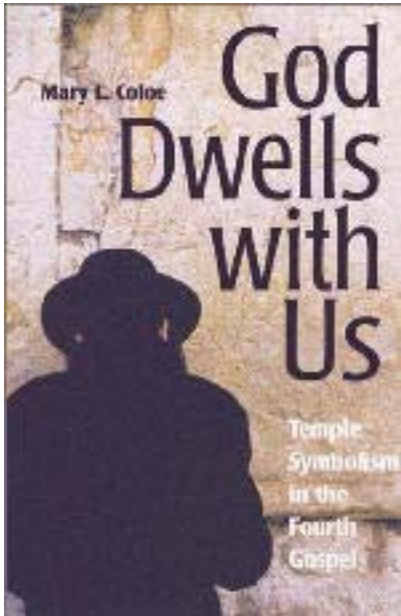


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**Coloe, Mary L.**

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

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Susan E. Hylan  
Emory University  
Atlanta, GA 30322

*God Dwells with Us* makes a contribution to the interpretation of John's symbolic language by focusing on one image, the temple, and following its development through the Gospel. Coloe's thesis is that "the Temple functions in the narrative as the major christological symbol that gradually shifts its symbolic meaning from the person of Jesus to the Johannine community in the post-resurrection era" (3). Coloe sets out to show that by associating the temple with Jesus, the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the location of God's presence, a presence that later comes to be known through the Spirit's presence in the church.

Coloe's method is a traditional textual analysis. She starts with her own questions of the text and selects passages that she thinks can contribute to answering these questions:

- in what way does the Temple, as it is presented in the Fourth Gospel, reveal the identity and mission of Jesus?
- in the absence of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, what is the significance of the Temple for the Christian community? (7)

Coloe's approach to these questions is exegetical; she applies a variety of literary and historical critical techniques to each passage she explores.

Coloe begins with a discussion of the prologue's "tabernacling" presence of the Word (John 1:14). She draws parallels between the structure of the prologue and the creation narrative of Gen 1:1–2:4a. In Genesis the creation culminates in the Sabbath; through her structural analysis of the prologue, Coloe argues that John leaves the fulfillment of the new creation until the end of the Gospel (23). Later Coloe portrays the passion narrative as the raising of a new temple, which is now to be found in the interpersonal relationships of Christian believers and the triune God (189). This culmination in a new temple, signified by Jesus' statement on the cross, "It is finished" (19:30), is seen as an indication of "the completion of God's creative work" (197) begun in the prologue.

Between the prologue and the passion, Coloe explores other images relating to the temple. The following are three examples from the five passages Coloe explores. She begins with the cleansing of the temple (2:13–25), describing the way the temple imagery is realigned to refer to Jesus. Next she turns to the dialogue with the Samaritan woman regarding the location of worship. In her exegesis of the dialogue, Coloe concludes that Jesus "offers a non-geographic, non-sectarian form of worship in the Spirit which is truth" (113). In the Farewell Discourse, Coloe interprets the reference to "my Father's house" (14:2) in light of the similar phrase in 2:16, which referred to the Jerusalem temple (160–62). Coloe aligns this imagery both with the temple and with the "household," understood as a series of interpersonal relationships rather than a structure (161–62, 167). The result of her analysis is the conclusion that "the phrase 'in my Father's house there are many dwellings' is best understood ... to mean a series of interpersonal relationships made possible because of the indwelling of the Father, Jesus and the Paraclete with the believer" (163).

*God Dwells with Us* presents an insightful exploration of the temple image in John. Building on the conclusions of the last quarter century of Johannine research, Coloe contributes to the understanding of John's figurative language within a Jewish context; she also treats the Gospel as a literary unit. As such, Coloe's work advances the discussion of how these historical and literary assumptions about John help to make sense of the Gospel's language.

However, there are some significant gaps in Coloe's argumentation. Her analysis is broad rather than deep, which allows her to address the temple as a theme in John but may cause her to miss alternative proposals. For example, Coloe does not address the argument that the seventh day of John's version of creation is the day of the wedding at Cana (2:1). The counting of seven days (1:29, 35, 43; 2:1) is not a clear-cut reference to

creation, but the possibility is something that Coloe should address if she wants to establish that the fulfillment of creation in John comes in chapter 19. Such gaps leave the reader to decide whether the neglected evidence invalidates Coloe's conclusions.

More important, Coloe's understanding of the figurative language does not support the kinds of conclusions she draws. Coloe relies on a comparison view of metaphor and symbol as "the joining together of two otherwise dissimilar realities" (4). With Ricoeur, she perceives metaphoric language as that which identifies similarities between two items that are otherwise dissimilar (5). Coloe concludes that what is similar about Jesus and the temple is that they are both symbols of God's presence.

One problem with this approach is that once the idea of "God's presence" is applied to Jesus, the specifics associated with the temple are dropped. This makes it possible to equate the temple metaphor with other images associated with the idea of God's presence; God's glory (58–61) and the "I Am" statements (136–37) present the same idea as the metaphor of Jesus as temple. The specific content of these metaphors is no longer present in their associations with Jesus. The "glory" associated with Jesus is only an indication of "God's presence" and not the specific glory that was associated with Moses' request to see God (Exod 33:17–33) and with the cloud accompanying the Israelites in the desert (Exod 40:34–38). Coloe ends up concluding that the temple is the primary christological symbol of the Gospel, but to do so she has collapsed the variety of John's imagery regarding Jesus' identity into one idea of Jesus as "God's presence."

This view of language allows Coloe to slide from one related image to another. An example is her interpretation of Jesus' departure from the Feast of Dedication as the departure of God's glory from the temple. Coloe begins by identifying John 10:39 ("Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands") as Jesus' final departure from the Jerusalem temple. Since Jesus is aligned elsewhere with the glory of God, she makes the additional step of interpreting this verse as the permanent departure of God's glory from the temple (154–55). Her conclusion is that "the cultic institutions of Israel are left emptied of the reality they once symbolized and celebrated" (155). Coloe makes two moves simultaneously: Jesus is the glory of God, and departure is the emptying of the cultic institutions of their meaning. These two ideas are related to 10:39 not through the language of the verse but through Coloe's identification of these themes elsewhere in the Gospel. Her exegesis does not establish why the statement in 10:39 is symbolic and not simply a narrative transition needed to move Jesus to a new location. In Coloe's presentation, once Jesus has become identified with the temple in John 2, this association may be assumed anywhere else in the Gospel.

Coloe's analysis regularly highlights the variety of Johannine metaphors (see, e.g., 20, 86, 102, 105, 135). To assume that all of these images—wisdom, Torah, logos, prophet, Messiah, "I Am," and bridegroom, just to name a few—have meaning only as they relate to the theme of Jesus as temple flattens the richness of John's presentation of Jesus. Her discussion of symbolism does not explain why one image can be given priority over all the others. The question remains to be asked how the temple image interacts with the other metaphors of John's Gospel.