with the Samaritans, Jesus is also represented

as the supplanter (John 4). Jesus is the gift of God who offers living water (a reference to Ezek 47). From now on worship will no longer be tied to physical sites but will be in Spirit and truth. John 7–8 are dealt with under the heading “the tabernacling presence of God.” Jesus replaces the important rituals of Tabernacles, namely, the water (7:37–39), light (8:12), and confession of God (8:31–58). At the Feast of Dedication, Jesus twice confirms that God is encountered in him (10:30, 38). The God of the festivals has been incarnated in their midst. John 14 also receives due attention, starting with the reference to the Father’s house. Coloe argues that this house actually refers to the community itself, living in loving relationships. In this way, the temple symbolism is moved from Jesus to the community. The implication could be that Jesus is no longer the temple. In this light, Coloe argues that the absent Jesus is represented by the Spirit-Paraclete. There are, however, considerably more references than Coloe discusses on the modes of presence of Jesus among his people in this Gospel, even in John 14, where it is described how Jesus returned to his people. It should be asked whether Jesus does not remain the locus of the presence of the Father even after his physical departure—the believers then represent the locus, *inter alia* through the presence of the Spirit, but also through his deeds, words, and so forth? The modes of his presence changed, and this is expressed in many ways. It might be that a little more thinking is necessary on this point. In John 18–19 it is described how Jesus raises the new temple through his crucifixion. I am, however, surprised that she does not carry her arguments through to John 20 or even 21 (except for a few references). To my mind, she gives too much weight to Jesus “giving the Spirit” when he dies on the cross and claims that everything is finished.

As far as the basic statement that the temple is the “major, consistent, and pervasive symbol of Jesus’ identity and mission” is concerned, a bit of caution should also be sounded. There are other aspects that could also be described as symbols that are also important and might rival the temple motif, for instance, the family symbol, or the agent symbol, to name but two.

Technically the book is well presented, and the language is not too technical for students. Unfortunately, there are some inconsistencies with the Greek (spelling mistakes, sometimes Greek words are transcribed sometimes not).

Coloe has indeed argued her point well and makes a contribution that takes the research on John ahead. The consistent way in which she tries to read John in the light of other Jewish literature makes sense as well as exciting reading. I think this book deserves to be read.