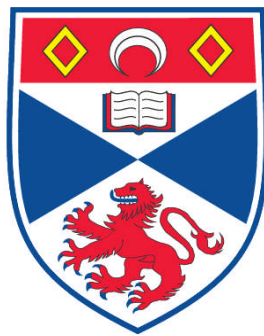


**AT THE BOUNDARY OF PLACE: RETHINKING THE
PROVENANCE OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE**

Mark B. Beesley

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS

AT THE BOUNDARY OF PLACE:
RETHINKING THE PROVENANCE OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE
THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

BY
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O'FALLON, MISSOURI USA
FEBRUARY 2010

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PREFACE

Much of the study of early Christian architecture has attempted to classify the buildings into various types and styles. This is natural as human beings are wont to make sense of the world in this way. The difficulty, in part, however, has been the lack of evidence. The first Christians continued to worship in the Jerusalem Temple and celebrated the Eucharist “from house to house.” These houses are indistinguishable from other ancient dwellings since there was no discernible modifications made by the Christians—neither has there been any written evidence identifying them to date. There is little written of ecclesial architecture before the fourth century and there is also little epigraphic evidence which offers a clue to the Church’s understanding of her buildings.

Although the Church has not offered much by way of direct evidence concerning her architecture, it does not mean, however, that she has been silent (as is sometimes thought). She has spoken, but elusively so. Like much of the ancient church’s theology, it was not intended for those outside her pale.

Instead of making yet another attempt to make sense of the Church’s architecture through the methods and means of archaeology, it has been my goal to adopt an understanding of architecture that moves beyond the limitations of a “type and style” approach. I mean to understand architecture for what it truly is: *a boundary of place*. The reason for this is really quite straightforward: though there is little evidence relating to architecture among the Jews and the early Christians, there is an abundance of evidence dealing with place and boundary. Through a better understanding of architecture, we can gain a better understanding of Judaism’s architectural legacy in the early Church.

To begin to understand the architecture in this way, we must begin to understand the concepts of place and its boundaries within Judaism and, subsequently, within the Church. The Jews understood the world filled with holy places created by God through a process of

differentiation (order) and emplacement, resulting in boundary. Paradise is the first holy place in Scripture. It had boundaries and a connection with heaven. But the sacred became defiled by sin and death.

The history of Israel is the history of God reclaiming His creation. The reclamation continued the creative pattern of differentiation and emplacement. Israel was separated from the world and emplaced as the people of God. The Israelite camp in the wilderness became a microcosm of the cosmos. The Land furthered the reclamation through emplacement. The Tabernacle/Temple re-established the creation/paradise place with its boundaries. As such, there was a real connection between the earthly and heavenly temple. The Temple defined sacred place as the locus of God's presence on earth which occurred within the (architectural) boundaries of the Temple precincts.

This immediately raises questions concerning long held ideas about the Jewish Temple and synagogue as they relate to the liturgy and architecture of the early Church. Why didn't the ancient Church follow the pattern of the Temple as an archetype for their places of worship? Why were the Christians content to assemble in private homes? The answer to the first question is thus: Jesus transformed the Temple by becoming the locus of God's presence on earth.

The explanation to the second question is more complex. The traditional view is that the early Christians modelled their ritual and spaces after the Jewish synagogue which itself pointed to the Temple in Jerusalem. The lineage would be temple/synagogue/church. But there are growing doubts concerning the origins of the synagogue and its role as a place of prayer and Torah reading. It appears to have been more a community centre, particularly for Diaspora Jews. It is unlikely that the Church followed the pattern of the synagogue.

On the other hand, the house in the ancient world was considered *a priori* a sacred place. It was so in the greater Graeco-Roman culture and also among the Hebrews. Archaeology has supplied evidence of house forms in the Graeco-Roman world and in

Palestine. All indicated their use as sacred places. The house was a place of prayer connecting the public and private cult.

The house has much to commend it to the Church. Though Jesus and his disciples attended both the temple and synagogue, it is also true that he gathered, taught, and had table fellowship within houses. Jesus established the Eucharist in the context of a Jewish house. The early church assembled in houses; the household was the model for church organisation; Paul had to distinguish between church and house; evidence of a pious household.

The house as a liturgical place was connected to the temple (Jesus) in the Eucharist. As the place of the church became more settled so also did the liturgy and hierarchy. These established the place of the church and so the place began to exert influence on the boundaries (walls). The table was a central focus; axis was prominent; size became an issue (*aula ecclesiae*).

Within this adaptive environment, the domestic place exerted the greatest influence and the emerging Christian architecture was connected with the temple through the house. By the time of the Constantinian basilica, the place of the Church readily modified its enclosing boundary (architecture) so that the adopted basilica quickly became a uniquely Christian form.

Comprehending the development of early Christian architecture by first comprehending its *place* and seeing architecture as its *boundary* allows us to understand more fully the tectonics, but also the culture and theology from whence it came.

By understanding the cultural and theological context of the early Christians we may more fully comprehend the events and rituals of their sacred place which give form to its boundaries. These coalesce and finally result in an ecclesial architecture.

Mark B. Beesley, 2010

CONTENTS

Preface	i
DEFINING THE EDGES:	1
Architecture as Artifact	2
Architecture as Social Consequence	8
Architecture as Ritual-event	13
The Contours of a New Approach	16
Placing Architecture	23
THE BIBLICAL PATTERN OF PLACE:	39
Holiness	43
The Primordial Pattern	47
Paradise	55
Circular Ascent	58
The Land of Promise	71
BOUNDARY AND THE JEWISH TEMPLE:	75
Regarding the Tabernacle	76
The Temple and Earth	81
The Temple and Creation	86
The Temple and Heaven	93
THE PLACE OF THE SYNAGOGUE:	105
The Origins of the Synagogue	105
The Nature of the Second Temple Synagogue	110
The Activities of the Second Temple Synagogue	115
The Liturgy of the Synagogue	119
The Synagogue as Sacred Place	124
The Synagogue Building	127
THE SACRED COMPLEXION OF HOUSES:	132
The Sacrality of the Roman House	134
The Sacrality of the Jewish House	154
FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE:	172
Jesus and the House	177
Jesus as the Temple	183
The House as the Temple in the Early Church	195
CONCLUSION:	208

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Boundaries in a leaf	31
Fig. 2. Solomon's Temple.....	81
Fig. 3. The Theodotus inscription.	111
Fig. 4. Romulus and Remus	135
Fig. 5. Plan of a Roman <i>domus</i>	144

ABSTRACT

Archaeologists and historians have sought to understand the architecture of the early church using methods common to their respective fields of inquiry. This has included an approach to architecture which classifies buildings according to type and style. Limitations of both method and evidence has led some scholars to conclude that there was no Christian architecture before A.D. 200. This present study intends to broaden the understanding of architecture beyond mere tectonics and realise its significance as a boundary of place with a view toward examining the foundations of early Christian architecture. Boundary and place are primary components of the cosmos within Judaism. The Hebrews came to understand the world according to a concept of holiness manifested as a scheme of circular boundaries ascending into the presence of God, located within the Temple. As an outgrowth of Judaism, the early Church held similar views of place and boundary which gave them an affinity for the Temple. By understanding architecture as a boundary of place we can connect the sacred places and boundaries of the Jews from Creation to the Land and Temple. The Church proclaimed Jesus as God incarnate and Himself the Temple transformed. The traditional view has been that the synagogue was the connecting link between the Church and the Temple, but the origins and role of the synagogue are now doubted. The predominance of the house in the life and ministry of Jesus combined with its prevalence in the NT and the early Christian writers indicates that the Christians understood sacred place in terms of their domestic reality. The house provided not only a strong ligature connecting Church and Temple, it was also an archetype for the Church's sacred place and developing architectural boundaries.

For

Ariadne

Anastasia, Anthony, and Tatiana

CHAPTER 1

DEFINING THE EDGES

*"Boundary and threshold are constituent elements of place"*¹
—Christian Norberg-Schulz

In the earliest known treatise on architecture, the Roman architect Vitruvius wrote, "Architecture is a knowledge, arising out of many other areas of knowledge, and adorned with much and varied learning."² Writing in the first century B.C., Vitruvius (born *c.* 80-75 B.C., died after *c.* 15 B.C.) intimated that architecture encompasses more than just a building, architecture involves both knowledge of the physical realities of construction and a thorough understanding of spatial functionality. The architect must also understand the application of aesthetic adornments which are inexorably tied to the symbolism of ethnicity, culture and religious belief. Like the conductor of a symphony, the architect must coordinate all of the disciplines in order to design and construct a building that not only fulfils its intended purpose but is also structurally sound and aesthetically satisfying.

Vitruvius also explained:

An architect should be ingenious, and apt in the acquisition of knowledge. Deficient in either of these qualities, he cannot be a perfect master. He should be a good writer, a skilful draftsman, versed in geometry and optics, expert at figures, acquainted with history, informed on the principles of natural and moral philosophy, somewhat of a musician, not ignorant of the sciences both of law and medicine, nor of the motions, laws, and relations to each other, of the heavenly bodies.³

1. Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture," in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 436.

2. Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 1.1 Vitruvius also quickly added, "ea nascitur ex fabrica et ratiocinatione," which is to say that this knowledge of architecture is born of the skill of making (fabrication) and deliberation.

3. Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 1.3.

In other words, an architect should at the very least have an understanding of the universe and its various physical laws, an understanding of human beings—how they act, what they think—and be able to communicate his thoughts well. He must be someone who comprehends the operations of the heavens and the earth.

Most striking, however, is Vitruvius' emphasis on areas of knowledge that are not building-specific: writing, history, natural and moral philosophy—these identify a cultural component to the architect's work. Because architecture embraces so many of the arts, it is *a priori* permeated with the stuff of culture. Each of the arts have their source in the folkways and traditions of a people, drawing from their life-rituals both sacred and mundane. Architecture, then, is not static; it flows out of individuals and families—out of the collective life of a community. Architecture, thus, is not made, per se, it is *generated*.⁴ Because the architect embodies the culture in which he lives, the architecture which he produces is less a product of his own genius than of his cultivation. Architecture embosses values and beliefs in time through the reflexion of *place*. And yet it is more than simply the reflexion of place, it is the *ordering* of place. But even that is not entirely correct because from the start it is the place—and the events that occur there—which makes the architecture what it is.

Architecture as Artifact

Architecture may be defined as “the art and science of designing and erecting buildings.”⁵ From this perspective, ancient buildings can be discovered, examined, classified and dated not unlike any other archeological artifact. Their physical qualities are easily measured and quantified: they have a certain size and shape; they have colour and texture—built out of certain materials and constructed in certain ways. Buildings are situated, they exist

4. Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 157.

5. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), s.v. architecture.

in a certain location and are set in relationship to other buildings and other places.

Architectural components have form because of their function and aesthetic. Materials are chosen for their availability, cost, and workability which combines both the skill and preference of the craftsman. In terms of layout and design, utility comes to the fore, but beauty is also a component. All of these factors coalesce into what architectural theorist Christopher Alexander terms 'patterns'. These may be joined into a 'pattern language'. Alexander explains, "An ordinary language like English is a system which allows us to create an infinite variety of one-dimensional combinations of words, called sentences.... A pattern language is a system which allows its users to create an infinite variety of those three dimensional combinations of patterns which we call buildings, gardens, towns."⁶ Significantly, this pattern language arises from within human beings as a function of how they think and act and live in relation to each other.⁷

This moves architecture well beyond mere tectonics. Nevertheless, the lion's share of exploration into the development of early Christian architecture has used what may be described as an artifactual approach.⁸ The reason for this is the nature of the evidence. Few examples of early Christian architecture exist before the fourth century.⁹ Archaeology has the difficult task of trying to assemble the portrait of a life by picking through (as it were) old

6. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 185–86.

7. A pattern is... "Something 'in the world'—a unitary pattern of activity and space, which repeats itself over and over again, in any given place, always appearing each time in a slightly different manifestation. When we ask, now, just where these patterns come from, and also where the variation comes from, which allows each pattern to take on a slightly different form each time that it occurs, we have been led to the idea that these patterns 'in the world' are created by us, because we have other, similar patterns in our minds from which we imagine, conceive, create, build, and live these actual patterns in the world," Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 181.

8. Included are the works of J. G. Davies, *The Origin and Development of Early Christian Architecture* (New York: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1953); Louis Bouyer, *Liturgy and Architecture* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967); Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (1988); Walter Lowrie, *Art in the Early Church* (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1947); William L. MacDonald, *Early Christian & Byzantine Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1962).

9. The oldest architectural evidence is the house church at Dura Europos (ca. 250).

bones.¹⁰ The physical remains give us some understanding of the tectonics—the what, where and when of architecture; but precious little is given up in the way of the *who* and *why* of these ancient structures. For many years, scholarship sought a direct genealogy from the house churches of the first century to the basilica established under Constantine the Great. Such a line of descent, however, is not considered relevant any longer.¹¹ More has come to light as the remains of church architecture in the early centuries continue to be uncovered and analysed. Though different methods have been employed to comprehend the purpose and meaning of the buildings, there has been little advancement beyond the surface.

One scholar who has attempted to probe deeper is the German-born art and architectural historian Richard Krautheimer (1897-1994). Krautheimer's approach to the study of the ancient arts has been dubbed *contextualism*. That is, he believed that the arts should be understood in light of the intellectual-theological culture which produced them.¹² His work explored questions that could not be answered simply by examination of the architectural remains alone. His *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* entrenched his notion that Christian architecture could only be fully comprehended in connection with the Christian liturgy, doctrine and symbolism. James S. Ackerman notes that in one of his more influential articles, "An Introduction to the Iconography of Medieval Architecture," Krautheimer moved well beyond the synchronic boundaries of context and encompassed the whole realm of pre-

10. Archeology may be defined as "the study of past cultures, based on their material remains," David L. Webster, Susan Toby Evans, and William T. Sanders, *Out of the Past: An Introduction to Archeology* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1993), 4. Archeology has tended to focus on the study of physical remains, the methods used in recovering them and the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings in achieving the subject's goals. More recently in the U.S. and increasingly in other parts of the world, archeology is more commonly devoted to the study of human societies and is treated as one of the four subfields of Anthropology.

11. See L. Michael White, *Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation Among Pagans, Jews and Christians*, vol. 1 of *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 17, and Richard Krautheimer and Slobodan Ćurčić, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, The Pelican History of Art (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 456, n. 24.

12. James S. Ackerman, "Richard Krautheimer: Biographical Memoirs," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 148, no. 2 (June 2004): 232.

Gothic Medieval world and applied it to architecture.¹³ Placing architecture within the larger matrix of culture made Krautheimer a pioneer within the emerging studies of Christian and Byzantine architecture. Along the way, he also became something of a self-taught archaeologist. It was through the excavation and study of the masonry and foundations of timeworn buildings that reconstructions of the original plans were made.¹⁴ But it was Krautheimer's presuppositions as an archeologist that limited his view of architecture. Categorising buildings into types and styles are the methods of an artifactual approach, methods which inherently miss the mark when trying to fully apprehend architecture.

Without gainsaying the quality and magnitude of Krautheimer's contribution, his work does, nevertheless, present several difficulties. First, the scope of his work in the period before Constantine is limited. "It must be conceded," writes L. Michael White, "that Krautheimer's study remains limited to the field of architectural history, and his treatment of prebasilical Christian buildings is quite brief."¹⁵ An examination of Krautheimer's *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* bears this out. A methodology based upon archaeological evidence requires archeological data in order to bear fruit. The lack of such evidence in the first three centuries of the Church, perhaps, explains Krautheimer's laconic treatment.

For Krautheimer, the paucity of evidence implied an apparent developmental gap between the Christian places of worship in the first three centuries and the later basilicas which flourished under Constantine. He explained this gap by saying, "These early believers had neither the means, the organisation, nor the slightest interest in evolving an ecclesiastical architecture."¹⁶ Krautheimer concluded: "Until A.D. 200, then, a Christian architecture did not

13. Ackerman, "Memoirs," 232.

14. Ackerman, "Memoirs," 232.

15. White, *Building*, 21.

16. Krautheimer and Ćurčić, *ECBA*, 24.

and could not exist.”¹⁷ This is an unusually strong assertion in light of the evidence and it raises a bevy of questions. The first has to do with the nature of architecture itself. What did Krautheimer mean when he spoke of “evolving an ecclesiastical architecture”? Would a growing church, at times under significant persecution, *intend* to evolve an ecclesiastical architecture? Does their apparent lack of interest suggest that the Christians consciously avoided such a course? Perhaps Krautheimer intimates nothing more than to say that the early Church was too small and too preoccupied with survival to give any thought to construction. The evidence, however, clearly shows they did, even if it was only the adaptation and renovation of existing buildings. Christians began to adapt their meeting places very early, which would already suggest an interest in making their place of assembly suit their liturgical requirements.¹⁸ The Christian *domus* at Dura Europos is a case in point. In Christian possession by A.D. 250, the house was clearly adapted for liturgical use.¹⁹ While the house at Dura is the earliest material example, it illustrates the practice of adaptation already common by this time.

It may be argued that because the early Christians did not actually construct buildings for their own use until the late second century, they did not have an *architecture* per se. Such an argument might be persuasive if architecture is limited to identifiable building types and styles. But isn't the adaptation of existing structures as much *architecture* as new construction?

Krautheimer considered the basilica to be the first true Christian architecture and yet the basilica was an adaptation of an existing building *genus* which had a history of varied

17. Krautheimer and Ćurčić, *ECBA*, 24.

18. Krautheimer notes that by A.D. 240 church buildings were not only owned by congregations but were being altered to better suit their functions as a community house. Krautheimer and Ćurčić, *ECBA*, 27.

19. Krautheimer and Ćurčić, *ECBA*, 27–28 and White, *Building*, 111ff.

use.²⁰ Though the basilica was adopted by the Church it was also adapted to suit the needs of the developing Christian liturgy. Krautheimer well understood that in Roman usage the term basilica was more a reference to *function* than to the design of the building.²¹ Why would the adaptation of a building with a *basilical* function be considered architecture, while the adaptation of a building with a *domestic* function not be so considered? The fact is that architecture includes both adapted and modified buildings as well as buildings commissioned and built from the foundation-stones.

Perhaps a larger question is whether any group in the ancient world would set out to develop an ecclesiastical architecture at all. Though history affords examples of architecture put in the service of some political or cultural agenda, Krautheimer is on the mark when he considers it an unlikely aim of the early Church given their means and social standing. Though an emerging religious group in the Roman empire such as the Church would not have intentionally evolved an ecclesial architecture, would not one have developed anyway? In other words, the Church may not have set out to develop a proper churchly architecture (understood in terms of building types), but by adapting spaces for their assembly one would have necessarily developed. Some architectural theorists suggest that architecture is not milled out of organisation, means and interest, but out of the daily grist of life and faith. After all, “Architecture is life, or at least it is life itself taking form and therefore it is the truest record of life as it was lived in the world yesterday, as it is lived today or ever will be lived.”²² If that is so, will not an architecture come to be on its own, that is to say, be generated, almost unconsciously? And does this not also suggest that architecture is reflective of the place in which the events of life unfold?

20. Krautheimer and Ćurčić, *ECBA*, 41. See also Richard Krautheimer, “The Constantinian Basilica,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 (1967): 115–40.

21. Krautheimer and Ćurčić, *ECBA*, 42.

22. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (London: MIT Press, 1970), 44.

It is true for the Christians, theirs was not yet a distinctive architecture (organised, planned, and imbued with symbol and meaning) but it was an architecture nonetheless.

Architecture as Social Consequence

Following a line of inquiry already initiated by Krautheimer, L. Michael White has sought to place the architecture of the early Church within its social context. Like Krautheimer, White has broken with previous theories searching for a genetic line in the development of the basilica. “While one may look for historical continuity, norms of spatial articulation and liturgical form from basilical architecture cannot simply be retrojected onto the earlier periods.”²³ Doubtless, few would disagree; however, the continuity between the basilica and the earlier periods is not readily apparent. In his study, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, White moves well beyond Krautheimer by seeking social interconnections within the adaptive architectural environment for synagogues, churches, and mithraea in the first three centuries. His goal is to reconstruct and reinterpret the unfolding of Christian sacred architecture from the New Testament era to the fourth century.

Gathering an impressive amount of evidence which includes buildings, inscriptions, sectarian writings, polemics and elite histories, White’s model has identified four stages of architectural development: the House Church, the House of the Church or *domus ecclesiae*, the Hall of the Church or *aula ecclesiae*, and the Constantinian Basilica.²⁴

The first category, the house church, is nothing new. No archaeological evidence has been found for this initial stage because the early Christian assemblies met in homes that were not modified in any discernible way nor identified as being used by Christians. “The house-church, by definition, implies no special architectural articulation beyond that typical of

23. White, *Building*, 18.

24. The evidence is contained in the second volume of his two-volume *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*: L. Michael White, *Texts and Monuments for the Christian Domus Ecclesiae in Its Environment*, vol. 2 of *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990).

houses, apartments, and other unrenovated spaces.”²⁵ This was the situation recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*: Christians met from house to house.²⁶

The second stage of White’s developmental model occurred as houses began to be modified for the purposes of the congregation. Using standard terminology, White classifies the examples in this stage as a *domus ecclesiae*, or “house of the church.” As a result of numerical growth, liturgical development, and property ownership, assemblies in the third century began to modify the buildings they used for their gatherings.

The third architectural stage identified by White is the *aula ecclesiae*, or “hall of the church,” and comprises a new category. The *aula ecclesiae* was a larger place of worship, which was either new construction or an existing structure completely remodelled by a congregation. “Through physical adaptation they were fully transformed from domestic edifices to cult buildings recognisable to the culture at large.”²⁷ Identified as pre-Constantinian, these buildings were characterised by simple rectangular forms with adjacent ancillary rooms and usually blending in with nearby domestic architecture.²⁸ Noticing an increased “rigid” formal order in these places, White surmises that this is evidence of an increased formality and strictness in the orders of the clergy and laity.²⁹ That may have, indeed, been the case, but the lines are not so clearly drawn. Steven J. Friesen has suggested that White uses his analysis of sacred space to move to conclusions about ritual and institutional organisation far too directly.³⁰

25. L. Michael White, “Architecture: The First Five Centuries,” in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip E. Esler (New York: Routledge, 2000), 709.

26. See Acts 2:46-47; 5:42.

27. White, *Building*, 144.

28. White, *Building*, 137.

29. White, *Building*, 138.

30. Steven J. Friesen, Edgar Krentz, Ulrike Outschar, and Carolyn Osiek, review of *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, by L. Michael White, *Religious Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (July 2001): 224.

The fourth stage is the development of the Constantinian basilica which allowed Christian architecture to become monumental in scale and received—and this is paramount for White—imperial patronage. Though patronage was an important element in all of the phases as White describes them, it became increasingly significant as the Church shouldered imperial sanction. White concludes, “Patronage, therefore, established a network of social relations whereby Christianity, like Mithraism and Judaism, found its way into the mainstream of Roman culture.”³¹

Patronage was an important part of Roman culture and did play a role in the Christian acquisition of property. It has been noted, however, that White is too dependent on the notion of patronage: “White employs a functional definition of religion. For the purpose of his study, religious institutions rise and fall because of benefaction and patronage,” writes Friesen; but with regard to the architecture, he says, “This may be true for religious *facilities* because funding is required to construct or remodel a building. Whether religious groups rise and fall because of patronage or benefaction, however, is a different assertion.”³² Paul Finney indicates that White is, “long on speculation about the social and economic status of patrons.”³³ While he does agree that there is sufficient Jewish evidence to support the notion of patronage, Finney is quick to point out that the evidence is not uniform from place to place. Carolyn Osiek has raised the question regarding church structure and patronal titles, noting that in synagogues there are designations such as mother or father of the synagogue which are generally assumed to be titles of patronage rather than of leadership. She then queries, “Why do we find no titles among Christians other than those of recognized religious leadership,

31. White, *Building*, 147.

32. Friesen, Krentz, Outschar, and Osiek, review of *Social Origins*, 225

33. Paul C. Finney, review of *Building God’s House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians* by L. Michael White, *American Journal of Archeology* 96, no. 4 (October 1992): 777.

roles such as apostle, prophet, teacher, *episkopos*, presbyter or deacon?”³⁴ Countryman³⁵ and Maier³⁶ suggest that by the time Christian inscriptions appear, the episcopate had sufficiently absorbed all vestiges of patronage. Osiek also mentions that by the end of the first century, all help to the needy was channelled through the Church and was no longer offered through patronage.³⁷ With regard to the architecture of the early Christians, it would seem that patronage played a much smaller role than White proposes because the organisational model adopted by the Church was based on the Roman household structure.

That being said, however, the social components of architectural adaptation identified by White are a helpful addition to the study of early Christian architecture, but it is only one component influencing architecture. White helps to document the adaptations and helps us understand some of the reasons for them.

In the wider social context, the early church would have found itself similar to many other groups struggling to gain a foothold in Roman society. Given the similarities, it would seem reasonable to find that many of these groups shared similar architectural solutions to their requirements.³⁸ White contends:

Architectural adaptation was a dynamic process geared to both the social and physical needs of the community. Throughout the first three centuries the changing status and composition of Christian groups necessitated ongoing adaptation seen architecturally in the process of development from house church to *domus ecclesiae* and to *aula*

34. Carolyn Osiek, “House Churches and the Demographics of Diversity,” *Religious Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (2001): 229.

35. L. William Countryman, *The Rich Christian in the Church of the Early Empire* ([S.l.]: Edwin Mellen Press, 1980).

36. Harry O. Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* (Waterloo, Ont: Wilfrid Laurier Univ Pr, 1991).

37. Osiek, “House Churches,” 230.

38. “In this wider social context Christians would have appeared similar to a number of other kinds of groups familiar to the urban environment. These include collegial associations, philosophical schools, the synagogue, and the household itself.” White, *Building*, 143.

ecclesiae.³⁹

Adaptation is, indeed, a dynamic process and to re-emphasise a point made previously, it is a dynamic process of *architecture*. White makes his thesis perfectly clear: the adaptive architectural process was centred upon the physical and social needs of the group and it was brought about by the changing status and composition of the Church.

It seems self-evident that any architecture, adaptive or otherwise, will be focussed on the physical and social requirements of the intended user group. White's developmental model falls short, however, by leaving architectural adaptation as the result of purely social factors. How much and how often patronage and status affected architectural change may be debated. Significantly, however, White has no place for theology and liturgy as causative factors, largely ignoring the spiritual, theological and symbolic components of architecture.

Like those before him, White still trades in an understanding of architecture limited to building types and styles, or in the case of the first three centuries, a lack thereof: "By its very nature the house church defies normal canons of architectural history and iconography, since there was as yet no template of plan and style. It took the Constantinian revolution to provide such a template."⁴⁰ This understanding of architecture is commonplace. In her contextual study of early Christian houses, Monika Trümper gives voice to the same approach:

Constructing typologies serves first of all to sort and categorize the archaeological evidence. Moreover, this is usually practiced in the more or less firm belief that different house types correspond to different social levels and that domestic architecture might thus reflect the social structure of the city or culture under examination.⁴¹

The sorting and categorising of archaeological evidence is necessary, but it fails to connect

39. White, *Building*, 147.

40. White, *Building*, 18.

41. Monika Trümper, "Material and Social Environment of Greco-Roman Households in the East: The Case of Hellenistic Delos," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, Religion, Marriage and Family (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 21.

adequately the faith of the early Christians with what they used, adapted, or constructed as places of worship.

Like Krautheimer, L. Michael White seeks to set the architecture of the early Christians within its proper context. By centring on the adaptive environment and social dynamics, White has much to say. By limiting his understanding of the causes of the early Church's constructive endeavours to patronage, White has also missed the opportunity to broaden our understanding of architecture itself.

Architecture as Ritual-event

Another recent endeavour to come to terms with the significance of religious architecture is pressed by Lindsay Jones. In his *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, Jones expressed his “deep discontent with comparative orderings of architecture that rely variously on commonalities in formal appearance, building techniques or materials, in geographic locations or era of construction, or even in the ethnicity or historical affiliations of the builders—all of which are, from the perspective of a hermeneutical history of religions, (relatively) insignificant principles of organisation.”⁴²

In the words of Gregory Alles, “Jones’s project weds Gadamer’s hermeneutics to Joachim Wach’s concern with significant organisation, Mircea Eliade’s observations on sacred space, and Lawrence Sullivan’s suggestion that historians of religions take sources other than texts more seriously.”⁴³ According to Jones, the significance of religious architecture arises out of the interaction between the building and the user—and this varies

42. Lindsay Jones, *Hermeneutical Calisthenics: A Morphology of Ritual-Architectural Priorities*, vol. 2 of *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000), 1.

43. Gregory D. Alles, review of *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* by Lindsay Jones, *The Journal of Religion* 82, no. 2 (April 2002): 322.

from place to place and over time. He suggests that in ritual-architectural events people converse and interact with buildings:

Instead of fixating on any of its constituent components—the physical attributes of the building, the cosmological presuppositions of the human participants, the moon overhead, or the smell of burning incense—our attention should encompass the entire situation, the gain or the ritual-architectural event that transcends and subsumes the players.⁴⁴

Jones maintains that meaning in architecture is the result of the conversation people have with buildings via ritual-architectural events. There cannot be any inherent meaning in architecture, according to Jones, and he tersely exclaims, “buildings in and of themselves do not ‘mean’ anything!”⁴⁵ Architecture is a kind of *tabula rasa* onto which users project their own ideas. “The locus of meaning,” argues Jones, “resides neither in the building itself (the physical object) nor in the mind of the beholder (a human subject), but rather in the negotiation or the interactive relation that subsumes both building and the holder—the *ritual architectural events* in which buildings and human participants alike are involved.”⁴⁶ Meaning exists in the moment of architectural experience.

Thus, Jones argues that meaning in architecture can be discovered not only within the context of “sociocultural conditions, cosmologies, and historical artistic traditions but, moreover, with respect to the specific ritual occasions—or ritual-architectural events—in which those meanings arise.”⁴⁷ Jones attempts to contain the whole tradition of a building and its significance within the confines of an interaction. “Wrenched from its related nasty human users and to some particular function or ceremonial occasion, a religious building loses its

44. Lindsay Jones, *Monumental Occasions: Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture*, vol. 1 of *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000), 50.

45. Jones, *Hermeneutics*, 36.

46. Jones, *Hermeneutics*, 41.

47. Jones, *Hermeneutics*, 29.

meaning, or, more likely, its manifold meanings are set adrift without context or perspective.”⁴⁸

The difficulties of this approach become apparent for any study of ancient architecture. Still, Jones readily admits that “beyond the constant flux in the meanings and functions of any single building or configuration—whether those transformations are deliberately planned or spontaneous—the decipherment of sacred architecture is complicated still more because, invariably, the built environment simultaneously evokes a range of disparate meanings from the heterogeneous constituency that is experiencing it.”⁴⁹ This would make comprehending meaning in architecture almost impossible.

Jones makes the case (almost apologetically) that ways must be found to transcend any confidence in a one-to-one correlation between the formal characteristics of a building and meaning because buildings inevitably gain meaning far beyond the expectations of their designers and engender all sorts of unanticipated meanings and sensations.⁵⁰ The designer’s intentions notwithstanding, Jones ignores the possibility that architectural meaning may derive from a shared theological framework within a community or even divine revelation. Because meaning is supposed to reside in the event or interaction between the beholder and building, meaning becomes wholly subjective, immune to any consistent architectural meaning within a community. Even if meaning is generated by the interaction between the building and its users, Jones does not answer questions relating to how the architecture may evolve as a result of ongoing ritual-architectural events. Nor does Jones’ hermeneutic explain the adaptations already identified by White in the first three centuries.

It is true, there is interaction between architecture and those who experience it, but Jones does not allow any theological connections to be made other than what may be in the

48. Jones, *Hermeneutics*, 36.

49. Jones, *Hermeneutics*, 31.

50. Jones, *Hermeneutics*, 28–29.

mind of the present beholder. Because Jones' hermeneutic relies upon the interaction between users of the architecture, it has little to do with trying to comprehend ancient peoples and how they generated and understood their architecture. Jones' contribution for this study lies only in this: ritual events do help to shape religious architecture. Architectural meaning certainly involves the active interaction between building and those who use it. This makes it difficult at best to discover any architectural meaning whatsoever among the early Christians. Jones also fails to consider that meaning may be imposed by the culture.

The Contours of a New Approach

In his turbulent novel, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, Victor Hugo sets his story amid the dirty streets of medieval Paris in a way not unlike the Gothic cathedral itself.⁵¹ Believing that, "the greatest products of architecture are less the works of individuals than of society,"⁵² Hugo makes the pithy observation: "Architecture is the great book of humanity."⁵³ It is a book written over centuries and comprising, as Hugo said, "a residue of successive evaporations of human society."⁵⁴ This residue is the deposit of a culture, the result of countless lives lived with each other over time in a given place. Because architecture grows out of culture, it bears unmistakably the marks of its extraction.

In their study of the origins of the Jewish synagogue, editors Dan Urman and Paul Flesher make this very point. Studying the Jewish synagogue as a building, they say, is only the beginning of the story, "For the ultimate question focuses not on the building itself, but on

51. There has been considerable discussion in literary circles as to whether the protagonist of the novel is Quasimodo, the hunchback, or the cathedral itself. The original French title, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, would suggest the latter as more likely.

52. Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (Ann Arbor, MI: Borders Classics, 2004), 110.

53. Hugo, *Hunchback*, 176.

54. Hugo, *Hunchback*, 110.

the community that built and used it.”⁵⁵ They grasped that ancient synagogue architecture was conceived by a Jewish people whose culture and faith intuitively generated it. In his study of Byzantine church architecture, Hans Buchwald came to a similar assessment: “Interest in historic buildings cannot be limited to how buildings were constructed, nor even to what the impact of social, economic and political forces may have been; rather, ideally all of the many layers of activity and thought which produced the forms, including some which are difficult to grasp or intangible must be explored.” He said that, “each work of architecture reflects, in some way, essential elements of the individuals, the society and the entire civilisation involved in the building’s realisation.”⁵⁶

In her article, “Towards an Archeology of Architecture: Clues from a Modern Syrian Village,” Kathryn Kamp contends that all human culture operates within the context of a built environment and she finds the connection between buildings and culture:

The built environment is an integral portion of the culture and becomes not only the physical stage on which the dramas of social interaction are enacted but also an integral component of the drama itself, structuring culture while being structured by it.⁵⁷

Important here is the notion that architecture is part of the drama of life itself. In fact, architectural theorist, Christopher Alexander believes that architecture is generated out of the oft repeated events of life which recur in a particular place—in other words, *culture*.⁵⁸ Alexander believes that the form of a building or town is the result of the events which keep

55. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, eds., *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archeological Discovery*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (New York: Brill, 1995), xxxi.

56. Hans H. Buchwald, *Form, Style, and Meaning in Byzantine Church Architecture*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Aldershot Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), xii.

57. Kathryn A. Kamp, “Towards an Archaeology of Architecture: Clues from a Modern Syrian Village,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 49, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 293.

58. Culture may be defined as “Patterned, learned, shared behaviour based on symbolic communication,” Webster, Evans, and Sanders, *Past*, 7. The many regularities of human behaviour are often repeated and affect the way human society develops and functions. Such regularity also impacts the development of architecture.

happening there. He says, “a building or a town is indeed a quick thing, a living system, a collection of interacting, and adjacent, patterns of events in space, each one repeating certain events over and over again, yet always anchored by its place in space.”⁵⁹ Culture manifested by the activities of people in a given place give it a unique character that comes to be reflected in the building. It is the events thus located that begin to generate the architecture.

One of the difficulties in the study of ancient architecture is that of our own preconceptions about it. Architecture has changed over the centuries as has the culture and society which produce it. In a twenty-first century occidental context, architecture is understood in multifarious ways ranging from the purely functional to the symbolic—spatial machines or *objets d’art*. Juhani Pallasmaa confessed, “Architecture has come to be a field of technology which still ventures to believe itself a form of free artistic expression.”⁶⁰

As heirs of René Descartes, the contemporary culture holds a mechanistic view of the world. “The trouble,” writes Christopher Alexander, “is that within a mechanistic view of space and matter—the one considered normal by all right-thinking people today—architecture must inevitably become shallow and trivial.”⁶¹ Within this framework, architecture loses all touch with any notion of spiritual value. “The picture of the world we have from physics, because it is built only out of mental machines, no longer has any definite feeling of value in it: *value has become sidelined as a matter of opinion, not intrinsic to the nature of the world at all*” [emphasis mine].⁶² From this perspective, it becomes difficult to examine the

59. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 74.

60. Juhani Pallasmaa, “The Geometry of Feeling,” in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 448. Of our contemporary understanding of architecture, Bruno Zevi quipped, “Among the planets of the arts, architecture is the dark side of the moon,” Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture*, trans. Milton Gendel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), 227.

61. Christopher Alexander, “Perspectives: Manifesto 1991,” *Progressive Architecture*, July 1991, 110.

62. Christopher Alexander, *The Phenomenon of Life*, vol. 1 of *The Nature of Order* (Berkeley: The Center for Environmental Structure, 2002), 16.

architecture of the ancient world in any meaningful way, particularly sacred architecture. We have already seen how studies into the architecture of the early Church have continued to see architecture as artifacts even though the intention was to place them within a cultural context.

No current approach to the study of early Christian architecture allows for a theology of architecture that embraces the nexus between the physical and ethereal. Architecture has the capacity to carry meaning because it is tightly woven into the fabric of culture and imbibes the beliefs and mores of people rooted in place. To understand fully the architecture of the early Church, it will be necessary to move beyond the *status quo* and discover a methodology which begins with the people of that locality and discovers the role of the architecture among them. It is not enough to accept an artifactual analysis of building components, nor is it helpful to say that architectural meaning resides only in those who presently experience the building. We must regain an approach to architecture not unlike that of the ancients. We must shed our preconceptions of architecture that have limited the extant studies of early Christian architecture and embrace a fresh approach.

The work of mathematician and architect, Christopher Alexander, provides a promising architectural framework as a starting point.⁶³ Beginning in the late 1960's, Alexander concluded that there was something fundamentally wrong with twentieth century architectural design methods and practices. Through his initial work, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*,⁶⁴ Alexander began to identify, in his view, the failures of contemporary architecture. He argued that the modern "rational" design paradigm with its use of analytic models and focus on 'methods' was not able to produce an architecture that satisfies the true needs of

63. Christopher Alexander was born in Vienna, Austria in 1936. He graduated with degrees in mathematics and architecture from Cambridge University and with a Ph.D. in architecture from Harvard University. For further biographical data, cf. Muriel Emmanuel, *Contemporary Architects* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980) p. 25-26.

64. Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

people and society.⁶⁵

By 1974, Alexander proposed a new paradigm in architectural theory which was, according to him, not new at all. He writes, “There is one timeless way of building. It is thousands of years old, and the same today as it has always been.”⁶⁶ With this fresh concept toward architecture, Alexander desires to tap into that inner intangible quality from which all design emanates. He writes:

The great traditional buildings of the past, the villages and tents and temples in which man feels at home, have always been made by people who were very close to the center of this way. It is not possible to make great buildings, or great towns, beautiful places, places where you feel yourself, places where you feel alive, except by following this way... It is a process through which the order of a building or a town grows out directly from the inner nature of the people, and the animals, and the plants, and matter which are in it.⁶⁷

Several bedrock works present Alexander’s architectural scheme, but it is his *Timeless Way* that lays the foundation for the others by unfurling his new paradigm of architecture, building and planning, “which has, at its core, that age-old process by which the people of a society have always pulled the order of their world from their own being.”⁶⁸ It will not be necessary, for our purposes, to explore in detail the writings of Christopher Alexander and his polemic since his purpose is to turn the tide of current “rational” thinking toward a more pattern-based development. It will suffice to paint in broad strokes the essence of his thought as it is presented in *The Timeless Way of Building* and *The Nature of Order*, and draw from it application to the study of early Christian architecture.

The ‘timeless way’ is “a process which brings order out of nothing but ourselves.”⁶⁹

65. For a brief review of Christopher Alexander’s thought, see Alexander, “Manifesto” See also Doug Lea, “Christopher Alexander: An Introduction for Object-Oriented Designers,” review (New York, 1993), Internet paper at <http://g.oswego.edu/dl/ca/ca/ca.html#node7>.

66. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 7.

67. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 7.

68. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, cover flap.

69. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, ix.

Like an organism, a building is more than the incarnation of a design concept or even the outturn of a development process, it is the result of a living formation. Alexander's theory makes use of *patterns* which are constructs describing forces in the world and the relationships among them—the constellation of *space* and *events* comprising the whole of human life with all its boundaries.

Though Alexander understands that architecture arises out of events that occur in a place, events that are culturally conditioned, he also seeks to go beyond culture and to timeless ways of building that are universally true. There are aspects of architecture that are common to all cultures, or perhaps, beyond culture. This claim rises above the contemporary relativism that shades modern thought and accepts the possibility that there may be certain absolutes in architecture. Significant for this study is that architecture arises out of a particular culture or belief system of a people or group and how that culture is manifested in a place. Modern architecture looks the way it does because it is conceived and constructed by those who hold a modernist philosophy. The architecture of the Renaissance or Gothic had its particular form because of the culture and world-view of those who built it. Thus, architecture is more than a form response to function.⁷⁰ Architecture is, in fact, a living product of culture. The values and way of life attaching to each group of people in a given locale have associated with them specific views of the world, specific beliefs, specific activities and events of life. The meaning often attached to architecture—especially religious architecture—is also conditioned by such things. Using the term 'tradition' to identify a religious 'culture', Adrian Snodgrass writes in his *Architecture, Time and Eternity*:

The meanings discovered in the building are those of the tradition as a whole. Just as each mirror in the ring of mirrors reflects all the others, so here the building, as every symbol, is a focal convergence of the meanings contained in other symbols, so that the study of the building is simultaneously an entry into the profundities of the tradition of which it forms a part. Its study tends to a twofold understanding, giving insights into both the nature of architecture and the tradition's doctrines. In this the building serves

70. Modern architect Mies van der Rohe is purported to have said, "Form follows function." This is, however, apparently a misattribution.

its originally intended function, as a support for a knowledge of metaphysical realities.”⁷¹

According to Snodgrass, the building not only arises out of the religious culture or tradition, but serves the catechetical purpose of communicating and affirming the views of the tradition. Though, perhaps, not the earliest example, the communicative quality of architecture may be illustrated by a recent study of the early fifth century courtyard at the basilica at Cimitile in southern Italy. The courtyard functioned as an atrium to the new basilica and formed its central passageway. Ornately adorned and painted with Old Testament scenes, the courtyard was intended to catechise guests and pilgrims in the ascetical way of life, fulfilling both apologetic and missionary objectives.⁷² Paulinus of Nola’s (354-431) account clearly portrays his purpose through the art and architecture:

Everyone is aware of the crowds that the glory of St. Felix brings here. But the greater part of this multitude are country folk, neither without belief nor skilled in reading... This is why we thought it would be useful to make Felix’s houses gay and amusing [*ludere*] throughout with holy pictures, in order to see whether [*si forte*], as they gaze in astonishment at the wonderful sights [*spectacula*], their minds and hearts might be captivated by these sketches painted in various colors, which are described by inscriptions overhead, so that the text might make known what the hand has drawn. As all [the peasants] point out to one another the paintings and read over to each other [*releguntque*] the inscriptions, and as they feed their eyes with this attractive and charming fast, perhaps they will turn more slowly to thoughts of food. And in this way, as the painting deceives [*fallit*] their hunger, a better comportment may take root in their marvelling hearts, and virtue, inspired by holy examples, steal over them as they read [*legenti*] the sacred histories.⁷³

Paulinus’ catechetical intent reveals an understanding of architecture as a conduit for communicating Christian asceticism.

Architecture, then, may not only reflect the events which are repeated in a particular place, events which are attached to a particular culture or tradition, but may also be used by that culture or tradition to perpetuate its own views. This perspective has not been fully

71. Adrian Snodgrass, *Architecture, Time and Eternity* (New Delhi: P.K. Goel, 1990), 1:4.

72. Maria M. Kiely, “The Interior Courtyard: The Heart of Cimitile/Nola,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 445ff.

73. *Carmina* 27.542-91 as translated in Kiely, “Courtyard,” 469.

explored concerning the origins of early Christian architecture. Kathryn Kamp laments that even though architecture is extremely important for the expression and structuring of social interactions, archeologists have not been very successful in formulating a theory of architectural interpretation.⁷⁴

Although archeologists and historians have sought to understand the architecture of the early Church, their traditional approach, grounded as it was in archeological methodologies, has failed to fully draw the connections between building and belief. Architecture has been thought of as an object instead of an outgrowth and expression of the Church's theology and faith:

It cannot be reiterated too often that so long as the history of architecture fails to burst the bonds of philology and archeology, not only will architecture of the past not acquire the true historicity of current actuality and fail to arouse interest and lively emotion, but the public will continue to believe that architecture is to be found only in monuments, that it is involved only when you build."⁷⁵

Architecture is more than artifact; it has a broader role than social consequence; architecture is a reflection of the people and culture which give it rise.

Placing Architecture

Robert Venturi defined architecture as: "the wall between the inside and the outside."⁷⁶ At first this appears to be a trenchant, if not simple view of architecture, but with further reflection, Venturi's definition suggests several interesting things. He identifies architecture as a physical reality that exists between two realms: *inside* and *outside*. This puts architecture on the edge, on the boundary between different places and helps to define their relationship. The implication is that the wall belongs to neither realm but stands "between." For architecture, this conjectures that it sits apart from place—or, perhaps, forms a place in and of itself. But

74. Kamp, "Archeology," 293.

75. Zevi, *Architecture*, 228.

76. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 89.

this is contrary to reality. Buildings are not autonomous entities standing in between realms, they are part of a landscape, a composition of places bounded by the horizon.⁷⁷ And yet they seem more tied to the interior place than to its exterior surroundings. Bruno Zevi argues this very point when he asserts that no work—building or otherwise—can be considered architecture without interior space.⁷⁸ This spatially distinguishes architecture, for example, from a sculpture or a park, but it does not resolve the questions of boundary and place.

For Aristotle, space shared a common boundary with any object:

Space is a continuous quantity: for the parts of a solid occupy a certain space, and these have a common boundary; it follows that the parts of space also, which are occupied by the parts of the solid, have the same common boundary as the parts of the solid.⁷⁹

Rudolph Arnheim indicates that Aristotle may have been correct physically, but he was not correct psychologically because “perceptually a disturbing contradiction is created when an interface belongs to two different boundaries but is only one thing nevertheless.”⁸⁰ In other words, the walls of a building, though they may physically bound both interior and exterior space, are not perceived that way. The walls are comprehended as being the limit of the interior space. The walls of a building are perceived to contain the place within.

Experience would indicate that the walls of a building are impacted by the surrounding area and the elements present there (e.g. people, pollution, birds, etc.), but it is the interior space which effects the walls most significantly (e.g. shape, function, openings, etc.). So while

77. One of the intrinsic differences between the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ is brought out by the role of the horizon on the landscape: “Every landscape has a horizon, yet space never does. The horizon is an arc within which a given landscape comes to an end—an end of visibility, or presence, of availability,” Edward S. Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 4 (December 2001): 690.

78. Zevi, *Architecture*, 28.

79. Aristotle, *Categories*, trans. E.M. Edghill, Ch. 6.

80. Rudolf Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 74.

Venturi's definition posits the *in-betweenness* of the architecture, it is the interior space which affects the greatest influence.

Venturi's definition reminds us that architecture is, after all, a physical structure with sensual qualities such as form, texture and colour. As a construction at the margins of place, architecture draws its physical characteristics from the character of the place which it contains—a place which is itself formed by the events that recur there. The walls of the building, reflecting the interior place also touches exterior surrounding place. The building is thus set within the larger landscape. Architecture, whether edging the interior or exterior, is a manifestation of a way of life. "Since all human thoughts must be worked out in the medium of perceptual space, architecture, wittingly or not, presents embodiments of thought when it invents and builds shapes."⁸¹ Hans Buchwald has said that every instance of architecture, "reflects, in some way, essential elements of the individuals, the society and the entire civilisation involved in the building's realisation."⁸² This is especially evident in more ancient times.

The point to be made is that architecture is in actuality a physical manifestation of a less tangible reality. Architecture comes into existence as a *boundary of place*—at once forming place and then being formed by it. Architecture springs out of culture and is more than an orderly arrangement of materials, it possesses a spiritual quality. It has the ability to point beyond itself giving it a liminal cast. It is for this reason that we must take a look at the patterns of place which, ultimately, generate the walls between the inside and the outside.

Place

The idea of *place* seems obvious: A quaint courtyard café scented with thick coffee and brimming with spirited conversation; a sun-warmed window seat nestled in the upstairs

81. Arnheim, *Dynamics*, 274.

82. Buchwald, *Byzantine Architecture*, xii.

guest room; a seaside jetty, awash with a cool spray and salty odour. Beyond the bare coordinates of Cartesian space, these are places that excite our senses and take root in our memory. In place resides meaning and human belonging—what Heidegger called *dwelling*.⁸³ Places draw their meaning from locality and being ‘lived-in’—anchored in the world and its history.⁸⁴

The idea of place seems obvious, and yet in recent years as the disciplines of geography and philosophy have increasingly drawn upon each other, it appears that the obvious may not necessarily be so. There is considerable discussion about the meaning behind the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’. Doreen Massey laments the lack of clarity and consensus. She writes:

Many authors rely heavily on the terms space/spatial, and each assumes that their meaning is clear and uncontested. Yet in fact the meaning which different authors assume (and therefore in the case of metaphorical usage the import of the metaphor) varies greatly. Buried in these unacknowledged disagreements is a debate which never surfaces; and it never surfaces because everyone assumes we already know what these terms mean.⁸⁵

John Malpas points out that “it is not just our everyday familiarity with the concept that can give rise to difficulties, but also a complexity and breadth of meaning that seems to attach to the term itself.”⁸⁶ Elizabeth Grosz has suggested that space as a mappable, explorable territory must necessarily give way to place which involves both dwelling and living.⁸⁷ The current contention, however, need not concern us as long as it is understood that space and place are

83. Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” in *Rethinking Architecture*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997), 109.

84. For some difficulties with the perception of place and history, see Doreen Massey, “Places and Their Pasts,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 39 (Spring 1995): 182–92 (Oxford University Press).

85. Doreen Massey, “Politics and Space/Time,” in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Michael Keith and Steve Pile (New York: Routledge, 1993), 141–42.

86. J.E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 20–21.

87. Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 123.

qualitatively different things.⁸⁸ Edward S. Casey has pressed a useful distinction between space and place. He understands, “‘Space’ to be the encompassing volumetric void in which things (including human beings) are positioned and ‘place’ to be the immediate environment of my lived body—an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural.”⁸⁹

Though contemporary culture tends to view space and place as interchangeable, it is important for an understanding of architecture that we differentiate between them. This is one factor that has contributed to a misunderstanding of ancient church architecture. The earliest Christians understood place in a very different way. Drawing from its Jewish heritage, the Church understood the world in terms of places and boundaries: heaven and earth, good and evil, life and death. We must be cautious not to project inadvertently our contemporary notions of place/space backward into the first century. Arguing against modernity and its neglect of place, Edward Casey has attempted to deepen the contemporary understanding in his book, *Getting Back into Place*.⁹⁰ Previously, however, he astutely brought out the essential distinction:

The difference between space and place is one of the best-kept secrets in philosophy. Above all in modern philosophy, where the very distinction came to be questioned and then discredited: one way of understanding modernity...is by its very neglect of this distinction. The ancient world, however, knew otherwise—knew better. Indeed, the premodern and the postmodern join forces in a common recognition of the importance of place as something essentially other than space, something one cannot afford to ignore in its very difference from space.⁹¹

88. For a taste of the issues involved, see Malpas, *Place*; Edward S. Casey, “On Habitus and Place: Responding to My Critics,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 4 (December 2001): 716–23 (Taylor & Francis, Ltd.); Casey, “Place-World”; Edward S. Casey, “Smooth Spaces and Rough-Edged Places: The Hidden History of Place,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 51, no. 2 (1997): 267–96.

89. Casey, “Place-World,” 683.

90. Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

91. Casey, “Smooth Spaces.”

John Malpas would agree, “Place is not a concept that can be severed from notions of extension and spatiality.” In fact, he has suggested that, “a central feature of the idea of place would seem to be that of a certain open, if bounded, space or region.”⁹² The import of this view is that place is not closed even though it may be circumscribed. As we begin to comprehend architecture as an edge, a boundary of place, it is important to keep in mind that it may be an open boundary, allowing for movement—as if it were a threshold.⁹³

In an attempt to explain the relationship that exists between matter, form, boundary and place, Aristotle confessed, “Place is thought to be something important and hard to grasp...”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, after pondering the issues, he wrote, “We conclude that the innermost motionless boundary of what contains is place.”⁹⁵ Surely we can agree with the ancient philosopher that everything has its place, but beyond such attempts at objectivity, place must be considered in larger terms.

Place exists as a reality in the physical universe, but people have often found it possesses attributes beyond the physical. For example, the place of the Roman house was far more than a location for family dwelling. Veyne says, “The architectural setting was not an inert vessel; the *genius* of the domus, honoured by a cult, was the protector of both the place and the people who lived in it.”⁹⁶ The place of the Roman domus had a palpable spiritual dimension.

92. Malpas, *Place*, 22.

93. Architecture may become a physical boundary manifesting the edge of metaphysical realities in a given place.

94. Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, Bk. IV, 4.

95. Aristotle, *Physics*, Bk IV, 4.

96. Paul Veyne, ed., *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, gen. ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *A History of Private Life* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 407.

The spiritual qualities of place, however, were not initially associated with buildings. Though in contemporary usage, a *temple* has reference to a building, among the Romans it was a sacred *place*. It was a place set apart for the interaction between people, represented by the augurs, and the gods. “The taker of the auspices defined a *templum* in the heavens, a rectangle in which he specified left, right, front and back; the meaning of the sign depended on its spatial relationship to these defined points. These celestial rectangles had a series of equivalents on earth to which the same term was applied.”⁹⁷ This sacred rectangular place was aligned with the cardinal directions, the front facing west. A *templum* could be a clearing in a forest or the top of a high mountain. Buildings were called *aedes* and were often used for sacred purposes within a *templum*, serving as a house for the god(s). In later antiquity the term *templum* came to be used of the *aedes* within it. Thus, it is easy to see how the sacred building came to be associated with the term for the sacred place.

Among the ancient Hebrews, place was defined in relation to things, events or people which were found there.⁹⁸ The concept is very concrete, it was relationally and historically based. For the Hebrews, place was not an abstract construction of the intellect, but a concrete reality associated with the history of their people as they lived in covenant with their God.

Place, however, has additional qualities.⁹⁹ Place has to do with life in the world as we

97. Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *A History*, vol. 1 of *Religions of Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.

98. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 8.194.

99. Heidegger wrote, “A first step is taken with the distinction of natural and man-made phenomena. The second step is represented by the categories of earth-sky (horizontal-vertical) and outside-inside. These categories have spatial implications, and so ‘space’ is hence re-introduced, not primarily as a mathematical concept, but as an existential dimension. A final and particularly important step is taken with the concept of ‘character’. Character is determined by *how* things are, and gives our investigation of basis in the concrete phenomenon of our everyday life-world. Only in this way we may fully grasp the *genius loci*; the ‘spirit of place’ which the ancients recognised as the ‘opposite’ man has to come to terms with, to be able to dwell. The concept of *genius loci* denotes the essence of place.” Christian Norberg-Schulz, “The Phenomenon of Place,” in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 418.

experience it. Place is *located*, that is to say, more than located in terms of a coordinate system, it is located in our experience of the world. While we can speak of a location in *space*, using a reference system to pinpoint the exact coordinates, whether the location is a point or region, we cannot say much more until we begin to think of that location in terms of *place*. Places are situated, that is, they exist in context. Like space, place has its own reference system, but more than mere coordinates, place is located in our experience. “The old church is around the corner on High Street near the big willow,” we might say, or, “That’s the parish where I was baptised.”¹⁰⁰ And so Heidegger affirms, “*Accordingly spaces receive their being from locations and not from ‘space’*”[emphasis in the original].¹⁰¹

It is the situatedness—the context—of a place that gives it character. “Whereas ‘space’ denotes the three-dimensional organisation of the elements which make up a place,” Heidegger writes, “‘character’ denotes the general ‘atmosphere’ which is the most comprehensive property of any place.”¹⁰² On this point, Heidegger is correct because it is the ‘atmosphere’ or character of a place which makes it alive. It brings a certain uniqueness to a place with which people identify and remember—even consider sacred. This character is what imprints a place in our memory: autumn leaves dancing across a windy street; the sound of children playing outside the window; the creak of a wooden floor; or the tolling of a nearby church bell. “The most comprehensive and perhaps most important architectural experience is the sense of being in a unique place. Part of this intense experience of place is always an

100. The absence of context and relatedness in a place may be terrifying. Rudolph Arnheim writes, “It follows that perceptual emptiness can be described as a quality of an area whose spatial characteristics are not controlled by the surrounding objects. Extreme emptiness is experience where there are no objects at all. In darkness, on the ocean, or in outer space, the absence of all points of reference and orientation, the lack of attraction and repulsion, the undefined distances can cause ultimate terror. Its social equivalent is the experience of a person who feels totally abandoned: the environment is complete without him, nothing refers to him, needs him, calls him, or responds to him. This lack of external definition destroys the internal sense of identity, because a person defines the nature of his own being largely by his place in a network of personal relations,” Arnheim, *Dynamics*, 21.

101. Heidegger, “Dwelling,” 105.

102. Norberg-Schulz, “Place,” 418.

impression of something sacred: This place is for higher beings.”¹⁰³ The spiritual qualities of place were early associated with architecture.

Place is at the centre of human existence. It is the canvas upon which the pigments of life are painted. Don Michael Hudson postulates that “sacred space is a predominant but neglected archetype underlying much of Scripture’s representation of God’s interactions with humankind.”¹⁰⁴ As we will see, the concept of space which predominated among the Greeks was entirely absent among the Hebrews, at least until the Hellenistic period. Among the Israelites it was *place* that held sway—and it was the notion of place from which Christian architecture came forth and obtained its uniqueness.

Boundary

The world is filled with hedges and fringes, verges and edges, walls and fences. Each one forms a boundary marking off a region in space. They are so commonplace—and surround us in such plenitude—that most of them go unnoticed: the corona of a winter moon or the



Fig. 1. Boundaries in a leaf.

cracked glass in an attic window. These are but a few of the limitless lines sundering the world into manageable pieces. The boundaries around us take many forms but they first take on the structured emphases of earth and sky—vertical and horizontal. The horizon is a strong boundary that encircles each of us making us feel grounded and emplaced. Perhaps the next thing is that boundaries demarcate the line between inside and outside offering a sense of shelter and security. These concepts, of course, have significant spatial implications, but as the

103. Pallasmaa, “Geometry,” 452.

104. Don Michael Hudson, “From Chaos to Cosmos: Sacred Space in Genesis,” *Zeitschrift Für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 108, no. 1 (1996): 88.

noted architectural phenomenologist, Christian Norberg-Schulz has pointed out, these categories do not present space as a mathematical concept, but as an existential dimension.¹⁰⁵

Like place, boundaries are ultimately experienced. Some mark the edges of intersecting planes, such as at the corner of a house. Others indicate different materials like the edge of an oriental rug on a wood floor. There are those that delineate the hard man-made surfaces such as a country lane over and against the softer natural grasses and foliage thriving alongside it. But boundaries are not always experienced spatially. For example, each physical life is delimited by birth and death, growth and decay. Time is manifested both through solar and lunar cycles marking the boundaries of days and months and years. Nations rise and fall, neighbourhoods change. Invention and knowledge press the limits of technology and understanding. Boundary is characteristic of every dimension, it is part of a living world.¹⁰⁶ Yet, it is inevitably the spatial qualities of boundary that, perhaps, most affects this present attempt at understanding architecture.¹⁰⁷

Boundary is part of the *essence* of existence; nothing exists without a boundary. And yet, similar to place, boundary has proved difficult to define, particularly in relation to that which they may contain. Rather than merely a dimensionless interface, boundaries appear to have their own distinct coherent properties and shape.¹⁰⁸ This was Venturi's definition of

105. Norberg-Schulz, "Place," 418.

106. Christopher Alexander expands the boilerplate of what is usually considered to be living: "Thus life is not a limited mechanical concept which applies to self-reproducing biological machines. It is a quality which inheres in space itself, and applies to every brick, every stone, every person, every physical structure of any kind at all, that appears in space. Each thing has its life." Alexander, *Life*, 28.

107. Some argue that architecture can only be experienced *in time*. For example, architecture may be experienced differently in the daytime, at dusk or at night, in winter or summer, newly built or ancient ruin—time works its deleterious effects upon any structure. That is why Rudolph Arnheim suggests that, "in dealing with architecture we must constantly shuttle back and forth between the building as an object seen as a whole in space by a contemplating mind, and the building as an event in time experienced by man in action," Arnheim, *Dynamics*, 130. It is true that a boundary such as time effects the experience of architecture and *understanding* of architecture may be gained through the experience of it. Nevertheless, architecture does not have to be experienced in order to be understood.

108. Alexander, *Life*, 256.

architecture. Without diving into the philosophical nuances of the ancient Greek concepts of place and boundary, it seems readily evident that the two are interconnected—just how they are connected is a matter of considerable debate.¹⁰⁹ It is not difficult to understand Achille Varzi’s assessment: “So boundaries are, on the one hand, central to the common-sense picture of the world and yet, on the other, deeply problematic.”¹¹⁰

What is certain, however, is that boundaries are indicative of *place*. Norberg-Schulz advances further and asserts that boundary is a constituent element of place.¹¹¹ Boundary marks place, identifies it, makes it tangible and real. It may be permeable and allow for movement through, such as the permeable walls of a single cell or the doors and windows of a house.

Whether it is an augur’s invisible *templum* in the sky or the walls of a courtyard, boundaries serve many essential roles in their relationship to place. In fact, place cannot exist without boundary. Boundary forms the outermost edge, the limit of that which is contained. As such, the boundary forms a definition between what is inside and what is outside the boundary—and between one place and another. In a religious sense, boundary differentiates between the sacred from the profane, between the earthly and the heavenly.

Place is a fundamental reality of the world. Boundary is a fundamental reality of place. So, wherein lies the province of architecture?

Architecture

Architecture is ultimately about *buildings*. But it does not begin necessarily with one

109. What is clear from the outset is the inherent difficulty between understanding boundary as a part of a thing or as something completely separate. Euclid defined a boundary as that which is an extremity of anything. Euclid, *Elements*, ed. Thomas L. Heath, Book I, Def. 13. Aristotle concluded that, “place is coincident with the thing, for boundaries are coincident with the bounded.” Aristotle, *Physics*, IV 4. But that does not mean they are the same thing. For a concise summary of the philosophical issues relating to boundary, see Achille Varzi, “Boundary,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2007, URL=<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2007/entries/boundary/>>, ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed 10/8/2007.

110. Varzi, “Boundary,” 2.

brick placed upon another, it begins within—within the fabric of a culture, within the mind of the builders, within the precincts of a unique place.¹¹² To think of architecture as only a balance between art and science as these are applied to the erection of buildings, is to miss its essential force. Christopher Alexander has proposed that architecture is essentially, “a system of understanding the world, what space and matter are, which includes the idea of soul.”¹¹³ Architecture is the embodiment of a society whose significance reaches well beyond the assemblage walls and columns. It is more than a building, it is a star in the constellation of a place. Architecture forms the edge between interior and exterior, both shaping and being shaped by the forces present there. As an edge, architecture also affects the transition between places; it can serve to orient and re-orient. A case in point is the account given of a monk’s visit to an orthodox church on Mount Athos in Greece:

During a visit and pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain [Athos] in 1963, many of us were particularly impressed by the main church of the Skete of Kafsokalyvia. At first glance, it is an unassuming structure—hardly noticeable in so far as the outside is concerned... What impresses you is that when you enter the door, you expect to find yourself in the narthex. However, you are wrong. You have only entered a porch-like, low ceilinged room where another door awaits you. You walk a few more steps, turning slightly in order to enter the next door. Surely, *this* is the narthex. Wrong again. The room you are standing in now is a bit bigger, but other doors still lie ahead. Again, you take a few more wary steps, turn slightly again, and pass through one of the doors. Is this the narthex or isn’t it? You’re not quite sure anymore, because more steps, another slight turn and some more doors await you. Not quite sure where you are heading, you pass through one of the doors and discover at last that you are finally in the church. Furthermore, you discover that—thanks to all of those preceding rooms, slight turns and multiple doorways—you are now completely and utterly disoriented.

By a simple architectural device you find yourself feeling completely cut-off from the outside world. You have entered a holy place, a place set apart, a place that somehow has no connection with the world outside or with time.¹¹⁴

111. Norberg-Schulz, “Heidegger,” 436.

112. German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe oversimplified when he wrote, “Architecture starts when you carefully put two bricks together. There it begins.” Mies van der Rohe, “On Restraint in Design,” *NY Herald Tribune*, 28 June 1959.

113. Alexander, “Manifesto,” 110.

114. Unpublished conference paper: Fr. Ephraim, “The Worship of the Church in Its External Aspect,” Seattle Conference (Seattle, WA, 1980).

Movement through the smaller attendant places removed any orienting cues from the visitors. The architecture of the church successfully re-oriented the visitors and put them squarely in the realm of the timeless sacred.

Architecture fulfils a decidedly functional role in the lives of most people. Houses offer shelter from the elements while maintaining a relationship to the world outside. They provide an enclosure for family, furnishing safety, privacy and shelter. Still, as a pervious enclosure, movement is encouraged by maintaining contact with the outside. Architecture is the multi-faceted consequence fulfilling both basic needs and spiritual aspirations, tempered by a particular cultural view of the cosmos. “Buildings keep us warm and dry, and are closely involved in the practicalities of living, but architecture always has a cultural dimension to it, if we choose to pay attention.”¹¹⁵

But architecture also has the ability to move beyond any single culture and tap into sentiments more wholly human: “The symbolism of the arts, of which architecture is the most important, could not be so effective, could not move us so profoundly and prevail over changes in cultural convention, were it not rooted in the strongest, most universal human experiences.”¹¹⁶ Human beings make architecture, and they do so with what they have available to them both in terms of materials and methods, and in religious belief. It is inevitable that builders will draw from that which is unique to their culture and from those things which more deeply transcend it. These find their expression in architecture which may cultivate the use of certain forms, materials, colours—even to a particular order and hierarchy in arrangement. Carolyn Osiek and David Balch have noted this connection in their study of early Christian houses and raised the question of the relationship, “between faith and culture,

115. Andrew Ballantyne, *Architecture: A Very Brief Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

116. Arnheim, *Dynamics*, 209–10.

even between *faith and architecture*.”¹¹⁷

If architecture is a fruit of culture on the larger scale, surely it is also a product of culture on a smaller scale, such as the culture of a religion or the culture of a local congregation. The place and its inherent activities pass also to its boundary. As a nexus, a sacred place reveals its function as a point of communication between heaven and earth. It is a place where God reveals Himself and where people go to meet with Him. Here, various means of marking between the sacred and profane emerge and rituals of entry become important.

Commenting on the functionality of church buildings, Mircea Eliade has written:

For a believer, the church shares in a different space from the street in which it stands. The door that opens on the interior of the church actually signifies a solution of continuity. The threshold that separates the two spaces also indicates the distance between the two modes of being, the profane and the religious. The threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds—and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred becomes possible.¹¹⁸

In this way, architecture is a boundary, an open threshold allowing travel between places. So, architecture really is a kind of boundary in a place, a boundary that reflects the place it contains. Architecture grows at the edge, at the dividing line between the sacred and profane—or at the line between sacred and less sacred. Architecture has not been understood this way.

Traditionally, architecture has been understood as an object on the landscape. Objects with similar characteristics are characterised into styles. These change over time and from region to region. The tectonic characteristics of buildings have been classified over the centuries according to their semblance. Buildings studied through this means of classification have enjoyed some measure of success. Culture and belief systems have made an impact upon

117. Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, The Family, Religion, and Culture (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 215.

118. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred & the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1987), 25.

architecture in the past and some direct correspondences have been observed. Architectural ‘styles’ have also survived because of their slow transmission:

Knowledge of architecture as a traditional craft was transmitted mainly through the spoken word and by practical demonstration. This medium of communication carried inherent geographical restrictions with it. Knowledge was tied to place, as the teacher could teach only within a certain locality, and there was no other medium through which ideas could travel easily over long distances. As a result, the myths, rituals, social norms and other conventions in terms of which the meaning (and mysticism) of architectural types was made legible were all firmly rooted in the immediate local context.¹¹⁹

The difficulty with early Christian architecture, in particular, is that the ‘styles’ so commonplace in later construction were not present.¹²⁰ The objection may well be that there are no examples of church buildings from the period from which styles might be discerned. That is certainly the case, but architectural style is only useful for grouping buildings of similar characteristics. They do not necessarily make the connection with culture and faith. Those who have studied ancient architecture on the basis of style have expressed amazement that the Christian Church should so quickly develop its own unique character without any stylistic precedent to follow.¹²¹ It is unlikely that the Church would develop its own architectural style in a short period of time. This suggests that there must be some other explanation.

Zevi touches on the problem when he writes, “A satisfactory history of architecture has not yet been written, because we are still not accustomed to thinking in terms of space, and because historians of architecture have failed to apply a coherent method of studying buildings from a spatial point of view.”¹²² Perhaps, this might be amended to say that historians have

119. Prem Chandavarkar, “Architecture and the Expression of Meaning,” *Architecture + Design* IV, no. 5 (July 1988): 95.

120. L. Michael White has written, “By its very nature the house church defies normal canons of architectural history and iconography, since there was as yet no template of plan and style. It took the Constantinian revolution to provide such a template,” White, *Building*, 18.

121. William L. MacDonald, *Architecture*, 17.

122. Zevi, *Architecture*, 22.

failed to apply a coherent method of studying buildings from the point of view of *place*.

The dearth of architectural evidence and lack of a defined style for the early years of the Church is overcome by understanding architecture as a *boundary of place*. Understanding the architecture of the early Church is better approached in this way because it is informed by the culture and belief of the early Christians themselves rather than upon the somewhat arbitrary styles of buildings bearing little connection to the faith of the Church.

Is architecture really a boundary? Christian Norberg-Schulz touts the affirmative, “Any enclosure is defined by a boundary.”¹²³ Bruno Zevi agrees unequivocally: “Every architectural volume, every structure of walls, constitutes a boundary, a pause in the continuity of space.”¹²⁴ Located at the edges of place, architecture is coincident with boundary.

To gain a better understanding of the development of early Christian architecture, we must do more than pick over the bones of building artifacts. We must begin to understand the architecture by understanding the early Christians themselves—and their theology. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to begin to see architecture not as an object—or the ruins of an object—to be studied in an archeological format. Architecture must be appreciated as a boundary of place reflecting the Christian assembly and their liturgy. In this way, a link can be made between the host of factors comprising a place and the architecture which surrounds it.

The beliefs and understanding of the world, God, salvation, and Christ all coalesce in how the early Church understood herself and their places of worship. Those places were the arena for liturgical events and activity giving character to the place and, finally, to the boundary of the place, namely, the architecture. The earliest known example is the house church at Dura Europos (c. 240). Although a simple domestic structure, it already displays an elaborate iconography for both the main room and baptistry. Before we can understand such

123. Norberg-Schulz, “Place,” 419.

124. Zevi, *Architecture*, 31.

sacred places, we must explore Judaism because it was there that the seeds of Christian architecture were first sown.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL PATTERN OF PLACE

*“The Holy One, Blessed be He, is the place of the world,
but the world is not His place.”*
—Rabbi Yose¹

Of the many things inherited by the Church from Judaism, perhaps the most significant is the concept of boundary and place. Boundary was an underlying structure (order) of the cosmos² prevalent in every facet of ancient Jewish life. They were established by God from the beginning and filled the cup of daily Jewish experience through religion, culture and community. This includes more than spatial boundaries, it comprises the full range of limits and edges that occur in life. Within the Scriptures, several boundaries become apparent, some are spatial, others relational and still others cultic—all of them, however, originate in the primordial pattern of the creation.

The process by which the universe came into being may be described as *pattern*.³

1. Rabbi Yose (Jose) ben Halafta was a *Tanna* of the fourth generation in the 2nd century A.D. He was a student of Rabbi Akiba and was regarded by his contemporaries as one of the foremost scholars of *halakha* and *haggadah*. He was prominently mentioned in the *Mishnah* and in the *Talmud*, being the one simply referred to as Rabbi Yose.

2. The word κόσμος means ‘order’ and Pythagoras was the first to use the word in connection with the universe (*Aetius* 2.1.1). The Hebrew OT has no single word for the universe. Instead, it usually refers to “heaven and earth.” Thus there would be no reason for the LXX translators to use κόσμος as a term for universe or world. Nevertheless, the word became quite popular among the Jewish Hellenistic writers and so became a part of their theological vocabulary. Among them, “it denotes the world in the spatial sense and replaces the older ‘heaven and earth.’” See the article by Hermann Sasse in Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *TDNT*, 3.881.

3. The Hebrew word for pattern is תְּבִיטָה and the Greek, παράδειγμα. Generally, a pattern is a plan, diagram or model to be followed in making things; a model or an original used as an archetype. It is a logical ordering of parts based on a design, *American Heritage Dictionary*, s.v. “Pattern”. The similarity of the architectural patterns described by Christopher Alexander and those found in the Creation narrative are poignant: “Each pattern defines an operation, which helps to differentiate, and to complete, the building as it grows: and when the last patterns are introduced into the growing fabric, the building is complete. Again, the patterns operate on the whole: they are not parts, which can be added—but relationships, which get imposed on the previous ones, in order to make more detail, more structure, more substance—so the substance of the building emerges

Though the word itself does not appear until the Exodus material, the concept is present already within the telling of the creation narrative. The pattern follows a path from the rude to the refined, the unshaped to the formed, and from the simple to the complex. The pattern moves through a sequence of events initiated by the Word of God. These events caused differentiation to occur through a process of separation and emplacement, resulting in order and boundary—and this was not exclusive to the Hebrews. Sacred places are a fundamental element of religion.⁴ The Greeks had well ordered places that were considered to be sacred, in fact, the *polis* began not so much as a territorial phenomenon as a religious and political precinct.

Boundary is a constituent element of place. Among the Hebrews there appears to have been little distinction between the constructs of *space* and *place*. Unlike the Greek philosophers, the Israelites did not begin with an abstract notion of *space*, but with the concrete concept of *place*—a locality connected with the events of history and God. Walter Brueggemann wrote, “The land for which Israel yearns and which it remembers is never unclaimed space but is always *a place with Yahweh*, a place well filled with memories of life with him and promise from him and vows to him.”⁵ William Dyrness concludes much the same thing when he writes that among the Hebrews, “The quality or significance, rather than the mere location, of the space mattered.”⁶ The Hebrews experienced the world in very personal terms.

gradually, but always as a whole, at each stage of its growth,” Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 459.

4. Douglas Davies, “Introduction: Raising the Issues,” in *Sacred Place*, ed. Jean Holm and John Bowker (New York: Continuum, 1994), 1.

5. Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 2nd ed., Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 5.

6. William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 71.

Evidence for this lies in the Hebrew words themselves. In the OT, the word used for a place is *Māqôm* (מָקוֹם). Stronger than the Greek *topos* (τόπος), it was understood as a place where something *is*.⁷ With this word there can be little room for abstraction. Ephraim Urbach explains, “*Māqôm* in connection with the manifestation of the Lord in the Bible, always refers to a concrete place, be it on earth or in heaven.”⁸ For the Hebrews every place was the stage upon which was played the events of life. Place ordered the world into manageable pieces and set people, events, and God in relationship. Every locality was defined in relation either to a thing found there, an event which took place there, or those living there.⁹ This is what Brueggemann calls *storied place*, place that gains significance and meaning because of the events that have taken place there—events that had their centre and cause in God.¹⁰ This is not necessarily unique to Israel, but secures this idea of place within a line of direct descent to the Church.

The question then becomes, what makes a place sacred? How does one place become more sacred than another? While the answer may be complex within the bailiwick of comparative religion, the answer is fairly straightforward within ancient Judaism: a place becomes sacred in the presence of God.¹¹ Reading the OT, the sacrality of place blossoms

7. In the ancient Greek literature, τόπος is a defined place, a specific territory. Often the term seems to denote the specific smaller part of a greater whole, with χώρα as the broader term. The idea of empty space is expressly called an impossibility by Aristotle, IV, 6-9, p. 213a, 12-217b, 28. τόπος is never infinite space as such and it never remains empty if a thing changes its location. It belongs to the idea of place to be always proper to certain things. *Topos* is seldom used of sacred places except in later Jewish and Christian usage. Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *TDNT*, 8.187ff.

8. Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), 68. See also Urbach’s meaningful discussion of τόπος and מָקוֹם in his chapter on “Nearness and Distance.” Urbach concludes that “so long as the epithet [*māqôm*] was employed, it denoted the immanence of God, His nearness to man and to the place where he was.” Urbach, *Sages*, 75.

9. Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *TDNT*, 8.194.

10. Brueggemann, *Land*, 198.

11. Seth Daniel Kunin, “Judaism,” in *Sacred Place*, ed. Jean Holm and John Bowker (New York: Continuum, 1994), 128.

with the emerging creation and remains an integral part of it. This is at variance with Mircea Eliade and others who assume the incipient bifurcation of space into sacred and profane. According to Eliade, while a myth relates a sacred history, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, it is also an incursion of the sacred into time and space. The earth is considered profane until the sacred is inserted: “Every creation is a divine work and hence an irruption of the sacred into the world.”¹² It is only through the mythological that the sacred comes to exist in the world, if only in the minds of those who believe. This perspective is also evident in the assessment of Don Michael Hudson: “If I read Gen 1-2 correctly, sacred space was everything this side of creation and profane space was the void relegated to nothingness by the act of creation.”¹³ By “this side of creation” he must mean the present world, though it is unclear what “the other side of creation” might be. Nevertheless, Genesis indicates that at the end of each day of creation, God embossed His imprimatur by pronouncing everything “good.” This leaves no place (as it were) for the profane “void relegated to nothingness by the act of creation.” Where is this profane void? To be sure, the Hebrew of Genesis indicates that “the earth was formless and void,” but it was not empty space.¹⁴ It was the rather disorganised, though necessary, first-step in the process of moving from the unformed to the formed.¹⁵ The void and formless state of the earth did not mean it was uncreated or without beginning, it was simply the world in its elementary form.¹⁶ We will explore this further in a discussion of the Primordial Pattern. The existence of the profane did not exist in Genesis until after the

12. Eliade, *Sacred & Profane*, 97.

13. Hudson, “Chaos to Cosmos,” 95.

14. Delitzsch: “The alliterative nouns *tohu vabohu*,...signify waste and empty (barren),” C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, vol. 1 of *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 48. See also Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., Wilhelm Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic.*, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), s.v. *בְּהוּ*.

15. H. C. Leuphold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 1:43.

16. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 48.

disobedience of mankind. God had declared everything to be good, everything was sacred. Thus, for the Hebrews (contrary to Eliade and Hudson), before sin and death entered the world, nothing could have been considered *profanus*.

Holiness

The importance of holiness for our consideration of sacred place is brought out by Sara Japhet in her article, *Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Space*. She writes,

In any consideration of the biblical conception of holiness, and, more specifically, the biblical conception of the sacred place, we must begin with the term used by the Bible itself: the root *qdš* and its derivatives, referring both to the deity and to the entire spectrum of phenomena and objects that are associated with him: sacred space, sacred time, sacred persons, sacred objects, and so on.¹⁷

Each of the six days of creation recorded in the Scriptures echoed the refrain, “And God saw that it was good.” In the consummation of the sixth day, the refrain is magnified: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was *very* good.”¹⁸ By applying the term “good” to everything within the limits of creation and adding the emphasis “*very* good” on the sixth day, there was no allowance for evil to exist within God’s handiwork.¹⁹ In this way God pronounced that the whole of the creation was not only excellent, it was holy, *qādôsh*:

The divine act of blessing was a real communication of powers of salvation, grace, and peace; and sanctifying was not merely declaring holy, but “communicating the attribute of holy,” “placing in a living relation to God, the Holy One, raising to a

17. Sara Japhet, “Some Biblical Concepts of Sacred Space,” in *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar and R.J. Zwi Werblowsky (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 56.

18. Genesis 1:31. The Hebrew word for ‘good’ is טוֹב. According to Harris, this term has five general areas of meaning: 1) practical, economic, material good, 2) abstract goodness such as desirability, pleasantness, and beauty, 3) quality or expense, 4) moral goodness, and 5) technical philosophical good. His analysis suggests that “the total context of early Gen is based upon a moral significance for the phrase,” R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 345–46. Delitzsch indicates that the term means “everything is perfect in its kind, so that every creature might reach the goal appointed by the Creator, and accomplish the purpose of its existence,” Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 67.

19. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 67. Cf. also Leuphold, *Genesis*, 99.

participation in the pure clear light of the holiness of God.”²⁰

Holiness, then, is to be understood as not simply one attribute among others, but as the “innermost reality to which all others are related.”²¹ From the Hebrew perspective, then, all space was created *sacred place*.

But it didn’t so remain for very long. An unholy blemish entered the primordial perfection and initiated a step backward toward the chaos. Following the Fall into sin, the earth was subjugated to death and decay.²² Only then was there the possibility of profane place. The initial holiness that was a part of the world and its contents was lost. Paradise was gone and mankind was relegated to a coarse existence separated from the intimacy they had enjoyed with their Creator. As a result, God initiated a plan for the reclamation of holiness: a plan that would appear in the theophanies and promises of God in the patriarchal period, gain a foothold in the time of the exodus and wilderness wandering, and find its fullness in the Promised Land and Temple.

The Hebrew root for holiness is *qādôsh* (קָדֹשׁ) and although it bears the idea of purity, it is better expressed by the idea of separation—not a separation *from* something but a separation *toward* something. People, places, events and things were distinguished by virtue of their separation to or for God.²³ Elmer Martens has observed, “No thing or person is holy in itself. Its holiness derives from being placed in relation to God.”²⁴ Conversely, that which is not connected with God came to be considered profane.²⁵

20. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 68–69.

21. George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:616.

22. Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:20.

23. See Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, s.v. קָדֹשׁ; and Elmer A. Martens, *God’s Design* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 93–96.

24. Martens, *God’s Design*, 95.

25. The Hebrew words generally imply a state of holiness from which someone or some thing may be made unholy, common, or profane. The Hebrew קָדַשׁ is used to mark the act of doing violence to the established

Holiness is a concept that is inextricably bound up with God. Whether a person, place, or thing, all holiness derived from being placed in relationship to Him. God's power extends over all: "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other."²⁶ He made the cosmos and all it contains and so has a relationship with them all, but God chose Israel to be His peculiar people and so they are holy to Him. Because of God's election, holiness may describe Israel's status.²⁷ However, while holiness may often refer to such a state or condition, "it is for ancient Israel primarily an activity and a speaking which eventuate in relationship."²⁸ There is a wide diversity in usage in the OT, which is not surprising since relationship is at the core of Israel's existence. Holiness defined Israel's relationship to God, their relationship to the world and other peoples, and it defined their relationship to one another. Relationship also defines for them the concept of place; it is this relationship which empowers the various boundaries in life, from the moral to the cultic. Thus, it was not just confined to the Land or the Temple precincts, but extended into the daily life of the people.²⁹ Understood in this way, Dyrness can assert, "From the start, then, there can be no split between the sacred and profane spheres of life; at least potentially every movement can be sacred unto the Lord."³⁰ Which is to say, for the Israelite, there really was no secular sphere of life.³¹

law of God (Zeph 3:4). Levitical laws were intended to protect against defilement. The word can also mean simply the opposite of holy, for example, a non-sacred place (Ezek 42:20; 48:15) or common bread as opposed to the bread of the Presence (1 Sam 21:5-6). Similarly *תִּטְּמָה* describes the activity of defilement through the transgression of laws and covenants. The adjective describes a godless man, a man who forgets God (Job 13:16) and lives contrary to all that is right (Job 17:8; Isa 9:17; 10:6).

26. Deuteronomy 4:39.

27. John E. Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 142.

28. Buttrick, *IDB*, 2:617.

29. Buttrick, *IDB*, 2:617.

30. Dyrness, *OT Theology*, 125.

31. If I understand Dyrness correctly, he is speaking of life within the boundary of Judaism. The secular

Sacred place arises out of a process of differentiation and emplacement resulting in the formation of boundaries. Boundaries and places were holy because of their intimate connection with the Creator. Holiness is a boundary which embraced every aspect of Israel's existence: spatial, relational, and cultic. It was part of the fabric of their daily life. Relationally, to be holy is to be connected with God and in the OT this was covenantal in nature: "Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy."³² In order to enter the sphere where the holy God dwells, one had to be in a state of cultic purity, or else the encounter with God would be destructive.³³ The ideas of purity and impurity found among the ancient Hebrews are closely related to holiness, but they are not identical.³⁴ Holiness found expression in the movements and workings of the created order because it was ontologically a part of it before the imposition of death and sin. For this reason it is one of the central concepts in the Bible.³⁵ Holiness is ultimately about a relationship to God and those places in which God chooses to manifest Himself tangibly. Much of the OT understanding of *qādôsh* (קָדֹשׁ) was taken up into the NT and so found its way into the Church, especially the holiness of place connected with the presence of God. John Inge understands this connection: "Holiness is built into the story of a place so that the Christian community can be built up in faith by association with it."³⁶ The Christian conception of holiness came from Judaism; for them, holiness was an elemental part

sphere existed after the Fall and was outside the boundaries of Israel. That is why Sara Japhet can say, "In the biblical view, the two realms, the sacred and the profane, co-exist, and it is both possible and necessary to separate them," Japhet, "Sacred Space," 55.

32. Leviticus 19:2.

33. Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 95.

34. The Land, for example, is declared to be holy and so must be kept clean and undefiled (Ezekiel 36:17). It may be profaned by becoming unclean. See Jacob Neusner, "The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43, no. 1 (March 1975): 16ff.

35. Japhet, "Sacred Space," 55.

36. John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 86.

of the primordial process by which God created the world.

The Primordial Pattern

Jews and Christians in the early centuries both accepted the Genesis narrative which explained how the world came into existence—a narrative often regarded today as *myth*. William Dyrness has cautioned that we must be aware of how ancient cultures understood themselves and the world around them in terms of *myth*—not myth in the contemporary sense of something as a “fiction or half-truth,” but in the broad sense in which historical events serve to unfold the world view of a people.³⁷ According to Brevard Childs, myth is “an expression of man’s understanding of reality.”³⁸ Myth expresses the power of reality that is communally experienced because it includes not only an event’s factual data but the inner meaning attached those facts.³⁹ This is the consummate Hebrew perspective. Grounded in the pithy language of everyday life, the Hebrew depictions of the world often seem quaint and unscientific, contrary to the bold modern notion that history and nature are objective—or the postmodern notion that history and nature are individually constructed realities.⁴⁰

Israel’s history was founded on real events—and it is history in which God ordered the events of creation.⁴¹ If it is true that ontology recapitulates cosmogeny, then the Jewish understanding of the creation event ripples throughout their history and into the very aspect of their being. Mary Douglas has argued that the creation myth in Genesis provided the Hebrews

37. Dyrness, *OT Theology*, 69.

38. Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1960), 17.

39. Dyrness, *OT Theology*, 69.

40. Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Turning Point Christian Worldview Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 47–48.

41. Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper, 1958), 138.

with a conceptual model for understanding the cosmos.⁴² Genesis 1:1-2:4 provided a cognitive framework upon which to hang their perceptions of reality. This understanding of the Jewish—and later, Christian—perspective on the world is a viewpoint that becomes manifest in their understanding of place, boundary and architecture.

The primordial pattern was the revelation of God which commenced with the creation of the heavens and the earth. When God began to speak the universe into existence, He was revealing something about His purpose and intent for the creation. The first chapter of Genesis begins with God creating the heavens and the earth. “In the different acts of creation we perceive indeed an evident progress from the general to the particular, from the lower to the higher orders of creatures, or rather a steady advance towards more and more concrete forms.”⁴³ It was an orderly process of refinement moving the unformed earth toward even greater order—even the most agnostic observer must concede that the world is fundamentally ordered. God fixed a sacred order upon the cosmos, the transgression of which reversed course and moved everything backward toward inchoate disorder and formlessness.⁴⁴

The comprehensibility and congruity of the world was located in the will of God. It was both the limit and source of the created order and nothing existed apart from it.⁴⁵ “There is nothing belonging to the composition of the universe, either in material or form, which had an existence out of God prior to this divine act in the beginning.”⁴⁶ Everything centred upon His will enacted through the process of creation, a pattern marked by differentiation and emplacement.

42. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Pelican Books (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 41–57.

43. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 38.

44. W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 13.

45. Dyreness, *OT Theology*, 73.

46. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 47.

The first distinctions came into being at the speaking of God. The universe was described in the Masoretic text as being “formless and void” (תהו ובהו).⁴⁷ The LXX is probably more clear with ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, which indicates that the earth was “unseen and unpolished.” Unseen because as yet there was no light and unpolished because God had not yet spoken order upon it. Either way, this was not empty space.⁴⁸ “The chaotic mass in which the earth and the firmament were still undistinguished, unformed, as it were unborn, was a heaving deep, an abyss of waters, and this deep was wrapped in darkness.”⁴⁹ It was from this amorphous state of the earth, already in place, that God began to bring order. The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.⁵⁰ This ‘hovering’ movement is indicated in the text by the Hebrew word *rāḥāp* (רחף). It describes a quick, non-linear movement back and forth, a quivering or trembling.⁵¹ This movement affected the process of differentiation.⁵² God’s principal activity was one of separation and division. In this way the primordial matter

47. Genesis 1:2.

48. St. Basil said that the earth was not only invisible, it was still incomplete. The earth was invisible for two reasons: first, man the spectator was not yet created and so could not see it, and, second, the earth was submerged below the waters because they had not yet been gathered “into their own places” and so was unseen. Basil also added, “As light did not yet exist, and as the earth lay in darkness, because of the obscurity of the air above it, it should not astonish us that for this reason Scripture calls it ‘invisible’,” St. Basil, *The Hexaemeron*, Homily II, 1.

49. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 48.

50. Genesis 1:2.

51. This back and forth movement of creation is not very different from the motion of creation described by Physicist Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003). St. Basil explained that the movement of the Holy Spirit upon the waters was to be likened to a bird which covers her eggs with her body in order to impart to them “vital force” from her own warmth, Basil, *The Hexaemeron*, Homily II, 6. Cf. also Milton: “Thus God the heav’n created, thus the earth, Matter unformed and void: darkness profound Covered th’ abyss: but on wat’ry calm His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread, And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth...” John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited with an introduction and notes by John Leonard, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2000), 156.

52. A similarity may be observed between the pattern of human speech and God’s creative speaking. The human voice originates as air moving across the vocal chords causing them to vibrate. It is the vibration of the vocal chords that produces sound. This elemental sound is further clarified, defined and ordered by the formations of the tongue and lips. In this way the sounds of language are produced in such a way as to be received and comprehended by the hearer. In a similar way, the Spirit of God moves over the deep and the speaking of God brings to the unformed material differentiation and order.

was expanded, clarified and shaped—it occupied space. As the earth was formed and populated with living things, space ripened into place. Time was marked by celestial and terrestrial movements. The fabric of the universe was constituted by time and place; everything within the cosmos was imbued with these realities and belonged to them.⁵³ Thus to have place in the cosmos is to have dimension, physical and temporal qualities, and locality.

Matter was created and differentiated, divided and set into place. This resulted in boundaries. “Boundary not only marks differences, it creates them. A boundary separates and delineates, thereby making a difference where otherwise there would be no difference.”⁵⁴ Boundaries have to do with the underlying structures of the universe. At first, the boundaries were essentially *spatial* in character. According to the sacred Scriptures, every creative word uttered by God brought about separation and division of the elements. “God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light...,” records the first book of Scripture, “and God *separated the light from the darkness*.”⁵⁵ Light and darkness are not usually associated with spatiality. But the separation of light and darkness suggests that regions for the light and darkness have also come into being. For there to be a physical separation between the two implies that each inhabits its own place or locality. Along with this there is the intimation of a boundary between the two realms forming a distinct relationship between the two.

With the separation and subsequent emplacement of both light and darkness, there also came to exist between them not only a physical boundary but also a temporal one.⁵⁶ Each of

53. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, Gifford lectures at Aberdeen, 1992–1993 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 113.

54. Leonard L. Thompson, “Mapping the Apocalyptic World,” in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces*, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housely (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 116.

55. Genesis 1:3, 4. Both the Hebrew לָדָד and the Greek διαχωρίζω mean to ‘separate’ or ‘distinguish’ one thing from another, to ‘divide into parts’. Interestingly, in Exodus 26:33, God required the making of the veil for the tabernacle to separate between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. While the Hebrew uses לָדָד, the Greek uses διορίζω meaning ‘to draw a boundary through,’ ‘delimit’. Here the action of division is connected with that of boundary.

56. Scientific theories beginning with Einstein indicate that time and space are not really separate

the days of creation were circumscribed with the refrain “and there was evening and there was morning.”⁵⁷ It was only on the fourth day that both the temporal and spatial boundaries of light and darkness were fully realised: “God placed the greater and lesser lights of the heavens to govern the day and the night and to “*separate* the light from the darkness.”⁵⁸ The two were intrinsically connected. “Thine is the day and Thine is the night;” chanted the psalmist, “Thou hast perfected the light of the sun. Thou has made all the borders (ὅρια) of the earth; summer and spring hast Thou fashioned.”⁵⁹ As the heavenly bodies synchronously move in relation to each other, the boundaries of days and months, seasons and years may be enjoyed and measured.

Another temporal boundary came into existence when God rested on the seventh day. God separated the seventh day from all the others by ceasing from His activity. This became the basis for the divine injunction that Israel remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, that is, separate.⁶⁰ Eilberg-Schwartz has said that “in observing the Sabbath, Israelites affirm the basic distinction between sacred and profane time, a distinction God also established at creation.”⁶¹ Though his purpose is to find support for the classifications in Leviticus by looking for their source in the creation story, his statement about sacred and profane time misses the mark. The creation was declared “good” by God at the conclusion of each day and

entities but aspects of the same reality. See Albert Einstein, *Relativity*, trans. Robert W. Lawson (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1961) and Greene, *Universe*.

57. Basil the Great considered evening and morning to be “a common boundary line of day and night” Andrew Louth, ed., *Genesis 1–11*, vol. I of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament*, gen. ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 7. Philo speaks in a similar manner when he writes that the boundaries of morning and evening separated the light from the darkness and prevent them from clashing together. Philo, *On the Creation*, trans. C. D. Yonge, IX.

58. Genesis 1:18.

59. Psalm 73:16-17 (LXX).

60. Exodus 20:8-11; 31:14-15; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3 and Deuteronomy 5:12.

61. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, “Creation and Classification in Judaism: From Priestly to Rabbinic Conceptions,” *History of Religions* 26, no. 4 (May 1987): 362.

affirmed to be “very good” on the last day. There could be no profane time—just as there was no profane place—at this early point in the world’s history. But a temporal distinction is made nonetheless. The seventh day was delimited by the activity of God—He *rested*—which provided the exemplar for Israel’s sanctifying the Sabbath.

Similar differentiations occurred on the other days of creation. For example, on the second day, “God said, ‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it *separate* the waters from the waters.’”⁶² It has been correctly observed that this expanse, or *firmamentum*, was “placed as a wall of separation (מַכְדִּיל) in the midst of the waters, and divided them into upper and lower waters.”⁶³ The firmament itself acted as a boundary surrounding the earth, dividing between the heavens above and the earth below.⁶⁴ Following the movement of separation each of the waters was given its appropriate place in relation to the other with an expansive boundary in between.

On the third day, God gathered together the waters below the expanse and caused dry land to appear.⁶⁵ Again, the act of differentiation through the process of separation and emplacement created a boundary between the elements. The rivers and oceans were given their locality as was the dry earth—both shared a common edge. In this way God created the

62. Genesis 1:6.

63. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 52.

64. Delitzsch has said that the Hebrew מַכְדִּיל means to spread out and so refers to the spreading out of the air as an atmosphere over the earth. He says that there is nothing to warrant the idea that “the heavens were regarded as a solid mass” Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 52–53. However, as noted in James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), no. 8385, “though to the modern mind the expanse of the sky is a void of empty space, it is perceived as a ‘solid’ space.” The LXX renders the Hebrew with στερέωμα which has reference to a ‘solid body’ and hence also the Latin, *firmamentum*. While I find Delitzsch’s position unconvincing, neither does the evidence of the Greek require the atmosphere to be conceived as a solid, particularly as the writers of the early Church do not necessarily understand it so. Whatever the density of the ‘expanse’ in Genesis, it nonetheless functions as a boundary.

65. Genesis 1:9-10.

place in which living things could live and move and have their being.⁶⁶ The *Prayer of Manasseh*, a short penitential psalm attributed to the son of Israel's king, Hezekiah, lyrically magnifies the Lord who established such extents: "He who made the heaven and the earth with all their beauty; He who *bound* the sea and established it by the command of his word."⁶⁷

On the fourth and fifth days, the earth was furnished with living things created and separated according to their *kind*: vegetation, animals, birds and fish.⁶⁸ Leuphold has called this "a peculiar and definite limitation," noting that "Nature itself here is seen to have definite limits fixed which appear as constant laws or as insurmountable barriers."⁶⁹ The objections of Darwinists notwithstanding, all living creatures have their fixed limits, like a genetic hedgerow which cannot naturally be crossed.

Throughout the Genesis account, differentiation reveals boundaries, resulting in the locality and edge of place. This suggests that they are essential to the fibre of the cosmos. This may be illustrated when God queried Job concerning His setting in place the foundations and underpinnings of the earth—and their consequent boundaries:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who enclosed the sea with doors when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; when I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and I placed boundaries on it and set a

66. Acts 17:28.

67. The *Prayer of Manasseh* in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, vol. 2 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 634.

68. The Hebrew לָמַד (LXX = γένος), usually translated 'kind', is only loosely related to the term 'species' in the scientific classification system used by modern biologists and zoologists. See Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, 503. This is no small issue since contemporary scientists, themselves, have difficulty specifically defining 'species'. Darwin never defined the term and Bessey said that "species have no actual existence in nature. They are mental concepts and nothing more," Charles E. Bessey, "The Taxonomic Aspect of the Species Question," *The American Naturalist* 42, no. 496 (April 1908): 218 (The University of Chicago Press). See also the discussion in John W. Klotz, *Genes, Genesis, and Evolution* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1972), 48–81 and Leon J. Cole, "Each After His Kind," *Science* 93, no. 2412 (28 March 1941): 289–93. What is clear is that God created living things and set them within particular boundaries identified in the Scriptures as 'kinds'.

69. Leuphold, *Genesis*, 67–68.

bolt and doors, and I said, ‘Thus far you shall come, but no farther; and here shall your proud waves stop’?⁷⁰

The whole character of this poetic interrogation is one of limitation, place and boundary.

Words like ‘measurements’, ‘enclosed’, ‘womb’, ‘swaddling band’, ‘stop’, and of course, the word boundary itself, all express that God made a universe full of edges and limitations.⁷¹

The same understanding of the cosmos is found within the Psalter as it is written of the waters, “Thou appointest a bound that they shall not pass, neither return to cover the earth.”⁷²

This fundamental *boundedness* of the world is variously expressed in the Old Testament:

The Lord set *bounds* for the sea (Job 38.10, Jer. 5.22) and *ordinances* for the heavens (Job 38.33; *bounds* Ps. 148.6), *bounds* to the length of human life (Job 14.5) and a *set limit* (Job 14.13), *drew* a circle on the face of the deep (Prov. 8.27), he *described* a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness (Job 26.10), assigned to the sea its *limit* and *marked out* the foundations of the earth (Prov. 8.29), made a *decree* for the rain (Job 28.26).⁷³

Within the six days of creation God differentiated the substance and contents of the earth and gave them place. Through separation and division, God gave each element and created thing its unique character and quality, its *proprium*—and to each created thing was given its limit,

70. Job 38:4-11. The dating of Job is difficult at best and the theories are many and varied. A helpful summary of the differing viewpoints may be found in Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 319ff. Young says that the traditional view has the book composed some time during the reign of Solomon. Driver and Gray assert that Job was “certainly not a product of the earliest periods of Hebrew literature” Samuel R. Driver and George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Job* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), lxvii. Apart from the issues related to the date of writing is the dating of the events contained in the book which, according to the opinion of Young, occurred during the time of the patriarchs.

71. In this instance, the Hebrew for ‘boundary’, חֵק, has the implication of being a smaller bounded part of a larger whole. The masculine noun is from the root חָקַח which means to ‘scratch’ or ‘engrave’. Since it was the practice among the ancients to engrave laws upon slabs of stone, the word came to be used for a law or statute. Thus, it may be used also, as here (cf. Job 28:26, Ps. 148:6, Jer. 5:22 and Prov 8:29), for the natural laws which ‘bound’ the seas. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, 316–17. Barker also suggests that the belief in an engraved state was widespread among the Jews and the stability of the creation was due to these ‘engravings’ of the fixed order Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 180–81. Clearly, this points to boundaries which God marked and set in place.

72. Psalm 103, LXX.

73. Barker, *High Priest*, 271.

its place, and its boundary. Separation and emplacement necessitate the existence of boundaries—indeed, place cannot exist without them.

The way in which God created was a process of bringing organisation out of the rudimentary *materiae*. The primordial pattern of the world was characterised by *order*. Through the process of differentiation and emplacement, order came out of chaos and place came into being. More than simply a spatial, three-dimensional locality, place among the Hebrews always had the Lord as its cause and centre. The creational pattern promulgated the elements of place which included boundaries, edges that exist between the differentiated components of the world. These imbued both Israel's religion and culture. Boundary and place were the *sine qua non* of Jewish cosmology.

Paradise

The first identifiable place in the Jewish Tanakh is the garden prepared by God for man and woman to live. The whole context of human life was set within the easy yoke of place and its attendant boundaries. The garden was both home and temple and it was the setting for the daily experience of their Creator. The garden God planted was in the east, in a land called Eden.⁷⁴ God established the man and the woman there.⁷⁵ Every indication is that the garden, following the Persian conception, was an enclosed place surrounded by a hedge or wall, that is to say, by a boundary.⁷⁶ It was not an unkempt place but one of order in which all

74. גֶּדֶן meaning 'delight' or 'joy'. Harris suggests that there is more indicated in Genesis than simple geography: "Eden symbolised a state of unbroken fellowship between God and man. The expulsion from the garden was more than a physical move. It indicated that man had sinned," Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, 647.

75. Genesis 2:8.

76. The Hebrew גֶּדֶן means a garden, a place protected by a wall or hedge, according to Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, 168–69. The LXX uses παράδεισος, hence paradise, meaning any formal garden or enclosed park Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, comps., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Ninth edition "With a Supplement, 1996" [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996], s.v. παράδεισος. The word in Hebrew theology at the time of Christ could refer to a) the original Garden of Eden, b) that garden as the abode of the righteous dead before the resurrection, and c) that garden as the eternal home of the righteous, Buttrick, *IDB*, 3:655–56. For a history of Persian walled gardens and their influence in the east, see Mehdi Khansari, M. Reza Moghtader, and Minouch Yavari, *The*

life was able to thrive under the guiding care of the man and the woman.⁷⁷ It was a holy place where God Himself walked with them in the cool of the day.⁷⁸ It was within this circumscribed habitat that God deigned to draw nigh and have converse with His foremost creatures. This was, of course, before the Fall into sin and the subjugation of the world to death.⁷⁹ There was nothing to obstruct man from God. Here God's purpose and intention for the creation was manifest, to be present among His people.⁸⁰

Paradise had more than physical boundaries. Distinction is made between the man and the woman from the rest of the creatures. The animals were brought to Adam in order that he might name them, and the man and the woman were given rule over the rest of the world.⁸¹ This boundary sets the man and the woman not only apart from the rest of creation but in a hierarchical relationship above it. God limited their use of the garden through a single charge: "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."⁸²

The creation of the woman from the side of the man was another example of the primordial pattern of differentiation and emplacement. God separated from the man the woman and gave her place, forming her into a distinct being. This sets the stage for the generational rhythm of children leaving their parents to be joined in marriage.⁸³ In this case,

Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1998).

77. "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it." Genesis 2:15.

78. Genesis 3:9.

79. Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 8:20-21.

80. Exodus 29:45.

81. Genesis 1:26, 28.

82. Genesis 2:16-17.

83. Genesis 2:24.

familial boundaries change with maturity and new ones are formed.

Place and boundary were part of the cosmos because they were part of the pattern of creation. Paradise was criss-crossed with physical and relational boundaries that gave order to life and established a holy place in which God would enter and commune with Adam and Eve. It is for this reason that many have understood the garden to be associated with the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle/Temple.⁸⁴ Fletcher-Louis has stated the widely accepted thesis that the Garden of Eden was the first archetypal Temple and the model for all subsequent temples in Israel:

Both accounts of creation in Genesis 1-3 describe the contents and order of creation in terms of ancient temple building in general and Israel's peculiar vision of sacred space in particular. 'The whole universe must be regarded as the highest and, in truth, the holy temple of God' (Philo, *De spec. leg.* I:66) just as the cult (the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple) is a microcosm of the whole of creation.⁸⁵

The Tabernacle/Temple was a materialisation of Israel's understanding of the primordial pattern and structure of the cosmos. Israel's worship realised the reclaimed order and stability of the creation sundered by the first transgression.

The Scriptures also make other connections with the primordial garden. The prophet Isaiah compares Zion (Jerusalem) to the Garden of Eden as he describes the eschatological peace in the time of the Messiah: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."⁸⁶ Delitzsch explains:

It is a prophecy, however, the realisation of which is to be expected on this side of the boundary between time and eternity...when the Son of David enters upon the full

84. W.D. Davies, *Dimension*, 1.

85. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "God's Image, His Cosmic Temple and the High Priest: Towards an Historical and Theological Account of the Incarnation," in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 82. This has also been argued by Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988) and was also the view of Philo and Josephus.

86. Isaiah 11:9.

possession of His royal inheritance, the peace of paradise will be renewed.⁸⁷

Remembering to consider Hebrew patterns of thought, Dyrness says, “The quality or significance, rather than the mere location, of the space mattered, and since the quality of Zion and Eden were similar they could be compared.”⁸⁸ Both were places in which God caused His presence to dwell, both were places bounded and set apart from other less holy places. Paradise was the context in which Adam and Eve experienced life and its imagery sustained the future hopes of Israel for a renewed place in which to dwell with their God.⁸⁹

Circular Ascent

Sara Japhet has astutely observed the kernel of sacred place as it is given within the Scriptures: “Any place can *become* sacred, but no place *is* sacred.”⁹⁰ Neither, it should be added, does any place necessarily *remain* sacred. Japhet’s observation at once combines the sacrality of place with God while averting the pitfall of linking God with place. A place becomes sacred when there is “a direct and immediate connection with God.”⁹¹ This occurs when God locally reveals Himself. Such encounters inevitably infuse both a character and structure not unlike the process of Creation itself. For Israel, the cosmos consisted of a ringlike pattern, concentric circles of holiness. But more than that, there was the idea of ascent as one approached the presence of God—each circular level of holiness being higher in elevation than the previous. This pattern underlies the OT reclamation of holiness after the Fall. God increasingly differentiated between the world and His people, drawing them (and

87. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, vol. 7 of *Commentary on the Old Testament*, F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 285. Though Oswalt offers a different interpretation of the passage it is not incompatible with the imagery of Paradise, John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 283–84.

88. Dyrness, *OT Theology*, 71.

89. Brueggemann, *Land*, 156.

90. Japhet, “Sacred Space,” 64.

91. Japhet, “Sacred Space,” 59.

raising them) ever closer to Himself. The process of reclamation was the result of God's continued desire to dwell among His creation. The segmental ascent culminated in Israel's entering the Land and reached its zenith in the sacred place of the Temple. Located within the Moriah mountain range, the Temple is believed to have occupied the highest point on the Ophel Ridge north of the City of David.⁹²

Order Unraveled

The pattern of creation which ensued through the process of differentiation and emplacement brought into existence a beautiful world in which God could walk and communicate with man. However, that which God had proclaimed good and holy did not persist. The pattern of creation was interrupted by the Fall into sin. God was holy, the world was holy and man was holy no longer. Adam and Eve had become profane and they could not share the same place with God.

Another boundary had been crossed. "The temptation then was more a seduction to cross the boundaries of the sacred which would in turn imbue existence with profane space."⁹³ There was no profane space in the creation before the serpent had succeeded in his deception. The holy had been profaned and Paradise was lost. Following the trespass, Adam was forced to leave the Garden and cultivate the ground from which he was taken. They toiled in a land of thorns and thistles with death (another boundary) awaiting their end.

With the fall into sin and their refusal to repent, the man and the woman had to leave Paradise. They became unfit for the holy place which God had prepared for them and His mercy sent them forth. Man left the garden and a barrier was set so they could not return. Man lost his participation in the sacred.⁹⁴ God drew a line between the holy and unholy, a

92. Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 179.

93. Hudson, "Chaos to Cosmos," 95.

94. Genesis 3:25.

separation between the sacred and profane. The dividing line between paradise and the places outside was impassable: “[God] placed the cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”⁹⁵

With the primordial pattern of creation spoiled by Adam’s sin, God began the process of reclaiming that which was lost. The intention of God to dwell with humankind was unchanged. God put into play a process by which He would visit His presence upon the earth and draw all people unto Himself. According to Martens, there are two aspects of salvation: *deliverance*, which involves God’s act of intervention, especially in a crisis, and *blessing*, which is His continuous activity in non-crisis times.⁹⁶ While both aspects are to be found in the pages of Genesis, it is God’s activity of blessing which fills the account of creation. However, following the Fall into sin, it was God’s salvation through deliverance which sought to restore the creation. “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,” prophesied Isaiah. This One would have the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Him and through Him, life will be paradise once again. Leder summarises,

So, Scripture describes two epochs of wholly consecrated, and thus clean, space and time. One, the initial and abiding structure for creation, which was subsequently polluted; the other, the full consecration of reality that exists in God’s presence in heaven but that is yet to come for the entire creation. In between these two epochs, the nations, all the descendants of Adam and Eve, continue to defile the space and time consecrated by God’s word and presence.⁹⁷

The Ark of Salvation

God commenced a program of restoration by His mercy and redemption.⁹⁸ The boundary of death had excluded mankind from the primordial Temple in which man could

95. Genesis 3:24.

96. Martens follows the distinction made by Claus Westermann, *Segen in der Bibel und Im Handeln der Kirche*, trans. Keith Crim, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

97. Arie C. Leder, “Christian Worship in Consecrated Space and Time,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 32, no. 1 (1997): 254–55.

98. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 9.

stand in the presence of His Creator. Now God would initiate a course that would result in a new Temple in which God and man could meet. The restoration would not only include human beings, but the whole creation. This was not only a hope of the Jews as proclaimed by Isaiah, but later also of the Christians. St. Paul wrote to the Romans, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”⁹⁹ The deliverance of the creation from its bondage to death and decay would be a restoration of place and its boundaries.

The account of Noah’s Ark and the Flood offers an epic example of God at work in the reclamation of the spoiled pattern of place. Through the destruction of all living flesh, God would cleanse the earth and by an act of deliverance save only the righteous Noah and his family, who found favour with God.¹⁰⁰

God determined to bring a flood over the earth in order to destroy all that exists: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.”¹⁰¹ God called Noah to build an ark out of wood in preparation for the flood He would send upon the land. The wood of the ark became the spatial boundary dividing between those whom God would save and those who were doomed. The ark manifested a boundary in a very architectural way. The physical-spatial boundary of the ark was a response to the relational delineation between the family of eight on the inside and doomed masses on the outside.¹⁰² At the boundary between the righteous and the unrighteous was formed the wall of separation. The hull was to be made

99. Romans 8:20-21.

100. Genesis 6:8-9.

101. Genesis 6:11.

102. Barker has associated the floodwaters in Genesis 6 with the Pythagorean Unlimited or ‘Unbound’ as she renames it: “The ‘Unbound’ was the ‘deep’, which flooded over the earth in the time of Noah as a result of human wickedness, but did not exist in the new creation of John’s vision: ‘A new heaven and a new earth...and the sea was no more’ (Rev 21:1). The chaotic flood was the realm of evil and setting a boundary for it is a sign of divine power,” Barker, *High Priest*, 272.

of gopher wood, covered inside and out with pitch.¹⁰³ Here is an example, albeit by the command of God, where a man-made structure arose at an established boundary. To this point in the Scriptures, all of the boundaries have formed the edges of God-created places. With the ark of Noah, this place of deliverance was formed by man with a tangible wooden structure at the edge, between the inside and the outside. This pattern of reclamation will find expression in the Tabernacle/Temple structures in which the walls, whether by fabric or stone, formed the sacred periphery of place.

House of God

There are two theophanies of God in the OT that deserve mention. Though they do not elicit an architectural response, they nonetheless bring out some important aspects of sacred place germane to the topic at hand. The first occurred as Jacob travelled on his way to Haran for the purpose of procuring a wife from his mother's brother, Laban.¹⁰⁴ Along the journey, Jacob stopped to rest for the night in a certain place and had a dream. It was a dream of a ladder extending from the earth into heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. Coincident with this vision, Jacob heard God reiterate the promise of blessed progeny and future land bestowed on his father Isaac:

And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."¹⁰⁵

In response to this theophany, Jacob set up a pillar of stone and renamed the place *Beth-el*

103. The kind of tree meant by "gopher-wood" is unknown. The phrase only occurs in Gen 6:14 and no cognates have been found. Buttrick, *IDB*, s.v. 'gopher wood'. Some say that the root is from the Greek word "Cyprus," a common wood used for shipbuilding in the ancient world, Leuphold, *Genesis*, 270.

104. Genesis 28:2.

105. Genesis 28:13-15.

(בֵּית־אֵל, ὅκος θεοῦ), that is, “House of God.” He exclaimed, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it... This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”¹⁰⁶ This *axis mundi*, as it is called by Eliade and others, delineated a sacred place from its mundane surroundings. To indicate the holiness of the place, Jacob “took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar (מִצְבֵּה) and poured oil on the top of it.”¹⁰⁷ He then declared, “This stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house.”¹⁰⁸ The response to the presence of God, in this case, prompted a liturgical action (the pouring of oil) accompanied by a vow and setting up the stone as a pillar to commemorate the place.¹⁰⁹ Augustin Ioan asserts, “To re-consecrate a space, to inflict upon it a new semantics, it has to become physically marked.”¹¹⁰ Though minimal, setting up a stone pillar was, perhaps, the best ‘architecture’ a nomad could offer. Important here is the fact that the designation of Bethel as a holy place was due to a vision of God, and the sacrality of place continued not because of God’s abiding presence but because of the lingering memory of the event. God later used this place in reference to Himself: “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.”¹¹¹ Whenever someone designated such a place as a result of a divine experience, the place was only holy because it was so considered by men. The divine presence no longer

106. Genesis 28:16-17.

107. Genesis 28:18-19.

108. Genesis 28:22.

109. Leuphold notes, “Since the pillar marked a holy experience, it was in this instance consecrated by the pouring out of oil upon it (cf. Exod. 40:9-11).... There is the possibility that the oil also gave expression to the idea of sacrifice and was offered as sacrifice, for in 35:14 in consecrating the Bethel altar Jacob poured a drink offering and oil upon the altar,” H. C. Leuphold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 2:777.

110. Radu Dragon and Ioan Augustin, *Symbols and Language in Sacred Christian Architecture*, trans. Cristina Ilina Salajanu, Studies in Religion and Society (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 42.

111. Genesis 31:13.

remained beyond the theophany, yet the place was considered sacred, not essentially, but in the minds of those who were aware of its occurrence. The purpose of the pillar was not only to mark the place, but to stand as a witness of the event and perpetuate its remembrance.

The same is true of the place which Jacob named Peniel on the river Jabbok. There Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord and acquired the new name Israel¹¹² Genesis records that “Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.’”¹¹³ Once again, in response to a theophany, the location of the event was designated as holy and given an appropriate name change. These were memorial locations which remained holy sites because of the events which took place there. Unlike a temple where the deity dwells within, there was no abiding presence of God in the place—though, potentially, He could always return.

The promise of future land also comes into play. Abram was called by God to go to a land which would be revealed to him: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”¹¹⁴ After tarrying a while longer in Haran, Abram and his wife Sarai along with Abram’s nephew, Lot, took all of their possessions and settled in the land of Canaan at a place called Shechem.¹¹⁵ It was there that Abram first heard the words of God that would resound to him again and again throughout his days: “To your descendants I will give this land.”¹¹⁶ In response to the voice of God, Abram set up an altar to the Lord in that place. Isaac and Jacob, too, received the same promise that the land would become theirs. Even at his death, Jacob affirmed that though he would perish in Egypt, God

112. The name Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) means “He who strives with God,” Genesis 32:28.

113. Genesis 32:30. The name Peniel (פְּנִיֵּאל) means the “face of God.”

114. Genesis 12:1.

115. Genesis 12:5-6.

116. Genesis 12:7.

would bring his descendants back into the land which God had promised.¹¹⁷

Beale has brought out the significance of these events:

Though they built no buildings, these patriarchal sacred spaces can be considered ‘sanctuaries’ along with the lines comparable to the first non-architectural sanctuary in the Garden of Eden. These informal sanctuaries in Genesis pointed then to Israel’s later Tabernacle and Temple from which Israel was to branch out over all the earth.¹¹⁸

Sacred Encampment

The patterns of differentiation and emplacement were not absent in the process of reclamation. As God delivered the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, the boundary lines were drawn between Israel and the rest of the world, between those who were a part of God’s people and those who were not.

The intersection of the sacred and profane is evidenced once again on Horeb, the mountain of God. Moses, seeing a burning bush unconsumed, drew near the base of the mountain and heard the voice of God say, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.”¹¹⁹ Once again it is the presence of God that makes a place “holy” and this is signalled by the requirement to remove his sandals.¹²⁰ It is, to draw again from Eliade, an “irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.”¹²¹ Here, the architectural element is the mountain and its precincts, not made by human hands.¹²² But Moses also hid

117. Genesis 48:21.

118. Gregory Beale, “The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and Its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple,” in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 203.

119. Exodus 3:5.

120. “The place of the burning bush was holy because of the presence of the holy God, and putting off the shoes was intended to express not merely respect for the place itself, but that reverence which the inward man (Eph. iii.16) owes to the holy God” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 439–40).

121. Eliade, *Sacred & Profane*, 26.

122. See the article “Temple without Hands,” in David Noel Freedman, *Ancient Israelite History and Religion*, vol. 1 of *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation*, ed. John R. Huddleston (Grand Rapids, MI:

his face, “for he was afraid to look at God.”¹²³ No man could look upon the face of God and survive.¹²⁴ Clearly, the interlocution between the sacred and profane is not without danger or consequence. The profane must be purified to meet with the sacred. For this is added the requirement of sacrifice. “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”¹²⁵ It is precisely here that a Temple language begins to materialise.

God said, “I am the Lord your God, who has separated (לָרָא, δισπρίζω) you from the peoples;”¹²⁶ and again through the prophet, “Let not the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, ‘The Lord has utterly separated (לָרָא, ἀφορίζω) me from His people.”¹²⁷ And yet even God’s holy people can separate themselves from their God by their sin, “But your iniquities have separated (לָרָא, διίστημι) you from your God.”¹²⁸

Firmly established as the people of God, He established a covenant with the people through Moses on Sinai. The decalogue placed boundaries around their behaviour, including their relationship with God and each other and the nations around them. God gave them limitations and boundary for their worship and established the place of His presence among them.

In the Scriptures, sacred place became focussed upon the camp of Israel and the Tabernacle at the centre of the camp during the period of the Exodus. Within the OT the tension so characteristic of the later Sages never seems to surface over God’s immanence and

Eerdmans, 1997), 330ff.

123. Exodus 3:6.

124. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 440.

125. Hebrews 9:22.

126. Leviticus 20:24.

127. Isaiah 56:3.

128. Isaiah 59:2.

His transcendence. Both of these qualities are found juxtaposed and Israel affirmed both without any qualms. For example, R.E. Clements observes:

Quite frequently we discover that Yahweh's dwelling in heaven, and his presence on Mount Zion are mentioned in the same psalm, without any consciousness of contradiction between the two. There is in fact little attempt throughout the Psalter to rationalise, or 'theologise', the inherent tension between the earthly and the heavenly, the immanent deity on earth and the transcendent in heaven.¹²⁹

Israel clearly had no scruples either about God's immanence or transcendence. Concern over this issue came later during the time of the Sages following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Only in the later Rabbinic writings is there an issue over too close a link between Creator and creation. Ephraim Urbach expressed their thinking: "The Omnipotent God, the Creator of the universe, who governs it and cares for His creatures, is necessarily removed from the world, being above and beyond it; but in the same measure the concept of Providence incorporates God's nearness."¹³⁰ However distant God may have been, He revealed Himself to Israel in particular ways, at particular times, and in specific places.

We must take note, however, that some scholars detect a difference between the idea of God 'dwelling' and His 'causing His Name to dwell'. For example, in Deuteronomy it is the glory of God (כְּבוֹד, *Kābōd*) which is present rather than God's actual physical presence.¹³¹ Those who tread the lines of source identification and criticism find two distinct perspectives at work. On the one hand is the so called P literature in the OT which has no apparent compunction identifying the divine presence in an anthropomorphic, corporeal sense—the Lord actually dwelled in the Tabernacle. On the other hand, the Deuteronomic writers apparently intend to defend God's transcendence. The preferred phrase in Deuteronomy is that

129. R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 75.

130. Urbach, *Sages*, 38.

131. Deuteronomy 12:5, 11, 21; 14:23. The physical presence of God being understood in anthropomorphic terms.

God “causes His name to dwell.” Either way, the Israelites believed that something of the Divine presence was in their midst and it wholly affected their life in the wilderness.

Holiness and purity are related to the presence of God in the OT according to a system of concentric circles: the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle/Temple occupying the centre, then the sanctuary, then the court, then the Levites, then clans, the camp and the rest of the earth.¹³² Such language puts us immediately into the realm of boundary. Even though the Jews understood the world in terms of holiness, the fact that they made distinctions in levels of holiness made for the existence of boundaries. Boundaries are often understood as “limits” separating one thing from another. And yet among the Hebrews it appears to be not separation between dissimilar, but annular edges defining levels of intensity. Thus, as it is later codified in the *Mishna*, the wall of Jerusalem forms a boundary, “The cities surrounded by a wall are more holy than it [the land]... Within the wall [of Jerusalem] is more holy than they...”¹³³ The closer one moves toward the Temple and the presence of God, the more holy the place becomes. Within Israel, there was no sacred/secular distinctions, only holy and more holy.

Writing on sacred place within Judaism, Seth Kunin has proposed understanding sacred places on two interrelated levels: the ideological and the functional. The functional level was a response to the Diaspora following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and finds expression today in the synagogue and the Jewish home. More relevant to our purpose, however, is the ideological level described by Kunin. This level is based on what Kunin calls an “abstract understanding of the structure of reality as it is realised in the Israelite and Rabbinic understanding of geography and in the structure of the Temple and *mishkan* described in biblical and Rabbinic texts.”¹³⁴ Drawn from OT texts, this abstract structure of

132. Because there are those who view the Tabernacle as a priestly fiction from a later period, there is a discussion on its status in Chapter 3. The position taken here is that it was a real entity.

133. Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 894.

134. Kunin, “Judaism,” 115.

reality is most clearly seen in the spatial geography of the Israelite camp described in Exodus and Leviticus. The structure of sacred place is, first, a division between the sacred and the profane. This corresponds to the division between the camp of Israel and the rest of the world. Within the camp, space is described in progressively smaller concentric circles.

The usual Hebrew word for camp is *maḥāneh* (מַחֲנֶה) and derives from *ḥanā* (חָנָה) meaning “to bend or curve.” The Hebrew camp was circular in its layout, not unlike the camps of other ancient semitic peoples.¹³⁵ The suggestion that the Israelites camped in the form of a square around the tabernacle—three tribes, each with their own insignia, arranged on each of the four sides of the Tabernacle—seems misguided.¹³⁶ The Biblical texts in both Hebrew and Greek firmly indicate an annular schema.¹³⁷ Its actual form aside, the overall structure of nesting one spatial layer inside another can be clearly understood from the Scriptures.

According to Kunin, the structural division of space into circular layers is a pattern which allowed the Israelite culture to ascribe meaning and value to particular people, events and places.¹³⁸ It also ordered Israelite life around God who chose to dwell in their midst. The division between the sacred and profane realms required that all impurity remain outside of the camp.¹³⁹ For example, the leper was to remain outside the camp.¹⁴⁰ So also, criminals were to be executed outside the camp.¹⁴¹ The camp was separated from the world. The Tabernacle enclosure was separated from the camp and the Tabernacle itself was separated

135. This form of tribal encampment is still common among Bedouin groups in the Near East.

136. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, s.v. מַחֲנֶה.

137. While the Hebrew texts use the word *sābīb*, סָבִיב, “round about”, the LXX is more clear in its choice of κύκλος, indicating “a ring or circle.”

138. Kunin, “Judaism,” 119.

139. Numbers 5:1-4; Deuteronomy 23:10-14.

140. Leviticus 13:46.

141. Leviticus 24:23.

from the Tabernacle enclosure. This spatial progression was a movement along a continuum from the impure to the most holy. But this was more than a purely spatial arrangement. The persons admitted into each level were also progressively limited. It was the proprium of the Levites to camp around the Tabernacle.¹⁴² At the purest level, only the High priest may enter the Holy of Holies which contains the Ark of the Covenant.

Within the ideological spatial structure in the Biblical model, Kunin has identified two levels of geography at work: the macro level and the micro level. The macro level sets in relationship the outside world, the Israelite camp, the enclosure, the tent and the Ark of the covenant. The micro level, is a recapitulation of the macro level which occurred within the various spatial divisions within the Tabernacle itself. The Tabernacle enclosure was analogous to the world, the Holy Place was the camp, and the Holy of Holies was the Tabernacle with its Ark.

For the Hebrews during the exodus period, the world was differentiated and filled with places both sacred and profane. Among themselves, however, God was said to dwell and there were set in place boundaries which marked the progression toward the most holy place. During their time in the wilderness, Israel moved their camp from place to place. This meant that the sacred place of the Tabernacle also moved. Within Kunin's scheme of ideological sacred space, he indicates that within the Biblical model, space is dynamic, that is, it is mobile. "It is the space in which the Israelites live, surrounded by the wilderness."¹⁴³ That space changed with their movement, so it is something of a misnomer to refer to 'sacred space' among the Hebrews as being mobile. The space remained; the people moved.

Following the pattern noted earlier, the ground upon which the Tabernacle sat was sacred only during the time the Tabernacle was situated there (the same with the camp). Thus,

142. Numbers 1:50-54. Both the vocabulary of the Hebrew and the LXX indicate that the Levite camp *encircled* the Tabernacle.

143. Kunin, "Judaism," 121.

the sacrality of the Tabernacle was defined by the divine presence in the place defined by the tent structure, not the ground. “The sanctity of a place is established only when the tabernacle has been set up there at some point and by virtue of that fact. But the place itself, as a particular geographically defined tract of land, has no intrinsic sanctity.”¹⁴⁴ This ignores, however, that some places (e.g. mountains) were viewed as having more potential for contact with the divine. The sacred place is dependent upon the abiding presence of God. Place was relational in the sense that though the ringlike scheme of camp/Tabernacle moved from place to place, there essential relationship to each other was constant. This was the case until Israel crossed the Jordan and entered the Land long promised.

The Land of Promise

Land was a gift, and like paradise, the context in which Israel experienced daily life with God.¹⁴⁵ According to Brueggemann, “Land is a central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith. Biblical faith is a part of historical belonging that includes a sense of destiny derived from such belonging.”¹⁴⁶ From the promise given to Abraham, the story of God’s people was one of moving toward a place given to them by Yahweh in which they could live and dwell. “The land for which Israel yearns and which it remembers is never unclaimed space but is always *a place with Yahweh*, a place well filled with memories of life with him and promise from him and vows to him.”¹⁴⁷ Consequently, as Israel fell from faithfulness to the covenant with Yahweh, the Land was withdrawn and the people carried away into exile—though the promise of a return to the same land remained. As Adam and Eve had been

144. Japhet, “Sacred Space,” 63.

145. According to Elmer Martens, the word ‘Land’ is the fourth most used noun in the Old Testament occurring some 2,504 times. Statistically, he notes, land is a more dominant theme than even ‘covenant’. Martens, *God’s Design*, 98.

146. Brueggemann, *Land*, 3.

147. Brueggemann, *Land*, 5.

expelled from their bounded place within the garden, so Israel was expelled from the Land of blessing which God had prepared for them. To transgress the limits of God's Word and Law had distinct spatial implications.

The boundary of the land was also connected with relational boundaries. "The Jordan is entry not into safe space but into a context of covenant."¹⁴⁸ Martens also notes, "The promise for descendants and the promise of land are complementary. Numerous descendants need living space; a land needs occupants. From the first, then, people and land belonged together; both belong to Yahweh."¹⁴⁹ But the physical and relational are connected. In this regard we find Naaman, the mighty commander of Aram (Syria) who was healed of his leprosy by his obedience to the word of the prophet Elisha.¹⁵⁰ Thus healed, Naaman requested "two mules' load of earth" to take back with him to Aram in order that his sacrifices to Yahweh might be upon Israelite soil.¹⁵¹ He apparently believed in the sanctity of the soil.

"Throughout the post-exilic period," Kunin notes, "Jews expressed a connection to a physical space—in particular the Temple Mount, Jerusalem, and the Land of Israel—in fact, they found ways to create a sense of sanctity of the space in which they found themselves."¹⁵² The Land was for Israel a holy place. It was a place given them by God. It was a spatial manifestation of God's loving kindness and mercy toward them. The crossing of the Jordan after their forty-year journey was more than crossing out of the desert into a land "flowing

148. Brueggemann, *Land*, 50.

149. Martens, *God's Design*, 99.

150. 2 Kings 5.

151. Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-73) commented, "Naaman the Aramean asked for some dust from the promised land in order to cause the shame of Israel, as I think, so that they might be ashamed that a stranger believed that even the dust of their land was filled with God, while the Hebrews did not even believe that God dwells in the prophets" Marco Conti, ed., in collaboration with Gianluca Pilara, *1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, general editor Thomas C. Oden, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 169.

152. Samuel C. Heilman, review of *God's Place in the World: Sacred Space and Sacred Place in Judaism*, by Seth D. Kunin, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 91, no. 3–4 (January–April 2001): 475.

with milk and honey,” it was crossing a boundary, passing over a threshold. It was entering into a new phase of life with themselves and with God. Brueggemann called it, “the most radical transformation of any historical person or group...nothing is more radical than this, that the sojourner becomes a possessor.”¹⁵³

There were, however, various holy Places within the Land at first. One of the most significant involved Jacob’s dream at Bethel already mentioned. It was the presence of God that made the place holy and the stone pillar served to mark off the place as sacred. A boundary marker was used to differentiate that place from other less sacred places.

Spatial boundaries are virtually ubiquitous. They are part of the very fabric of the physical universe. They were at the centre of how the Jews experienced the world and God. There was no division between sacred and profane, no understanding of holy and unholy, only sacred and less sacred. Everything in the cosmos was sacred by virtue of the fact that it was created and sustained by the hand of God. “The authors of the Qumran texts...did indeed believe that the Sanctity of Jerusalem, God’s chosen City, was greater than that of the rest of the Land of Israel. Yet the Temple precincts, in the view of the *Temple Scroll* constituted of three concentric courtyards, were themselves of even greater sanctity. Holy, Holy, Holy was the Lord of Hosts: Holy in His Temple, Holy in His city Jerusalem, and Holy in His land, the Land of Israel.”¹⁵⁴

It must be observed that the Biblical model of sacred place does not really focus on *space* at all. What becomes clear is that places come to be considered holy among the Hebrews as a result of a theophany or event.¹⁵⁵ A place is considered holy because God has

153. Brueggemann, *Land*, 43.

154. Lawrence H. Schiffman, “*IR HA-MIQDASH* and Its Meaning in the Temple Scroll and Other Qumran Texts,” in *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity*, ed. A. Houtman, M.J.H.M. Poorthuis, and J. Schwartz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 109.

155. This is the case with Abraham (Genesis 12:7), Jacob (Genesis 28:10-17), Moses (Exodus 3:12), Gideon (Judges 6) and David (2 Samuel 24). Other sacred places are founded by the patriarchs or heroes of Israel.

been or continues to be present.¹⁵⁶ This becomes clarified in the discussions of the Rabbinic Sages after A.D. 70. Nevertheless, within the Biblical model a place becomes sacred because of the presence of God and His presence is always coincident with the presence of people—though people are never the cause of the Divine presence.

The themes of differentiation and emplacement observed in the Creation account of Genesis are repeated as God reclaims that which was lost in Eden. The scheme of circular boundaries manifested in Israel's wilderness encampment reached a stasis as they entered the Promised Land and the Jerusalem Temple was established. It is to the Temple and its boundaries that we must now turn.

156. Kunin draws a similar conclusion: "God's presence is not tied to a specific place. Instead, it is tied to the presence of God's people...who bring God's presence to wherever they are." Kunin, "Judaism," 129. The difficulty with Kunin's view is that it is anthropocentric making Israel the cause of God's presence.

CHAPTER 3

BOUNDARY AND THE JEWISH TEMPLE

*“The Word knows the Tabernacle of Moses to be
a figure of the whole creation—I mean the
entire system of things visible and invisible”
—St. Gregory Nazianzus*

In the book of Jubilees,¹ the author recounts Noah’s division of the land into three portions for his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth. When the sons and their families gathered to the patriarch, Noah divided the land by lot as to which parcel they were to receive. The lot which fell to Shem was identified as “the middle of the earth.”² A few verses later, the location of the place is given: “Mt. Zion in the midst of the navel (ὀμφαλός) of the earth.”³ Jubilees says this was the ancient land of Eden. In the Scriptures, this same place is the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite at which David was commanded to build an altar to the Lord in order to halt a plague.⁴ This is the place about which it is written, “Solomon began

1. R.H. Charles established the case for a date for Jubilees between 134-104 B.C. in R.H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees* (London: A. and C. Black, 1902), lviii-lxiii. For a survey of the earliest proposals for a date, see James C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, no. 14 (Missoula, MT: Published by Scholars Press for Harvard Semitic Museum, 1977), 207–13. According to O.S. Wintermute in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 43–44, Jubilees is to be dated between 161-140 B.C. See also Jonathan A. Goldstein, “The Date of the Book of Jubilees,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 50, (1983 1983): 63–86. The Qumran evidence suggests that Jubilees was an authoritative document for them and suggests a measure of influence at the time of Christ.

2. Jubilees 8:12 in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 72.

3. Jubilees 8:19. The author further explains the blessing that had come to Shem and his sons: “all the land of Eden, all the land of the Red Sea, all of the land of the East, India, along the Red Sea, and its mountains, all of the land of Basa, all of the land of Lebanon, the islands of Caphtor, all of Mount Senir, Amanus, Mount Asshur, which is north, all of the land of Elam, Asshur, Babel, Susa, Media, all of the mountains of Ararat, and all of the region beyond the sea, which is beyond Mount Asshur, which is toward the north, the blessed and wide land,” Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 73.

4. 2 Samuel 24:18ff; 1 Chronicles 21:18ff.

to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan [Araunah] the Jebusite.”⁵ Mt. Moriah was the site of the *akedah*, the sacrifice of Isaac, and though there is no identification between Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion in Genesis 22, the case has been made that they are one and the same location.⁶ This means that the most significant events in Israel’s history occurred in the same place. The sacrality of the threshing floor, believed by the Jews to be the navel of the earth, established the significance of the place. Further, Jewish tradition has it that Adam’s tomb was located under the rock on this site.⁷ The fact that David was commanded by an angel to build an altar there for the purpose of offering sacrifices to the Lord only sanctified the place further and provided a basis for inaugurating recurring liturgical events. This place had a long history of sacrality—which undergirded the impetus for building the Temple. Significantly, it was not the architecture per se, but the holiness of the place that was foremost. The building occurred almost collaterally at the edges.

Regarding the Tabernacle

Before we begin to explore the place of the Jerusalem Temple and its boundaries, it will be necessary to come to terms with the relationship between the Temple and its traditional antecedent, the Tabernacle. Following Julius Wellhausen, it has become a commonplace of Biblical scholarship that the Tabernacle was viewed not as it is presented in the Biblical texts, but as a backward projection by later priests.⁸ In an attempt to resuscitate the flagging relationship between God and Israel following the Babylonian exile, so the

5. 2 Chronicles 3:1.

6. Isaac Kalimi, “The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah, and the Site of Solomon’s Temple in Biblical Historiography,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1990): 345–62 (Cambridge University Press).

7. Skarsaune, *Shadow*, 185.

8. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1957), 37.

hypothesis goes, the Tabernacle became the vehicle by which they retrojected a fictional image of the macrocosmic, archetypal Temple.⁹ Wellhausen claimed that the Tabernacle was only a copy of Solomon's Temple rather than a prototype for it. Though the Wellhausen hypothesis seems ever-changing in its detail, the scheme begins with the simple tent of the E (Elohistic) material as the original in the sequence, followed by Solomon's Temple and then the ideal temple described by Ezekiel, concluding with the Priestly version (P) of the Tabernacle. Ezekiel's ideal temple is both eschatological and messianic; the Priestly model is both historic and Mosaic: "Both representations are ideal transformations of Solomon's temple,"¹⁰ having as their purpose the finding of a suitable basis for God to dwell in the midst of His people.

While recognising that many scholars follow some iteration of the Graf-Wellhausen view, it is also important to recognise alternate possibilities in light of the acknowledged limitations of the historical method.¹¹ There is some evidence to suggest that the Tabernacle existed. For example, Carol L. Meyers has found archaeological and historical parallels which could place the Tabernacle in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age—the time of Moses and Joshua. By comparing the precise descriptions in Exodus of the seven-branched candle stand, called the menorah, Meyers found them coincident with Egyptian artistic details and craftsmanship extant in the Late Bronze Age.¹² The affinity between the Biblical descriptions

9. James R. Davila, "The Macrocosmic Temple, Scriptural Exegesis, and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 9, no. 1 (2002): 1.

10. Buttrick, *IDB*, 4:503.

11. See for example, Victor (Avigdor) Hurowitz, "The Priestly Account of Building the Tabernacle," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 1 (March 1985): 21–30 (American Oriental Society). For a review of critical scholarship and its anomalies, see R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969); Young, *Introduction*, Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), and Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

12. Carol L. Meyers, "The Elusive Temple," *The Biblical Archeologist* 45, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 37.

and the natural forms of Egyptian art and architecture support Meyers' conclusion that the Tabernacle was a reality of Israel's past.

Advances in archaeological and philological research in the ancient Near East have changed the contours of the Documentary Hypothesis fostering a kinder disposition towards the Tabernacle. Frank M. Cross Jr., Professor Emeritus at Harvard Divinity School is a case in point. Though noted for his work in Deuteronomic history and generally a proponent of the Wellhausen view, he has asserted that the Tabernacle was historical.¹³ Nevertheless, the primary issue is not whether the Tabernacle actually existed, but how the NT writers seem to have accepted its history. Essential for this study is how the early Christians viewed the Tabernacle within the Jewish legacy of sacred place: How did they understand its origin and significance? How did the Church view the Tabernacle in relation to the Temple?

Tabernacle references run throughout the New Testament.¹⁴ For example, the Gospel of John alludes to the Tabernacle in the familiar passage, "The Word became flesh and dwelt (i.e. "tabernacled," σκηνώω) among us."¹⁵ The Apocalypse speaks of the Tabernacle in similar terms: "Therefore they [those who have come out of the great tribulation] are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple (ναός), And He who sits on the throne will dwell ("tabernacle," σκηνώω) among them."¹⁶ Acts speaks of the Tabernacle of Moses without questioning its validity or chronology: "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony (ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ μαρτυρίου) in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern (τύπον) which he had seen."¹⁷ Again, in

13. Frank M. Cross Jr., "The Tabernacle: A Study from an Archaeological and Historical Approach," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 10, no. 3 (September 1947): 59.

14. References include Matthew 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33; Acts 7:44, 15:16; Hebrews 8:2, 8:5, 9:2-3, 9:6, 9:8, 9:11, 9:21, 13:10; Revelation 7:15, 13:6, 15:5, and 21:3.

15. John 1:14.

16. Revelation 7:15. Cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.35.2.

17. Acts 7:44.

Revelation there is an allusion to the “Tabernacle of Witness” set up by Moses as a place of God’s presence: “And after these things I looked, and the temple (i.e. Holy of Holies, ὁ ναὸς) of the tabernacle of witness (τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου) in the heavens was opened...”¹⁸

It is in the book of Hebrews, however, where the Tabernacle receives the most attention. There the Christian understanding of the ancient Mosaic tent as being modelled after the heavenly divine archetype is set forth.¹⁹ Marie Isaacs observed, “It seem [*sic*] to me that the author of the Hebrews’ preoccupation is not that of the Hellenistic philosopher, that is, of the phenomenal versus the Ideal, but rather the *profane versus the holy*.”²⁰ This dovetails well with the OT interest in boundaries and sacred place—and the dwelling of God among His people. Isaacs finds the most likely occasion for the writing of Hebrews to be the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. The sense of loss felt sharply by the Jewish Christians at the Temple’s end required a re-emphasis upon Jesus as the means of access to God. “Hence,” she wrote, “Jesus is shown to have gained access to the only sacred space worth having—heaven. That space is superior to any previously gained through entry into the promised land or into the inner sanctum of the cult place.”²¹ Jesus as the new Temple will be discussed in chapter 6. For now it seems apparent that among the writers of the New Testament, the Tabernacle was not a pious fiction but a reality and an important connective with the sacred place in the OT. The Tabernacle was accepted it is presented.

Following the NT exemplar, the early Christian writers wrote of the Tabernacle as a real tent constructed by Moses in which God dwelled among the Israelites. A few passages should suffice to illustrate this point. Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 200) wrote, “He [God] imposed upon

18. Revelation 15:5.

19. Hebrews 8:5; 9:11.

20. Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 61.

21. Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 67.

the [Jewish] people *the construction of the tabernacle*, the building of the temple, the election of the Levites, sacrifices also, and oblations, legal monitions, and all the other service of the law;²² and again, “As a matter of course, therefore, these things were done beforehand in a type, and *from them was the tabernacle of God constructed*; those persons justly receiving them, as I have shown, while we were pointed out beforehand in them.”²³

Hippolytus (c. 170-c. 236) also mentioned, “For the things that took place of old in the wilderness, under Moses, in the case of the tabernacle, were constituted types and emblems of spiritual mysteries, in order that, when the truth came in Christ in these last

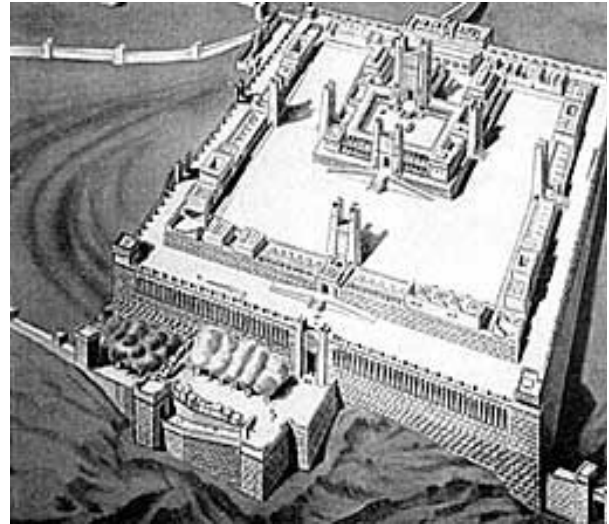


Fig. 2. Solomon's Temple.

days, you might be able to perceive that these things were fulfilled.²⁴ Methodius (c. 290) wrote:

The Hebrews were commanded to furnish the tabernacle as a type of the church. In this manner, by means of visible things, they could announce in advance the image of divine things. A pattern was shown to Moses on the mountain. He was to follow this in making the tabernacle. For the pattern was a type of accurate representation of the heavenly dwelling. We now understand this more clearly than when we did through the types. Yet, we still perceive it more darkly than if we saw the reality.²⁵

Similar to the NT, the early Christians viewed the Tabernacle as an historical reality which had important implications for the Church. Whatever the modern assessment of this ancient

22. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, 4.14.3.

23. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, 4.30.4. In the same work, Cf. also 1.18.4; 1.19.3; and 4.18.6.

24. Fragments from the exegetical commentaries of Hippolytus, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 5:179.

25. Methodius, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, 5.7. For a review of Biblical typology and how significant OT events are fulfilled in Christ, see Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Dom Wulstan Hibberd (London: Burns & Oates, 1960).

conviction, the premise of this study requires that the very same perspective should underlie our investigation.

The Temple and Earth

The Tabernacle and Temple were both physical things: they existed in a particular locality, they existed in time and they bore the marks of every dimensional attribute. The physical extents of Solomon's Temple are recorded in 1 Kings: "The house that King Solomon built for the Lord was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high," those being the interior dimensions.²⁶

The interior of the Temple was divided between the *hekal* (הֵיכָל), the great hall or holy place which was forty cubits deep, and the *d^ebir* (דְּבִיר),²⁷ or Holy of Holies, which was twenty cubits deep. These two comprised 'the House' which was thirty cubits high,²⁸ excepting the Holy of Holies which was a perfect cube at twenty cubits high.²⁹ At the front of the Temple was an '*Ulām* (אוֹלָם or אֵילָם), that is a vestibule, porch, or narthex. It measured twenty cubits wide and ten cubits deep.³⁰

26. 1 Kings 6:2. In ancient times there were three different sizes of cubits, a cubit being the distance of the forearm between the elbow and finger tip. The standard cubit measured 17.6 inches; the royal cubit measured 20.9 inches; and the rarely used long cubit measured 21.6 inches. It is generally agreed that the royal cubit is the one intended by the descriptions of the temple, W. F. Stinespring, "Temple, Jerusalem," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 535.

27. Margaret Barker explains that the older way of translating this word was 'oracle,' as opposed to the more modern 'inner or hinder part' (For the latter view, see Leroy Waterman, "The Damaged 'Blueprints' of the Temple of Solomon," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2, no. 4 [October 1943]: 290). Barker opts for the former, "This is where the Lord spoke to Moses (Exod. 25.22) and appeared to the high priest (Lev. 16.2). To the end of the second temple period, this is where the people heard the voice of the Lord: just before the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, it was widely reported that voices had been heard there. The priests serving in the temple at night during the feast of Pentecost heard noises and 'a voice as of a host "we are departing hence"' (Josephus, *War* 6.299-300)," Barker, *High Priest*, 165; See also Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 149.

28. 1 Kings 6:2.

29. 1 Kings 6:20.

30. 1 Kings 6:3.

In the Tabernacle there was the curtain, or veil, woven of blue, purple and scarlet thread and fine white linen decorated with cherubim between the Holy Place and the Most Holy. It served to separate the *hekal* from the *d^ebir* of the Tabernacle.³¹ The same was true of the Temple and, as will be examined later, the veil was considered to be the division between heaven and earth. The entire Temple was surrounded by a courtyard and beyond that there was the great court which enclosed both the Temple and the king's palace.³² Though the courtyards were modified over time, they, nevertheless, architecturally delineated the sacred place and reflected the temple language of holiness giving clear signals to anyone who approached.

The interior of Solomon's Temple was panelled with cedar wood and ornately carved with flowers. The floor was made of cypress, and the walls in the *d^ebir* were overlaid with gold:

He [Solomon] lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar. From the floor of the house to the walls of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood, and he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress. He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the walls, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the Most Holy Place. The house, that is, the nave (לִיכָל, ναός) in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long. The cedar within the house was carved in the form of gourds and open flowers. All was cedar; no stone was seen. The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar.³³

Seemingly indifferent to the Jewish prohibition against graven images, the Temple was adorned with “engraved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms.”³⁴ These recalled the Garden of Eden, and as we have seen, the Paradise theme permeates the Tabernacle/Temple descriptions.

31. Exodus 26:31-34.

32. 1Kings 6:36.

33. 1 Kings 6:15-20.

34. 1 Kings 6:29.

Inside the Holy of Holies there were also two cherubim, carved from olive wood and covered in gold. They were ten cubits high with a wingspan of the same dimension, their wing tips touching.³⁵ The ark of the covenant was placed beneath these cherubic wings in the Tabernacle.

At the entrance to the Temple were two large columns which stood some twenty-three cubits high from base to capital.³⁶ They, too, were adorned in a manner consonant with the Garden theme of the interior:

There were lattices of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars, a lattice for the one capital and a lattice for the other capital. Likewise he made pomegranates in two rows around the one lattice work to cover the capital that was on the top of the pillar, and he did the same with the other capital. Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits. The capitals were on the two pillars and also above the rounded projection which was beside the lattice work. There were two hundred pomegranates in two rows all around, and so with the other capital. He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple. He set up the pillar on the south and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the north and called its name Boaz. And on the tops of the pillars was lily-work. Thus the work of the pillars was finished.³⁷

The Temple was furnished inside with a number of sacred objects: a golden altar of incense, a golden table for the bread of the Presence, and ten golden lampstands.³⁸ The altar was placed in the sanctuary on the western end and centred before the entrance into the Holy of Holies. There were “horns” on each corner and only a special blend of incense could be

35. 1 Kings 6:23-28.

36. 1 Kings 7:15-16.

37. 1 Kings 7:17-22. The purpose of these columns is not known. Some have suggested that they represent sacred trees, being symbols of fertility, though this is unlikely. Some have suggested that they were fire altars or that they represented the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud which led the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. Still another idea is that they symbolise the strength of God. This would certainly account for their names: Jachin, “Yahweh will establish;” and Boaz, “in strength.” Cf. Buttrick, *IDB*, 4:535-59 and Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 29-30.

38. 1 Kings 7:48-49. Chronicles has a variant list which includes a golden altar, ten tables for the bread of the Presence and ten lampstands (1 Chronicles 4:7, 8, 19). This, too, is slightly different than the furnishings listed for the archetypal desert tabernacle which include a gilt altar, the mercy seat of pure gold, the cherubim of hammered gold, the table for the bread of the Presence, the altar of incense, and a single seven-branched lampstand *menorah* of pure gold (Exodus 37:17-24).

burned upon it.³⁹ The table of the Presence was located on the north side of the Sanctuary. The bread of the Presence was twelve loaves set out in two rows of six each Sabbath.⁴⁰

On the south side of the *hekal* was the golden *menorah*. The lamp was fuelled by pure olive oil,⁴¹ and it was fashioned as a seven-branched tree, decorated with almonds and flowers.⁴² There is no mention of this seven-branched candlestick either in 1 Kings or in 2 Chronicles, and it would be tempting to presume that there was no menorah in Solomon's Temple at all. However, there are clues which may suggest an earlier existence. Based upon the indications of 2 Enoch, the Tree of Life was described as a golden tree of fire apparently associated with the lamp of Zechariah's vision.⁴³ In the vision, the lampstand was identified as "the Lord of the whole earth."⁴⁴ There is also an association between the lamp and the king.⁴⁵ Both connect the divine life-giving presence of God with the sacred place of the Temple.

Another significant feature of Solomon's Temple is the dwelling of God's Name

39. Four spices are enumerated in Exodus, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you. And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the Lord. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people'" (Exodus 30:34-38). Josephus mentions thirteen spices for the altar, "The altar of incense, by the thirteen fragrant spices from sea and from land, both desert and inhabited, with which it was replenished, signified that all things are of God and for God," Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Loeb classical library, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), V.218.

40. The *Mishnah* indicates that the bread is to be prepared within the temple: "their kneading and their rolling out are [done] inside," Jacob Neusner, *Mishnah, Menahot* 11:3.

41. Exodus 27:20.

42. Exodus 25:31-37.

43. 2 Enoch 8:3-4 in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983). Philo also implied a connection between the menorah (sun) and the Tree of Life, Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, trans. C.D. Yonge, 1:10.

44. Zechariah 4:14.

45. Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 91-94.

there.⁴⁶ The Tabernacle had been a place where God's presence existed among his people. The glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.⁴⁷ It was clearly thought of as the 'House of the Lord'.⁴⁸ There is apparently disagreement over exactly what is meant by the "Name of the Lord," but throughout Deuteronomy, the presence of the Lord is equated with his Name.⁴⁹ "A name stresses God's presence among his people apart from any material or visible aspect of his presence. God's majesty and love are manifest clearly in his names, but his people are given no exhaustive knowledge of his essence."⁵⁰

Although there is a history of revelation which includes a past and a future, the theocentric focus on God's initiative in making Himself known tends to encompass all the various times into the one great act of disclosure. Eichrodt has written, "God himself came forth from his secret place and offered himself in fellowship."⁵¹ To know God's name is to know his purpose for all mankind from the beginning to the end.⁵² The connection between the Lord's presence and his name has a long history. Aristeas, a Gentile courtier of Ptolemy II Philadelphius (285-246 B.C.) gave an account of the Jewish Temple and its Service. In particular, he wrote of the high priestly headdress bearing the Divine Name: "And on his head he had the so-called turban, and above this the inimitable mitre, the consecrated royal diadem with the Name of God in holy letters set in relief on a golden plate in the midst of his

46. For a discussion of the significance of the name יהוה and its possible history, see "The Name of the God of Moses" in Freedman, *Divine Commitment*, 82-87.

47. Exodus 40:34-35.

48. 1 Chronicles 6:48.

49. Concern over the Name of God and His immanence became an important topic among the Jewish Tannaim. Cf. Urbach, *Sages*.

50. Dyrness, *OT Theology*, 45.

51. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), I.206.

52. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 119.

forehead, gloriously completed.”⁵³ Philo described this very thing, “And a golden leaf was wrought like a crown, having four names engraved on it which may only be mentioned or heard by holy men having their ears and their tongues purified by wisdom...and this holy prophet Moses calls the name, a name of four letters.”⁵⁴

Theologically, this Name is vital for any coherent understanding of sacred place and sacred action within Judaism:

The high priest, bearing the Divine Name on his forehead, recalls the angel who went before Israel in the days of desert wanderings after the Exodus, of whom God said ‘My Name is upon him’ (Exod. 23:21). By virtue of the priestly blessing, Israel has the divine Name imposed upon her—in the Temple Service. God’s Name indicates above all His presence with Israel; and where God is present as king, He must of necessity have attendant ministers. The angels will not be strangers, then, to the earthly Temple, which is an open door to heaven for its earthly ministers.⁵⁵

God’s name not only refers to the actuality of his presence, it also offers the possibility of salvation. As Martens expressed it, “The name Yahweh, judged by the context in which it is first given...signals a divine presence to save.”⁵⁶ Without the salvation Name, the people of Israel could not know the presence of their God, nor could they receive his merciful deliverance, and sacred place would be meaningless. The merciful presence of God was vital for the establishment of sacred place and Israel’s experience of their God.

The Temple and Creation

We have already seen the significance of boundary and place as constituent elements of Creation. This theme becomes localised first in the Tabernacle and subsequently in the

53. C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 29–30.

54. Philo, *De Vita Mosis, II*, trans. C. D. Yonge, 114–15.

55. Hayward, *Sourcebook*, 10. See also Margaret Barker, “The Secret Tradition,” available from <http://marquette.edu/maqom/tradition.pdf>, Internet, accessed on 21 Nov 2006, 1–23.

56. Martens, *God’s Design*, 17–18.

Temple, fomenting a robust image of the Tabernacle/Temple as a microcosm of the cosmos—a concept which endures to the time of Christ.

Dated to the early second century before Christ, the Hebrew version of *The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira*, depicts Adam as a high priest (49:16): “And above every living thing is the beauty of Adam.” The word “beauty” (תִּפְאָרָה) is a poetic catchword forming a link between the high priestly vestments of Simon and the clothing of Adam. C.T.R. Hayward comments: “Ben Sira seems to imply that the privileges granted to the first man, and thus to all humankind, are also peculiarly summed up in Israel whose representative is Simon in his function as sacrificing high priest.”⁵⁷ There is also a well known tradition which says that Adam’s garments were handed down through the generations until they became the high priestly vestments of Aaron.⁵⁸ Jubilees patently depicts Adam as performing priestly actions:

And on that day when Adam went out from the garden of Eden, he offered a sweet-smelling sacrifice—frankincense, galbanum, stacte, and spices—in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day he covered his shame.⁵⁹

The depiction of Adam as a high priest begs the question as to the temple in which he served. The answer is the Garden in Eden. Ben Sira claimed the presence of paradise in the Temple of his day as a way of passing over its deficiencies and connecting it with what was viewed as a holier past.⁶⁰

57. Hayward, *Sourcebook*, 45.

58. See *jer.Meg.* 1:11; *Gen. Rab.* 20:12; 97:6; *Num. Rab.* 4:8; *Tahuma B. Toledot* 67 and *Bereshith* 9; *Aggadath Bereshith* 42. For other sources of this tradition, including those of Syriac origin, cf. Hayward, *Sourcebook*, 45–46.

59. Jubilees 3:27. Hayward suggests in this regard that it may be significant that when Jacob appointed Levi as priest, Jubilees merely notes that he put the garments of the priesthood on him (32:3). He writes, “We are not told the source of these garments: they appear ready to hand, and thereby Jubilees encourages speculation on their origins”—intimating that they may well have been the garments of Adam, Hayward, *Sourcebook*, 46.

60. Martha Himmelfarb, “The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of Ben Sira,” in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces*, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housely (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 75.

Gregory Beale has argued that the Garden of Eden was the first archetypal Temple which became the model for all subsequent temples. His understanding of Eden emphasises that the Tabernacle and temples of the OT were symbolic microcosms of the whole creation.⁶¹ Throughout Israel's history the whole cosmos was, according to Beale, something of divine Temple reflecting God even though it is soiled with the sin of humanity.⁶² He said:

I think it more appropriate to speak of the original, pre-fall creation as a pristine Temple of God (with the Garden of Eden perhaps as the holy of holies) and the post-fall creation and Israelite Tabernacle and Temples as contaminated with sin, thus needing judgment followed by eschatological recreation of the cosmos and Temple.⁶³

Though some have claimed that such a cosmic understanding of the Temple is a later, somewhat parochial development within Israel,⁶⁴ the evidence indicates otherwise. For example, the paradisaical Temple described in Revelation 21-22 is based on the Paradise-Earth-Heaven connection. In the OT, the courtyard basin in the Temple is referred to as the "sea"⁶⁵ and the sanctuary in the heavens is likened to "the earth" in the Psalms.⁶⁶ Jon D. Levenson furthered the idea when he wrote, "the Temple meant, among other things, a rich and powerful re-presentation of creation."⁶⁷ The correlation was certainly not lost on Philo whose descriptions of the Tabernacle harken back to the creation. For example, when he described the making of the Temple veil he wrote:

[Moses] chose the materials of this embroidery, selecting with great care what was the most excellent out of an infinite quantity, choosing materials equal in number to the elements of which the world was made, and having a direct relation to them; the

61. Beale, "Vision," 191–92.

62. Beale, "Vision," 206–07.

63. Beale, "Vision," 208.

64. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 328–29.

65. 1 Kings 7:23.

66. Psalm 78:69.

67. Levenson, *Creation*, 99.

elements being the earth and the water, and the air and the fire.⁶⁸

Philo likened the menorah to the great lights in the heavens representing “the motions of the stars” and with its branches numbering seven in all, “being symbols of those seven stars which are called planets by those men who are versed in natural philosophy.”⁶⁹ The table on which the salt and bread were placed was located near the menora. Philo drew out their meaning:

The symbols of heaven and earth are placed side by side, as the holy Scripture shows, the candlestick being the symbol of heaven, and that which is truly called the altar of incense, on which all the fumigatory offerings are made, being the emblem of the things of the earth.⁷⁰

Philo describes in detail the dress of the High Priest as being a “copy and representation of the world; and the parts...a representation of the parts of the world.”⁷¹ By connecting the forms, colours and imagery of the Temple with Eden, Philo gives expression to what appears to be a continuous tradition of interpretation.⁷² James Palmer finds the link between the creation and the Tabernacle/Temple a plausible concept based on both his study of ancient Near Eastern parallels and the witness of the OT—especially when it is read in the light of early Jewish interpretation.⁷³

Levenson has noted that there is an early belief in the ancient Near East, which binds Temple building and world building. He has also found significance in the fact that Solomon

68. Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, II, 18.

69. Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, II, 21.

70. Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, II, 22.

71. Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, II, 22.

72. The Eden imagery in the temple vision of Ezekiel (chs. 40-48) is connected with the non-Biblical writers Philo and Josephus as well as works like Jubilees and Ben Sira. Barker and Hayward have observed a long tradition drawing these connections which have been dismissed among scholars until recently. See also the remarks of David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 251–54.

73. James Palmer, “Exodus and the Biblical Theology of the Tabernacle,” in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 15.

took seven years to build the Temple,⁷⁴ that he dedicated it on the seventh month, during the Feast of Booths,⁷⁵ and that his prayer of dedication was structured around seven petitions.⁷⁶ Levenson concluded that the building of the Temple was modelled on the seven-day creation of the world, which also is in line with the construction of other temples in the ancient Near East.⁷⁷ Further evidence is offered by Palmer who points to the similarity of language in the way Leviticus 26:12 speaks of the Lord walking among His people in the Tabernacle and the way Genesis speaks of God walking in the garden, “This strongly recalls the Genesis account of Adam and Eve.”⁷⁸

God had told Moses specifically when to begin the fabrication of the Tabernacle: “On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.”⁷⁹ This corresponds to the divine actions in the creation: As God created the heavens and the earth on day one, Moses set in place the sockets, boards and pillars of the Tabernacle and overlaid them with the outer covering.⁸⁰ On the second day of creation, God made the heavens, the “expanse in the midst of the waters” (*firmamentum*); Moses emplaced the ark with its mercy seat and spread the veil to conceal the ark.⁸¹ Barker has suggested this implies that anyone who passes through the veil and enters the sanctuary, enters the first and eternal day of creation. “A curious idea,” she admits, “but one for which there is much evidence, and one

74. 1 King 6:38.

75. A festival of seven days; cf. 1Kings 8:65.

76. 1 Kings 8:31-55.

77. Levenson, *Creation*, 78–79. Cf. also Margaret Barker, “The Temple Roots of the Liturgy,” *Sourozh* (2001).

78. Palmer, “Exodus,” 15.

79. Exodus 40:2.

80. Exodus 40:18-19.

81. Exodus 40:20-21.

that explains how the firmament separating heaven and earth was also the temple veil.”⁸² This also evokes for Barker the idea that what Moses saw on Sinai was not the heavenly tabernacle, but “a vision of the creation which the tabernacle was to replicate.” Here, Barker may be overreaching the evidence. As we have seen, there is a strong connection between the days of Creation and the Tabernacle, but there is no evidence to suggest that Moses’ vision was anything more than the divine model for the Tabernacle’s construction. However, as a result of her study of the Garden of Eden imagery in Ezekiel’s eschatological vision of the Temple, Martha Himmelfarb concluded that, “Ezekiel knew a larger set of traditions about the primal garden than those preserved in Genesis 2-3.”⁸³ Nevertheless, R.E. Clements offers his own guarded conclusion:

Not all of these supposed symbolic references of features of the temple are convincing, but the essential claim that the temple and its furnishings did possess cosmic, or naturalistic, symbolism must be upheld... The underlying idea was that the temple was a microcosm of the macrocosm, so that the building gave visual expression to the belief in Yahweh’s dominion over the world.⁸⁴

Arie C. Leder has observed a connection between the Tabernacle and the idea of deliverance: “The tabernacle was assembled one year after the Exodus: on the first day of the first month of the second year after leaving Egypt (Ex 40:2, 17). This day coincides with the Passover (Exod. 12:1) and the drying up of the flood waters from the earth (Gen 8:13), the newly ‘cleansed’ creation.”⁸⁵ He has also argued that the construction of the Tabernacle was intimately connected with the Sabbath, the completion of creation: “In addition to the Sabbath speeches, the repetition of certain phrases from Genesis 1:31-2:3 in Exodus 39:42 and 40 also links the building of the Tabernacle to the creation of the world and the Sabbath.”⁸⁶

82. Barker, *High Priest*, 194.

83. Himmelfarb, “Temple and Garden,” 66.

84. Clements, *God and Temple*, 67.

85. Leder, “Consecrated Space,” 257.

86. Leder, “Consecrated Space,” 258.

The Sabbath was the outer boundary of the creative period. It marked the fulfilment, and, thus, the stopping place. For the Israelites it established the edge of their week and marked a time set apart, particularly devoted to God. The themes of differentiation and boundary so prevalent in the creation informed the Hebrew conceptions of the cosmos and sacred place allowing for the Tabernacle and later temples to be sufficient for God's presence.

So we find a substantial connection between the Tabernacle/Temple and the divine activities of creation. Within the mind of the Israelites, this association emphasised the centrality of God's continued desire to dwell among His people and it reinforces the idea that the Tabernacle/Temple is the sacred place for that dwelling to occur. Thus, the primary antecedent of the Solomonic Temple in the minds of the majority of Jews and early Christians was the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting.⁸⁷ It was an earthly structure based on an heavenly model. God spoke to Moses on Sinai, "And let them make me a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ), that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the Tabernacle (מִשְׁכָּן), and of all its furniture, so you shall make it."⁸⁸ However, as Japhet reminds us, "The sanctity of a place is established only when the tabernacle has been set up there at some point and by virtue of that fact. But the place itself, as a particular geographically defined tract of land, has no intrinsic sanctity."⁸⁹ The manifestations of the Lord together with his presence and holiness were the essence of theological meaning for the Tabernacle in Israel—even as it would so

87. Traditionally the Tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting were understood to be different references to the same structure (see G. Henton Davies, "Tabernacle," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962], 498–506). However, some have taken the view that these terms may refer to separate structures based on the fact that the 'Tent of Meeting' was located outside the camp (Exodus 33:7ff. and Julian Morganstern, "The Tent of Meeting," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 38 [1918]: 125–39) and the 'Tabernacle' was located within the camp (See Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 136–38). Another theory finds the middle ground with the possibility that the 'Tent of Meeting' was, perhaps, a temporary arrangement while the 'Tabernacle' was being constructed (See Martens, *God's Design*, 92).

88. Exodus 25:8-9; Cf. also 25:40.

89. Japhet, "Sacred Space," 63.

become for the Temple.⁹⁰

At this point we may say that in the mind of the ancient Jews, the Tabernacle and the Temple were related in every way: both were thought to have been revealed by the Lord, both were built according to a heavenly plan, and both were sacred places. The emphasis of sacred place and its architectural boundaries (whether made of stone or tent fabric) continued to be, as it had always been, on the dwelling of God in the midst of His people. The creational actions of differentiation and emplacement which caused the boundaries of the world and formed paradisaal place are the seeds of an architecture worthy of the Divine Name. Solomon mused at the dedication of the first Temple, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!”⁹¹ and yet it appears that He not only could, but did—and graciously so.

The Temple and Heaven

The intimate correlation between the Tabernacle/Temple and Creation, the primordial Temple of the garden in Eden, and their heavenly archetype, made the Tabernacle/Temple the locus of their ongoing relationship with God (and each other) and provided a pathway to salvation. But the Tabernacle and Temple were associated with more than the primal temple-garden, it was considered an expression of heaven itself. As I shall attempt to demonstrate, early notions about the Tabernacle had a long history and culminate in the sort of idea found in St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389): “The Word knows the Tabernacle of Moses to be a figure of the whole creation—I mean the entire system of things visible and invisible.”⁹²

The acclaimed historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, has explained his view of why the religious man has need for such an “heavenly” temple:

90. Martens, *God's Design*, 93.

91. 1 Kings 8:27. Cf. also 2 Chronicles 6:18.

92. Gregory Nazianzen, *The Second Theological Oration*, xxxi.

The sanctity of the temple is proof against all earthly corruption, by virtue of the fact that the architectural plan of the temple is the work of the gods. The transcendent models of temples enjoy a spiritual, incorruptible celestial existence. Through the grace of the gods, man attains to the dazzling vision of these models, which he then attempts to reproduce on earth.⁹³

Eliade indicates that the myth of the heavenly temple is a consequence of viewing the world as divided into the sacred and profane realms. The only way to protect the holiness of the temple is to locate the prototype in heaven and shield it from earthly sin and decay. This view, however, makes the heavenly pattern little more than a projection of the human, albeit religious mind.⁹⁴ For their part, the Jews (and Christians) believed that God was the source of all things, including the sacred place of the Temple and all it contained.

C.T.R. Hayward has observed, “The Biblical notice that God ordered Moses to make the sanctuary and its furniture according to a pattern which He Himself showed to Moses (Exod. 25:9, 40; 26:30) were enough for the ancient exegetes to conclude that the buildings and furniture of the Temple were in reality replicas of heavenly things.”⁹⁵ James R. Davila seems to agree, “The accounts of the Tabernacle and the building of the Temple in the Hebrew Bible contain implicitly the concept of the earthly Temple as a microcosmic copy of an archetypal Temple that encompasses the whole universe.”⁹⁶ The Epistle to the Hebrews indicates that the archetype is in heaven, where Jesus is “a minister of the holy things and of the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man.”⁹⁷

93. Eliade, *Sacred & Profane*, 59.

94. Eliade is not without critics, see for example, Guilford Dudley, III, “Mircea Eliade as the ‘Anti-Historian’ of Religions,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44, no. 2 (June 1976): 345–59 (Oxford University Press) and Douglas Allen, “Mircea Eliade’s Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience,” *The Journal of Religion* 52, no. 2 (April 1972): 170–86 (The University of Chicago Press).

95. Hayward, *Sourcebook*, 10.

96. Davila, “Macrocosmic Temple,” 1.

97. Hebrews 8:2.

The correspondence between the earthly Temple and its heavenly archetype indicates that the purpose of the Jerusalem Temple was to be an intersection of heaven and earth—the place where God and man could interact. But there were other temples in Judaism, temples built before the Temple of Solomon, and temples built in places other than Jerusalem. The temple at Shiloh is one example. Eli was the priest there and a certain man, Elkanah, and his family would go up to Shiloh annually and, “offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow.”⁹⁸ This temple, we are told, had both the “lamp of God” and the “ark of God,”⁹⁹ and it was the place where the Lord appeared.¹⁰⁰ Temples were also established at Dan and Bethel. In fact, Bethel was a royal sanctuary, but became a place of contested worship together with Gilgal and Beersheba.¹⁰¹ The temple at Nob was the place where David and his men ate of the Bread of the Presence and the sword of Goliath was stored there according to Ahimelech the priest: “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod.”¹⁰² Such holy places continued to exist and have their influence even after Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁰³ While there were several temples, there had never been a centralised royal temple, and following the dedication at Jerusalem, the others waned.¹⁰⁴

98. 1 Samuel 1:21.

99. 1 Samuel 3:3.

100. 1 Samuel 3:21. There was also the tent of meeting (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד) set up at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1; 19:51) and an altar (Joshua 22:29).

101. Amos 7:13; 4:4.

102. 1 Samuel 21:9; 21:6.

103. See Mina C. Klein and H. Arthur Klein, *Temple Beyond Time* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1970), 42ff.

104. The reforms of Josiah’s reign (initiated in 628 B.C.), sought to rid the land of the old Caananite worship practices devoted to Baal and the Asherim (fertility gods) and promote the worship of YHWH. See Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Old Testament History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), 372–74 and Rainer Albertz, *From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy*, vol. 1 of *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, First American ed., trans. John Bowden, The Old Testament Library (Louisville:

One distinguishing factor that set the Jerusalem Temple apart from the others was that God had revealed its pattern to David just He had revealed to Moses the plans for the Tabernacle. The Chronicler records the words of David to his son Solomon, “All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the Lord, all the work to be done according to the plan.”¹⁰⁵ It is never stated exactly how these plans were delivered to Moses or David, only that they were given by the Lord, as a result, not everyone accepts the Biblical explanation for the Temple pattern.

One objection might be that archaeological evidence suggests that the Jerusalem Temple was patterned not on a heavenly vision but on the architecture of Israel’s closest neighbours. The Jerusalem sanctuary was very similar to the “long room” type of temple common at the time. According to Amihai Mazar of the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the long-room type of temple was common in Syria from the second millennium B.C. This temple form originated about 1,000 years before the construction of Solomon’s Temple and continued some 200 to 300 years afterwards.¹⁰⁶ So the evidence not only provides an archaeological corroboration for the Biblical account of the First Temple, it also offers a decidedly earthly source for its architectural provenance.

This is not necessarily inconsistent, however, with the Biblical view of a divine pattern. The deific scheme establishing the nexus between heaven and earth that involved rings (boundaries) of increasing holiness is a pattern that fits several different physical constructions. The primordial pattern is reduplicated in several manifestations. As we have demonstrated, the spatial structure of the Tabernacle/Temple is not only connected with the days of Creation and the Garden of Eden, it also repeats the pattern set forth for the Jewish

Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 198–224.

105. 1 Chronicles 28:19. Cf. the clearer reference to David and Solomon in the LXX: “πάντα ἐν γραφῇ χεῖρὸς κυρίου ἔδωκεν Δαυὶδ Σαλωμων κατὰ τὴν περιγενηθεῖσαν αὐτῷ σύνεσιν τῆς κατεργασίας τοῦ παραδείγματος.”

106. Price, *Stones*, 180.

wilderness camp and, later, the Land. The divine pattern allows for different manifestations while itself remaining unchanged. This may be illustrated by the pattern we call “brick” which has millions of variations and yet the defining pattern remains stable. Meyers has come to a similar conclusion:

The various temples of Israel, while different in a variety of significant and insignificant ways, were also identical. The continuity in symbolic function provided the crucial and unbroken link from one concrete rendition to the next. The chain of actual buildings was often broken in the unstable environment of Palestine in the second millennium B.C.E. The chain of verbal images transmitted in the Biblical canon was never lost. The latter then could be utilized afresh as each building or rebuilding, each furnishing or refurnishing, was initiated.¹⁰⁷

While diversity may be observed in the boundary architecture over subsequent iterations of the divine pattern, the pattern itself is stable. One criticism with Meyers’ conclusion is that architectural continuity is attributed to what she calls the “verbal images” transmitted in the biblical canon. Not only would this require a great deal from the verbal images themselves, it would presuppose a consistent hermeneutic over time—even while the buildings themselves changed. Remember how architecture can alter in relation to recurring events and how, in turn, the events can be affected by the architecture. The consistency is better explained by the enduring effects of sacred place resulting from an archetypal divine pattern reflected and expressed in the architecture emerging at the boundaries. Neither was the Temple simply an exercise of human effort attempting to reproduce a heavenly vision. For the Jews, it was obedience to the command of God to build according to a divinely given plan and it generated an architecture which circumscribed the holiest place on earth.

The Holy of Holies was the fulcrum upon which the whole religious system of the Israelites balanced. Whether in the Tabernacle or the Temple, it was the place of meeting, the *axis mundi*, the place where God and man came together. But there is another component to be considered: the Holy of Holies embraced a unique concept of time. It was “neither linear nor cyclic, but based on the concept of a hidden eternity in the midst of time as we perceive

107. Meyers, “Elusive Temple,” 41.

it.”¹⁰⁸ It presupposes something beyond our sensory capabilities. The Holy of Holies was understood as a place not bound by spatial limitations or time—it is, in fact, an existence without time.

Eliade presumes that, “religious man lives in two kinds of time, of which the more important, sacred time, appears under the paradoxical aspect of a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites.”¹⁰⁹ But this ‘mythical’ time may not, in fact, be so mythical—or circular. It has long been assumed that time itself was absolute.¹¹⁰ More recent understanding, however, has determined that time is really *dynamic*. Time and space are no longer thought to be independent of each other, which suggests that the Jewish understanding of the Holy of Holies may be closer to the truth than previously thought. If space could touch upon the infinite, would time become eternity? Stephen Hawking, a leading theoretical physicist at the University of Cambridge, has written of the possibility:

So maybe what we call imaginary time is really more basic, and what we call real is just an idea that we invent to help us describe what we think the universe is like. But according to the approach I describe,...a scientific theory is just a mathematical model we make to describe our observations: it exists only in our minds. So it is meaningless to ask: which is real, “real” or “imaginary” time? It is simply a matter of which is the more useful description.¹¹¹

What Eliade calls ‘sacred time’ may be an earthly construct that attempts to describe what happens in eternity. The distinction between heaven and earth is the distinction between the uncircumscribed and the circumscribed, between eternity and time. Philo said that the veil of

108. Barker, *High Priest*, 146. For a review of the Biblical evidence regarding time and eternity, see James Muilenberg, “The Biblical View of Time,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 54, no. 4 (October 1961): 225–52 and Buttrick, *IDB*, s.v. “Time”.

109. Eliade, *Sacred & Profane*, 70.

110. “Both Aristotle and Newton believed in absolute time. That is, they believed that one could unambiguously measure the interval of time between two events, and that this time would be the same whoever measured it... Time was completely separate from and independent of space” (Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, Tenth anniversary ed. [New York: Bantam Books, 1988], 18).

111. Hawking, *Time*, 144.

the Temple, “separated the changeable parts of the world... from the heavenly region which is without transient events and is unchanging.”¹¹² Thus, to enter the Holy of Holies was to enter eternity, it was to go beyond time—and what of the boundary?

Louis Ginzberg has brought together a number of later Jewish sources to reconstruct the affiliation between the Tabernacle and the six days of creation:

God told the angels: On the first day of creation, I shall make the heavens and stretch them out; so will Israel raise up the tabernacle as the dwelling place of my Glory. On the second day I shall put a division between the terrestrial waters and the heavenly waters; so will [Moses] hang up a veil in the tabernacle to divide the Holy Place and the Most Holy. On the third day I shall make the earth put forth grass and herbs; so will he, in obedience to my commands, eat herbs on the first night of Passover and prepare shewbread before me. On the fourth day I shall make the luminaries; so he will stretch out a golden candlestick before me. On the fifth day I shall create the birds; so he will fashion the cherubim with outstretched wings. On the sixth day I shall create man; so will Israel set aside a man from the sons of Aaron as high priest for my service.¹¹³

The importance of this connection has to do with the second day: the creation of an expanse (רָקִיעַ) to divide heaven and earth.¹¹⁴ This division between heaven and earth is the only day not declared “good” by the Lord. Of the veil it is said, “the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy.”¹¹⁵ So the heavenly is separated from the earthly. The heavenly reality of the “one day” is cordoned off from the earthly material world giving it a mystical quality. The ἡμέρα μία is a definite boundary.¹¹⁶ This suggests that the Holy of Holies was

112. Philo, *Questions of Exodus*, 2.91.

113. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), vol. 1, 51.

114. Genesis 1:6-8. It may be noted that the word in this verse for “expanse” is a word that in Hebrew thought was considered a solid, perhaps a sheet of ice, Brown, Driver, Briggs, and Gesenius, *BDB*, 596, thus the LXX has στερέωμα, and the Latin *firmamentum*. For a critique of this view see Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, s.v. רָקִיעַ.

115. Exodus 26:33. The “veil” is a solid which corresponds to the “firmament” which divides the “waters from the waters” in Genesis 1:6. But depending upon how the veil was actually hung, it could also represent an “expanse.” If a single veil wrapped around the entire holy of holies and overlapped, forming the entrance,

116. Genesis 1:5 (LXX). The use of an ordinal number instead of a cardinal number expresses the idea of eternity according to St. Basil: “If then the beginning of time is called ‘one day’ rather than ‘the first day’, it is

eternal even though it was contained within the created order. God said to Moses, “The veil shall be a divider (פֶּדֶל, διορίζω) for you between the holy place and the Most holy.”¹¹⁷ Here the veil is the border, the dividing wall separating the Holy of Holies and the Holy place. It is a significant architectural element marking the boundary of the Most Holy place. This was not lost upon the early Church.

The veil at the entrance to the Holy of Holies is in both the Tabernacle and Temple was the פֶּרֶכֶת (LXX and *Philo κατεπέτασμα*) distinguished from the hanging at the entrance to the tabernacle מִשְׁכָּן (LXX *epispastron*, *Philo κάλυμμα*). Josephus wrote that the tabernacle was a microcosm of the creation, divided into three parts: “as a place accessible and common, he [Moses] denoted the land and the sea, these being of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, *because heaven is inaccessible to men*.”¹¹⁸ The Most Holy place, the sanctuary, was off limits even to the priests, except for the high priest on the Day of Atonement. The place behind the veil was inaccessible: “The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy.”¹¹⁹ These divisions came to be reflected in the early Christian churches where “the growing sacrality of space (exonarthex - narthex - altar) seems to remind of/and follow...this awesome indication in the Exodus.”¹²⁰

The material of which the veil was made recalls the creation and the elements from which it was made. Both Josephus and Philo (as already considered) refer to the four different

because Scripture wishes to establish its relationship with eternity. It was, in reality, fit and natural to call ‘one’ the day whose character is to be wholly separated and isolated from all the others...it is the day the Psalmist calls the eighth day, because it is outside this time of weeks... Thus it is in order that you may carry your thoughts forward towards a future life, that Scripture marks by the word ‘one’ the day which is the type of eternity, the first fruits of days, the contemporary of light, the holy Lord’s day, honoured by the Resurrection of our Lord,” Basil, *The Hexaemeron*, Homily II, 8.

117. Exodus 26:33.

118. Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, updated ed., trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 3.181.

119. Exodus 26:33.

120. Dragon and Ioan Augustin, *Symbols and Language*, 44.

colours from which the veil was woven as representative of the four elements from which the world is composed: earth, water, air, and fire. Josephus said that the veil threads, “declared the four elements; for the fine linen was proper to signify the earth, because the flax grows out of the earth; the purple signified the sea, because that colour is dyed by the blood of a sea shell fish; the blue is fit to signify the air; and the scarlet will naturally be an indication of fire.”¹²¹ The veil signified matter, as did the vestments of the high priest which were made of the same colours.¹²² The High Priest removed his robe when he entered the most holy place: removing the earth as he entered heaven.¹²³ Pointing to Jesus as the high priest, the epistle to the Hebrews declared that Jesus’ flesh is the Temple veil, “by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.”¹²⁴

Within this place of eternity known as the *d’bir* were the cherubim. The ones described within the Tabernacle were small cherubim on either end of the mercy seat placed on top of the ark.¹²⁵ These cherubim faced each other with their wings spread over the ark.¹²⁶ The cherubim within the Temple were much larger and had a different orientation:

The wings of the cherubim together extended twenty cubits: one wing of the one, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house, and its other wing, of five cubits, touched the wing of the other cherub; and of this cherub, one wing, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house, and the other wing, also of five cubits, was joined to the wing of the first cherub. The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits. The cherubim stood

121. Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 3, chap. 7.183 See also Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, II, 88.

122. The *Wisdom of Solomon* indicates, “For on his [Aaron’s] long robe the whole world was depicted (Wisdom of Solomon 18:24, NRSV). Philo also says that the robe worn by the high priest when he enters the Holy of Holies is, “a copy and representation of the world” (Philo, *The Special Laws*, trans. C.D. Young, 1.84).

123. Special vestments were prescribed for the high priest to be worn only on the Day of Atonement. They consisted of a linen tunic, linen underpants, a plain linen sash, and a linen turban (Lev. 16:4). They were normally kept in the tent of meeting (Lev. 16:32). In these simple vestments, the high priest was dressed like one of God’s angels (cf. Ezekiel 9:2-3, 11; 10:2, 6-7; Daniel 10:5; 12:6-7) and, like a servant, entered into the Presence, John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 339.

124. Hebrews 10:20.

125. Exodus 25:17-21.

126. Exodus 25:10.

on their feet, facing the nave (הַיֵּכָל).¹²⁷

Moses heard the voice of the Lord speaking to him from above the cherubim.¹²⁸ But between the cherubim in the Temple would have been the throne.

The ark of the covenant was constructed at Sinai and contained the two tablets of the commandments and a jar of manna.¹²⁹ It also contained the budded staff of Aaron,¹³⁰ as the book of Hebrews recounts: “Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.”¹³¹ These were evidence of God’s deliverance in the past, but the Temple also embodied a vision of the future.

During the captivity, the prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of a new and ideal Temple which he described with forceful clarity.¹³² It was a vision of how things would be when God made all things right in the eschaton. Commenting upon the Jewish eschatological expectations found in the Sibylline Oracles, Andrew Chester writes, “Indeed, not only are Jerusalem and the Temple the focal point for the new (now perfect) Jewish people in the messianic age, but Jerusalem (and implicitly the Temple) will be the centre of gravity for the whole world as well.”¹³³

127. 2 Chronicles 3:11-13.

128. Numbers 7:89.

129. Exodus 16:33.

130. Numbers 17:8-11.

131. Hebrews 9:3-4.

132. Ezekiel 40-44.

133. Andrew Chester, “The Parting of the Ways: Eschatology and Messianic Hope,” in *Jews and Christians*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 242.

The Temple Scroll which was, perhaps, understood by a small minority of Jews as a law for the eschaton, emphasises that the king would lead Israel in the “End of Days” and the material emphasises him as a war leader, a judge and a man of exceptional purity.¹³⁴ It is this Levitical purity that is of interest in light of earlier connections in the days of Solomon between the king and high priest. “Concern for purity dominates the concept of the eschaton in the T[emple] S[croll].”¹³⁵ It is this Temple Scroll which gives instructions for building a temple different than any other known temple.¹³⁶ While pointing to a future renewal, this would also suggest that the Second Temple was somehow inadequate and unable to be an *axis mundi*. Though a discussion of the cleansing of the Temple by Jesus is forthcoming, germane here is Beckwith’s assertion that the cleansing event was actually “the culmination of a dissatisfaction with the Second Temple which had extended over a long period.”¹³⁷ Barker, too, discredits the Second Temple in order to substantiate a stronger connection between the Church and the First Temple.¹³⁸ The difficulty is that both views presuppose a diminished loyalty to the Second Temple among the Jews. This conflicts with the evidence presented in the NT. It is difficult to find evidence for Barker’s strong First Temple link with the Church and there seems to be little evidence of dissatisfaction with the Second Temple except in a few Jewish sects. Most Jews believed in the sanctity of the Second Temple—including Jesus and His disciples who regularly attended the Temple liturgies. Even when Jesus lashed out at the money-changers, His wrath was not directed toward the Temple, but those who were

134. See Michael O. Wise, “The Eschatological Vision of the Temple Scroll,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49, no. 2 (April 1990): 155–72.

135. Wise, “Eschatological Vision,” 169.

136. The *Temple Scroll*, XXX, 10 in Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York, NY: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1997), 200ff.

137. R.T. Beckwith, “The Temple Restored,” in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 77.

138. Barker, *High Priest*, 315.

misusing it. The Jews were quick to defend the sanctity of the Second Temple against desecration.¹³⁹

The Hebrews and their priests understood that the Temple was a sacred place. They believed the account of Creation in which God separated and distinguished the elements of the world into boundaries and places. They knew the Tabernacle (and the Temple) was intrinsically connected with the Creation and that it was modelled upon a heavenly archetype. They knew the Holy of Holies to be on the earth and yet filled with eternity—it was the place of heaven on earth. This was where God and His people were reconciled. All of these were facets of reality for Israel, grounded upon the reality of God entering time and space for the purpose of renewing the fallen world. N.T. Wright emphasises strongly that “first century Judaism had at its heart what we can and must call several incarnational symbols, not least the Torah, but particularly the Temple.”¹⁴⁰ The presence of God effused into sacred place and filled Jewish Temple rites and architecture so that they became inseparable.

Thus, we may conclude that the Jewish legacy to the Church was not a temple building “type” nor a unique Jewish “style.” Levine has astutely noted, “The Jewish people never possessed an independent architectural tradition either in their private or in their public domain.”¹⁴¹ The legacy resides in their notions of place and boundary from which the seeds of Christian architecture would sprout and bloom. Judaism was never indifferent to place: it has the capacity to contain the infinite and embrace the Divine. It remains now, to explore the path through which the Temple place/boundary pattern made its way into the development of early Christian architecture.

139. E.g. the objections at Jesus’ trial about claiming to destroy the Temple and rebuild it (Matthew 26:61; Mark 14:58) and St. Paul’s arrest in the Temple (Acts 21:27ff.).

140. N.T. Wright, “Jesus and the Identity of God,” NTWrightpage.com, available from http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_JIG.htm, accessed 28 Dec 2009, 4.

141. Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 581.

CHAPTER 4

THE PLACE OF THE SYNAGOGUE

*“The synagogue has preceded the church;
the Jews, the Christians.”*
—Blaise Pascal

It has long been the accepted view that Christianity, and particularly the Christian liturgy, had its roots in the synagogue. The Church and the synagogue emerged in similar surroundings and so they naturally shared some things in common, but what exactly was their relationship? Were the house church and synagogue two daughters of Judaism who chose different paths? Did the early Church find its connection with the Temple via the synagogue? Do they share similar notions about boundary and place resulting in a similar architecture? Given the increasing questions being raised about the origins and development of the synagogue, it is well to ask, “What is the place of the synagogue?”

The Origins of the Synagogue

The Judaism of antiquity has often been assumed to comprise a monolithic body of doctrine and life. While it may be granted that there is something of a ‘common Judaism’ before A.D. 70, there is also evidence of great diversity.¹ This only muddies the waters when we look into the origins of the synagogue. In fact, numerous theories exist.² One reason for this is due to the dearth of data, both archeological and epigraphic. Such lack has allowed

1. E.P. Sanders argues for a unified Judaism in E.P. Sanders, “Common Judaism and the Synagogue in the First Century,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1–17.

2. See Joseph Gutmann, ed., *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research*, vol. 22 of *Brown Judaic Studies*, edited by Jacob Neusner, et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars Press, 1981) 1–4; Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 19–41.

scholars to range far and wide in their speculation as they seek answers to their questions. Indeed, for an institution that grew so gradually and was dispersed so broadly, the question may well be raised as to how one can actually define the origin of such an institution as the synagogue.³ Among the many theories and variations on theories, there are a few which have risen to the top.

Perhaps the oldest theory regarding the origins of the Jewish synagogue has come from the Rabbinic tradition that the synagogue began with Moses. This view was defended well into the seventeenth century by Hugo Grotius, the Dutch scholar and theologian.⁴ This view, however, places far too much weight on the rabbinic traditions which tend toward exaggeration and contradiction in their attempt to find the origin of the synagogue within a Biblical context. Citing several examples of conflicting rabbinic testimony, Levine concludes, “It seems certain that such traditions are little more than anachronistic musings, perhaps for homiletical purposes, and are of little historical worth.”⁵

More scholars through the years have gravitated toward the view that the synagogue had its origins in the Babylonian exile (586-536 B.C.).⁶ This popular theory latches onto the trauma that must have resulted from the destruction of the First Temple and the ensuing exile. It is thought to have impacted the people of Israel so forcefully that the creation of an alternative form of religious worship was invoked, namely, the synagogue.⁷ In this reading of

3. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 21–22.

4. Gutmann, *Ancient Synagogues*, 1. See also Urman and Flesher, *Ancient Synagogues*, xxi.

5. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 22.

6. The exilic theory is “a belief already propounded in the tenth-century Gaon of Pumbedita, Sherira ben Hanina,” Joseph Gutmann, ed., *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research*, vol. 22 of *Brown Judaic Studies*, ed. Jacob Neusner, et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars Press, 1981), 1–4 Cf. also Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 23 n. 11.

7. Typical in this regard are the following: “With the destruction of the Temple, sacrifices ceased. Prayer and the study of the sacred Scriptures, however, knew no geographical limitations. The book of Ezekiel describes the elders of Israel gathering in the prophets house (8:1; 20:1-3). Such gatherings became more regular and more organized in nature, resulting in the weekly synagogue services, after which the weekly services of the Christian church were patterned,” Pfeiffer, *History*, 542; and a quotation of the sixteenth century scholar Carolus

the data, the synagogue is seen as the air rushing in to fill the vacuum left by the destruction of the First Jerusalem Temple.

The Hungarian Rabbi, Leopold Löw (1811-1875), however, challenged the prevalent views of his time by calling into question whether the synagogue had been a place of worship at all. His theory proposed that the synagogue was *not* a place of worship taking the place of the Temple. This tack sought to establish a pre-exilic origin of the synagogue on the basis of the term *בֵּית הָעָם*, “house of the people,” which was a building in Jerusalem where public meetings of the city were held. Rather than tie the origins of the synagogue to the worship life of Israel, Löw’s theory sought the genesis of the synagogue in the civic realm. Only gradually, according to Löw, was the meeting place transformed into what became a synagogue. A similar, but later, nuance of this proposal has been championed by Zeitlin who put the origin of the synagogue in the community meetings of later Persian-Hellenistic Judea.⁸

Yet another view sets the beginning of the synagogue during the period of the Restoration after the exiles are permitted to return out of Babylon.⁹ In support of this view are adduced the work of Ezra and Nehemiah, and later, the scribes:

Ezra instructed the people in the written Mosaic laws and religious customs. Tradition has it that Ezra instituted set days for public instruction to be opened and closed with prayer and hymns, and that his Great Assembly created the pattern for benediction, prayers, sanctification, and Havdala in Israel.¹⁰

Sigonius, “If it is at all admissible to venture a conjecture of this kind of antiquity, I would surmise that synagogues were first erected in the Babylonian exile for the purpose that those who have been deprived of the Temple of Jerusalem, where they used to pray and teach, would have a certain place similar to the temple, in which they could assemble and perform the same kind of service,” Buttrick, *IDB*, 4:478.

8. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 24.

9. It was through the work of Vitranga and his followers that this view gained the upper hand over and against Grotius’ view of Mosaic origin. I. Sonne, “Synagogue,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 478–79.

10. A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 17.

But more than simply setting a precedent for public worship on certain days, Ezra was credited with creating the need for a particular building: “When Ezra instituted public instruction on Sabbaths and festivals, the need for a “house of assembly”—“Beith Haknesseth”—in Greek συναγωγή Synagogue—was strongly felt.”¹¹

The public reading of the Torah is seen by those who hold to this view to be the catalyst for the emergence of the synagogue.¹² Levine has noted, “Proponents of this view often seek support by invoking later rabbinic traditions which view the age of Ezra as the critical period in the development of synagogue liturgy;”¹³ a perspective with a penchant for literary license and reading back into history what they would like to find there.

More recently, the theory has been proposed by Lee I. Levine that the synagogue evolved from the communal, religious and judicatory activities of the city-gate in the post-exilic period.¹⁴ Levine explains:

Most of the activities carried out within the context of the first-century synagogue are already documented for the city-gate area in the first-Temple period. By the Hellenistic period, the functions previously associated with the city-gate and adjacent square were relocated to a building that came to be known as a synagogue, a change required when the biblical city-gate complex was transformed from a center of urban activity into a simple, functional gate for entrance and exit.¹⁵

Levine’s thesis is a departure from the other theories which want to establish the origins of the synagogue in some specific event or crisis and place it within the natural evolution of Hellenistic city life between the fifth and first centuries B.C. Levine’s proposal is

11. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 24.

12. “This theory is still the standard view among scholars. It should be noted that Krochmal, Zunz, and Graetz, on the one side, and Wellhausen and Schürer, on the other, have greatly contributed to this standardization. For one reason or another they all set the beginning of the synagogue in the Babylonian exile but its consolidation in Palestine as the result of Ezra’s work,” Sonne, “Synagogue,” 479; Cf. also Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 252.

13. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 23.

14. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 26–41.

15. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 32.

especially appealing because it gives due consideration to both the unity and diversity among synagogal development. A gradual evolution over time also avoids unnecessary stress on the synagogue as ‘building’ over and against the synagogue as ‘assembly’.

So there is much to commend this approach to the origins of the Jewish synagogue as it draws upon known archeological, Biblical, and epigraphical evidence and works backward in time, accounting for anomalies in other explanations.¹⁶ Levine is able to accommodate and explain the wide variation of evidence within Judea and throughout the Diaspora, particularly the evidence from Egypt.¹⁷ He summarises briefly:

We may conclude that the synagogue as a distinct and recognizable institution began to crystallize owing to a shift in urban planning. The previous setting of this institution’s many functions was well rooted in biblical society. City-gates, with their manifold activities, existed throughout Palestine and other Near-Eastern settings for centuries, if not for a millennium or more. The Jews were perpetuating a well-known model. The later move into a building in place of the open-air city-gate setting was likewise a familiar phenomenon in the Hellenistic age. Within Jewish society, this move constituted the beginnings of the institution known as the synagogue.¹⁸

As we have already noted, the differing views on the origins of the synagogue are numerous and only the leading theories have been put in evidence here. Given the scarcity of the evidence and the multiplicity of theories, the one thing about which scholars seem to agree is that the exact origins and development of the synagogue remain obscure. Whether its origins were early or late, “it is not until the first century C.E. that the synagogue emerges into the full light of history as the central communal institution of Jewish communities throughout Judea and the Diaspora.”¹⁹

Whatever its origin, however, the synagogue appears to be reasonably established by

16. For a critique of Levine’s views, see Urman and Flesher, *Ancient Synagogues*, xx.

17. J. Gwyn Griffiths, “Egypt and the Rise of the Synagogue,” ed. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, in *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 3–16.

18. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 39.

19. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 20.

the time of Christ.²⁰ It was an institution growing in importance and popularity in Judea and throughout the world. Because of the strong ties between the synagogue and the early Church presumed by many, it will be necessary to explore the possibility of the synagogue serving as a foundation for early Christian architecture.

The Nature of the Second Temple Synagogue

The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70 was an event of monumental import for the Jewish people—particularly those living in Judea. The Temple had been the centrepiece of Jewish religion since its completion under Solomon (*ca.* 950 B.C.).²¹ With its destruction at the hands of

Nebuchadnezzar, Israel had already endured and survived such a loss.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. did not spell the demise of Judaism or the disappearance of the Jewish people; life went on, adaptations were made, and the Temple was eventually restored. Moreover, Diaspora communities long before 70 C.E. had come to terms with their geographical distance from the Temple, which, for all practical purposes, no longer impacted their daily lives.²²



Fig. 3. The Theodotus inscription.

The Temple had been rebuilt under Zerubbabel and the people recovered. The tragedy of A.D. 70, however, had a far-reaching impact that would lead to significant changes in Jewish religion and life. It would change the way they saw themselves and how they related to their God.

20. "That the synagogue had come into existence by the first century C.E. is amply attested in such textual sources as Josephus and the New Testament. Archaeologically speaking, the evidence is not so positive," Andrew R. Seager, "Ancient Synagogue Architecture," ed. Joseph Gutmann, in *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research*, vol. 22 of *Brown Judaic Studies*, ed. Jacob Neusner, et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars Press, 1989), 3.

21. On the dating of the completion of the First Temple, see Buttrick, *IDB*, 4:535; Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, xv.

22. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 161–62.

Prior the Temple's demise, the synagogue had already made its mark on Jewish culture and religious life within Judea and throughout the Diaspora—though it seems to have received little official attention. “The synagogue at this time had no halakhic or religious standing; it was a communal institution and, as such, merited no special status.”²³ Nevertheless, it may have been far from benign. Some have conjectured that the synagogues near Jerusalem may have actually been viewed as competition for the Temple cult.²⁴ The tensions that may have existed are by no means obvious and it is just as likely that the Temple and synagogue came to have a symbiotic relationship, each in their own way supporting the other. The Judean synagogue found ample mention in the NT and has been corroborated by other first-century Jewish evidence.²⁵ Levine cites the following example:

Acts refers to Diaspora Jewry's synagogues in Jerusalem, and this presence is reflected in rabbinic literature and the Theodotos inscription as well. The centrality of the scriptural readings in the synagogue (viz., Luke 4) is echoed in the Theodotos inscription, Philo, Josephus, and some early rabbinic traditions (e.g., T Megillah 3 [p. 359]).²⁶

The fact that Jesus and his disciples regularly attended the synagogues in Nazareth and Capernaum are clearly attested in the Gospels. The synoptics relate the important account of Jesus coming to his hometown. There, he is invited to teach in the local synagogue and those gathered to hear him are both astonished (ἐκπλήσσεσθαι) and offended (ἐσκανδαλίζοντο) because of him. They cried out, “Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his

23. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 43.

24. Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher, “Palestinian Synagogues Before 70 C.E. A Review of the Evidence,” ed. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, in *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 29.

25. For a helpful review of the evidence, see Pieter van der Horst, “Was the Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship Before 70 CE?” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Routledge, 1999), 18–43.

26. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 45.

sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”²⁷ Their response prompted Jesus to proclaim that a prophet is not welcome in his own town.

Luke’s version of this event is both different and longer than the others, involving more detail and a different position and purpose in the narrative.²⁸ The value, however, for our study lies in the details it offers regarding the synagogue:

According to Luke, Jesus was apparently accustomed to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath, either as an ordinary participant or as an itinerant preacher or healer; other gospel traditions bear this out. Certain stages of synagogue liturgy are carefully noted: Jesus stood up to read from the Prophets, was handed the book of Isaiah, read several verses, returned the book to the synagogue official, sat down, and proceeded to address the congregation.²⁹

The synagogue was a place where the scriptures were read, where a rabbi or other person deemed worthy would offer words of wisdom, and where people customarily gathered. It was a place of assembly, a place where Jews could gather and speak the language of their faith and enjoy communal life. Though this is far from affirming a definite synagogal liturgy, it does appear to have involved some religious activity.

Jews, like so many other groups of people during the first century, tended to join together in small groups or associations. Such societies were popular especially in the Diaspora and they met for various purposes which included sharing meals and prayer.³⁰ For the Jews living among the nations, such associations were desired for maintaining their cultural identity and religion.³¹ “However they came, Jews carried their ancestral traditions

27. Matthew 13:55-56. See also Mark 6:1-6.

28. Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 184-96. Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, gen. ed. F. F. Bruce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), 166. Cf. also Arthur A. Just, Jr., *The Ongoing Feast* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 87–100.

29. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 47.

30. Sanders cites the example of Phoenicians and Egyptians who were residents of Delos who met to maintain their native cults, Sanders, “Common Judaism,” 1–2.

31. See Sanders, “Common Judaism,” 1–4.

and worship with them, to varying degrees, as they established community life in ethnic enclaves.”³²

Israelites living in Judea, however, did not face the same challenges as did their Diaspora counterparts. Nevertheless, the synagogue was prevalent among them also, particularly in the haunts of northern Judea. Areas like Samaria, Galilee, and the Decapolis were quite receptive to the development of the synagogue since they were further away from the Temple cult and its priests. There is some debate concerning the actual number of synagogues in Jerusalem and their relationship to the Temple. For example, Idelsohn argues that, “the institution of the House of Assembly spread throughout the Jewish world, so that in the last century of the Second Temple there existed in Jerusalem numerous synagogues.”³³ But Stuart Miller is more cautious, “Jerusalem may have had many synagogues at one time, perhaps even several hundred” but this number, he notes, given the sources, are surely exaggerated.³⁴

Regardless of their number, there were synagogues in Jerusalem for the purpose of accommodating Diaspora Jews who visited during feasts—New Testament evidence bears this out.³⁵ Also, there is the noteworthy Greek inscription found in Jerusalem and attributed to the head of a synagogue (ἀρχισυνάγωγος), a priest named Theodotos:

32. White, *Building*, 60.

33. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 24.

34. Stuart S. Miller, “The Rabbis and the Non-Existent Monolithic Synagogue,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Routledge, 1999), 58. Levine also notes: “Several...rabbinic sources report on the number of synagogues to be found in Jerusalem. One often cited source speaks of 480; another, probably a corrupt reading, speaks of 460, and yet another notes 394. These numbers—all appearing in later amoraic compilations—appear to be incredibly exaggerated, and in once case, at least, undoubtedly symbolic (viz., the number 480)... What these traditions do evidence, however, is the assumption by later generations that the late Second Temple Jerusalem abounded in such institutions,” Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 58.

35. Acts 6:9 clearly connects Diaspora Jews with synagogues in Jerusalem: “Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.” See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 155–57 and Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 62–63.

Theodotos, son of Vettenus, priest and head of the synagogue, son of a head of the synagogue, grandson of the head of a synagogue, had this synagogue built for reading of the Law and instruction in the commandments, and also the guest lodgings and the rooms and the water systems for the accommodation of those who come from abroad and need [accommodation]. [This synagogue] was founded by his ancestors, the elders, and Simonides.³⁶

This inscription states that the synagogue was for the reading of the Law and instruction in the commandments, but it also tells us that it was used for accommodating pilgrims visiting Jerusalem from abroad.³⁷ The Tosefta indicates that there was a synagogue of the Alexandrians in Jerusalem.³⁸ The synagogue or ‘House of Assembly’ in the days of the Second Temple was first and foremost a community house with prayer becoming increasingly established as part of its Sabbath ritual.³⁹

It is not entirely understood what relationship existed between the Jerusalem synagogues and the Temple before its ruin.⁴⁰ The synagogues in Jerusalem and Judea shared many of the same qualities as the other synagogues throughout the world, but whatever the details of their civic and religious character, it seems clear that the Temple was at the heart and centre of Jewish faith and life during this period, even if to a lesser degree away from Jerusalem. Synagogues were a place for Jews to express their intrinsic Jewishness, and as such, it was a place of varied and repeated activity. The nature of the synagogue appears to have been quite varied both geographically and over time. Its obscure origins leave hidden

36. The Theodotos inscription as quoted from van der Horst, “Place of Sabbath Worship,” 19.

37. Flesher, “Palestinian Synagogues,” 33–34.

38. Sanders, “Common Judaism,” 9.

39. Dan Urman, “The House of Assembly and the House of Study Are They One and the Same?” ed. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, in *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 254–55.

40. Some have argued that the Temple and the synagogue in Judea had a complementary relationship and, thus, existed happily together. Levine notes, “Prior to 70, the Temple was recognized as the central institution in Jewish life; nevertheless, the newly emerging role of the synagogue transformed it into the pivotal institution for local Jewish affairs.” Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 72–73. However, Flesher argues the possibility that synagogues in Jerusalem were seen as competition for the Temple making the relationship uneasy. Flesher, “Palestinian Synagogues,” 30–34.

further details of the synagogue's character and purpose. To grasp the architectural implications of the synagogue, we must understand it as a place filled with activity.

The Activities of the Second Temple Synagogue

The functions of any given place tells us something of the way of life of people there. The activities of the Jewish synagogue provide hints concerning the Jews of that time and place. The purpose of the synagogue is reflected in the terminology used to describe it. The oldest attested word for a building where a Jewish community gathered is *proseuchê* (προσευχή), which means 'prayer' and is typically shorthand for 'house of prayer.'⁴¹ This title seems to have begun with the synagogue in Egypt as early as Ptolemaic times.⁴² It should be noted, however, that the sanctity afforded the Egyptian προσευχή appears to have been something of a local phenomenon connected with the temples in Ptolemaic culture rather than any particular worship or acts of prayer which might have occurred among the Jewish assembly.⁴³

While προσευχή was the normal designation for the synagogue in Egyptian inscriptions and papyri, Griffiths explains:

By the first century AD, of course, the New Testament often uses συναγωγή of the [Jewish] meeting house... The Septuagint used the word συναγωγή to translate the Hebrew הֶרֶץ, of the community assembled, but many of these allusions may naturally long antedate the emergence of the synagogue... בית כְּנֶסֶת is the word eventually used in Hebrew for 'synagogue,' with the sense of 'House of Assembly,' while the meaning 'House of Prayer' is conveyed by בֵּית תְּפִלָּה, a phrase adapted from Isa. 56:7.⁴⁴

41. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1511; n.b. the Septuagint uses the word in Isaiah 56:7 in connection with the Temple as a 'House of Prayer' (οἶκος τῆς προσευχῆς). See also Griffiths, "Egypt," 4–10.

42. Griffiths writes, "It is in the third century BC that the synagogue emerges in Egypt with full and clear evidence in the archeological and epigraphic record which includes details of date." Griffiths, "Egypt," 4.

43. Steven Fine, *This Holy Place*, vol. 11 of *Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series*, ed. Gregory E. Sterling (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 32–33.

44. Griffiths, "Egypt," 6–7.

Even though the terminology for the synagogue may be found well before the first century, some have contended that “before 70 CE there were no separate synagogal buildings and, if there were, they did not serve as places of worship on the Sabbath.”⁴⁵ There does not appear to be any clear separation between the activities of the synagogue and the building which housed them. The earliest evidence comes not from Judea but outside: “In the earliest diffusion of Jewish communities into the Diaspora, local congregations probably met in the homes of individuals.”⁴⁶ It seems unlikely that such meetings of the Jews, whether called συναγωγή or προσευχή would not have had some form of prayer associated with it—especially given the sacred character of the Jewish house. It seems unlikely, however, that there was much structure or formality to the prayer before the Tannaim.

The terminology used for the synagogue seems to point toward a religious use, but that may not necessarily have been the case. The question, however, may simply be one of emphasis. Flesher noted:

A synagogue forms the ongoing and central community institution in a Jewish town or village. On the one hand, its primary function is religious, for it constitutes a meeting place for prayer, worship, and scripture study. On the other hand, it may also serve less sacred activities by providing a bank for community or charity funds, a hostel, an office for community leaders, or it may simply function as a meeting place—since it usually is the largest public building in a town. In fact, although archaeology tends to focus on the architectural aspects of the synagogue, the building should be understood primarily as a place for the community—the people Israel.⁴⁷

What is more important, perhaps, than terminology is to understand how these places were actually used by the Jews. This, too, is a complex undertaking given the nature of the

45. That there were no separate synagogue buildings before A.D. 70, first argued by Howard Kee in 1990; if synagogues existed, they were not places of Sabbath worship was an idea argued by Heather McKay in 1994. Both of these arguments are ably refuted in van der Horst, “Place of Sabbath Worship,” 18–43.

46. White, *Building*, 64.

47. Flesher, “Palestinian Synagogues,” 30. See also Kraabel’s conclusions in Alf Thomas Kraabel, “The Diaspora Synagogue: Archeological and Epigraphic Evidence Since Sukenik,” ed. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, in *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 119–21; See also Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 124 ff.

evidence. However, certain typical functions become apparent even though the “evidence suggests that each synagogue was shaped by local needs and customs.”⁴⁸

There was considerable variety among the synagogues of the first century. That is because the needs of the Jews in various places differed according to their economic status, their acceptance into the community, and the number of Jews present in a given place. For all their differences, there is also a considerable commonality expressed by Jews throughout the world, a commonality born of Jewish culture, religion, and shared history as the people of God.⁴⁹ They are first a people, a community, who need to pass on their heritage to their children even though they may live as pilgrims in a foreign land. One of the community functions of the synagogue was instruction. This activity of the synagogue was emphasised by Josephus:

“Nay, indeed, the law...commands us to bring those children up in learning and to exercise them in the laws, and make them acquainted with the acts of their predecessors, in order to their imitation of them, and that they may be nourished up in the laws from their infancy, and might neither transgress them, nor yet have any pretence for their ignorance of them.”⁵⁰

Admitting that the evidence for schools in synagogues is negligible before A.D. 70, Levine has suggested that there is reason to believe that synagogues served this function in many, if not most, areas.⁵¹ This would not seem to be out of place given the Jewish emphasis on the study and reading of the Scriptures.

The synagogue also served a *judicial function*, acting as a place for administering Jewish justice. New Testament evidence is especially helpful here. Jesus warned his disciples

48. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 72 and White, *Building*, 64.

49. E. P. Sanders gives evidence for the commonality among the Jews at this time in Sanders, “Common Judaism,” 1–5.

50. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.204.

51. “The well-established and widespread local educational apparatus already reflected in rabbinic discussions from the second century onward was probably not created overnight. Nor were they under rabbinic auspices; these schools seem to have been a communal responsibility and thus might well have existed much before the time the editors of rabbinic literature began including such material.” Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 133.

about what would happen to them as they were sent out: “Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you *in their synagogues*, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.”⁵² The Gospel of Mark echoes the same judicial synagogal enterprise.⁵³ Following his arrest in Jerusalem, St. Paul spoke before the crowds in his own defence. He recounted his conversion and in prayer to the Lord admitted that he once persecuted the Christians, “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you.’”⁵⁴ The judicial activities among the Jews was also echoed in the writings of Josephus:

Those Jews that are our fellow citizens of Rome, came to me, and demonstrated that they had an assembly of their own, according to the laws of their forefathers, and this from the beginning, as also a place of their own, wherein they determined their suits and controversies with one another.⁵⁵

The synagogue, in fact, continued to serve as a court and place of punishment for many centuries.⁵⁶

The communal activities of the synagogue included hospitality for foreigners, especially, as noted above, among the synagogues in Jerusalem who accommodated pilgrims visiting Jerusalem for the feasts. “How unique this function was to Jerusalem, the focus of the Temple pilgrimage, is unclear. However, the fact that later synagogues also served such a purpose may point to similar needs in the pre-70 era as well.”⁵⁷ The synagogue served numerous communal and civic functions not only in Jerusalem but wherever Jews settled. The particular details of each synagogue varied from place to place, but the evidence suggests that

52. Matthew 10:17-18.

53. Mark 13:9. Cf. also Luke 21:12.

54. Acts 22:19.

55. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.235.

56. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 132.

57. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 132.

they served as places of instruction, justice, and hospitality. These communal activities existed alongside the worship needs of the people. Levine correctly summarises:

With the notable exception of the Pre-70 Jerusalem institution, the synagogue incorporated Jewish communal life within its walls: the political and liturgical, the social and educational, the judicial and spiritual. It is the inclusiveness that made the first-century synagogue a pivotal institution in Jewish life, one that played a major role in enabling communities throughout the world to negotiate the trauma and challenges created by the Temple's destruction in 70 C.E.⁵⁸

The activities of the synagogue in the later part of the Second Temple are complex and variegated. Their growth was gradual and irregular owing to many variables. Most notably, it was during this same period that the Christians began to establish their houses of worship and to formulate their own worship patterns and theology. Whatever the juxtaposition of synagogue and church may have been, the synagogue's significance as a sacred place has to be considered alongside other possible sources of the early Church's architecture.

The Liturgy of the Synagogue

While the debate rages over the ancient synagogue and its origin and purpose, it does appear that it was a place of worship by the first century of our era.⁵⁹ The contours of that worship are still unclear. Nevertheless, it is requisite that we make some effort to understand the liturgical actions that took place in the *proseuchê*.

Sacred actions give rise to sacred places. Over time the synagogues came to be considered 'holy places.'⁶⁰ Their sanctity seems to have originated through certain associations made between the Jewish προσευχή and temples in Ptolemaic culture, but the sanctity of the synagogue was not solely based on this association. Holiness derived also from the liturgical actions which recurred there—the foremost being the reading and study of the

58. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 158–59.

59. van der Horst, "Place of Sabbath Worship," 37.

60. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 75–82 and Fine, *Place*, 25–33.

Torah. The liturgical reading of Torah became central following the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, but it existed as a part of synagogue worship before that time.

Torah Reading

It was in the Temple, not the synagogue, that the chief service of Judaism was preformed. It was a service which absolved sins and atoned for the iniquities of the individual as well as of the people at large—"a service which was looked upon as a divine command without which the people Israel could not exist—was still centred in the cult of the Temple of Jerusalem."⁶¹ But in the vacuum left by its destruction, the Jewish leaders scrambled to pick up the pieces and hold their people—and their faith—together.

There was a great move to reorganise Jewish religious life, their religious institutions, and to replace the missing sacrificial cult. In the tumult of that time some rabbis began to assert that "prayer is greater than sacrifices" and "the words of learning [Torah] are more valuable than burnt-offerings and peace-offerings."⁶² These ideas became widespread in the years following A.D. 70 and it was written: "'After the destruction of the Temple,' said God unto Abraham, 'your children shall study the laws concerning sacrifices, and I will consider it as though they had actually offered them and will forgive their sins.'"⁶³

But how important was the reading of Torah in the synagogue before A.D. 70? How much was it a part of the liturgical language? We have already seen from the evidence of the gospels that Jesus was accustomed to go to the synagogues on the Sabbath and before he taught the people there was a reading from the prophets, which was later called *haftarah*. It is assumed that the reading of the Torah came before the reading from the prophets in those

61. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 25.

62. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 26.

63. b. Meg. 31b; Taanith 27b; b Menahoth 110a; Tanhuma, Tzav; Pesikta de Rav Kahana §6; *Yalkut* §776 as quoted in Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 26.

texts. The most explicit NT witness to the reading of the Torah comes from Acts 13:13-15 which refers to a synagogue in Perga in Pamphylia where Paul and his companions attended:

And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.”⁶⁴

This reference indicates that the public reading of the Torah came before the reading of the Prophets in the synagogue context.⁶⁵ The Torah was increasingly a central part of Jewish worship in the post-exilic period after the reforms of Ezra and was a normal part of the synagogue activities in the first century. The sanctity of the synagogue drew upon the sanctity of the Scriptures read in its services. Pieter van der Horst has noted that “in the second half of the second century BCE Pseudo-Aristeas, the author of the pseudonymous work on the origin of the Septuagint, is the first to call the Torah ‘holy’ and ‘divine’.”⁶⁶

Lawrence H. Schiffman, after marshalling evidence from the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, and Tannaitic literature has concluded:

The Torah reading was certainly a prominent part of synagogue ritual by the first century of our era. It seems that public reading of the Torah was practiced at Qumran, although no details are available... It would seem that these widespread and organized reading rituals in Pharisaic–rabbinic circles so soon after 70 CE lead to the conclusion that the reading of the Torah and most of its procedures...would have been practiced in synagogues in the early first century, even before the destruction.⁶⁷

The New Testament also makes it clear that the synagogue liturgy included time for the

64. The word in this text for “reading” is ἀνάγνωσιν and indicates that the reading from the Law and the Prophets was ‘public reading’ and not just private study. See William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 52–53.

65. At present it is impossible to attach a date as to when the readings from the Prophets were added to the Torah in the synagogue. However, Levine reviews the evidence for its existence in the pre-70 synagogue, Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 142–44.

66. van der Horst, “Place of Sabbath Worship,” 34–35.

67. Lawrence H. Schiffman, “The Early History of Public Reading of the Torah,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Routledge, 1999), 54; This conclusion is also supported by Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 45–48; and van der Horst, “Place of Sabbath Worship,” 33–37.

exposition of one of the scripture readings. Philo also gives several descriptions of the Sabbath worship that indicate such expositions of scripture were prevalent.

For it was invariably the custom, as it was desirable on other days also, but especially on the seventh day, as I have already explained, to discuss matters of philosophy; the ruler of the people beginning the explanation, and teaching the multitude what they ought to do and to say, and the populace listening so as to improve in virtue, and being made better both in their moral character and in their conduct through life.⁶⁸

For Philo, the Jewish προσευχή was for the purpose of weekly instruction in the “ancient philosophy” of Judaism. Another passage from Philo, this from the *Apologia*, echoes the practice of interpreting the readings to those gathered:

And, in fact, they do constantly assemble together, and they do sit down with one another, the multitude in general in silence, except when it is customary to say any words of good omen, by way of assent to what is being read. And then some priest who is present, on some one of the elders, reads the sacred laws to them, and interprets each of them separately till eventide; and then when separate they depart, having gained some skill in the sacred laws, and having made great advancers [*sic*] toward piety.⁶⁹

The sermon became an important part of the Sabbath liturgy that furthered the understanding and piety of the people. Among the Jews in Palestine, the Torah reading was also accompanied by the recitation of a *targum*, that is, a translation of the Torah into the local language of the people. Levine notes that it is generally assumed that this custom of translating Scriptures into the vernacular at the synagogue service already existed in the Second Temple.⁷⁰ This was a practice not needed in the Diaspora since the scripture readings themselves would have already been in the vernacular. It is in Palestine, where the scriptures were read in Hebrew, that an Aramaic *targum* was needed.

Synagogue Prayer

One of the most difficult areas in the study of synagogue worship is in the area of

68. Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, II, 2.215.

69. Philo, *Apologia Pro Iudaeis*, trans. C. D. Yonge, 7.13.

70. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 147–51.

prayer. Levine has stated it well:

The case against the existence of institutionalized communal prayer in the Second Temple synagogue rests squarely on the evidence at hand (or lack thereof) for communal Jewish prayer-worship in the pre-70 period. With all their diversity, extant sources are unanimous in this respect...Philo, Josephus, the New Testament, the Theodotos inscription, and what appear to be early rabbinic traditions speak only of scriptural readings and sermons. *None mentions public communal prayers.*⁷¹

Their lack of mention does not necessarily mean they did not exist, however.⁷² In fact, it is hard to imagine a προσευχή, a ‘House of Prayer’, as a place where prayer was absent.⁷³ Much of the early evidence points toward a practice of prayer twice a day, and in many places, three times a day by the first century. This has led E. P. Sanders to opine, “Jews did pray—as did other ancient people—and Jews also attended synagogues, but there was no necessary connection between the two. They could and did pray at home. I still think it likely, however, that the sabbath study sessions included prayer.”⁷⁴ However, it has also been argued that prayer only became a central liturgical component during the time of the *Amoraim* within the boundaries of Israel.⁷⁵

Following the destruction of the Temple, prayer did become more important to the Jewish people as a practical substitute for the Temple sacrifices. Prayer connected the Jews with God. Thus, the status of the synagogue and its worship grew quickly in the eyes of the people. As an example, we find in the Babylon Talmud that “the prayer which a man addresses to God has only its proper effect if offered in the synagogue.”⁷⁶

71. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 152.

72. See the argument for communal prayer in the pre-70 synagogue in van der Horst, “Place of Sabbath Worship,” 31–37.

73. Nevertheless, Steven Fine has written, “What ‘prayer’ took place there is hard to say. By the first century, however, ‘prayer places’ in Egypt seem to have been places where Scripture was read and studied in public.” Fine, *Place*, 32–33.

74. Sanders, “Common Judaism,” 12.

75. Urman, “House of Assembly,” 238.

76. Edersheim, *Social Life*, 249.

From Jerusalem to the Diaspora, the lives of the Jews varied considerably. Though bonded by their common heritage and committed to the promulgation of their culture and heritage, there existed an unavoidable, if natural, vicissitude from region to region. This variation meant that the language of their communal life developed in different ways. The nature of the synagogue in Jerusalem was different than the nature of the synagogue, say, in Dura Europos and yet the Jews were a people determined to help and support each other, educate their children, hear the scriptures read and explained, and worship their God.

These are important components in the development of synagogue architecture because the pattern language is “a living picture of a culture, and a way of life... It is a tapestry of life, which shows...how the various parts of life can fit together, and how they can make sense, concretely in space.”⁷⁷ The earliest synagogue buildings uncovered to date were built using many styles and shapes drawing from the local architectural context. This is what we would expect given the variegated nature and activities of synagogues throughout the world. It is also what we would expect of minority people living and adapting to new places. Only over time does the architecture become more consistent—though always adapting to the local architectural vernacular. To look into the development of the synagogue in the late Second Temple period, the time that would have influenced Christianity the most, is to look into the nebula of a forming institution. However diffuse it may have been, there are some consistencies.

The Synagogue as Sacred Place

The place of the synagogue was focussed primarily upon its community functions, especially in the Diaspora before the destruction of the Temple. The notion that the synagogue was a sacred τόπος (place) seems to have arisen in Egypt, but it was a concept destined to spread throughout the Diaspora and into the land of Israel itself. However, the notion that the

77. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 347–48.

synagogue was a ‘holy place’ probably would not have existed without its association with the Temple. Jacob Neusner has written: “No Judaic structure beyond A.D. 70 ignored the Temple, and all Judaisms both before and after A.D. 70 found it necessary to deal in some way with, to situate themselves in relationship to, that paramount subject.”⁷⁸

Clearly the Temple was considered by the Jews to be the ultimate sacred place. At the heart and centre of the concept of sacred place is differentiation.⁷⁹ Some space is different than other space and it is the presence of the divine which makes a given place ‘holy’. The Hebrew word for ‘holy’ is קֹדֶשׁ. It means to be ‘set apart,’ ‘sacred’. The idea is that what is ‘holy’ is to be made separate from the mundane. The Jerusalem Temple was referred to as בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, that is, ‘the house that is cut off,’ and thus, set apart, sacred, holy. That the Temple Mount was holy among the Jews is without question. The synagogue, however, is another matter. In Judea it deferred to the holiness of the Temple so long as the Temple existed in Jerusalem.⁸⁰ This is perhaps one reason why the evidence for the synagogue and its worship life are not more evident in the shadow of the Temple. But the fact that the synagogues are referred to as προσευχή and “sacred precincts” in Egypt may give indication to its rising sacrality in the Diaspora. Not only was ‘sanctity’ a growing part of the synagogue because of the importance of the Torah read within, but comprehending the synagogue as holy also seems to have been an attempt on the part of Jews to instil their *proseuchê* with the same status and prestige enjoyed by many temples throughout the Hellenistic and Roman world.⁸¹

78. Jacob Neusner, *Symbol*, p. 187, as quoted in Joan R. Branham, “Vicarious Sacrality: Temple Space in Ancient Synagogues,” ed. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, in *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 319–20.

79. For an explanation of the various concepts of ‘sacred space’ in connection with the Temple and synagogue, see Branham, “Sacrality,” 319–45 and Fine, *Place*, 7–33.

80. Joan Branham builds upon and furthers a theory developed by René Girard about the competitive relationship that existed between the Temple and the synagogue in Branham, “Sacrality,” 320–23.

81. Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 123.

It is only following the overthrow of the Temple that the synagogue begins to bear some of the functions of the Temple as well as participate in some of its holiness—most notably in Palestine. The synagogues of the first century connected themselves with the Temple, or what had been the Temple, through their orientation toward Jerusalem.

Post-Temple synagogues lack, in essence, any intimate connection to sacred mountains except one, and that is their consignment to pay homage to Jerusalem's Temple Mount by means of orientation. In the early years of the Common Era, synagogue facades and doors consistently open toward Jerusalem. By the fourth and fifth centuries, synagogues succumb to another set of orientation rules by angling their most important walls, designed for the placement of the Torah scrolls, toward the Temple Mount.⁸²

The consistency of orientation toward Jerusalem may, however, be questioned. Seager raises the possibility that there may have been two traditions regarding the orientation of the synagogue.⁸³ In any case, the archeological evidence indicates one set of synagogues oriented toward Jerusalem and another set that is not. This may mean that the direction of prayer could have been quite independent from the orientation of the building or that prayer was not always directed toward Jerusalem. Whatever the case, some synagogues were oriented toward the Temple Mount and that intentionally so. In later synagogues a connection to the Temple to evoke sacred space involved imitating Temple imagery, liturgy, and place. "The incorporation of Temple motifs into synagogue imagery and space implies, therefore, vicarious synagogal participation, by means of symbolic representation, in the sanctity once allocated to the Jerusalem Temple."⁸⁴

Regarding the synagogues in the Diaspora, Kraabel summarizes their rise in the wake of the Temple's fall:

Over time the 'sanctity' of the synagogue will increase, particularly after the destruction of the Temple and the realization that it will not be rebuilt. The synagogue will become more than a *proseuche*, a 'prayer house'; it will become a *sancta synagoga* (Hammam Lif), a 'holy place' (Stobi), even 'the most holy synagogue' (Side, *CII* 781, cf. *CII* 754). 'Secular' functions will be restricted to side rooms if such

82. Branham, "Sacrality," 331.

83. Seager, "Ancient Synagogues," 41.

84. Branham, "Sacrality," 345.

are available. The scriptures will be housed in impressive and permanent shrines. The use of religious symbol will increase...more and more the synagogue will become a replacement for the lost Temple, and will acquire some of its functions, characteristics and aura.⁸⁵

Whatever the origins of the synagogue, the institution was not the monolith it was once thought to be.

The Synagogue Building

What does this mean, then, for the architecture of the synagogue? Owing to the debate over the origins of the synagogue and its activities in the late Second Temple, it is difficult to make any positive assessment. The archeological evidence of the synagogues in this period is illustrative of the limitations of an artifactual approach.⁸⁶

In terms of architecture, the ancient Palestinian synagogues have generally been placed into three categories: the synagogues of the “early” or “Galilean” type, synagogues of the “transitional type,” and synagogues of the “later type.”⁸⁷ These categories, however, have proven to be something of an oversimplification and are not without difficulty.⁸⁸ The categories neither appear to be sequential stages nor uniform in their geographical distribution.⁸⁹

85. Kraabel, “Diaspora Synagogue,” 120.

86. It should be noted, however, that there is also some discussion over whether some of the structures identified as synagogues (houses of assembly) in Palestine may have actually been ‘houses of study’. For a review of the evidence, see Urman, “House of Assembly,” 232–55.

87. Seager, “Ancient Synagogues,” 39–43.

88. See for example Marilyn J. Chiat, “First-Century Synagogue Architecture: Methodological Problems,” ed. Joseph Gutmann, in *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research*, vol. 22 of *Brown Judaic Studies*, ed. Jacob Neusner, et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars Press, 1989), 51 ff.

89. Seager notes, “The traditional classes now seem to be at least partly parallel developments, overlapping in time. Indeed, the Dura-Europos synagogue, a “broadhouse” type dating from the late second century C.E., predates most if not all of the synagogues in the “Galilean” or “basilican” class. The controversy over the dating of the Capernaum synagogue adds to the uncertainty about chronology, of course. Quite apart from the Capernaum controversy, however, the fact is: the “Galilean” type occurs in a relatively small area arching from the Golan heights through Galilee and (perhaps) over to Mt. Carmel. No clear examples have come to light elsewhere. The “apsidal” synagogues, those in the Holy Land at any rate, occur further south. Their ranges meet at Hammath-Tiberias but they do not overlap as far as I can determine. The “Galilean” type, surely,

In the Diaspora, the Jews had minority status and as a result, their synagogue buildings were often concealed or at the very least inconspicuous. Kraabel has noted, “The synagogue outside the ‘Holy Land’ is the community center for a minority group faced with persevering its identity in a Gentile culture.”⁹⁰ The buildings were not often their primary concern, but they inevitably spoke as a pattern language the values and priorities of those who assembled there.

The ‘early’ synagogues consisted primarily of the Galilean type. They were usually built out of hewn stone and decorated with stone carvings. The roof rested upon rows of columns, usually three rows placed parallel to the longer walls and one end wall; in smaller buildings there are only two rows. Typical of these synagogues was their erection with the main facade containing three entrances facing Jerusalem.⁹¹ Even the remains of the ‘early’ buildings are not dated before the third century. Thus, Yoram Tsafrir has written:

The archeological finds known to us lead to a single conclusion, namely, prior to the third century synagogues did not exist as special structures, with external identifying signs, as in the third-century Galilean synagogues. The synagogues in which the *tannaim* prayed in the second century and even those used by the early *amoraim* were located in houses with the plan and facade of private homes. These buildings usually included one hall larger than the rest for study and prayer, and often had additional rooms which served the community.⁹²

The synagogues of the Diaspora are hard to identify because they, too, were not as differentiated in their use as are later buildings. Literary evidence surely points toward their existence in some numbers, but their functions and features, as we have seen, are not entirely understood. Kraabel concludes that “the shape and materials of the Diaspora synagogue will

is more tightly circumscribed in space than in time. Treating it as a stage in a universal developmental sequence is inappropriate and misleading.” Seager, “Ancient Synagogues,” 42.

90. Kraabel, “Diaspora Synagogue,” 120. See also White, *Building*, 63–64.

91. Yoram Tsafrir, “On the Source of the Architectural Design of the Ancient Synagogues in the Galilee: A New Appraisal,” ed. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, in *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 71.

92. Tsafrir, “Source,” 79.

be determined first by local custom and conditions; there is no one ‘canonical’ pattern... The buildings of Diaspora Judaism show great architectural variety; they are just not that much alike.”⁹³

The synagogues prior to A.D. 70 in the Diaspora likely followed the process of originating as small gatherings in private homes which then gave rise to formal establishments and architectural adaptation as a result of growth and private benevolence.⁹⁴ Indeed, most religious buildings were originally private houses or small shops that were later remodelled and transformed into temples, churches, or synagogues.⁹⁵ The process was a practical approach for small religious groups as they sought to establish themselves within a community. Meeting in houses served an assembly’s need for a place to gather—and this was fomented by the sacrality of the house in the ancient world. Often considerable time passed from the moment a Jewish group formed and began to meet and the place of those meetings came to influence the architectural boundaries. When the first architectural syllables began to be spoken by the Jews, they were strongly influenced by contemporary Hellenism and local traditions. This was evident also in the artwork and ornamentation found within synagogue structures.

Extant mosaics and other art in synagogue remains have puzzled scholars because of their pagan content. Especially evident in the synagogues of Palestine is art borrowed from Classical, Hellenistic and Roman sources. One example is the appearance of the zodiac wheel with Helios.⁹⁶ Though there appears to have been no connotation of idolatry, scholarly

93. Kraabel, “Diaspora Synagogue,” 119.

94. This is the general process evident at such locations at Dura, Sardis, Priene, Delos, and possibly Miletus. See Kraabel, “Diaspora Synagogue,” 99–112, and White, *Building*, 92–101.

95. Robin M. Jensen, “The Dura Europos Synagogue, Early Christian Art, and Religious Life in Dura Europos,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Routledge, 1999), 180.

96. Asher Ovadiah, “Art of the Ancient Synagogues in Israel,” ed. Dan Urman and Paul V.M. Flesher, in *Ancient Synagogues*, vol. 47 of *Studia Post-Biblica*, gen. ed. David S. Katz (Boston: Brill, 1998), 301–18.

opinions remain divided. “Here we can only refer to the continuing debate between those scholars who view this art as no more than mere ornamentation, devoid of any meta-conventional significance, and those who discover in it evidence for the existence of a syncretistic kind of Jewish mysticism.”⁹⁷

The time in which Christianity began to grow and separate from Judaism was very fluid. Judaism itself was in flux as synagogues began to take hold throughout the Diaspora and was transported into Judea. The complex relationship that existed between the Jerusalem and Judean synagogues and the Temple was the cause of religious ambiguity.

The exact origins of the synagogue are not yet known, though theories abound. What is evident, however, is that the Jews scattered throughout the world gathered together for strength and support as minority enclaves surrounded by pagan culture. Their relationship with their community, government, and other religious institutions varied from place to place, therefore, the needs of each Jewish group also varied.

At the inception of Christianity and in the years of its early development there was no monolithic Jewish institution called the synagogue. The synagogue did exist, as the evidence indicates, but it was not unified in its purpose, activity, or liturgical practice—and they varied from place to place. While Christianity certainly shared many things in common with Judaism, the synagogue did not provide the Christian Church with any real model from which to draw when building their places of worship. In fact, there is evidence which indicates that synagogal architecture borrowed from Christianity rather than the other way around⁹⁸ It would seem that in terms of architectural development, the synagogue was in much the same

97. Joseph M. Baumgarten, “Art in the Synagogue,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Routledge, 1999), 73–75. See also Joseph Gutmann, “Programmatic Painting in the Dura Synagogue,” in *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archeology, and Architecture*, Harry Orlinsky (New York: KTAV Publishing Inc., 1975), 210–31.

98. This is especially true of the basilica-type Byzantine synagogues which followed the pattern of Christian churches of the period, Lee I. Levine, *Synagogue*, 583–582.

situation as the Christians and other religious groups of the time. Commenting on the Diaspora synagogue, Kraabel has written:

It seems likely that an increase in formal and liturgical practices in Diaspora synagogues was prompted in part by similar practices in other religions nearby; in some locations Christianity may have been an influence on Diaspora Judaism at this point, but it is perhaps more often the case that both these 'Biblical' religions were each influenced independently by the worship practices and on occasion the theologies of their pagan neighbors.⁹⁹

Any similarities between the synagogue and Church were, more likely, from a shared theological heritage. The early Church was growing and developing alongside the post-Temple synagogue and so it is unlikely that the synagogue exerted much influence upon the developing architecture of the Church. The synagogue did become more unified in the third and fourth centuries functionally, theologically, and architecturally, but this was long after the Christian church had developed its own unique architectural language.

99. Kraabel, "Diaspora Synagogue," 121.

CHAPTER 5

THE SACRED COMPLEXION OF HOUSES

*“Continuing daily with one accord in the temple,
and breaking bread from house to house,
they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart”
—Acts 2:46*

Of the various religious sites in the ancient world, none have achieved an eminence greater than the house. Though the great temple structures have inspired awe and wonder among all who saw them, it was the house that pressed its quiet influence through the comfortable rhythm of daily experience. Within the nurture of family life, the seeds of culture and religious belief were shaped and cultivated by members of the family who lived and worked together.

While the present focus is upon the sacred complexion of houses in the ancient world, it is important to remember that houses are as much architecture as the Parthenon or Jerusalem Temple. Domestic walls surround and reflect the interior space, forming a link with the cultural and religious ways of those who live within. People share similar notions about what they consider to be appropriate and desirable housing. These notions are influenced by several factors: wealth and social standing in the community, religious affiliations, proximity to a city or village—even sharing parts of the house with livestock. Not unlike today, these factors resulted in a certain homogeneity among ancient houses:

Despite a certain amount of variability, the members of a society tend to entertain similar stereotypes about the qualities of a suitable house and the number, arrangement, size, and structural characteristics of the component rooms. Consequently, the domestic space attains a degree of uniformity.¹

1. Kamp, “Archeology,” 293.

Along with the cultural causes of uniformity, there were other considerations: the availability of materials for construction could limit the size and type of structure; another limiting factor was the specific construction knowledge and craftsmanship of the builders. Houses were generally made by their owners, so it is not surprising to find simple utilitarian structures, particularly in more ancient times and in more rural localities. By the first century A.D., cities were burgeoning and with higher density and crowded conditions, different forms of housing became necessary.

Whatever the complexity or simplicity of the house, one cannot miss the interlocation between culture and architecture, between the house and its occupants: “People and their dwellings were indistinguishable,” writes Paul Veyne of Roman houses, “domus referred not only to the walls but also to the people within them.”² It is true that the house reflected its inhabitants: “The relation between a society and its architecture is reflexive: People structure their built environment, and the latter in turn structure people’s perception of space.”³ The “use of space,” after all, “can be telling indicators of how people behaved and related.”⁴ The house formed the boundary within which the family would engage in cultural, social, and religious activities. In this way, the house was shaped by the people and events it contained.

For the early Christians, the house formed an important part of their lives: they gathered in the homes of members for prayer, instruction and the celebration of the Eucharist. Following the pattern set by Jesus when He sent out the seventy, St. Paul preached and stayed in private homes throughout his missionary journeys. The house was an essential component in the spread of Christianity throughout the ancient world. And yet, as Monika Trümper observed, “There was nothing distinctively Christian about the physical setting of the early

2. Veyne, *Pagan Rome*, 407.

3. Avraham Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz, “The Four Room House: Embodying Iron Age Israelite Society,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66, no. 1–2 (2003): 28.

4. Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, The Family, Religion, and Culture (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 5.

ἐκκλησία, since house churches were not adapted or altered for specific religious functions.”⁵ But we are not looking for material clues to learn more about the early Christians. Our purpose is to understand better early Christian architecture by understanding the early Christians. Why, for example, did the early Christians choose the house as a place of worship? The NT speaks of their attending the Temple and synagogues, why did they also meet in houses? Was it for purely pragmatic reasons that the early followers of the Way gathered in domestic places or was there something about those domestic places that attracted them to meet there? Having concluded that the early Church had a great interest in the Jewish Temple and that the synagogue was an unlikely architectural model for the Christians, we must search elsewhere for the foundations of early Christian architecture. Because of its sacred complexion, the house has much to commend it.

The Sacrality of the Roman House

“The architecture of the Romans was, from first to last, an art of shaping space around ritual.”⁶ So Frank Brown expressed the accepted view for the *raison d’être* of Roman public and domestic architecture. But as we have already demonstrated, architecture is not primarily the art of shaping space around ritual, it is the manifestation of ritual-shaped space. Architecture is the boundary of a place which echoes and actualises the rituals which recur there.

The touchstones of Roman sacrality were an abiding interest in boundary and a preoccupation with place. The story of the founding of Rome is a case in point. The myth was that the city was founded by the twins, Romulus and Remus—a



Fig. 4. Romulus and Remus.

5. Trümper, “Families,” 19.

6. Frank E. Brown, *Roman Architecture*, The Great Ages of World Architecture (New York: G. Braziller, 1961), 9.

story that was as much about the establishing of the new city as it was about the delineation of its sacred boundary. The brothers were the grandsons of King Numitor. When they were born, the king's brother, Amulius, placed the infants in a basket to float down the Tiber river to their destruction. However, the basket made land and the children were nursed by a she-wolf who heard their cries. The brothers came to be reared by a shepherd until the day they were finally reunited with their grandfather. When a disagreement arose between the brothers over which of them was to found the new city, the dispute was resolved through augury: Remus saw six vultures from his vantage on the Aventine hill, while on the Palatine, Romulus saw twelve. The myth excluded the Aventine from the boundary of the *pomerium*, the sacred boundary of the city, and was, thus, excluded from the city of Rome proper. The killing of Remus at the end of the story draws out the sanctity of the city's boundary which was shown to be more dear than even a brother.⁷ Thus, "Roman myths were in essence myths of place."⁸ The *pomerium* was identified during the Imperial period by large stone blocks (2 m. tall and 1 m. square), placed wherever the line of the *pomerium* changed direction. The stones were marked with the exact distance between them and they were numbered in sequence along the boundary line.⁹

The entirety of the Roman political and constitutional system was set within an elaborate framework of religious ritual which gathered together time, place, and political actions under a single divine rubric.¹⁰ It was the *augures* who were trained as experts in establishing the will of the gods. The process was known as *auspicia*, or the 'taking of the auspices'. Their work included observing the flights and activities of particular bird species,

7. In Ovid's telling, the foundation of Rome and the establishing of the *pomerium* and the death of Remus are intertwined. Ovid, *Fasti*, 4:833–48.

8. Beard, North, and Price, *History*, 173.

9. Beard, North, and Price, *History*, 177.

10. Beard, North, and Price, *History*, 43.

the behaviour of certain animals, and the interpretation of thunder and lightning. “The taker of the auspices defined a *templum* in the heavens, a rectangle in which he specified left, right, front and back; the meaning of the sign depended on its spatial relationship to these defined points.”¹¹ These celestial rectangles corresponded to places on earth bearing the same term. There was for them a connection between the heavenly and the earthly. The *augures* did not usually take the auspices (that was left to the city magistrates), though the *augur* would be present at the ceremonies as both an advisor and witness. After the auspices were taken, the augural college would offer their judgment on the legality of what had taken place.¹² “These procedures,” according to Beard, North and Price, “were integrally bound up with the definition of religious boundaries and religious space.”¹³ The importance of augury and *auspicia* continued in the empire until the end of the fourth century of this era.

While the bones and sinews of Roman religion was sacred boundary and place, it was the calendar of public festivals which brought it to life. Festivals were performed for the city by priests, magistrates and occasionally, priestesses. The only apparent requirement of the citizenry was to abstain from work during the performance of the rituals.¹⁴ The festivals brought together the public and private spheres of Roman life. This may be observed in the calendar, one of the functions of which was to “link public ritual with private worship—to calibrate the concerns of the community as a whole onto those of the family, and vice

11. Beard, North, and Price, *History*, 22.

12. In the late Republic and early Empire there were four main colleges of priests: (1) There were sixteen *pontifices* led by the Pontifex Maximus; (2) sixteen *auguri* in charge of divination; (3) fifteen men designated as *sacris faciendis* for performing the sacrifices; and (4) ten *epulones* in charge of the feasts. The *auguri* and *pontifices* had a higher standing than the others, Peter Connolly and Hazel Dodge, *The Ancient City: Life in Classical Athens & Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 171. See also Beard, North, and Price, *History*, 18ff.

13. Beard, North, and Price, *History*, 22.

14. There was some debate over what actually counted as work and what did not on such occasions according to H.H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*, Aspects of Greek and Roman Life (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 39–40.

versa.”¹⁵ The sacred complex of the Roman house was thus connected with the public ritual of Roman religion. Similar to the view of houses within other religions in the ancient world, the Roman house was believed to be a religious place—at once connected with the ancient ancestors of the householder and the beliefs of the Roman *polis*. The significant role of boundary in the mythology and religion of Rome was the basis for the significance of boundary within the house. The domestic architecture echoed an intricate network of boundaries which made up the social and religious life within the home.

Of social-familial forces in the house, Stephan Joubert wrote:

The first-century Mediterranean world, with its pivotal values of honor and shame, was demarcated in terms of power, gender and social status. Kinship and its set of interlocking rules form the central social institution. Politics was the other major institution, *with religion embedded in both of these*. First-century people were thus socialized into a world where these values and institutions were part and parcel of their ‘taken-for-granted’ reality.¹⁶

The Roman Household

The household was an essential structure of the Roman *polis*. “Indeed,” as Wayne Meeks has pointed out, “the household, as Aristotle and subsequent moralists saw it, was the veritable microcosm of the city.”¹⁷ The *paterfamilias* was the bridge between the public cult and the worship of his household. As the male head of his house, it was his responsibility to maintain the traditional rites of the family as they were performed in the place of the home. These *sacra privata* were handed down from generation to generation and were vested at the nucleus of household life. But these were not the only rituals to be found in the Roman home. Social rituals kept the family connected to others and insured the household’s economic place in the community. Since these rituals were inexorably connected with both the structure of the

15. Beard, North, and Price, *History*, 51.

16. Stephan F. Joubert, “Managing the Household: Paul as *Paterfamilias* of the Christian Household Group in Corinth,” in *Modelling Early Christianity*, ed. Philip F. Esler (New York: Routledge, 1995), 213.

17. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 38.

familia and the architecture of the house, we must first touch on the material aspects of the house before looking further into the domestic cult.

While the Roman understanding of family could be variously defined, the household was resolutely hierarchical.¹⁸ Besides the head of the house, the members of the Roman household included the wife of the householder, their children and any slaves they might possess.¹⁹ All of them were considered part of the *familia* and their relationship with the *paterfamilias* was one of subordination and authority. The *paterfamilias* possessed near absolute power (*patria potestas*) over his *domus*:

The peculiarly Roman concept of *potestas* was central in expressing relationships within a household. By giving the head of each household virtually absolute authority over all its members up to his death, *potestas* excluded any possibility that the *pater's* capacity to manage the household as an economic unit might be challenged... *Potestas* in this sense is not a constitutional power; but neither is it extra-legal—it refers to social, not political, relationships.²⁰

There was, over time, a gradual erosion of the powers that the *paterfamilias* had over his household, so that by the time of the early empire, wives came to enjoy a certain independence apart from their husbands and could participate in public affairs.

The structure and viability of the family as a fundamental social unit also served in non-social ways. The family ideal in Roman society was so strong that it was used as the basis of metaphors concerning areas of life outside the family sphere—usually functioning to evoke

18. “The Roman concept *familia* had various meanings. Apart from referring to the slaves and freed slaves attached to a married couple, it was also used with reference to the kin as well as to the property or family estate. The *familia* thus included more than just the nuclear family, which was commonly referred to as the *domus*. Although the Roman *familia* consisted of a husband, wife, children, slaves, freedmen and foster-children, it was definitely not an extended or joint family which included the more remote relatives or even several generations of the stem family,” Joubert, “Household,” 214. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill concluded from a wide range of household sizes in his study of Pompeii and Herculaneum, that “common though small units may have been, a majority of the population lived in what we would regard as ‘big’ households. ‘But,’ he cautions, ‘this is by no means the same as saying that they lived in big families,’” Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Houses and Households: Sampling Pompeii and Herculaneum,” in *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 225.

19. David C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, Dissertation Series (Society of Biblical Literature), no. 71 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 79.

20. Jane F. Gardner and Thomas Wiedemann, *The Roman Household* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 5.

images of authority and hierarchy.²¹ Because the house was at the centre of Roman culture and business, it was natural to draw on its normative influence in the culture at-large. The traditional *paterfamilias* and his *familia* became a symbol of stability and order in Roman society.²² So the household was not only a link connecting public religion, politics, and business with the private domestic life, the household also became a supporting symbol for them.

Domestic Place

The architecture of Roman houses formed an intricate web of boundaries giving expression to the complexity of social and religious life. These were manifested by differing kinds of houses in the Mediterranean region by the first-century: the simple, courtyard, patrician townhouse (*domus*), farmhouse, multi-storied apartment block (*insulae*), and house with shop (*tabernae*). The latter three, the *domus*, *tabernae*, and *insulae*, were relatively newer forms that had appeared in the burgeoning urban areas of the empire. Though of Roman origin, these houses began to spread throughout the region and their evidence can be found even in such parts of the empire as Palestine.

The upper classes, though relatively small in number, would have owned large private houses. These households would have typically had several slaves and, “in many cases their marriages would have been carefully arranged political alliances.”²³ Among the lower classes, there would have been a few wealthy freedmen with homes similar to that of the upper classes, but for the most part, the lower societal strata would have either occupied multi-room

21. Eva Marie Lassen, “The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor,” in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (New York: Routledge, 1997), 114.

22. David C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, Dissertation Series (Society of Biblical Literature), no. 71 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 31.

23. Verner, *Household*, 80.

apartments (*insulae*) or one to two room storefront shops with an upper level apartment (*tabernae*).

The architecture of the Roman house found several expressions, but there were some elements that remained constant: emphasis on the strong visual axis in the dynamic spaces and a careful differentiation between public place and private place.²⁴ There were rooms for eating and public gathering as well as more private bedrooms and living quarters. Vitruvius described the “public areas” as those in which anyone could enter without invitation and the “private areas” as those reserved only for the family.²⁵

Though the best-preserved evidence is of the larger *domus*, it should be remembered that the majority of people—perhaps as much as 90 percent in larger cities—lived in the restricted spaces of the *insulae* or the *tabernae*.²⁶ This meant that for the most part, “the majority of urban dwellers lived in small, dark, poorly ventilated, crowded buildings where privacy was unavailable, adequate sanitation impossible, and the spread of disease inevitable.”²⁷ Before embarking fully in a discussion of the sacrality of the house, it will be helpful to make a brief acquaintance with the Roman houses and their characteristics.

The Domus. In the Roman and Greek literature of the time, it was the *domus* of the wealthy that captured the most attention. What we know of the Roman *domus* comes from two sources: Vitruvius’ detailed description in his treatise, *De architectura* (Book VI) and the excavations of extant Roman houses.²⁸

24. John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 29.

25. Vitruvius explained, “Now we must look at the criteria for building those sections of a private house which are reserved for the *familia*, and those which are open to guests. Those rooms which no one is allowed to enter are considered ‘private’: bedrooms, dining-rooms, bathrooms and so on. But the public rooms are those which people have a right to go into without being invited: entrance halls, courtyards, porticoes and so on.” Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 6, 5.1.

26. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the NT*, 31.

27. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the NT*, 32.

28. Clarke, *Houses*, 2.

The *domus* was large enough to accommodate a large extended family and a goodly number of servants. The Roman house, unlike its Greek counterpart, was designed to receive friends and conduct business (*clientes*).²⁹ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has drawn out the contrast: “The Greek house is concerned with creating a world of privacy, of excluding the inquisitive passerby; the Roman house invites him in and puts its occupants on conspicuous show.”³⁰ This very public concept of the house is substantially different than the one held by most of contemporary society. For people today, the house is a refuge, a shelter away from work and is intentionally shielded from the daily business of the world. But as John Clarke has pointed out:

The Roman house was in no way private. It was the locus of the owner’s social, political, and business activities, open both to invited and uninvited visitors. Because of this, the location, size, and decoration of each space formed codes that cued the behavior of every person under its roof, from intimates (the family, friends, and slaves) to distant clients.³¹

As an example, Carolyn Osiek and David Balch cite a certain Livius Drusus, the plebeian Tribune in 91 B.C., who wanted his house to function in an open way though it was to be built on the Palatine hill overlooking the Roman Forum:

When his architect promised to make it private so that it could not be overlooked by anyone, Livius responded, “No, you should apply your skills to arranging my house so that whatever I do should be visible to everybody.”³²

The public character of the Roman house draws out the intimate correlation between the social mores of the culture and the architecture of the dwelling. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has aptly demonstrated how the spatial hierarchy from public to private reflects Roman social

29. “*Clientela* or patronage...dominated the Mediterranean world, from the Latin West to the Greek East. In this world with its strict social stratifications, patronal relationships entailed a reciprocal exchange of goods and services, a personal relation of some duration and an asymmetrical relationship with the parties of unequal status offered each other different goods and services in exchange,” Joubert, “Household,” 213.

30. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 45.

31. Clarke, *Houses*, 2.

32. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the NT*, 24.

structure in the Early Empire.³³ That social structure influenced the architecture of the house and was at the bedrock of its form. He has written further:

The close nexus between housing and social standing is only comprehensible in view of the peculiar nature of Roman public life. In a way and to an extent that was unknown in the eastern Mediterranean world, the home was a locus of public life. A public figure went home not so much to shield himself from the public gaze as to present himself to it in the best light.³⁴

Dwellings for those in society other than the *paterfamilias* and those of his *familia* did not require all of the architectural ostentation of the *domus*. Theirs was a more diminutive existence. Vitruvius concluded: “Hence, for a person of middling condition in life, magnificent vestibules are not necessary, nor tablina, nor atria, because persons of that description are those who seek favours which are granted by the higher ranks.”³⁵ This would suggest that the purpose of these places was primarily business and connected primarily with the *clientela/paterfamilias* relationship. The Romans did not segregate and compartmentalise the various aspects of life and insofar as Roman public life (both politics and religion) was subsumed under the divine, so also was the activity of the house. The concurrence of business and religion in a single domestic place is described by Clarke:

Facing all who enter through the fauces, the paterfamilias controlled the boundaries of this House. Some scholars have compared his position and control of the domus to that of the Etruscan and Roman soothsayers, or *haruspices*, who stood on the platform of the temple to define the physical boundaries (*templum*) of its sacred power. Clear definition of the Axis in front of this platform, and of the cardinal points to the right, left, and behind it, formed the basis of the reading of omens that was at the heart of Etruscan and Roman religion.³⁶

The *domus* had an arrangement of rooms centred around a central courtyard called the *atrium*. Central to the atrium was the *impluvium*, a basin which was designed to collect rainwater for

33. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “The Social Structure of the Roman House,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 56 (1988): 43–97.

34. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.

35. Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 6.5.1.

36. Clarke, *Houses*, 6.

use by the family and the *compluvium*, which was the opening in the roof allowing for sunlight, fresh air, and rainwater to enter the house. A long axis ran from the entryway, called a *fauces*, through the atrium and toward the main reception space, called the *tablinum*, and served to organise all of the house's interior spaces.³⁷ This axis, in fact, was a significant and invariable feature of the *domus*, and served as an important element in the social function of the house. The ritual that gave rise to the fauces-atrium-tablinum axis was the *salutatio*.³⁸ This was the ritual by which the *pater familias* would receive his *clientes*.³⁹ The significance of the *salutatio* should not be underestimated. The fauces-atrium-tablinum axis served to focus and limit the pathway of visitors,

conducting them into the presence of the *paterfamilias*.

Such control allowed the *paterfamilias* to examine the guest in full view while returning only a small glimpse of his house. Making the connection between the house

and the Roman temple, John

Clark writes of this entry control:

If the temple in Roman times, raised on its high podium, was a viewing platform axially situated in a space bounded by its enclosure walls, the tablinum was the seat of

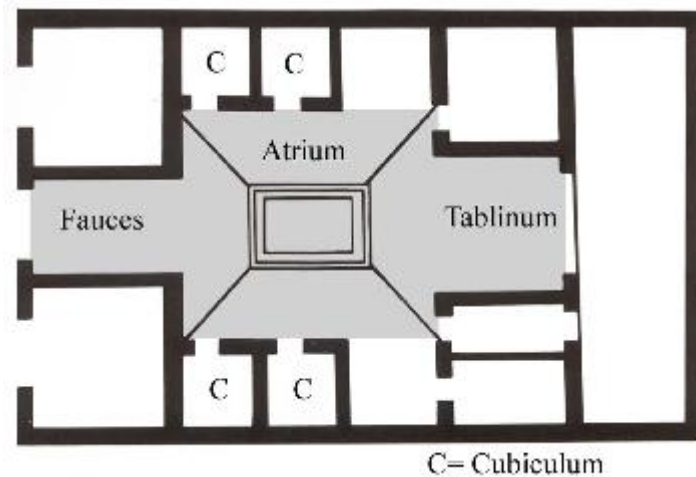


Fig. 5. Plan of a Roman *domus*.

37. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 5. It is worth noting that this public character of life was not unlike that of the monarchs in 17th century England and 19th century France in which the bedroom was a place of public reception and meals were held in public so that visitors could observe.

38. Clarke, *Houses*, 4.

39. The ritual of the *salutatio* secured the power and fortune of the head of the household through those who served his interests. Among the clientela, Clarke includes, "relatives who could not have the status of a *paterfamilias*, such as sons who had established independent households, all those who worked for the *paterfamilias*, including both slaves and freedmen, plus an assorted group of unattached persons who made the daily rounds of *salutationes* to assure their political and economic security," Clarke, *Houses*, 4.

power in the domus, controlling the axis of entry that formed its link with the business of the outside world.⁴⁰

Indeed, the force of a socio-architectural event like the *salutatio* was not easily contravened, in fact, “This ritual structured the domus.”⁴¹

Curiously, this strong architectural axis along with its attendant social and religious rituals find no mention in the writings of Vitruvius and others. Lisa Bek has observed, “When reading the descriptions given by Roman authors of houses and villas, one is also struck by their disinterest in any exact definition of the ground plan.”⁴² Clarke has suggested that this is because the axis was such “an obvious and invariant feature” of the house. It is often the case that descriptions of houses focus on their distinctive features and the more common elements are passed over without mention. There is such an emphasis placed upon the pattern of social and religious customs within the home that the architecture, as such, fades into the background. The boundary of the walls form the ground upon which the cultic and social/business structures are overlaid. The walls quietly shape the place in which these events occur, drawing little attention to themselves.

Before Greek influence, the Roman house was built according to a strict traditional plan. During the Hellenistic period, the Romans fell under the siren-song of Greek culture. The Romans admired the charm and flexibility of the Greek house but were unwilling to abandon the traditions of their own. The solution was to build the front part of the house in the traditional Roman manner with the *fauces-atrium-tablinum* axial arrangement, while at the rear of the home, in the more private area of the house, a Greek peristyle was added with rooms casually arranged around it.⁴³ Interestingly, the architect Vitruvius had urged that in a

40. Clarke, *Houses*, 6.

41. Clarke, *Houses*, 4.

42. Lisa Bek, “Venusta Species: A Hellenistic Rhetorical Concept as the Aesthetic Principle in Roman Townscape,” *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 14 (1985): 140.

43. Susan Woodford, *The Art of Greece and Rome*, Cambridge Introduction to the History of Art (New

Hellenised peristyle *domus*, the peristyle should be placed transverse to the atrium (obscuring the axis), but a survey of existing houses suggests that most retained the *fauces-atrium-tablinum* axis intact.⁴⁴ This, again, points to the cultural and religious significance of the events associated with the axial progression of the place which, ultimately, influenced the walls.

As important as it was, the axis was not a singular force; it was the entire concert of interior spaces that emphasised the power, prestige and social status of the owner.⁴⁵ Wallace-Hadrill has indicated that the Roman house was for the householder, a *power house*:

It was where the network of social contracts that provided the underpinning for his activities outside the house was generated and activated. Consequently, the dominant concern in articulating domestic space was to provide a suitable context for the differentiation of public activities from those of more private nature, and for the activities of persons from the full social spectrum: from members of a public figure's peer group and his circle, through lesser *amici* (friends), to humbler dependents, tradesmen, and slaves."⁴⁶

Wallace-Hadrill has elucidated the importance of social standing and its effect upon Roman domestic architecture. Unfortunately, he offers only a brief glimpse of the importance of Roman religion and its architectural impact: "Roman aristocracy absorbed the forms of palatial and sacred buildings into their structures."⁴⁷ Not only the architecture as a whole, but the architectural components of decor and ornamentation, too, contributed to the *domus*' spatial aplomb. Drawing the public into the private, the house was unafraid to vaunt its public and religious associations. One example of this sacred ornamentation is the column. Long a hallmark of Greek sacred architecture, their use by the Romans in domestic service moves

York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 103.

44. Clarke, *Houses*, 14.

45. Veyne, *Pagan Rome*, 392.

46. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 12.

47. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 23.

well beyond tectonic necessity.⁴⁸

A glance at Vitruvius' *Treatise* is more than enough to grasp the importance of columns to temple architecture. Considered among their crowning achievements, the Greek peristyle, or colonnade, surrounding the Greek temple stands, "like a screen between the outer world and the dark *cella* housing the sacred image of the deity."⁴⁹ Behind the very practical notion of using a series of columns to support a roof, lurks ancient ideas of boundary and emplacement. The earliest Greek temples in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. were made of timber. The fact that in these archaic buildings, the columns were tree trunks made the analogy between the temple and hallowed forests obvious. The sanctuary was bounded by the trees of the sacred wood and these trees formed the περίβολος, the divine precinct.

Architecture represents this pre-eminent place which contains the divine spirit (*numen inest*, to borrow the words of Ovid), where sacredness is concentrated. The outer collonade or encircling portico is similar to vegetation, with stems and trunks bursting from the ground, and forms a sunny place where men and gods come together—a link between heaven and earth.⁵⁰

Over time the timber columns were replaced by stone shafts (a perishable material replaced with an "eternal" one) and the stone Greek temples were born. The Romans, greatly enamoured concerning things Hellenic, surely grasped the sacred associations of the column and intentionally brought them into their homes—which were considered in themselves, sacred places.

Indeed, the religious qualities of the *domus* are, perhaps, as important as those of social status and will be discussed in the context of the household cult. The house drew upon public architecture and brought it home. Significantly, the sacred architecture of the Greeks and Romans were evident in the *domus*. Apsidal ended rooms and recesses for religious

48. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 20.

49. Henri Stierlin, *Greece: From Mycanae to the Parthenon*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods Lagrasse (New York: Taschen, 2001), 42.

50. Stierlin, *Greece*, 45.

statuettes are other examples⁵¹ The religious character of the *domus* is well attested, and though the *insulae* and *tabernae* are not as spacious and axially organised, there is a sacred complex nonethless.

The Insula. Using brick-faced concrete with vaulted support systems, the *insulae* was a multistory apartment house that replaced the *domus* and many of its spatial patterns among the poorer sections of the populace.⁵² Absent was the *fauces-atrium-tablinum* spine, along with the varied ceiling heights and *compluvium*. The *Lararium*, located in the atrium of the *domus* was relocated to the reception room of the apartment.⁵³ New spatial relationships were necessitated by the density of the building and different architectural clues had to be given to “accommodate the occupant’s rituals and to signal each room’s function for the visitor.”⁵⁴ Most often the architectural boundary of a place conforms to the cultural activities that recur there; the *insulae* is an instance in which changing the architecture brought confusion to social rituals and had to adjust to the confined spaces of urban life.

Existing in Rome at least as early as the third century B.C., these large structures were a solution to city expansion and population growth. The solution was a successful one and *insulae* became common throughout the cities of the Roman empire—though to date, no examples have been found in Palestine.⁵⁵ At Ostia, a port town on the mouth of the Tiber River, a few of the apartment blocks were patterned after traditional domestic design and were apparently intended for wealthier occupants. This was an anomaly, however, as most of the buildings were used as dwellings for the less affluent.⁵⁶ Lacking water and latrines above the

51. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 22–23.

52. Clarke, *Houses*, 26–27.

53. Connolly and Dodge, *The Ancient City: Life in Classical Athens & Rome*, 144.

54. Clarke, *Houses*, 28–29.

55. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the NT*, 20.

56. Connolly and Dodge, *The Ancient City: Life in Classical Athens & Rome*, 141.

first story, these buildings could be unhealthy and squalid places to live. The earlier *insulae* were susceptible to fire and collapse. As a result, Augustus imposed a height limit of five stories (60 feet), but this regulation was apparently ignored because following the fire of A.D. 64, new laws were passed limiting the building to 70 feet with a 10 foot space required between buildings.⁵⁷ Even then, however, unsafe buildings remained. Juvenal mocked the frail buildings of Rome:

But here we inhabit a city supported for the most part by slender props [thin beams]: for that is how the bailiff holds up the tottering house, patches up gaping cracks in the old wall, bidding the inmates sleep at ease under a roof ready to tumble about their ears.⁵⁸

Despite their tendency to fail, there were a large number of *insulae*.⁵⁹ And though they were smaller and more compact than the housing afforded by the wealthy, the *insula* maintained a religious connection with public Rome and provided for the family a regular, albeit smaller and relocated, place for their rituals.

Vitruvius did not write about the *insula* per se, but chose, instead, to write about the arrangement of rooms intended for the private use of the householders. Contrasting the different needs for private and public space between the higher and lower classes, the Roman architect makes a curious statement: “In addition to these, libraries, pinacothecæ, and basilicæ, of similar form to those which are made for public use, are to be provided; for in the houses of the noble, the affairs of the public, and the decision and judgment of private causes are often determined.”⁶⁰ Of interest here is the use of the term *basilica*. Hermann Vetters, the former excavator and director of the *insulae* excavations in Ephesos, has written:

If one surveys the literature on the subject, one finds that the existence of such private basilicas is known on the basis of the Vitruvius passage, but there is no clear

57. Connolly and Dodge, *The Ancient City: Life in Classical Athens & Rome*, 138.

58. Juvenal, *Juvenal and Perseus*, ed. and trans. Susanna Morton Braund, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), Satires 3.190.

59. For household statistics, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 91–117.

60. Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 6:5.1–2.

understanding of what the term means... Now, however, the excavations carried out near the embolos in Ephesos since 1960 demonstrate that this kind of great hall—with exedra or apse—was sometimes erected even in an extravagantly-built *insula*.⁶¹

Several of the *insulae* in Ephesos were built to accommodate the wealthy and as such contained all of the rooms indicated by Vitruvius. Ulrike Outschar has noted that an inscription from one of the dwellings (unit 6) likely indicates that the owner, a priest named Dionysios, would have had banquets and other functions in his *basilica privata* for initiates to his cult.⁶² It would not have been unheard of for such large rooms to have been used for religious gatherings. Although Outschar has ultimately concluded, “The evidence at our disposal does not warrant a theory of direct development from private basilica to Christian church,” he is quick to point out that, “basilicas such as these—which were entered through an atrium and provided space for meetings, gatherings, and communal meals—may have played a role in the evolution of early church assembly halls.”⁶³

The Tabernae. Similarly, the *tabernae* were large multi-storeyed apartment blocks. This was an urban house with shops that was very common in the cities of the Roman empire. It consisted of a single room facing the street that was connected to an interior room that served as living space. Guijarro writes, “The number of ‘house-shops’ that have been found in diverse places in Palestine lead us to believe that this kind of house was very common. In Galilee this type of house was found in the main streets of the big cities, for the most part.”⁶⁴ These were the dwellings of the working poor. The minimal space makes the discernment of features for sacred use more difficult, but there is no reason to think that these houses would not have had at least a small *lararium* for the family gods.

61. Hermann Vetters as quoted in Ulrike Outschar, “The *Basilica Privata* and the Origins of Christian Architecture: Finding the Right Stones to Build God’s House,” *Religious Studies Review* 27 no 3 J1 (2001): 227.

62. Outschar, “*Basilica Privata*,” 228.

63. Outschar, “*Basilica Privata*,” 228.

64. Santiago Guijarro, “The Family in First-Century Galilee,” in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (New York: Routledge, 1997), 54–55.

The Domestic Cult

The traditional religion of Rome was initially agricultural in nature. The Roman gods were not portrayed in human form until they were incorporated into the Greek pantheon in the latter part of the third century B.C. In the Greek world, the domestic hearth was the locus of veneration and associated with the goddess, Hestia. The hearth represented the centre of family life and was where offerings were made to insure the family's survival. The hearth was also the place for rituals which solidified and integrated the family (such as the birth of a child).⁶⁵ So also among the early Roman households, the hearth and the goddess Vesta were honoured.⁶⁶ Already in both the early Greek and Roman cultures, the house was demonstrably a religious place.

Within the domestic place, religious activity was a central aspect of the household.

John Clarke has pointed out a significant nuance:

The word 'ritual' itself has extended meanings in the private sphere, because the Romans tended to think of each space in a house in terms of the ritual or activity that the space housed. For this reason, the meaning of 'ritual'—in the context of the Roman house...is two-pronged. In its usual sense, it denotes formal, prescribed activity, often with religious purposes or rigidly ceremonial overtones. Its second sense is that of the habitual—yet not religiously prescribed—activity that took place in these spaces.⁶⁷

This suggests several things. First, according to Clarke, it was not the spaces themselves that was a focus for the members of the household, but the ritual or activity which occurred in the space. This supports the thesis that architecture grows out of the patterns of events that are repeated in a place. The architecture of the house was not conceived and implemented apart from its social and religious context. Ritual was all important to the Romans and the house was much less an object in its own right as it was a boundary of place. The architectural

65. John M. G. Barclay, "The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67.

66. Barclay, "Bearer of Religion," 67.

67. Clarke, *Houses*, 1.

features were deduced from the place in which religious rituals were repeated as part of the family's *sacra privata*.

Second, the religious rituals which eventuated the architecture of the house were not only those prescribed as part of the public religion of Rome, they comprised the many informal rituals which were passed on from generation to generation through the *paterfamilias*. This is an indication of how much religion permeated the daily routines of the household—and how much their ceremonial affected the domestic places bounded by the walls.

The Christian poet Prudentius (348-c. 405) provided a detailed description of the domestic ‘superstitions’ of the Romans and their influence on children.⁶⁸ He offers the description a young Roman family heir having already partaken of a sacrificial meal and looking upon an oil-soaked statuette:

The little one had looked at the figure in the shape of Fortuna, with her wealthy horn, standing in the house, a hallowed stone, and watched his mother pale-faced in prayer before it. Then, raised on his nurse's shoulders, he too pressed his lips to the stone and rubbed it with them, pouring out his childish petitions...convinced that all one's wishes must be sought from thence.⁶⁹

Though his intention was to deride Roman spirituality, he nevertheless hints at the intensity of the family cultus and indicates its centrality in the life of the *familia*. Barclay observes:

“Infants learnt very early which powers to propitiate in the home, and the demands of *pietas* to one's forebears, living or deceased, made it unthinkable that a child would wish to break the time-honoured traditions or show less than full respect for the *paterfamilias*.”⁷⁰ As we have seen, the atrium was the place for many household rituals and was the location where images of the family's ancestors were hung.⁷¹ Roman households worshipped the *Penates*, the *Lares*,

68. Prudentius, *Ad Symmachum*, trans. Loeb, 1.197–211.

69. Prudentius, *Ad Symmachum*, 1.205–11.

70. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 68.

71. Clarke, *Houses*, 6.

and the *Genius*. The *Penates*, were an indistinct group of deities who watched over the family larder, or store-house, and guaranteed the food supply for the family.⁷² The more important *Lares* were probably the deified spirits of ancestors.⁷³ Often represented as two young men wearing country clothing and carrying drinking horns, the *lares* were displayed as small statues or appeared in paintings. These were located in the *lararium*, a small shrine to the household gods. Sometimes nothing more than a niche in the wall, the *lararium* could, however, be quite elaborate taking the form of a miniature temple. The location of the *lararium* varied: it could be at the entrance, in the atrium, in the peristyle, near the kitchen, or elsewhere, but always in a place where the whole *familia* could assemble.”⁷⁴ The worship of the *penates* and *lares* in the home was traditionally a daily ritual involving the entire household.⁷⁵ Offerings of perfume, wine, grain, spelt, honey cakes, flowers, even blood sacrifices were given each morning in order to maintain the benevolence of the spirits, special commemorations would be offered on festivals and anniversaries.⁷⁶ Their most important festival, the *lares compitales* (the lares of the crossroads) occurred where one family’s land joined another’s. It was an important association between the household and the Roman public cult.⁷⁷ Households also worshipped the *genius* of the *paterfamilias*. This deity was something of a fertility spirit who guaranteed the continuation of the family. Not surprisingly, the festival day of the *genius* coincided with the birthday of the *paterfamilias*.

72. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 67.

73. The importance of the *lares* is underscored by the great number of *lararia* and shrines found in houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum, Clarke, *Houses*, 8.

74. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the NT*, 10.

75. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the NT*, 10.

76. David G. Orr, “Roman Domestic Religion: A Study of the Roman Household Deities and Their Shrines at Pompeii and Herculaneum” (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1973), 23.

77. Connolly and Dodge, *The Ancient City: Life in Classical Athens & Rome*, 171.

Roman families shared special religious festivals at the *lararium* on important family occasions. The rite of passage for a young boy into manhood was the *sollemnitās togae purae*, in which he took off his amulet and hung it as an offering in the *lararium*.⁷⁸ He then put on the man's toga, the *toga virilis* and dedicated his beard to the gods.⁷⁹ For girls, the rite of passage into womanhood waited until the eve of her marriage. She would then offer her dolls, soft balls, and breast bands to the household gods.⁸⁰ There were also rituals for marriage and the transfer of a bride to her husband's house; the birth, accepting and naming of a child; annual birthday and anniversary celebrations; and the rituals of death and mourning.⁸¹

The Roman house existed in varying forms over the course of time, owing to changes in Roman culture, politics, and religion. The house was, in many ways, at the heart of what it meant to be Roman. Vitruvius regarded the *domus* as the essential context for a responsible citizen's social life within the late Republican and Augustan era.⁸² That social life included religion and its practice in both public and private ritual. The house was without doubt a sacred place. The architectural boundaries and patterns were, in every case, connected with the religion of the household. When people became part of the Church in the early centuries of this era, there would have been no compunction about gathering in a domestic setting for worship as depicted in Acts of the Apostles. Pagan converts to Christianity would have accepted, *a priori*, that the home was a venue suitable—even preferred—for divine worship.

78. *Cum primum pavidō custos mihi purpura cessit bullaque succinctis laribus donata pependit*; "When, as a shy youth, I put off the purple gown of boyhood, and its protection, and hung up my amulet to the short-girt gods of the hearth," Persius, *Satires*, trans. W.S. Merwin, 5:30–31.

79. Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," 16.

80. Clarke, *Houses*, 10.

81. Clarke, *Houses*, 10; R.M. Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods in the Age of Augustus*, Ancient Culture and Society (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 99–105; and Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," 15.

82. Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 5:2.

The Sacrality of the Jewish House

If the sacrality of the Roman house was axiomatic in the ancient world, so also would have been the sacrality of the Hebrew house. Though their religions were different, the house was at the centre of a daily life built around their beliefs. Barclay has noted, “Judaism of the first century C.E. was a greatly variegated phenomenon, but all our evidence suggests that the Jewish religious tradition was deeply woven into the fabric of Jewish family life.”⁸³ For the most part, however, Hellenistic Judaism was virtually indistinguishable from the larger Greco-Roman society. In fact, they shared much the same material culture as their neighbours.

Judaism was intrinsically an ethnic tradition, allowing that there were Gentiles who embraced the Jewish religion. This ethnicity, according to Barclay, “fostered a conception and practice of religion which was bound up with Jewish ethnic identity, so that to be Jewish and to practice the ‘ancestral customs’ involved a range of distinctive family practices which were of profound religious significance.”⁸⁴ Because the Jews’ were in the minority, their sense of ethnic identity and fear of intermarriage made the family a crucial bulwark against social and cultural assimilation.⁸⁵ Determined to maintain their ethnic homogeneity, the Israelites tenaciously clung to their religion, giving their house a sacred character.

The concept of family within Palestine centred around Jewish ideals. Hopes ran high as the first-century was an age of Jewish apocalyptic and eschatological yearning. “As Roman domination continued to prevail...only some longed-for, extraordinary deliverance seemed likely to lift it.”⁸⁶ This bonded families into a stronger, more cohesive community. Influenced by the Hellenistic milieu, Jewish families were not only linked by their exercise of religion, but by their distaste for Roman occupation as well. Hellenism was, however, a powerful

83. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 69.

84. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 69.

85. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 69.

86. David J. Goldberg and John D. Rayner, *The Jewish People* (New York: Viking, 1987), 75.

juggernaut holding out the benefits of “civilisation” and prosperity to all who embraced its ways. While it threatened to assimilate fully Judaism and remove the Jews’ distinctiveness in the world, it ultimately did not. Oskar Skarsaune has argued that rather than destroy Judaism, Hellenism actually infused new life into the ancient religion. “Incorporating Judaism into Hellenistic culture on Greek terms, the strategy was to now incorporate elements from Hellenistic culture into Judaism—on the terms of the Torah.”⁸⁷ Jewish Hellenists promoted the idea that the Torah was the hidden pattern according to which the world was created; a life according to the law of nature was therefore a life according to the Torah. This was accomplished by adeptly identifying the Torah with God’s preexistent *wisdom* by whom the world was created:

The Lord possessed me [Wisdom] at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
From everlasting I was established,
From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
When there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills I was brought forth;
While He had not yet made the earth and the fields,
Nor the first dust of the world.
When He established the heavens, I was there,
When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,
When He made firm the skies above,
When the springs of the deep became fixed,
When He set for the sea its boundary
So that the water would not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth;
Then I was beside Him, as a master workman;
And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in the world, His earth,
And having my delight in the sons of men.⁸⁸

With Wisdom identified as the craftsman of creation, it was an easy step to connect Wisdom and Torah. The cause was helped by the author of Sirach (*ca.* 190 B.C.) who included a hymn

⁸⁷. Skarsaune, *Shadow*, 35.

⁸⁸. Proverbs 8:22-31.

in which Wisdom extolled herself as the preexistent law of creation.⁸⁹ A rabbinic midrash on Genesis 1:1 encased the thought by linking the “beginning” (*reshit*, רֵאשִׁית) of Genesis 1:1 with the *reshit* of Proverbs 8:22 which refers to Wisdom (thus, “beginning” = Wisdom = Torah):

As a rule, when a king builds a palace, he does not build it by himself, but calls in an architect, and the architect does not plan the building in his head, but makes use of rolls and tablets.... Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, *looked in the Torah and created the world*. And the Torah declares: “With *Reshit* God created” (Gen. 1:1), and *Reshit* means none other than the Torah, as it is said: “The Lord made me *Reshit* of His way (Prov. 8:22).⁹⁰

With the Law and Wisdom being one and the same, the stage was set not only for the success of Hellenism within Israel, but it also reinforced the sacred complexion of the Jewish house, for the boundaries of the creation were especially emplaced in the home and sanctified through the Torah.

The Jewish House

Traditional domestic architecture in Palestine consisted of two types: the *simple house* and the *courtyard house*. Both forms are well documented from the second millennium B.C.⁹¹ The earliest houses in Palestine were sturdy, one room designs with a single doorway and no windows.⁹² They very closely matched the form and arrangement of earlier tent dwellings. This aptly named traditional “Simple House” had four configurations: the multagonal circular,

89. Sirach 24:1-23.

90. J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, “Genesis Rabba,” in *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, Ch. Albeck (Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1965), 1:1. Though this midrash was likely written in the fifth century A.D., it expresses sentiments already extant in the third century or earlier, see Skarsaune, *Shadow*, 36, n. 20.

91. T. Canaan, “The Palestinian Arab House. Its Architecture and Folklore,” *Journal of Palestine Oriental Society* 13 (1933): 33–47.

92. Some of these early houses have been dated to about 6,800 B.C., H. Keith Beebe, “Ancient Palestinian Dwellings,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 31, no. 2 (May 1968): 40 (The American Schools of Oriental Research). See also Canaan, “Arab House,” 33–47.

the true circular, the square, and the rectangular.⁹³ The *simple house* was typical in agrarian communities and was the house in which most of the population of Palestine lived in the first century.⁹⁴

The foundations were typically of stone and the walls of mudbrick—though there were local variations.⁹⁵ The roofs were made of wooden poles over which brush or woven reed mats were placed and covered with layers of clay mortar rolled smooth—though later, as a result of Roman engineering, stone arches were placed in the walls with thin slabs of limestone covering them over which a lime cement sealed the exterior.⁹⁶ Most of the early square houses were small enough for the wooden beams to span without intermediate support, but there is evidence of wooden posts on a stone base. Domestic activities such as cooking and grinding were done outside and the houses themselves served primarily as a refuge from the elements.

The later *simple house* was usually designed as a four-room quadrangular building joined to an exterior courtyard (though smaller three-room and two-room variations exist). The main sleeping and living quarters for the family was located at the rear of the structure.

The house would accommodate a small family of four to six people—which likely also included slaves or servants. Arrangement varied and could be expanded to accommodate a married son and his family.⁹⁷ Architecturally, the simple house was normally clustered with

93. Beebe, “Dwellings,” 40.

94. Guijarro, “Galilee,” 50.

95. O. R. Sellers clarifies, “In Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the lowlands of Syria and Palestine, builders of houses used mud or sun-dried brick, while in the hills of Palestine, they used mostly stone, which was abundant,” Buttrick, *IDB*, 2:657. See also Arthur W. Klinck, *Home Life in Bible Times* (St. Louis: CPH, 1957), 63–68. Of the houses excavated in the rock, the most representative are the ones located in Nazareth, Guijarro, “Galilee,” 50.

96. H. Keith Beebe, “Domestic Architecture and the New Testament,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 38, no. 3–4 (1975): 101.

97. J. S. Holladay, “House, Israelite,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 308–18.

other houses belonging to the same family or clan group and often shared walls in common. This arrangement reflected “the patrilocal residential pattern of the extended family common in the ancient world.”⁹⁸ Undoubtedly, this would have encouraged close familial relationships necessary for their economic survival. In the first century, it was the close-knit lower class households which set the stage for Jesus’ ministry. “Primarily rural, the familial bonds and economic ties combined with a message that stirred belief in an imminent Divine act of redemption set the stage for the growth of the early Christian communities among the lower classes—the owners of simple houses.”⁹⁹

The other traditional house form in Palestine was the *courtyard house*. It was a further refinement of the simple house and, according to Michael Trainor, was common in relatively wealthier settings.¹⁰⁰ The earliest and simplest examples had a single room on one side of a courtyard. Other houses had rooms next to each other on two sides of the courtyard; still later versions had rooms on three sides of the court. The house was actually a complex consisting of several houses with a common courtyard. Several individual houses with two or more rooms each encircled the commons in which domestic tasks such as grinding grain, cooking, spinning, and washing was done.¹⁰¹ Houses among the Jews were not only used for dwelling purposes, they were also used as industrial and commercial shops.¹⁰² A single entrance gave access to the courtyard through a walled enclosure. Doors were a significant boundary

98. Michael F. Trainor, *The Quest for Home: The Household in Mark's Community* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 20.

99. Trainor, *Quest*, 24.

100. Some courtyard houses have been found in peasant communities, but this does not appear to be typical, Trainor, *Quest*, 25.

101. Courtyard houses from the Herodian period have been excavated at Dor, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, Guijarro, “Galilee,” 52.

102. Beebe, “Dwellings,” 55.

between the inside and out, between the public and private.¹⁰³ The single entrance suggests that the complex was inhabited by members of a single family or by related families.¹⁰⁴ Each of the conjugal families would have had use of one or two rooms apiece. The architectural form is a reasonable solution to the expansion of a family living in a simple house. Increasing economic pressures imposed upon the people of Palestine required greater cooperation and the pooling of resources for survival, much less, success.¹⁰⁵ According to Santiago Guijarro, the courtyard house “was the most characteristic type of domestic architecture in Palestine.”¹⁰⁶

Toward the end of the Hellenistic period, other types of houses came to be constructed in Palestine, largely as a result of Roman influence and changing economic factors.¹⁰⁷ In rural areas, the *farmhouse* can be cited as a newer form of house in the first-century. They were associated with areas of intensive cultivation and seem to reflect a response to the changing economic climate. Increasing marketisation intensified agricultural cultivation as families no longer sought only to meet the needs of the family, but to participate in the wider market.¹⁰⁸ Three of these houses have been unearthed in Palestine—all of them belong to the Herodian period. None have yet been found in Galilee, although Guijarro conjectures that it would be

103. Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period*, Collectio Minor, no. 34 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press; Israel Exploration Society, 1995), 249–55.

104. Canaan, “Arab House,” 40–42.

105. For a study of economics at the time of Jesus, see Seán Freyne, “Herodian Economics in Galilee,” in *Modelling Early Christianity*, ed. Philip F. Esler (New York: Routledge, 1995), 23–46.

106. Guijarro, “Galilee,” 52.

107. During this time there was a growing class of wealthy elite whose activities and homes receive much attention. However, “In most areas, probably no more than 7 percent of the population lived in cities, while the vast majority of the rural populations were peasants who worked the land or those who provided support for them through small crafts or trade. The silent majority who worked the land and supported small peasant villages ultimately bore the crushing economic burden of taxation, which forced them to give up the fruit of their labors to support the luxuries, military campaigns, and religious pomp of the urban wealthy,” Osiek and Balch, *Families in the NT*, 37.

108. Guijarro, “Galilee,” 45.

likely that this type of house also existed there.¹⁰⁹ In any case, the shape of the farmhouse was not very dissimilar from the courtyard house. Surrounded by a wall, the living space in the farmhouse was located opposite the entrance and provided enough space for a large family. Much of the interior was used for the storage of implements and produce. “The storage capacity indicates that other people, probably peasants from the surrounding area, were working in the same farm house and on its lands.”¹¹⁰

The big mansion, or *domus*, was another one of the newer house forms in Palestine. As we have seen, it was the typical house of the wealthier elite throughout the Greco-Roman world. Originally, the *domus* was a single level building but over time a second story was added and was usually associated with dining.¹¹¹ The evidence of this type of house in relatively high quantity in Galilee is one indication of the Greco-Roman influence during the Hellenistic-Roman period. The impact of Greek culture on the people of Palestine was stunning. Though more remote areas remained untouched, life in the city was revolutionised.¹¹²

Palestinian houses grew in complexity of design over time. Archaeological evidence indicates that houses were generally occupied over long periods of time and were modified with changes in ownership and changing economic times. While religious and public buildings were constructed with finer, more durable materials and methods, houses were not—which explains why, except in rare cases, domestic buildings have not survived the ravages of time and erosion.

109. Guijarro, “Galilee,” 53–54. Michael Trainor, however, disagrees. He passes over a discussion of the farmhouse because he does not consider this form of home to be a part of Jesus’ life and ministry nor was it a relevant part of the early Church’s context. Trainor, *Quest*, 21.

110. Guijarro, “Galilee,” 54.

111. Trainor, *Quest*, 29.

112. Beebe, “Domestic Architecture,” 91.

Some very early houses had rooms specifically dedicated for religious purposes. Archaeological evidence has revealed that “some Palestinian houses had rooms devoted primarily to religious uses.”¹¹³ That houses had religious articles is not surprising, but given the economic realities and the fact that most ancient Palestinian residents built their own houses with limited resources, it is significant that an entire room might be given over for religious ritual. H. Keith Beebe has provided the following example:

At Megiddo...many dwellings had cult objects in profusion, such as horned altars, incense stands, braziers, figurines, and chalices strewn about the floors. A house at Deir ‘Alla (biblical Succoth?) showed evidence of a shrine. The straight mudbrick walls were checked with niches which may have held figurines.¹¹⁴

Without a doubt, homes in Palestine—whether they were Hebrew or Gentile—were considered a suitable place for prayer and religious rites.

Though the Roman *domus* came into vogue in Israel, it remains unclear how that house form, so suited to the social and religious life of the Romans, was accommodated to the liturgical life of the Jews. It does appear, however, that Jewish religious activity centred upon the dining table (*triclinium*) even though the strong *fauces-atrium-tablinum* axis was not necessary. The *triclinium* is alluded to in the Gospel of St. John¹¹⁵ which provided for meals to be received while reclining.¹¹⁶

Before moving into a discussion of Hebrew domestic piety, mention should be made of a much earlier house in Israel: the so called *four room house*.¹¹⁷ First appearing in an

113. Beebe, “Dwellings,” 55.

114. Beebe, “Dwellings,” 55–56.

115. John 13: 4, Jesus “rose from supper” (ἐγείρεται). St. John Chrysostom comments, “For it was not before *reclining*, but after they had all sat down, then He arose.” St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 70.2.

116. The *triclinium* has not yet been archaeologically confirmed in Palestine.

117. The designation “four-room house” is simply a convention used to designate the typical Iron Age dwelling in ancient Israel. The plan was typically composed of four rooms (areas): three parallel longitudinal spaces backed by a broad-room with the entrance located in the larger space. There were, however, numerous variations and subtypes of the basic form. See Avraham Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz, “The Four Room House:

irregular form in the early Iron Age, it soon settled into the three or four room form that dominated Israel during the Iron Age II. Puzzling is not only its dominance as a house type from *ca.* 1200-586 B.C., but also its apparent sudden disappearance. Avraham Faust has written, “Such a predominance of one house plan is unparalleled in other periods. At some sites, public buildings are built along similar lines, and even typical Judahite tombs seem to mimic the four-room plan in form.”¹¹⁸ Though this kind of house had disappeared by the time of Christianity, it does demonstrate the powerful connection between the house and culture—a culture centred upon religion.

Mary Douglas has asserted that many of the Biblical laws about purity are actually about order.¹¹⁹ Her studies have drawn the conclusion that holiness is order and confusion is sin and that many of the laws covering every aspect of Jewish life were related to this idea. Building upon her work, Faust and Bunimovitz suggest that:

If the Israelites were deeply engaged with unity and ‘order’ as a negation of separateness and confusion, then these concepts must have percolated through all spheres of daily life, including material culture. Thus, it can be surmised that once the four-room house took shape and was adopted by the Israelites, for whatever reasons, it became the ‘right’ house type and hence its great popularity.¹²⁰

The house was “right” not only because of its affinity with holiness/order, but because it also fits into the Jewish cosmological schema. One example is how this house type was almost always oriented to the east.¹²¹ Interestingly, the spatial distribution of the house and its orientation were associated almost exclusively with the Israelites and so was its temporal existence: with the destruction and exile of Israel and Judah the four-room house disappeared.

Embodying Iron Age Israelite Society,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66, no. 1–2 (2003): 23.

118. Faust and Bunimovitz, “Four Room House,” 22.

119. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

120. Faust and Bunimovitz, “Four Room House,” 29.

121. Avraham Faust, “Doorway Orientation, Settlement Planning and Cosmology in Ancient Israel During the Iron Age II,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 20 (2001): 129–55.

The house was structured according to the Israelite mind and gave form to the Israelite codes of behaviour. “Thus,” concluded Faust and Bunimovitz, “the four-room house that dominated the domestic architecture of Iron Age II epitomises Israelite society.”¹²²

As with the Greeks and Romans, the Jewish house embodied their culture. As a boundary of place, the house gave form to the values and beliefs of its inhabitants. The domestic piety of the Jews demonstrates that the house was indeed a sacred place. Following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the search to remain connected to God without the benefit of sacrifice led, I believe, to a greater emphasis on the Jewish home.

Hebrew Domestic Piety

Rabbinic thought made the home a centre of religious piety and as such acted as a substitute for the destroyed Temple. The family gathered around the dining table which was understood to replace the altar in the Temple and the sacrificial cult.¹²³ The synagogue, on the other hand, was something of a communal equivalent to the family. According to Idelsohn’s view, worship by means of words (prayer) rather than sacrifice was old in Israel, reaching as far back as the patriarchs.¹²⁴ He observed that while the sacrifices played a central role in Israel’s worship, the prophets approached God with words apart from intermediary sacrifice. This gave rise to the later notion among the Jewish Hellenistic mystics that prayer was the true and only worthy sacrifice to God.¹²⁵ Though prayer was certainly a part of Jewish piety, from what is known of the centrality of the Second Temple sacrifices, there is cause to doubt Idelsohn’s view. However, it was not until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 that they

122. Faust, “Doorway Orientation,” 30.

123. Kunin, “Judaism,” 132.

124. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 4.

125. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 6.

were compelled to move away from animal sacrifice toward the public reading of the Torah and prayer.

The Jews were well formed in their devotion to God and were reputed to have been trained from infancy in the ways of their religion, according to the apothegm of Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” In the Great Shema, God said to the people, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might;” and with particular relevance to the home, God mandated, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you *shall teach them diligently to your children*, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”¹²⁶

In his *On the Embassy to Gaius*, Philo spoke of the religious education of the young within the home: “He [the Roman Emperor Gaius Caligula] regarded the Jews...who had been taught in a manner *from their very swaddling-clothes* by their parents, and teachers, and instructors, and even before that by their holy laws, and also by their unwritten maxims and customs, to believe that there was but one God, their Father and the Creator of the world.”¹²⁷ Philo later added that the Hebrew children, “having been instructed in this doctrine [the laws] *from their very earliest infancy* they bear in their souls the images of the commandments contained in these laws as sacred.”¹²⁸ Allowing even for hyperbole in Philo, these excerpts confirm the central and hallowed place of the Jewish religion in the home and in the lives of their children—owing particularly to instruction by their mothers. Alongside the religious instruction within the house, Josephus commented on their public instruction in the synagogue: “beginning immediately *from the earliest infancy*...to assemble together for the

126. Deuteronomy 6:4-7, cf. also 11:13-21.

127. Philo, *Legatione Ad Gaium*, trans. C. D. Yonge, XVI.

128. Philo, *Legatione Ad Gaium*, XXXI.

hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week.”¹²⁹

The Gospel of St. Luke records the event of Jesus in the temple at age twelve in which He is found in the Temple in the midst of the teachers (διδασκάλων), “both listening to them and asking them questions.”¹³⁰ Though the legal age for the Jewish rite of passage, the “Bar Mitzvah” (“son of the commandment”), was thirteen,¹³¹ the Rabbis encouraged that even earlier a young man should be brought to the Temple to observe the festive rites.¹³² Instruction in the Torah was part and parcel of growing up within a Jewish household and being connected with a Jewish community. In this regard, Alfred Edersheim has determined, “On every side there was evidence that religion here was not merely a creed, nor a set of observances, *but that it pervaded every relationship, and dominated every phase of life.*”¹³³ In everything, then, the Jew was taught to give thanks to God. Wylen agrees: “The service of God was never separate from daily living in early Judaism. The Jew believed himself or herself to be serving God at home, in the fields, and in the market square as much as in the synagogue, the schoolhouse or the Jerusalem Temple.”¹³⁴ Judaism was founded not only upon sacred texts and laws believed to be of Divine origin, but also upon customs and a system of unwritten laws. These pressed their influence upon the home giving to the domestic rituals a greater import since their desire was not only to know but to follow precisely what God has

129. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2:18.

130. Luke 2:46. This is the only place Luke uses διδάσκαλος for the Jewish religious teachers.

131. Jacob Neusner, *Mishnah*, Abot 5:21. This was the age at which a young man became obligated to observe the commandments, George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), 157–59.

132. Neusner, *Mishnah*, Yoma 8:4 B.

133. Edersheim, *Social Life*, 86.

134. Stephen M. Wylen, *The Jews in the Time of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 81–82.

commanded.¹³⁵

The Scriptures were not only for use in the Temple or synagogue; within the domestic sphere, prayer and psalmody were the staple of family devotion.¹³⁶ The *Morning Benedictions* were intended as private meditations prayed in the house, recited when the Jew first arose in the morning.¹³⁷ Following the destruction of Jerusalem, it became the opinion of the Rabbis that the Temple sacrifices could be replaced by prayer if they were recited at the times when the sacrifices used to be offered.¹³⁸ The Sages regulated the texts of prayers and made the synagogue services obligatory. Rabbi Gamaliel of Jamnia was a leader in this regard and added a third evening service (*Arvith*) to the two regular daily services *Shaharith* and *Minha*. The *Arvith* had previously been a service of private devotion prayed in the home before retiring for the evening. The ancient custom had been to recite the *Shema* in obedience to Deuteronomy 6:7, “And thou shalt...speak of them...when thou liest down.”¹³⁹ The growing concern was that it was easy to forget one’s daily prayers (said at home) as a result of the clamouring concerns of life. If men were required to pray daily in the synagogue, they reasoned, then they would be less likely to be remiss.¹⁴⁰ The intent was not to supplant the liturgies of the house and the prayers of the family, but to foment piety with additional accountability.

135. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 69.

136. Idelsohn notes that a number of psalms are for private devotion, as evident from their form and style, Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 15; Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 15.

137. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 73. Cf. also Jacob Neusner, *Mishnah*, Berakhot 4:1.

138. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 26.

139. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 27.

140. The rationale was thus: “Upon returning home in the evening from his day’s work, let no person say: ‘I will go home, eat and sleep a little and then I will recite the Shema and pray,’ for the result will be that he will be overcome by fatigue and will sleep throughout the whole night without having prayed. Therefore, before he returns home, every person shall go to the synagogue...and after that go home and have his meal,” (b. Ber. 4b).

In the second century Rabbi Mayir established the principle that every man was obligated to recite a hundred benedictions each day. This included all of the benedictions of the three daily services as well as those said before and after meals.¹⁴¹ This is a clear indication that prayer continued to be a part of the daily routine which included prayers at the synagogue and prayers within the house. The communal worship of God at the temple and the devotion of the family were two sides of the same coin. Ritual was at the heart of the Jewish household.

Besides the prayers at morning and evening, there were other rituals and times for devotion. Before meals, the Israelites washed their hands as suggested in the Psalter: “I will wash my hands in innocence; so I will compass Thine altar, O Lord.”¹⁴² The psalm not only suggests the washing of hands but makes the rabbinic association between domestic table and Temple altar implicit. Idelsohn alludes to a rabbinic writing that says, “not only the Sanctuary is called altar, but also the dining table.”¹⁴³ In connection with the washing of hands was the saying of prayers before and after meals.

The *Talmud* traces the saying of grace before a meal all the way back to Abraham.¹⁴⁴ Josephus also bears witness to the tradition of prayer both before and following meals: “Before meat the priest says a grace (κατεύχομαι), and none may partake until after the prayer. When breakfast is ended he pronounces a further grace; thus at the beginning and at the close

141. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 29.

142. Psalm 26:6.

143. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 122.

144. Zahavy has argued that the Jewish system of saying grace before meals was not formalised until the middle of the 2nd century at the very least, Tzvee Zahavy, *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, Studies in Judaism (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 240–41, 252–53, 259–63. Although Bradshaw questions his methodology, he is quick to warn of too readily concluding that grace after meals had a standardised form in the 1st century due to the fluidity of Jewish prayer patterns, Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (New York: The Oxford University Press, 1992), 45.

they do homage to God as the bountiful giver of life.”¹⁴⁵ In the *Book of Jubilees* the first three benedictions of Grace were already known in the first century B.C.¹⁴⁶ It is said in the *Talmud* that the first benediction of the meal was composed by Moses, the second by Joshua, and the third by David and Solomon.¹⁴⁷

For distinguished days, there were special additions and forms of prayers prescribed for the home, but perhaps the most beautiful and familiar of the household rituals occurs on Friday before sunset with the *Kabbalath shabbath*, the inauguration of the Sabbath. Upon arriving home before the Sabbath, it was customary for the father to bless his children:

When blessing his sons, he says: “God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh;” to daughters, he says: “God make thee as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah.” Then he recites the Priestly Benediction.¹⁴⁸

The Jewish woman lit the menorah, a seven-branched candle stand, while the blessing was recited.¹⁴⁹ The Sabbath emphasised both physical and spiritual rest, but this emphasis was not intended to be a total lack of activity. The Israelites worshipped and studied in the home and there were also “Table Songs” to be sung during meals. The Psalter says, “Wine maketh

145. Josephus, *War*, II.8.5.

146. Abraham celebrated the feast of first fruits by blessing the Most High God who created the heavens and the earth. The prayer attributed to him in *Jubilees* 22:7-9 is a prayer in the form of a *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. Of this prayer, Louis Finkelstein has written: “The Book of Jubilees, the date of which can hardly be later than the year 100 B.C.E., attributes to Abraham the recital of a prayer of thanks after he had eaten. The author of the book, who wanted it to be accepted as Mosaic, naturally did not dare commit the gross anachronism of making Abraham repeat the Birkat Ha-Mazon in the form which it had in Hasmonean Jerusalem. At the same time he wished to imply that Abraham observed the commandment of reciting the Grace in approximately the same way as his descendants were destined to do. He therefore wrote a prayer which is worded differently from the traditional Birkat Ha-Mazon, but, like it, consists of three parts of which the first is thanks to God for food and drink, the second addresses Him and praises Him for other blessings, and the third prays for mercy on Israel,” Louis Finkelstein, “The Birkat Ha-Mazon,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 19, no. 3 (January 1929): 218–19 (University of Pennsylvania Press).

147. *Babylonian Talmud*, Berakhot 48b.

148. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 151.

149. Jacob Neusner, *Mishnah*, Shabbat 2:6.

glad the heart of man”¹⁵⁰ and the book of Judges has added that wine, “cheers even God.”¹⁵¹ For this reason, according to Idelsohn, wine was offered at the sacrifices at the Temple, and from there the sanctification of wine was introduced into the home as a symbol of joy to usher in all holidays.¹⁵²

Less frequent than the Sabbath but still very important in the life of the Jews were the festivals—especially Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement.¹⁵³ These festivals were celebrated both in public and in private homes.

On the fourteenth of the Jewish month Nissan, the Passover is celebrated in remembrance of Israel’s exodus out of Egypt. The rituals are intended to remind the people of the event when God redeemed His people from bondage. The celebration involves a “Seder” meal. The seder liturgy, the *Haggadah*,¹⁵⁴ developed during the Second Temple and reached a new level of popularity during the Roman oppression. The popularity of the Passover moved thousands of Jews to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival. Josephus related in his eye witness account that at the feast, “an innumerable multitude came thither out of the country, nay, from beyond its limits also, in order to worship God.”¹⁵⁵ Idelsohn has emphasised, however, that for Jews, this meal became, “a home-celebration par excellence.”¹⁵⁶ The *Mishnah* includes a special rule for the instruction of sons¹⁵⁷ following the prescription of

150. Psalm 104:15.

151. Judges 9:12-13 (LXX).

152. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 134.

153. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 71.

154. Jacob Neusner, *Mishnah*, Pesahim V and X.

155. Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, updated ed., trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 17.9.3.

156. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 173.

157. Jacob Neusner, *Mishnah*, Pesahim 10:4.

Exodus: “And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up out of Egypt.’”¹⁵⁸

The Feast of Tabernacles also meant a very special time for the family and the celebration included was such that even very small children could participate.¹⁵⁹ Though not a domestic festival per se, the *Day of Atonement* may have made the largest impression upon young and old alike. Rich with history and meaning the festival was at the centre of Israel’s relationship to God. The festivals were at the same time communal celebrations and family events. They served to bind the Jewish families with the greater community of Israel.

Brief mention should be made of the decoration of ancient Israelite houses since it may be an indication of the inhabitant’s religion. Most wall and ceiling surfaces in the houses of Israel were covered with a smooth plaster. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that the use of frescoes was less an indication of the owner’s socio-economic standing than his exposure to Greco-Roman culture.¹⁶⁰ Katharina Galor maintains that there was a conflict between the archaeological evidence and the rabbinic writings. She notes that there is a Rabbinic prohibition against decorating or painting houses unless the house was already painted when purchased. However, with regard to the exterior, the rabbis ruled that a person may plaster his house as long as he left a small area unplastered in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple.¹⁶¹ While this does not point directly to the sacrality of the Jewish house, it does, nevertheless, indicate that the house is connected in some way to the Temple even if, by the time of the Rabbis it was only in remembrance.

158. Exodus 13:8.

159. Cf. Jacob Neusner, *Mishnah*, Sukkah 2:6–9.

160. Katharina Galor, “Domestic Architecture in Roman and Byzantine Galilee and Golan,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66, no. 1–2 (2003): 53.

161. Galor, “Architecture,” 54.

What emerges from the evidence is that Judaism did not know a distinction between the domestic and public cult.¹⁶² Religion was embedded within the structures and practices—the ethos—of the Jewish family. The house was a centrepiece of Jewish domestic piety and was arguably more important than either the Temple or synagogue in the sustenance of the Hebrew religion and culture, especially after A.D. 70.

Interestingly, in his study of Jewish family dynamics, Ross Kraemer has concluded that “the dynamics of Jewish families do not appear appreciably different from those of non-Jews (of similar class and status conditions) in the early imperial Roman period.”¹⁶³

This would suggest that though the religious differences between Romans and Jews were significant, the realities of daily life in the ancient world were not. It also suggests a much stronger link between the Christian families and those of the larger Graeco-Roman culture. This is important for our understanding of the roots of family structure which was adopted as a model for the early Church’s organisation. What seems clear at this point, however, is that Israel began to import Roman domestic architecture and though the rituals that gave birth to its form were changed, the house was still considered to be holy ground by the Jews and so was abundantly filled with their prayers, liturgies and celebrations. Cettina Militello wrote, “Changes in home and city are elements in the fuller development of their values and life-settings.”¹⁶⁴ Because the heart of the home was the faith of its inhabitants, the house in the ancient world adorned an unmistakable sacred complex.

162. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 69.

163. Ross Kraemer, “Typical and Atypical Jewish Family Dynamics: The Cases of Babatha and Bernice,” in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, Religion, Marriage and Family (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 155.

164. Cettina Militello, “A Theology of Liturgical Space,” in *Liturgical Time and Space*, vol. V of *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, ed. Anscar J. Chupungco (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 399.

CHAPTER 6

FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

*“Created things are confined within the fitting measures,
as within a boundary”*
—St. Gregory of Nyssa

“The fact is,” asserted Jean Danielou, “that the life of ancient Christianity was centred around worship.”¹ He further said, “The sacraments were thought of as the essential events of Christian existence, and of existence itself, as the prolongation of the great works of God in the Old Testament and the New.” OT worship was centred in the Temple so it is no wonder that the Church harboured great affinity for the ancient institution. Christians understood themselves to be the new Israel and the rightful heirs of salvation history. How was their connection with the Temple established and maintained?

The kinship between the Church and the synagogue has long been accepted. The lion’s share of liturgical scholarship has been built upon the assumptions made about the Church’s liturgical language and that of the synagogue. Dom Gregory Dix expressed the popular view when he wrote that the Church’s “synaxis was in its Shape simply a continuation of the Jewish synagogue service of our Lord’s time, which was carried straight over into the Christian church by its Jewish nucleus in the decade after the passion.”² The indications are that the underpinnings of this long held view are beginning to crumble.

It is no longer tenable to supposed that the liturgy of the Church gradually evolved out

1. Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Liturgical Studies (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 17.

2. Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A & C Black, 1945), 36.

of the New Testament in a linear fashion.³ While remembering that the worship of the synagogue was taken over from that of the Temple, Oesterley encompassed the majority view when he wrote that the synagogue, “set the pattern for the worship of the early church.”⁴ One reason why there has been a focus upon the liturgy of the synagogue rather than the Temple as the progenitor of the Christian liturgy is the lack of data concerning the Temple worship. More details have existed about the synagogue and so that is where the emphasis has rested. Only tacit consideration has been given to the early Church’s connection with the Temple because “the synagogue became not just a complement to the Temple but a substitute for it.”⁵ Many things which had been exclusively a part of the Temple liturgy came to have a place within the worship of the synagogue. The destruction of the Temple also fomented this trend. Thus, Temple connections lurked in the shadows while the light beamed upon the synagogue.⁶

There is, however, a growing uncertainty with regard to the liturgy of the synagogue in the first century. Cracks have begun to form in what was once a seemingly calcified synagogal priority. Bradshaw asserts: “On the basis of both archeological and literary evidence, a growing number of scholars now doubt that any form of regular Sabbath liturgy as such was a feature of the synagogue before the third century.”⁷ What this means is that the search for Christian liturgical origins is no longer certain and it opens up the possibility that the Temple

3. This view was first proposed by Leopold Zunz, *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, Historisch Entwickelt: Ein Beitrag Zur Alterthumskunde und Biblischen Kritik, Zur Literatur-und Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1832). For a synopsis of the scholarship, see Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Study of Ancient Judaism* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992).

4. W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 87.

5. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw, eds., *The Study of Liturgy*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 69.

6. W. D. Maxwell even asserted that “the Temple worship left little mark upon Christian worship,” William D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its Development and Forms* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 2.

7. Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2002), 36.

may have played a greater role in the formation of the Christian liturgical tradition than was once thought. This does not exclude the synagogue as a source, but what can be said is that the worship of the early Christians emerged within the matrix of Judaism around two foci: the Temple and Synagogue.⁸ Urman adds, “From the perspective of the common Israelite, the non-priest, there were thus really two different Judaisms: the Temple cult from which he was generally excluded from meaningful participation, and the Judaism of the synagogue in which he was a full participant.”⁹ But the synagogue’s purpose was more community oriented—at least until the Temple was destroyed.

The connections between the Jewish synagogue prayer and the early Christian liturgy do not seem to translate architecturally in any significant way into later Christian construction. Comparisons between house churches and synagogues are not dissimilar, however.¹⁰ In the first three centuries of this era, the synagogue and Church both struggled to make a stand amidst the flora and fauna of Rome’s religious landscape. Adaptation and survival was the order of the day and the synagogue in some cases copied Church building. The objection is sometimes raised that later edifices of the Church bear scant resemblance to the synagogue or to the house churches of the early years. This is true when examined *archaeologically*. By examining the assembly’s place and its enclosing boundaries, however, the outline of a sacred architecture becomes discernible. For example, the strong axial arrangement of the Temple (vestibule, Holy Place, Most Holy Place) was also evident in the Roman house (*fauces*, *atrium*, *tablinum*) though for different reasons. These find their way into the linear basilical arrangement (Narthex, Nave, Chancel), and all share the common thread of movement toward their axial terminus. In the case of the Roman house, it was the *paterfamilias*, in the case of the Temple, it was the mercy seat of God.

8. Arthur G. Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 186.

9. Urman and Flesher, *Ancient Synagogues*, 29. See also Skarsaune, *Shadow*, 117–22.

10. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 80.

Liturgical and architectural innovations often attributed to the time of Constantine were not necessarily new. Paul Bradshaw insists:

Many of the differences that really do seem to be new creations in the fourth century first come to our attention in the second half of that century, and in some cases its final quarter, suggesting that they were not so much the immediate consequences of Constantine's conversion but rather part of a process that had certainly begun well before that momentous event, was intensified by it, but only issued forth in radical changes of practice through the interaction of a complex series of cultural and doctrinal shifts in the course of succeeding decades.¹¹

This would suggest that while significant changes occurred within the church's liturgical life following Constantine's conversion and subsequent legalisation of Christianity, particularly as it gained a foothold in the empire, the changes had longer roots which only came to bear fruit in the fourth century.¹² These roots, rather than having their origin in the Jewish synagogue, had their terminus in the Temple cult of Jerusalem. This is likely also true of the architectural forms that the church came to employ. The ecclesial architecture of the fourth century has a greater affinity with a Temple prototype than with one based on the synagogue. Before A.D. 70, the synagogue was seen more as a supplement to the Temple service than a substitute for it.¹³ The line of development in the NT was, according to Militello, a process of interiorising the Temple and its connection with the people of God. He argued that the Church did not eliminate the Temple as unnecessary, but sought to increase the depth of meaning that had already interpreted the theological and liturgical status of Israel as they gathered in their holy assembly.¹⁴ This is why Cabaniss has well said, "The real home of

11. Bradshaw, *Origins*, 211.

12. It is Bradshaw's contention that the church of the fourth century was not flowering, but actually experiencing decline. In an attempt to stem the tide, the Church began to adopt liturgical practices of pagans even while they publicly denounced them. This is one way to look at the evidence. See Bradshaw, *Origins*, 211ff.

13. After the fall of Jerusalem, the synagogue did become a real substitute for the Temple, but only after significant changes had occurred that allowed the reading of Torah and certain prayers to substitute for the temple sacrifices. See Skarsaune, *Shadow*, 125.

14. Militello, "Liturgical Space," 403.

Jewish worship was thus the Temple, even if performed in the synagogue.”¹⁵

This was also said about the Jewish house. The household was the locus of daily activity and though the Jews did not have statuettes and images of God, praying, chanting, reading and blessing were at the heart of Jewish life and home. So, “What was the real foundation of early Christian architecture?”

During the Graeco-Roman period, there was a deep concern for the holy. Peter Brown has argued that whether it was a person, an object, or a place, sacrality was a central issue within Late Antique culture.¹⁶ The house in the ancient world was a sacred place and the sacrality of the house among the early Christians would have been unquestioned. Though Margaret Y. MacDonald’s purpose was to explore the role of women in the expansion of Christianity, she has, nevertheless, concluded that a unifying theme among them was household life. “The attempt to identify the specific activities of women that contributed to the expansion of the gospel leads time and time again to the household.”¹⁷ Because of the sacred complexion of the house, both Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity would have had no compunction about worshipping in a domestic place. In fact, the Church came to use the household as its organisational model.

Some might object and say that the use of domestic terminology was simply in vogue for sacred structures, whether pagan, Jewish or Christian. We have already noted the association between the Roman temples and the house. The Jews, particularly in the Diaspora, made use of residences for their assemblies just like the Christians. Nevertheless, the Christian writings of the first three centuries after Christ have intentionally used domestic

15. Allen Cabaniss, *Pattern in Early Christian Worship* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989), 29.

16. Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150–750*, Library of World Civilization (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), 96–103.

17. Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity,” in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, Religion, Marriage and Family (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 184.

language for their place of worship well beyond casual parlance. Of St. Paul, Allen Cabaniss writes, “His thought and mind were deeply colored by the ceremonial of Temple services and he often interchanged the language of Temple and church.”¹⁸ The Church’s language was intimately tied to the house and there is ample evidence to suggest that the house—not the synagogue— may have been the archetype for the development of Christian architecture. To explore this possibility, we begin with a look into the relationship that existed between the house and Jesus.

Jesus and the House

Though Jesus and his disciples attended both the Temple and synagogue, it is also true that He gathered, taught, and had table fellowship within *houses*. In fact, the house played a more significant role in the life and teaching of Jesus than did the synagogue.¹⁹ The locus of both Jesus’ teaching and miracles was often a domestic setting—and the house also featured large in His parables and admonitions. Before we tour these in more detail, we must first review the terms.

The vocables οἶκος and οἰκία, are joined by a common root and refer to the ‘house’ and ‘household’ (*familia*) respectively. The word for house (οἶκος) can also be used more broadly as a way of referring to a community. The distinction between ‘building’ and ‘community’ is often rather nebulous. “In the OT ‘my house’ refers to Israel itself, so that the NT exegesis reminds us of the equation of ‘house of God’ and the community.”²⁰ In the NT it is the community which is first referred to as the “house of God.”²¹ For example, οἶκος

18. Cabaniss, *Pattern*, 24.

19. Within the Gospels, Jesus is depicted in a synagogue little more than a dozen times. On the other hand, He is depicted in a house more than 30 times and the house appears in his teaching more than 58 times.

20. Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *TDNT*, 5.125.

21. Hebrews 10:21 refers to Christ as, “a great priest over the house of God (τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ).” Archbishop Royster has said this verse refers to the people, the “House of Israel,” Archbishop Dmitri Royster, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 161. Donald Guthrie concurs when he writes: “The words are comprehensive including both the church on earth and the

Ἰσραήλ is a clear reference to the chosen people of God and it derives from the OT phrase *beth Israel* (בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל).²² The distinctive Hebrew expression explains the common NT expression “house of Israel” as the collective people.²³ When Jesus approached Jerusalem and uttered His prophetic lament: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!...*Behold, your house will be left to you desolate,*” οἶκος is typically understood as referring to the Jerusalem temple. It could also, however, have the people and the city as its referent.²⁴ The lines between Temple and people become blurred, just as the lines between house and household—and so they should be. The house as a boundary of place is a reflection of those who dwell within. Is the Temple not at the heart of Jerusalem? Does it not localise the relationship between Israel and God? The Temple boundaries reflect the ritual actions that occur in that sacred place.

Similar to its usage in the Septuagint, the New Testament catchphrase οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ is used in reference of the earthly sanctuary of Israel. Michel has written, “No other sacred or ecclesiastical structure is called by this term in the NT.”²⁵ Sometimes, however, the words are not so neatly contained. Jesus referred to His “Father’s house” and the meaning was often the earthly Temple as was the case with Jesus’ response to his parents’ anxious chide concerning His whereabouts: “Son, why have you done this to us?” “Did you not know that I had to be in *my Father’s house?*”²⁶ Similarly, in the so-called cleansing of the Temple Jesus roared, “Do

church in heaven, but the main emphasis is on the earthly community,” Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press ; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 213.

22. 2 Samuel 1:12. In Exodus 16:31, the LXX renders the Masoretic text as οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραήλ, pointing to the community aspect.

23. Two OT quotations, one in Luke 1:33 and the other in Acts 7:46 speak of the οἶκος Ἰακώβ for the whole people of Israel.

24. Matthew 23:38. Cf. also the usage referring to the city in 1 Enoch 89:50ff.

25. Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *TDNT*, 5.121.

26. Luke 2:49.

not make *my Father's house* a house of merchandise!"²⁷ But in John 14:2, Jesus did not intend the earthly Temple at all, but something more ethereal: "In *my Father's house* are many mansions."²⁸ A concept intimately associated with "Father's house," at least in John's imagery, is that οἶκος can also imply the Kingdom of God.²⁹

So far as the terminology is concerned, "house" and "household" followed typical Jewish parlance. "House" was a term used for dwellings of all kinds. It was also used of the Temple—both earthly and heavenly—and it encompassed the whole community of Israel. There is nothing particularly remarkable about the term itself, but it does claim a significant, albeit subdued, place in the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth.

Beyond the word-stock of the synoptics and John, the house became an important backdrop for the life and work of Jesus. This is not surprising since the house is often the stage upon which much of life is played. However common, the house was a familiar venue for Jesus and His disciples and it offered a ready image in the teaching of Jesus. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus compared those who hear His words and live by them as being like a wise man who builds his *house* upon a rock.³⁰ In a homily on Matthew, St. John Chrysostom interpreted the house as "a soul that pursues the way of excellence," and the rock as the reliability of Jesus' teaching.³¹ The emphasis is on the different foundations: the wise man

27. John 2:16.

28. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 638.

29. Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *TDNT*, 5.122; see especially note 14.

30. Matthew 7:24ff. Deuteronomy 28:15 pronounces curses on anyone who will not obey the voice of the Lord your God and one of the curses is this (28:30): "You shall build a house, and you shall not dwell in it." In a similar vein, Proverbs 12:7 says, "The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand."

31. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, 24.2. Davies suggests that it is probably too much to make an allusion to Peter and the Church, W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1988), 721.

built his house on the rock and the foolish man built on sand. Nevertheless, the correspondence is made between the teaching of Jesus (the rock) and the soul of the hearer (the house).

Again, the house looms large when Jesus teaches concerning demons. Responding to those who claimed that His power to work miracles was the result of Beelzebub the ruler of the demons, Jesus said, “A *house* divided against itself will not stand.”³² Obviously οἶκος here stands for the household, or *familia*, and not an actual house structure. Jesus’ proverbial sounding words were the basis for Chromatius (*ca.* 345-407), the Bishop of Aquileia, to later argue that the Church, the true house of God was both heavenly and eternal:

The Lord declared that a kingdom or city or house divided against itself could not stand. This was said in reference to the kingdom that the Jews themselves occupied under the rule of Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon, which was judged as abandoned before being divided. The Jews would lose entirely the city of Jerusalem, to which Samaria had been hostile. They would lose the dwelling place of God’s temple against which golden calves and the house of idols had been erected. He showed them that they ought rather to follow the kingdom that cannot be divided—that is, the heavenly and eternal one. The spiritual city of Jerusalem always remains fixed and immovable. No hostile power ever has been or will be able to overcome *the true house of God*. That house which is protected by the Son of God is quite safe.³³

As a spiritual house under the protection of Christ, the Church is a formidable structure against which not even the gates of Hades can prevail.

Jesus spoke of Satan in terms of a strong man guarding his house against plunder. Teaching about demon possession, Jesus said that when an unclean spirit goes out of a man and finds no rest, it says, “I will return to my *house* from which I came.”³⁴ The imagery of the οἶκος in the ministry of Jesus provided both a ready metaphor and a natural backdrop for His teaching. Not only a place of dwelling, the house was a place of safety and security; it was a place where the family was (if you will) most at *home*.

32. Matthew 12:25.

33. Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 1a of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament*, gen. ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 246.

34. Matthew 12:44.

In the Gospels, houses were also a place for working miracles. When a synagogue ruler's daughter had died, he requested that Jesus come to his house and lay His hands on her. After putting out the incredulous mourners, Jesus took the girl by the hand, raised her to life and returned her to her father.³⁵ In another instance, the servant of a certain centurion was on his death bed. Some elders of the Jews came to Jesus and asked him to go to the centurion's house and heal the servant. On the way to the house, the centurion sent friends to stop Jesus, saying on his behalf:

Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof [i.e. house]; for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, "Go!" and he goes, and to another, "Come!" and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this!" and he does it.³⁶

To this Jesus marvelled, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith," and when those who were sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

In addition to Jesus' teaching and miracles, the house was a place of fellowship. To the astonishment of the Pharisees, Jesus was often found in houses eating and consorting with tax collectors and sinners.³⁷ The dining table was an important feature for establishing fellowship in the ancient world and the Pharisees were particularly careful about with whom they shared a meal. The question of who was and who was not a "sinner" was decisive for determining who was worthy of their table fellowship.³⁸ The fact that Jesus was so willing to engage in such fellowship with the undesirables of society made him suspect in the eyes of the religious establishment. It was, after all, to the tree-bound tax collector (and sinner!) that Jesus

35. Matthew 9:23ff.; Mark 5:35 ff.; Luke 8:41ff.

36. Luke 7:6-8.

37. Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:15; and Luke 5:29.

38. Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis, MO: CPH, 1996), 245. For the importance of table fellowship as a hermeneutical principle in the Gospel of Luke, see Just, *Feast*.

announced: “Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay *at your house!*”³⁹

On another occasion, Jesus was asked to dine at the house of a Pharisee named Simon. During the meal, a woman who was a “sinner” brought in an alabaster flask of fragrant oil and anointed Jesus’ feet while she wept. She washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. When the Pharisee thought poorly of Jesus for allowing this, He rebuked Simon for his lack of hospitality:

Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.⁴⁰

Jesus forgave the woman her sins and sent her away in peace. Arthur Just has suggested that this meal was likely a Sabbath evening seder and would have included an opportunity for teaching by an invited guest—in this case, Jesus.⁴¹ This domestic event draws out Simon’s affront toward Jesus and, in the opinion of Bailey, the woman was “offering her love *and* trying to compensate for the insult that Jesus has just received.”⁴² When it was all said and done, Jesus had unequivocally pronounced forgiveness of sins upon the woman and recognised her faith—and all of this within the context of a sacred meal within the boundaries of the house.

Perhaps the most important meal received in a house is the one shared in the upper room between Jesus and his disciples just before His crucifixion. The disciples asked Him where He would like them to prepare for the Passover. Jesus responded, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover

39. Luke 19:5.

40. Luke 7:44-47.

41. Just, *Luke*, 326–27.

42. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables, Their Culture and Style* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 9.

at your house with My disciples.”””⁴³ They found the house and prepared the meal as Jesus had directed. During the meal celebration, Jesus predicted His betrayal and established the Christian Eucharist in the context of that Jewish house:

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”⁴⁴

Volumes have been written about the meaning and significance of this sacred event, sufficient for the present purpose, however, is to point out that the most important ritual (sacrament) established by Jesus for the Church took place within the humble confines of Judean οἶκος.

What should be clear is that the house was a significant and sacred place in the ancient world. It was at the heart and centre of daily life and faith for pagans and Jews alike. It provided a notable *locus* for many of the events recorded in the Gospels. The house was the setting for Jesus’ teaching and miracles and it was the place of choice for Jesus to celebrate His final Pascha with His disciples before His death. It was, perhaps, this establishment of the Christian Eucharist in that upper room that secured the house as a holy place *par excellence* for the disciples and in the mind of the early Church.

Jesus as the Temple

Another significant place in the life and ministry of Jesus was the Jerusalem Temple. N.T. Wright has said that, “it is precisely in terms of Torah and Temple that the earthly Jesus acted symbolically and spoke cryptically to define his mission and hint at his own self understanding.”⁴⁵ According to the Scriptures, Jesus was devoted to the Temple and He not

43. Matthew 26:18.

44. Matthew 26:26-28.

45. N.T. Wright, “Jesus,” 4.

only attended the liturgy there,⁴⁶ He also kept its solemnities.⁴⁷ Jesus' zeal for the Temple was manifested by his cleansing of its courts⁴⁸ and he used illustrations which made use of Temple imagery.⁴⁹ The most striking use is in reference to Himself:

He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? 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*."⁵⁰

Jesus also referenced Himself at the cleansing of the Temple which will be examined more closely in due course. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for swearing by the Temple and its altar and one of his temptations happened at the pinnacle of the Temple.⁵¹ Far from separating himself from the Temple culture, Jesus seemed to both embrace and transform it:

Jesus believed he was Israel's Messiah, the one in whom Israel's history was to be summed up. Jesus believed he would win the messianic victory over the real enemy and would build the true messianic temple through taking Israel's fate upon himself and going to the cross. Jesus believed that in doing so he was not just pointing to or talking about, *but was actually embodying*, the return of YHWH to Zion.⁵²

Whether or not that was the case, the earliest Christians believed that Jesus was, in fact, the Incarnate Son of God. Luke's Gospel gives the most detail of the birth narratives and clearly expresses the Church's belief concerning Jesus. "Proper attention to the Incarnation forced Patristic theology to suggest that place is of great importance in the Christian scheme of things, for in defining places as the seat of relations and of meeting and activity between God

46. Mark 14:49; Matthew 26:55; Luke 21:37; and 22:53.

47. Cf. John 2:13; 4:45; 5:1; 6:4; 7:10; 10:22; 11:55; 13:29; and 18:28.

48. Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45; and John 2:16.

49. Mark 14:58; and Luke 18:10.

50. Matthew 12:3-6.

51. Matthew 23:16-21; 4:5; and Luke 4:9.

52. N.T. Wright, "Jesus," 9.

and humanity it allowed for the significance of places in human experience to be recognized.”⁵³

Place, as has already been demonstrated, necessitates boundary. Places do not exist without demarcation, without boundary. So if place became important to the early Christian Church, it was because a significant concept of boundary had been inherited by them from their Jewish forebears.

The Gospels record the conception and birth of the Christ within the womb of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁴ This is from the outset a *crux theologorum* in that it posits the infinite and uncircumscribable God to become circumscribed, that is to say, the infinite God became finite. This means that the Incarnation—and the Nativity of Christ which brought it about—is intimately connected with *boundary*. And this on several levels: The Infinite God became finite; the Unbounded became bounded; the bodiless took human flesh; He who is uncircumscribed became contained in the womb of the Virgin.

The fathers of the ancient Church believed this was the case. In his two-day conversation with a Jew named Trypho,⁵⁵ Justin had asserted in his apologetic that, “The First-Begotten of all creation would become incarnate by the virgin’s womb, and be a child.”⁵⁶ He insisted in a way similar to the fourth Gospel that the Christ was the pre-existent God become incarnate through the Virgin Mary.⁵⁷ As might be expected, Trypho’s response was one of incredulity: “You say that this Christ existed as God before the ages. You say that He

53. Inge, *Theology of Place*, 52.

54. Give Biblical references

55. This is ‘Likely the Rabbi Tarphon mentioned in the Mishna. See Johannes Quasten, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature from the Apostles Creed to Irenaeus*, vol. 1 of *Patrology* (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1986), 202–19.

56. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 84.

57. Justin, *Dialogue*, 87.

then submitted to being born and becoming a man. Yet you say that He is not man of man. Now, this appears to me to be not merely paradoxical, but also foolish.”⁵⁸

However one may regard the authenticity of the *Dialogue*, it is quite evident that Justin advanced that the Christ is God become man. This is evidenced also in St. Justin’s other writings as well. In his *First Apology* written in Rome, Justin said,

[Jesus] being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God. And of old He appeared in the shape of fire and in the likeness of an angel to Moses and to the other prophets; but now in the times of your empire, having, as we before said, become Man by a virgin, according to the counsel of the Father, for the salvation of those who believe on Him, He endured both to be set at nought and to suffer, that by dying and rising again He might conquer death.⁵⁹

Again, he said, “Through the power of the Word, according to the will of God the Father and Lord of all, He was born of a virgin as a man, and was named Jesus...”⁶⁰

J.N.D. Kelly notes that Irenaeus, even more emphatically than Justin, pressed the point that the pre-existent *Logos* who had revealed Himself throughout the pages of the Old Testament had become man.⁶¹ In his letters, Ignatius pointed out the paradoxes of the Incarnation: “There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit. He is both made and not made. He is God existing in flesh, true Life in death. He is both of Mary and of God.”⁶² And in his letter to the Smyrneans he wrote of Jesus, “He was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the will and power of God. He was truly born of a virgin.”⁶³

58. Justin, *Dialogue*, 48.

59. Justin, *I Apology*, 63.

60. Justin, *Apology*, 46.

61. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1978), 148.

62. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 7.

63. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrneans*, 1.

Another venerable figure of the second century, a bishop of Sardis named Melito devoted much of his writing to the pre-existence of the Christ:

On these accounts He came to us; on these accounts, though He was incorporeal, He formed for Himself a body after our fashion,—appearing as a sheep, yet still remaining the Shepherd; being esteemed a servant, yet not renouncing the Sonship, being carried *in the womb* of Mary, yet arrayed *in the nature of* His Father; treading upon the earth, yet filling heaven; appearing as an infant, yet not discarding the eternity of His nature; being invested with a body, yet not circumscribing the unmixed simplicity of His Godhead; being esteemed poor, yet not divested of His riches; needing sustenance inasmuch as He was man, yet not ceasing to feed the entire world inasmuch as He is God; putting on the likeness of a servant, yet not changing the likeness of His Father.⁶⁴

The nativity of Christ is evidence for the early Christians of the Incarnation of the pre-existent *Logos*. God became man; the infinite condescended to become bounded. By taking upon Himself human flesh, God in Christ, became a locatable creature: able to be seen, able to be touched, able to be smelled and able to be heard. To be invested with a body is to know a boundary, it is to be located, emplaced.⁶⁵ Not unlike the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple, the Incarnation was the means through which the eternal God became located in the world, placed within the boundary of flesh.

The location of God for the people of Israel had been the Tabernacle/Temple. They were the places where the Lord could be found, His presence located. If the Temple was for the Jews, the dwelling place of God in their midst, then the Incarnation made Jesus the same as the Temple. This was part of the reason why the Gospel of St. Matthew referenced Isaiah 7:14 in the birth narrative and translated *Immanuel* as “God with us.”⁶⁶ Here the Incarnation, boundary, and temple were all brought together in Christ. David Peterson agrees, “The Temple stood for revelation and purification: it was both the meeting place of heaven and earth and the place of sacrifice for purification from sin. Thus, it found fulfilment in the

64. Melito, *De Pascha*.

65. The Greeks used the term ὄρος.

66. Matthew 1:23.

incarnation *and* the death and resurrection of Christ.”⁶⁷

By becoming the located presence of God, Jesus was, in the mind of the ancient Church, no different than the Temple at Jerusalem. Through His Incarnation, Christ subsumed in His person everything that was the Temple.⁶⁸ The nativity created a union between heaven and earth unlike anything that had happened before. By becoming a man, Christ bridged the gap between the holy God and fallen man just like the Tabernacle/Temple had done. The Temple was a sacred boundary, a place in which God and man could meet. Even as the Old Testament claimed—and the Church believed—there was a real connection between the heavenly worship in the presence of God and the earthly worship in the Temple. The dwelling of God is with man; Christ entered the world as a *temple*.

One may envisage that He who came to transform the Temple might speak out against its current state and all that it represented. There were a number of people in the first century who had difficulties with the temple. The Essenes are one group. Others believed that Herod’s temple, known as the “Second temple” was not really a temple at all. One might expect that Jesus would come out against the status quo and oppose the temple, seeking to draw faithful Jews to Himself. But that was not the case. Jesus was often found in the temple giving approval by his words and actions.

One of the most endearing is the account of his tarrying in the Temple at age twelve. Travelling to Jerusalem for the feast of the Jews, Jesus’ parents made the journey from Nazareth “up to Jerusalem.” When the time had come for the return journey, Mary and Joseph thought their son was in the caravan with some of the other travellers—most likely close

67. David Peterson, “The New Temple: Christology and Ecclesiology in Ephesians and 1 Peter,” in *Heaven on Earth*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 167.

68. See, for example, N.T. Wright, “The Historical Jesus and Christian Theology,” NTWrightpage.com, available from http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Historical_Jesus.htm, accessed 31 Dec 2009, 3ff; T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole, eds., “Epilogue,” in *Heaven on Earth*, in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 21; Fletcher-Louis, “Image,” 98.

friends and relatives. When they did not find him, they were forced to return to Jerusalem and search for him. After three days, they found him in the temple, “in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.”⁶⁹ This demonstrates that Jesus was not opposed to the temple.

During His ministry, Jesus often taught in the Temple.⁷⁰ One occasion was the Feast of Tabernacles, a feast of thanksgiving among the Jews, primarily for the harvest. It was also observed with special reference to the wilderness wanderings, a time when God manifested Himself in the Tabernacle.⁷¹ On another occasion, Jesus was in the Temple thwarting the parries of the Pharisees and Herodians sent to trap Him in His words; Jesus left them marvelling.⁷² The Sadducees too attempted to trap Him through a conundrum concerning marriage in the resurrection. In turn, a scribe questioned Him concerning the commandments and upon hearing Jesus’ response conceded that He had answered wisely. This is another instance of Jesus being in the Temple teaching and being questioned by the religious leaders and though they were clearly opposed to Him, He was free to teach and even gained the admiration of His opponents. This indicates that Jesus was not leading a rebellion against the Temple nor was He discouraging people from using the Temple and following the laws and regulations which held sway there. It indicates, in fact, that Jesus was very much a part of the normal Temple activities of His day.

St. John indicates that it was winter when Jesus was in the Temple for the Feast of Dedication.⁷³ While freely walking in Solomon’s Porch within the Temple precincts, Jesus

69. Luke 2:46.

70. John 7:14-39.

71. Morris suggests that this may give significance to the events of this section: “Neither in the tabernacle in the wilderness, nor the temple which replaced it, was God fully manifested. The final and perfect manifestation of God was in Jesus” Morris, *John*, 393.

72. Mark 12:35.

73. John 10:22.

engages the Jewish leaders. Using the imagery of a sheep fold which has very clear implications of boundary, Jesus claimed that because they do not listen to His voice, they were outside of the flock. Though physically within the Temple, Jesus indicated they are outside the perimeter of the true temple.

During Jesus' trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman prefect, claims were brought against Jesus that He said He could destroy the Jerusalem Temple and rebuild it in three days.⁷⁴ These accusations reflect the event of Jesus chasing out the sellers and money changers in the Temple courts recorded in the Gospels.

The signal event showing Jesus in His relationship with the Temple is the event known as the cleansing of the Temple. This account occurs at the end of Jesus' ministry in the Synoptics and at the beginning of His work in the Gospel of St. John. All four accounts share similar contours:

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."⁷⁵

E.P. Sanders has argued that Jesus' action in the temple was not a cleansing at all, rather it was something of an eschatological prophetic event:

He [Jesus] did not wish to purify the temple, either of dishonest trading or of trading in contrast to 'pure' worship. Nor was he opposed to the temple sacrifices which God commanded to Israel. He intended, rather, to indicate that the end was at hand and that the Temple would be destroyed, so that the new and perfect Temple might arise.⁷⁶

Evans disagrees. Following his review of the synoptic evidence, he finds no compelling

74. The Gospel according to St. Matthew emphasises that the temple is of God" (Mt. 26:61). St. Mark's Gospel (Mk. 14:58) emphasises that the temple Jesus will rebuild in three days will be one "made without hands" (ἀχειροποίητον), Hebrews 9:11.

75. John 2:13-16; cf. also Matthew 26:61 and Mark 14:58.

76. E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 75.

reason to abandon the historical understanding, “It is probably better to conclude that the gospel tradition as it stands is closer to the original significance of Jesus’ action than Sanders’s hypothetical reconstruction.”⁷⁷ N.T. Wright asserts that Jesus symbolically enacted the Temple’s destruction “recognizing that its guardians, and the people as a whole, had refused his way of peace.”⁷⁸ While many argue over the meaning of the event, David Seeley argues that it was no event at all. He suggests the account is nothing more than a literary creation by St. Mark.⁷⁹ Whatever may be the contortions of contemporary scholarship on this matter, the ancient Church regarded the event as historical and of special import.⁸⁰ Christ was the Word of God made flesh and became the new Temple of God.

Acts 15:16 quotes a prophecy of Amos (from the LXX) that proclaimed the rebuilding of the Tabernacle: “In that day I will raise up the Tabernacle of David that is fallen, and will rebuild the ruins of it, and will set up the parts thereof that have been broken down, and will build it up as in the days of the ages; that the remnant of men, and all the Gentiles upon whom My Name is called, may earnestly seek Me, saith the Lord who does all these things.”⁸¹ This is the eternal tabernacle which Hebrews identified with the resurrected Christ.

The cleansing event suggests that Jesus was reestablishing the boundaries of the *templum*. He intended to reestablish the boundary of the Temple. Though stated rather strongly, Chilton argues that Jesus’ activity in the Temple was more of an invasion than a cleansing and should be understood as protecting the sanctity of the temple. He says that

77. Craig A. Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989): 270.

78. N.T. Wright, “Historical Jesus,” 3.

79. David Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 279.

80. See for example, Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 6; Cyprian, *Treatise XII*, 15; Ignatius, *Smyrneans*, 2; Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeam*, 21; Tertullian, *On Modesty*, 16; Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.4.1 and Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3.32.

81. Amos 9:11-12 (LXX).

“Jesus’ manoeuvre in the Temple was in essence a claim upon territory.”⁸² For Chilton, the key issue was not the offering of sacrifices, nor was it the commerce within the temple courts, the issue was the reclamation of sacred place.

An important feature of Mark’s narrative is identified by two words of similar construction: περιβλεψάμενος and περιπατοῦντος.⁸³ The first occurs as Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple and “looked around at everything” before leaving again.⁸⁴ The second occurs the day after Jesus had driven out the buyers and sellers in the Temple. Upon entering the Temple precincts Jesus was said to be “walking in the Temple.”⁸⁵ What would be the purpose? Why would Jesus arrive at the Temple, look around and then leave? Why would he walk around? One explanation might be that the Court of the Gentiles served as a meeting place for pilgrims arriving for the feast, Jesus was simply going to be among the people. This, however, does not adequately explain why Jesus simply looked around and then departed. Lane indicates that, “In recording this visit to the Temple, Mark has no intentions of depicting Jesus as a pilgrim who has come to Jerusalem for the first time and has a natural desire to see ‘all things’. The point is rather that Jesus is the Lord of the Temple, who must inspect its premises to determine whether the purpose intended by God was being fulfilled.”⁸⁶

It may be recalled that in the Old Testament account of the fall of Jericho, the armies of Israel circumnavigated the walls seven times before the wall collapsed.⁸⁷ It may also be

82. Bruce Chilton, “Jesus’ Dispute in the Temple and the Origin of the Eucharist,” *Dialogue* 29 (Winter 1996): 21.

83. The first meaning, “to look round about, look around;” and the second, “to walk around, walk about,” See Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon* and Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, and Bauer, *BAGD*.

84. Mark 11:11.

85. Mark 11:27.

86. William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 398.

87. Joshua 6:1ff.

recalled that in the Apocalypse, St. John is given a measuring rod by which he is to survey the temple before it is given over to the nations for desecration.⁸⁸ These symbolic actions may be interpreted as a survey and encirclement which precede the desecration and destruction of the Temple.⁸⁹ More than this, however, these actions could very well indicate and precede the relocation of the Temple, as the early Church believed, from the stone walls of Zion to the body of Christ Himself.⁹⁰

Before boundaries can be relocated, they must first be located. That is to say, before Jesus could relocate the Temple boundaries within Himself, He had to first reestablish the Temple boundaries blurred by the commerce and practices of the Jews. Jesus stakes again the boundary of the Temple as the place of God and a house of prayer, then proceeded to relocate and transform those boundaries into Himself in order to affect its transformation.

It is difficult to imagine that the Temple so frequented by Jesus and his disciples—and later, Paul—could be removed from the consciousness of the early Christians—and, indeed, it was not. It will no longer suffice to merely draw from the Jewish synagogue as the source of Christian origins. The Temple played a much larger role and exerted a much deeper influence upon the Church than has been considered to date. Jesus cleansed the Temple and indicated its transformation when he said to the Jews, “Destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days.” The statement was not lost on his hearers as it surfaced again and again in the accounts of Jesus’ trial.⁹¹ The belief of the early Church is expressed by St. John the Theologian, who

88. *Apocalypse* 11:1-2.

89. William W. Watty, “Jesus and the Temple—Cleansing or Cursing?” *The Expository Times* 93 (May 1982): 239.

90. The community at Qumran rejected the Jerusalem Temple and its worship and believed they were the new temple. What they lacked was an equivalent to Christ. Bertil Gärtner wrote, “The temple symbolism of the New Testament is built on the work of Christ; this it was believed had replaced the temple and its sacrifices once and for all. In short, the boundary between Qumran and the New Testament...goes through the person of Christ” Bertil Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament*, Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series, vol. 1 (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 104.

91. Matthew 26:61ff. and Mark 14:58ff.

indicated that Jesus is not only in the Temple, He *is* the Temple. Francis Moloney concludes:

The presence of God in the Temple will be perfected by the revelation of God that will take place in the destruction and the resurrection of the Temple of the body of Jesus. At a time when there is no longer a Temple in Jerusalem, believing readers of the Fourth Gospel will experience the presence of the crucified yet risen Jesus as their "Temple."⁹²

At the well, Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman concerning true worship.⁹³ Most contemporary commentators believe this passage means that Jesus indicated that no specific place of worship is required. Christians may worship anywhere so long as it is in the Spirit. For example, G.S. Hendry summarised the typical view that this verse, "has commonly been taken to mean that God, being spirit, is present everywhere and can be worshipped anywhere; the important thing is not where men worship, but *how* they worship." This Hendry vigorously denies. According to him, the saying means exactly the opposite"

It means that God is present in His own realm, to which man as such has no access. To worship God in spirit is not a possibility that is always and everywhere open to man... But this is just the Gospel of Christ, that this possibility has now been opened to men... The meaning is that the location has been redefined, and God is now to be worshipped in the place where He is present, i.e., in Him who is the truth incarnate.⁹⁴

Similarly, we learn from Lightfoot, "The hour of a true worship of God, with its centre neither in Jerusalem nor in Samaria, is at hand; for the Father, who has sent His Son into the world, is seeking true worshippers; and their true spiritual worship...will be centred on the person of the Lord."⁹⁵ This stands in contrast to the Protestant notion that the event at the well means God no longer requires a specific place of worship.⁹⁶ While affirming that true worship must be

92. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 79.

93. John 4:6-42.

94. G.S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (London, 1957), 31ff.

95. R.H. Lightfoot, "Unsolved New Testament Problems, The Cleansing of the Temple in St. John's Gospel," *The Expository Times* 60 (December 1948): 66.

96. For example, James Palmer writes, "The presence of God is no longer tied to places or buildings..." Palmer, "Exodus," 21. Leder also concludes, "Finally, we come to the architectural articulation of the place of solemn assembly. Since the Jesus Christ is the temple of God, there remains no particular geographic place or

connected with Christ and the Spirit, this takes on a spiritual, that is, non-physical, aura. Walker is only partially correct when he writes that, “The Temple of the new age in John’s Gospel is not the church but *the crucified and resurrected Son of God*. However, the link between Jesus’ exaltation, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the new people of God is clear in this Gospel.”⁹⁷ He is correct in thinking that the Temple of the new age has its location in the resurrected Christ. He misses the early Church’s understanding, however, when he fails to recognise the unity between the resurrected Christ and the Church as His Body. The first Christians expressed belief that Jesus was the Incarnate God who took upon Himself the place of the Temple (ναός). He became the locality of God’s presence in the world and so was not only similar to the Tabernacle/Temple but the fulfilment of it. The Temple was no longer in Jerusalem but in the person (Body) of Christ—identified with the Christian assembly as well as the Eucharist which was the reason for their assembling.

The Christians were only following in the footsteps of their master when they continued their affiliation with the Temple. The Gospel of Luke records of the disciples following the Ascension, “And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the Temple blessing God.”⁹⁸ And to the Temple was added the house, it is recorded in Acts that the Christians met regularly, “And day by day, attending the Temple together and breaking bread [Eucharist] in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.”⁹⁹

The House as the Temple in the Early Church

The house was connected with public worship and so a temple/house combination was

space that is essentially sacred or rendered sacred by particular rites or specially designated officers, for the people of God is consecrated in Christ. Consequently, it is possible to gather anywhere and use any kind of building for worship,” Leder, “Consecrated Space,” 267–68.

97. Peterson, “New Temple,” 167–68.

98. Luke 24:52-53.

not a contradiction. For the Christians, the house was considered a sacred place; it was the natural place for the Church to assemble and celebrate their reality as the Body of Christ. In fact, the household was comprehended as the Church in microcosm.¹⁰⁰

There is a strong connection between the early Church and the Temple—but not the Herodian temple, the Temple transformed by Jesus and relocated within Himself. Melito of Sardis wrote, “Precious was the earthly temple, but now it has lost its value because of Christ who is above.”¹⁰¹

Wayne A. Meeks, in his book, *The First Urban Christians*, explored different models that may have been used by the Church in the formation of their ἐκκλησία. He examined the household, the voluntary association, the synagogue, and the Philosophic or Rhetorical school and found that none of them held a monopoly of influence upon the development of the Church’s social structure. While suggesting that each of these types of groups offered significant analogies for the Church, he concluded that, “at the least, the household remains the basic context within which most if not all the local Pauline groups established themselves.”¹⁰² Particularly striking, according to Meeks, is the household familial language used by the Christians.

The use of family terms to refer to members [of the church] was not unknown in pagan clubs and cult associations, particularly in Rome and in areas where Roman customs influenced the Greek associations. Most likely, however, the early Christians took their usage from the Jews. Not only was there Biblical precedent for referring to all Israel as brothers, a usage that continued in the Greek-speaking Diaspora, but that usage could be restricted to members of a purist sect, as we know from the documents of Qumran.¹⁰³

99. Acts 2:46.

100. Verner, *Household*, 127ff.

101. Melito of Sardis, *Homily on Pasch* in Lucien Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 103.

102. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 84.

103. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 87.

This is entirely consonant with other aspects of the early Church inherited from Judaism. Because the Church understood herself to be the fulfilment of Judaism and continuing the OT relationship with God and adopting the Scriptures, it is not surprising that the Christians would have been comfortable using the house as their sacred place of assembly. The house became for them a *temple*.

House and Church

The family—the natural kinship structure into which one was born—which gave every person identity and a relationship within society, was supplanted by a new set of relationships in the Christian community, inaugurated by their entrance rite: Holy Baptism.¹⁰⁴ The concept of community was not different between Judaism and Christianity, it was only that the boundary shifted from ethnic differentiation to a faith orientation. The effects of the household upon the church was significant. Writing about the effects of the Gospel upon familial relationships, Barclay has identified two competing strands: one ascetic and the other of the family. He suggests that early Christianity, with its penchant for asceticism, sought to avoid the ethnic traditions propagated through family life so prevalent within Roman and Jewish culture. According to Barclay, for Gentile believers especially, faith in Christ caused a “fundamental rupture” with their ancestral religion “offensively breaking” that religious tradition which had been theirs for a thousand generations.¹⁰⁵ This destabilised family structures and brought tension into their family relationships.

In support of his thesis, Barclay draws upon St. Mark’s Gospel and the warning of Jesus, “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.”¹⁰⁶ Similarly in St. Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus

104. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 88.

105. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 73.

106. Mark 13:12.

declared the purpose of His mission: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.”¹⁰⁷ Another instance of the destabilising effects of Christianity was in allowing Christians to live in mixed households,¹⁰⁸ weakening marriages and so also diminishing the basic building block of culture. “Thus,” concludes Barclay, “the practical effect of the early Christian movement was not to solidify but to undermine family loyalties for a significant portion of its adherents.”¹⁰⁹

The second strand in Barclay’s assessment has to do with a later creation of a Christian family ethos. He believes that early Christianity was socially weak and ill-equipped to make sure that faith in Christ was passed on to the next generation. Only later did the Church find the need to teach (παιδεύω) the young. The fact that they met in houses made this a natural occurrence, “but it is only in Colossians and Ephesians that these instructions first emerge.”¹¹⁰

They are not in competition, however, but two ways held in balance. As people were converted to the new faith, it was inevitable that families would become divided as, for example, if a wife became a follower of Christ and her husband did not. This household turbulence was not unique to the early centuries. St. Paul offered peaceful counsel in such a situation advising the believing spouse to remain, yet if the unbelieving spouse should depart they should be allowed to do so.¹¹¹ Barclay’s view of the evidence is short-sighted and fails to consider fully the continuity between Judaism and early Christianity’s adoption of the Roman

107. Matthew 10:34-36.

108. 1 Corinthians 7:12-15.

109. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 74.

110. Barclay, “Bearer of Religion,” 76. If Colossians and Ephesians were written from Rome in A.D. 60 or 61, it was a period of some thirty years before the Church appeared to have taken up concern for the family and the teaching of children.

111. Compare the advice of 1 Peter 3:1-6.

household model. The earliest days of the Church were to be found in the locale of the Christian fellowship assembly. From the outset there was a close affinity between the family, its house, and the *ecclesia*.

It is only in Colossians and Ephesians that specific instructions for family first emerge. These *Haustafeln* indicate that the family was the social boundary within which the Christian faith was to be handed on to the next generation. Family metaphors were rich and abundant, giving Christians a way of speaking in familiar—and easily understood—terms. The *Haustafel*, however, indicates a mature development. Amy-Jill Levine's caution is well taken: "Re-creations of the early Christian view of children should be much more hesitant, especially concerning the first two centuries."¹¹²

At the centre of the congregation's life were the rites of Baptism and the Eucharist. "Baptism," writes Meeks, "is a boundary-establishing ritual;" the Lord's Supper, too, was an "expression of the group's solidarity and of its boundaries."¹¹³ Though Meeks is interested in exploring the social relationships of the early Christians, his work suggests the intimate connection between the social characteristics of the community and the place of their gathering: "Primitive Christianity structured its congregations in families, groups and 'houses'. The house was both a fellowship and a place of meeting."¹¹⁴ Christians gathered for the purpose of celebrating the Lord's Supper. That celebration was an event in which many social edges also existed: there was the gathering itself; within the assembly there were separations between the men and women, between older and younger, between clergy and laity. The Apostolic Constitutions (late 4th c.) implied that there were separate gathering areas between the clergy and laity: "In the middle let the bishop's throne be placed, and on each side

112. Amy-Jill Levine, "Theological Education, the Bible, and History," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, Religion, Marriage and Family (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 332.

113. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 102.

114. Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *TDNT*, 5.130.

of him let the presbytery sit down; and let the deacons stand near at hand...let the laity sit on the other side, with all quietness and good order.”¹¹⁵ This says something about how the place of the Church was used.

Because of the close affinity between the house, household, and ἐκκλησία, Stephen Barton has argued that Paul’s difficulties with the Corinthian congregation were due in some degree to the blurring of the lines between household and church. From Paul’s perspective, the church and the home were distinct even though they coincided: “Church meetings were in some sense *public gatherings which assembled in private space*.”¹¹⁶ The characterisation of the Church as either a house or building (or both) does not require that it be something inanimate, it may be, as the NT indicates, a living, growing organism.¹¹⁷ This is borne out in the writings of St. Paul who wrote to the Corinthians, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s *building* (οἰκοδομή).”¹¹⁸ And, again to the Ephesians, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s *household* (οἰκεῖοι), having been *built* (ἐποικοδομηθέντες) on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole *building* (οἰκοδομή), being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being *built together* (συνοικοδομεῖσθε) into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”¹¹⁹

The objection may be raised that Paul and others were simply using the imagery at hand. There need not be anything of theological import in such language. What could be more

115. *The Apostolic Constitutions*, 2.57.

116. Stephen C. Barton, “Paul’s Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth,” *New Testament Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1986): 232.

117. John D. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 57.

118. 1 Corinthians 3:9. Cf. also 14:5, 12; 2 Corinthians 12:19.

119. Ephesians 2:19-22. Cf. also 4:12, 16. The term οἰκοδομή is an active rather than static. The Church is actively being “built-up.”

common—and illustrative—than the nomenclature of houses and building? While this is certainly true, the focus here is that the early Church not only latched onto the house/household imagery, but that the sacred complexion of the house, including both the building and family structure became an archetype for the foundations of Church architecture, even as it was a model for her organisation.

More than a convenient metaphor, the house was believed to be sacred place. Drawing upon the OT, St. Paul wrote of the Church as the temple (ναός) of God, “Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? *For we are the temple of the living God*; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’”¹²⁰ Hughes observes that this is “a figure of speech which had first received the sanction of Christ Himself, who spoke of the temple of His body (Jn. 2:21).¹²¹ The quotation from Exodus reveals the connection between the temple and the Church in Paul’s mind. And yet the Christians who are called the “temple of the living God” and the “temple of the Holy Spirit” are also designated the household of faith.¹²² The temple/household concept is a favourite theme in Paul.¹²³ Though the common way of understanding this imagery is purely metaphorical, the consistency and frequency of its usage both in Paul and other NT writers would suggest a more concrete connection. The Jewish apocalyptic emphasis on a renewed temple in the last days joined to the Christian notion of the eschatological Church is ample fodder for the apostolic preaching of Paul.¹²⁴

120. 2 Corinthians 6:16; cf. also Leviticus 26:12.

121. Philip Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 252.

122. Hebrews 10:21; 1 Peter 2:5.

123. See 1 Corinthians 3:16ff.; 6:19ff.; Ephesians 2:20ff.; and 1 Peter 2:5.

124. See, for example, Isaiah 28:16 ff., Ezekiel 40ff., 1 Enoch 91:13 and Jubilees 1:17.

The first epistle of Peter refers to Christ as the “living stone” rejected by the Jews in connection with the prophecy of Isaiah which refers to a foundation stone laid by God in Zion.¹²⁵ The living stone imagery is then extended in the next verse to the community of faith: “You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a *spiritual house*...”¹²⁶ In the fourth century, Didymus the Blind (A.D. 313-398) commented on this passage and explained that those who have been born again of the Gospel:

...have been made living stones, built on top of the living Stone, who is chosen and honored, the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, in order to *build a spiritual house for God* toward whom they are being led and to whom spiritual sacrifices are offered.¹²⁷

Later in the same epistle, Peter wrote, “It is time for judgment to begin at the *household of God*.”¹²⁸ Didymus also said that God’s judgment would begin with those, “who believe and belong to the church of God...with those who belong to God’s household.”¹²⁹ St. Paul wrote to Timothy, “If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the *household of God, which is the church of the living God*, a pillar and buttress of truth.”¹³⁰ The idea that the church was the household of God echoed within Christianity so that in the 6th century, Oecumenius wrote, “He [Jesus] calls the faithful ‘the house of God’ in accordance with the passage of Scripture which states, ‘I will dwell among them and walk in their midst.’”¹³¹

125. Isaiah 28:16.

126. 1 Peter 2:5.

127. Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on 1 Peter*, in Gerald Bray, ed., *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament*, gen. ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 85.

128. 1 Peter 4:17.

129. Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on 1 Peter*, in Bray, *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, 119.

130. 1 Timothy 3:15.

131. Erik M. Heen and Philip D.W. Krey, eds., Thomas C. Oden, general editor, *Hebrews*, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 160.

The evidence clearly demonstrates that the house was closely identified with the Christian ἐκκλησία both in terms of a location for its meeting and as a model for its organisation. The house also had close associations with the Temple among the Jews and this was transferred to the person of Jesus in the mind of the early Christians. Understanding themselves as the ‘new Israel’ and Body of Christ with Jesus as the ‘Temple’ transformed, the Church was a sacred place very similar to the Temple, though the building was not yet capable of bearing it.

Meeks has astutely noted, “Socially the most striking thing about the communities revealed in the Pauline letters is that there is no visible connection or even contact between them and the synagogues.”¹³² This brings the house onto centre stage.

The Apocryphal Acts of Paul (*ca.* 190) records that when Paul arrived in Iconium, he went to the house of Onesiphorus: “And when Paul came into the house of Onesiphorus there was great joy—the bowing of knees, the breaking of bread, and [proclaiming] the Word of God... And while Paul was speaking in the midst of the church in the house of Onesiphorus...”¹³³

The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas associate teaching in the Church with the dining room.¹³⁴ Other large areas in homes were possibly used for the Church’s gathering: “Thus [it was] that Theophilus, who was exalted above all the others in power in the city [Antioch], by the desire of all eagerness dedicated the great basilica of his house (*domus suae ingentum basilicam ecclesiae*) in the name of the [or a] church...”¹³⁵ As was mentioned under the

132. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 168.

133. *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, 5.7; cf. 1 Timothy 1:16; 4:19.

134. *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (Acta Thomae), 131.

135. The Pseudo-Clementine Literature, *Recognitions* 10.71.2 as quoted in White, *Texts and Monuments*, 51.

discussion of the Roman house, larger homes had *basilica privata* which might have been used by the Christians as an assembly hall.

Origen of Alexandria, after explaining that every place is suitable for prayer goes on to say, “But the place of prayer (τόπος εὐχῆς), which has a certain special charm for [our] benefit, is the spot where believers come together in one place...”¹³⁶ The “one place” would have been a house. The house imagery of the Church is also expressed by Cyprian of Carthage as he described the celebration of the Eucharist:

In the same way the sacrament of the Pascha, as set out in Exodus, comprises nothing else than the Lamb, which is slain as a figure of Christ, be eaten in one house. God speaks, saying, “In one house shall it be eaten; you shall not cast its flesh outside the house” [Exodus 12:46]. The flesh of Christ, the holy [body] of the Lord, cannot be cast outside, nor is there any other house for believers except the one church.¹³⁷

The NT and the early Church saw the Temple, Jesus, and the Church as of one piece, connected and intertwined as one.

Church and Temple

According to Schaff, the apologists assert that the Church had “neither temples nor altars (in the pagan sense of these words), and that their worship was spiritual and independent of place and ritual.”¹³⁸ This reflects the sentiment of Acts: “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.”¹³⁹ The Christians were keenly aware of the differences between their worship and that of the pagans. They were aware, too, of the differences of place. The pagan temples in antiquity were built as dwellings for the deity, they were constructed as worthy places for the gods. Jungmann notes that, “in pagan antiquity there was no form of worship for

136. Origen, *De Oratione*, 31.5.

137. Cyprian, *De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*, 8.

138. Philip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity A.D. 100–325*, vol. 2 of *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), 199.

139. Acts 17:24.

which it was essential that a praying community be gathered together.”¹⁴⁰ The Christians, however, needed a place for their community to gather. In his *Octavius*, Minucius Felix boldly claimed that Christians do not conceal their God simply because they do not have temples and altars; God cannot be circumscribed by any temple.¹⁴¹ The indication is that the God of the Christians needs no temple in which to dwell as among the pagans. Felix goes on to make the argument that though God is unseen, He is near to the Christians (and in the Christians) and they are under His constant protection. This does not mean, however, that the Church eschewed sacred places and boundaries so much a part of their Jewish legacy, nor was worship simply a matter of “spirit and truth.” The spirituality of worship did not exclude physical necessity. As Jungmann observed, “This worship [of the early Church] was not to consist exclusively in the individual’s private prayer; it was not to be inimical to liturgy.”¹⁴² The assembly required physical accommodations. The Church was a real assembly of people; it required a physical locality in which to meet. People became part of the Church through Baptism involving real water and they gathered to hear real words and partake of a real meal. John Zizioulas has noted that the ecclesiology of the primitive Church was not abstract, but consummately practical: “As a result, not only is there no definition of the Church in the sources, but there is not even a theoretical description of her.”¹⁴³ Nevertheless, after reviewing the instances of ἐκκλησία in the NT, he concluded that the word “church” most often describes a *concrete reality in space* and was firmly joined to the house by the celebration of their sacred meal:

All ecclesial activities could be performed outside Christian houses. We know, for example, that preaching took place also in the synagogues. And worship itself could in principle be performed in Jewish buildings, as we see from Acts 2:46. But there was

140. Josef A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great*, Francis A. Brunner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 16.

141. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 32.

142. Jungmann, *Early Liturgy*, 11.

143. Zizioulas, *Eucharist*, 45.

one activity of the Church which never took place outside Christian homes: the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁴⁴

St. Ignatius speaks of Jesus being the temple of God: “Hasten all together as into the temple of God, as to one altar, to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from the One Father, is with, and returned to One.”¹⁴⁵ The purpose of the Church’s assembly was for prayer, encouragement and the reception of the Eucharist. It was in this sacramental meal that the believers were most united with their Lord. St. Ambrose (c. 339-397) attested that the Eucharist was the true Body and Blood of Christ who thus, “feeds His Church with these sacraments.”¹⁴⁶ Not only was Christ the Temple transformed, she was His Body. The Christians believed that in the Eucharist all things were brought together in Christ. The whole of the Tabernacle/Temple and all sacred place and boundary converged.

Eusebius presupposed a formal plan to the church building when he mentioned a sanctuary, or “holy place” (τὸ ἁγίασματι) as a place within the building. Though the architecture of the early Church was indistinguishable from other residences in the Roman world, their assemblies were, nevertheless, centred around sacred place. Similar to the Tabernacle, the sacred place was able to move from house to house and maintained its sacrality because of the presence of God. No longer Holy of Holies, the early Christians believed that God was present with them in the Eucharist. “Wherever the bishop appears there let the congregation be present, just as wherever Jesus Christ is there is the catholic Church.”¹⁴⁷

There is sufficient cause to think that the early Church’s link to the Temple was more direct and strongly felt through the house than the synagogue. The predominance of the house

144. Zizioulas, *Eucharist*, 51.

145. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 7.2.

146. St. Ambrose, *Concerning the Mysteries*, 9.55.

147. Ignatius, *Smyrneans*, 8.2.

in the life and ministry of Jesus combined with its prevalence in the NT and the early Christian writers indicates that the Christians were far more likely to understand sacred place in terms of its domestic manifestation. Though the synagogue may have maintained a presence in the growing Church, it appears that the house provided a far stronger ligature between Church and Temple—and this is seen more clearly by understanding architecture as a boundary of place.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

"Life is a quality of space itself."
—Christopher Alexander

In J.R.R. Tolkien's *magnum opus*, *The Lord of the Rings*, the reluctant hobbit, Frodo Baggins, recalls the warning of his adventurous uncle Bilbo, "'It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door,' he used to say. 'You step onto the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to.'"¹ Venturing onto the path of early Christian architecture, we were led, first, into an assessment of the current research into the topic. There, it became quite evident that while different approaches have grappled with the evidence, none have been able to move beyond the limitations of archaeology. By studying the architectural remains of synagogues and churches, the intention was always to form a connection between buildings, the culture and the *Sitz im Leben* of the early Church. The problem, as it turned out, was not as much the lack of archaeological evidence or a faulty methodology per se, but an insufficient view of *architecture*.

Conventional wisdom understands architecture as the art and science of building. Contemporary scientific methodology is built upon the mechanistic view of Descartes which has not allowed scholars to appreciate the full substance of architecture. Within the present view, the focus of architecture is on *building* which tends toward an emphasis on *tectonics* and *function*.² If we can assemble the artifacts and understand how they work, we can then

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Collector's ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 83.

2. The almost ubiquitous view of the world based on a machine-like model has, according to Alexander, two tremendous consequences: First, the world has lost the inner experience of what it means to be a person; and, second, the world has lost any clear idea about value: "The picture of the world we have from physics, because it is built only out of mental machines, no longer has any definite feeling of value in it: value has become sidelined

come to some conclusions about what people did in the buildings of long ago. But this approach cannot explain *why* the buildings came to exist the way they did nor can it tell us much, if anything, about their non-material qualities. As useful as the archaeological classification of artifacts may be to understanding tectonics, it is limited by the availability and abundance of material evidence. Archaeology is inevitably tethered to the remains of the past and it cannot fully comprehend architecture as it truly is nor can it tell us anything about the transcendent. A new vision of architecture is needed.

Architecture is more than the sum of its parts—it is more than a machine.³

Architecture does not consist of lifeless objects littering the landscape constructed for various human ends. Christopher Alexander argues that architecture “is based on a conception of the world in which the air we breathe, the stones and concrete in our city streets are made of—all have life in them, or not; all have life, anyway, in varying degrees.”⁴ Architects have as their task to “create life in the fabric of space itself.” The notion that all space contains life is nothing new.⁵ It is a blight of modern culture that we no longer understand it to be so, but it is essential for understanding architecture aright.

as a matter of opinion, not intrinsic to the nature of the world at all,” Alexander, *Life*, 16.

3. Following a *machine* aesthetic, modernist designers typically rejected decorative motifs in design, preferring to emphasise the materials (e.g. metal, concrete and glass) and pure geometrical forms. The French architect of the period, Charles Le Corbusier wrote, “A house is a machine for living in,” Charles Édouard Jeanne Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchell (Mineola, NY: Courier Dover Publications, 1986), 4.

4. Alexander, *Life*, 425.

5. The French philosopher and writer of the 18th century, Denis Diderot, submitted his “simple hypothesis” in his, *D’Alambert’s Dream*, “Listen to me, and you’ll feel sorry for yourself. You’ll feel that, in order not to admit a simple assumption which explains everything—*sensibility as a universal property of matter* or a product of organic structure—you’re rejecting common sense and jumping into an abyss of mysteries, contradictions, and absurdities,” Denis Diderot, “A Conversation Between D’Alembert and Diderot,” <http://records.viu.ca/~Johnstoi/diderot/conversation.htm>, accessed: 1 Jul 2009, trans. Ian Johnston (1769). Diderot believed that the idea that matter and space have different degrees of life is an easier and less complicated concept to believe than the idea espoused by Descartes, namely, that matter and space were like a neutral machine.

Architecture is, thus, more reflexive than assertive. It exists at the edges of place, at the nexus between realms like ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’. Bruno Zevi has said, “Since every architectural volume, every structure of walls, constitutes a boundary, a pause in the continuity of space, it is clear that every building functions in the creation of two kinds of space: its internal space, completely defined by the building itself, and its external or urban space, defined by that building and the others around it.”⁶ Architecture, then, is a living boundary of place—more than that, it is a boundary which differentiates and defines place even as it is formed by it.⁷ As a boundary, architecture grows from and responds to place and the events that recur there whether on the inside or out.

Though in modern parlance ‘space’ and ‘place’ are interchangeable, ‘place’ is to be preferred over ‘space’ as it relates to architecture.⁸ The idea that space is an empty container ready to be filled not only derives from Plato, but continues within the Newtonian view of the universe. His is a system with an absolute referential framework both with respect to time and to space.⁹ In geometry, this corresponds to the Cartesian coordinate system by which all objects may be located in space by three measurements from an arbitrary frame of reference. ‘Place’, on the other hand, is more than location. Place is where life occurs, it is rooted in history and connected with culture. “The character of place, then, is given to it by the episodes which happen there.”¹⁰ Phenomenologist, Harold W. Turner has said:

6. Zevi, *Architecture*, 31.

7. Christopher Alexander has written, “The intellectual foundation of this vision is the idea that space *itself*, matter itself, has life in varying degrees. There is a convergence of function, geometry, and feeling in space; this space is conceived as a living fabric that—through its structure—encompasses these things. Space does not merely *contain* living structure. Space *has* life, to a greater or lesser degree. Alexander, *Life*, 444.

8. “Space” is usually understood as a self contained and empty thing, either finite or infinite, that is capable of being filled with objects. This is not very different from Plato’s receptacle notion of space. Arnheim suggests that perceptually, “Space is experienced as the given that precedes the objects in it, as the setting in which every thing takes its place.” Arnheim, *Dynamics*, 9. This idea fully embraces the machinistic perspective.

9. Isaac Newton, *The Principia*, trans. Andrew Motte, Great Minds Series (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 14–15.

10. Alexander, *Timeless Way*, 62.

The sacred place is...the centre of reference from which all else is oriented, understood, or valued and on which it should be patterned, the one ordered place in a disordered world, the source of life's meaning and the anchor that gives security, the rendezvous between the human and the divine where the two worlds intersect and the gods and men may meet.¹¹

How, then, does modifying our view of architecture to be a boundary of place move us forward in the study of the development of early Christian architecture?

We began with the Hebrew view of the creation and the cosmos. The process of creation was one of differentiation and emplacement. God spoke and things came into being, they were separated and given their place in the order of the universe. The whole of the creative event was an action whose result was boundaries. When all was finished, God pronounced all that He had made “good.” God set apart a place in the east for the man and woman He had made. The garden in Eden was a place with a boundary, it was the primordial Temple; it was holy. But because the man and the woman disobeyed God and refused to repent, they were sent out from Paradise and forced to scratch out their days in a world which worked against them.

God's desire to dwell among His people never waned. He initiated a process of reclamation that moved Him to call out Abram from among his countrymen and establish a new people. At various times and places, God manifested Himself. Following their deliverance from slavery in Egypt initiated by the blood of lambs smeared over the lintels and doorposts, God used Moses to formalise the covenantal relationship with the Israelites through the giving of the Law. God's dwelling among them was gradually brought to fruition as they entered the land promised to them by God and as the Temple in Jerusalem became the place of His dwelling. Throughout the OT the world was filled with places, holy places and most holy places—and all of life was ordered by their boundaries. It was in the Tabernacle and Temple, however, that God made His presence to dwell among the Israelites. In the desert and

11. Harold W. Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship*, Religion and Society Series (New York: Mouton, 1979), 33.

in the Land, their life was organised around an annular ascent toward the Holy God. The world was divided into concentric circles of holiness, the quintessence of which was the Holy of Holies—the sacred place around which all sacred place orbited.

The early Church shared much the same attitude toward place and boundary as did Judaism. These were a part of the palette from which the early washes of a new architecture were laid. Following the ascension of Christ, the disciples continued for a time in the Temple but gathered in houses for teaching and fellowship. This was not unlike Jesus who often attended the Temple and was believed to have relocated the essence of the Jerusalem Temple within Himself.¹² Jesus was often to be found in houses eating (fellowship), teaching and working miracles. Houses also figured prominently in Jesus' preaching and instruction. The early Christians continued to meet in homes for prayer and meal, believing that they were the new Israel and the mystical Body of Christ. The imagery of both house and temple was a commonplace used in reference to individual Christians and the ἐκκλησία.

By understanding that architecture is a boundary of place, the study into the development of early Christian architecture helped us to use artifactual evidence in the service of understanding place and boundary. The abundance of temple and domestic references led us away from the synagogue as an archetype for Christian architecture and pointed us into the direction of the house—an established sacred place in the ancient world. Nevertheless, the house was clearly considered by both Roman and Jew to have a sacred complexion and thereby a place suitable for religious ritual. The Jews found the house suitable as synagogue, even as the Church found it suitable for their Eucharistic assemblies.

The palpable sacrality of the house was the result of the beliefs and sacred activities of the household. The religious activities of the house joined both the rites of the community and the family. Among the Romans, the house was an important link between the *sacra privata* and the public religion. This was true among the Jews as well; the house came to be linked

12. Cf. Colossians 1:13-20.

with the Temple. As a boundary of these sacred places, the house echoed and reflected in form the sacred place of the household. We saw this especially in connection with the *fauces-atrium-tablinum* axis among the Romans.

Whether the converts to Christianity were Jews or Gentiles, both understood, perhaps without thought, the sacrality of the house and readily accepted it as a location for the Church assembly. The early Christians could claim that their God was a God who could not be circumscribed by temples made with hands in the same way as the pagan gods, while at the same time understanding the *ecclesia* as the true temple in which Christ dwells—with the house serving as the *place* and *boundary* for that temple.¹³

As time passed, the privately owned houses became the property of the Church. The possibility of adaptation came with ownership, and the architecture began to reflect the rituals of the place. Houses were modified to accommodate Baptisms and celebrations of the Eucharist. Christians drew upon the fact that they were the new Israel, Christ was the Temple transformed. The Church thought of herself as the Body of Christ and the Eucharist as the mystical meal bringing Him into their midst. Each Christian was the temple of the Holy Spirit, collectively, they were being built-up into a holy temple for the Lord. The Church had a strong sense of being the temple of Christ. Later Christian liturgy was also strongly connected with the temple and the place which connected them was the house rather than the synagogue.

In the 8th century, St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, wrote what became a very influential work explaining the Christian Divine Liturgy. It was included with many copies of the liturgy and was widely distributed. It is hard to miss the temple/house imagery and connection that he makes between the Church, her liturgy and the Jewish Temple: “The church is the temple (ναός) of God, a holy place, a house of prayer, the assembly of the

13. Saul (subsequently Paul) persecuted the Church and on the road to Damascus, the ascended Christ proclaimed, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *Me*?” Acts 9:4; 26:14. There is indicated here the sacramental connection between the earthly and heavenly.

people, the body of Christ.” He also calls the church building an “earthly heaven.”¹⁴

The strong ties between the ancient Temple and the Christian temple runs through the house as a sacred place for the Church. It is only by understanding architecture as a boundary of place that connections can begin to be made between the life and faith of the early Christians and the architecture that they adopted, adapted, and ultimately assimilated and generated anew. Only by understanding that architecture exists on the edge, as a boundary of place, can we begin to see the common thread of sacrality of place reflected in the architecture.

In order to move beyond the limitations of archaeology in the study of early Christian buildings, only a modified view of architecture will suffice. Only then can we begin to discover the architectural thread connecting God, the creation and His people: a thread not woven of building artifacts alone but of places and boundaries—with architecture at their edge.

14. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, trans. Paul Meyerndorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 57.

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