

A TEMPLE FRAMEWORK OF THE ATONEMENT

ADAM JOHNSON*

The purpose of this essay is to explore Christ's atoning work from the standpoint of the Temple theme flowing throughout the Old and New Testaments. To do this I will build on the excellent work of G. K. Beale,¹ concerning which I have two significant reservations. The first concern is methodological. As T. F. Torrance explains: "The sacrificial and liturgical acts were regarded as *witness* and only witness to God's own action and appointment. . . . Liturgical sacrifice rests upon God's self-revelation and answers as cultic sign to God's own word and action, which is the thing signified."² That is, in Scripture the sacrificial and liturgical acts (and implements) play a significant role only within the determining context of God's self-revealing work. Only as we consider the Temple theme within the context of God's nature and purposes do we truly understand the former; only as we examine it indirectly as God's preferential mode of presence with his people do we see it in its true light. But keeping the question of God's nature and purposes to the foreground highlights the "dreadful side" of this theme: that of God's absence—a matter concerning which Beale writes little.

This brings us to my second concern: Beale's lack of sustained attention to the death of Jesus. I am of the strong impression that a theme so significant and extensive throughout Scripture will offer us far more concerning the death of Jesus Christ than Beale suggests. Perhaps this is to be expected, however, for by not drawing on the dreadfulness of God's presence throughout Scripture, Beale does not emphasize the tension or problem to which Jesus is the solution.

In this essay, I will briefly develop what I call the "dreadful side" of God's presence, building on this material to explore Scripture's witness to the relationship between the Temple theme and Jesus' death for us.³

* Adam Johnson is a Ph.D. student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2065 Half Day Road, Deerfield, IL 60015.

¹ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

² Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (ed. Robert Walker; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009) 18–19.

³ Beale does an admirable job of integrating the resurrection into his account—making our inquiry into the significance of Jesus' death all the more significant.

I. THE DIVINE ABSENCE

Integral to the Temple theme is the danger of God's presence or the threat of his absence or abandonment. Consider the role of the veil in the temple. The purpose of the veil was to separate the holy place [הַקֹּדֶשׁ] from the most holy [קֹדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשִׁים] (Exod 26:33–34). The separation is vital, for death awaits the one entering this holy place improperly (Exod 28:35, 43). While God's presence is an unparalleled blessing, it is likewise exceedingly dangerous. The veil protects the priests, recalling the role of the limits set around Mount Sinai, lest the people touch the mountain and die, lest they break through to see God and perish (Exod 19:12, 21). It was the task of the Levites to guard the temple to protect the Israelites (Num 1:53, 3:38), and precautions were set up such that those carrying the holy things of the temple would not touch them and die (Num 4:15–20; cf. 2 Sam 6:5–19). Even in instances when no particular sin or deviance was intended or where good was meant, coming into the presence the Lord under any but the most strictly delineated conditions meant death to the trespasser.⁴ The wonder was that anyone could meet with God and live (Deut 5:22–7).⁵

While this establishes the danger immanent in God's presence, it only introduces us to the dreadful side of God's presence; for while the OT seeks to prevent the death of the people resulting from improperly entering God's presence, it is more concerned that the people not incur God's abandonment. The choice, as Moses puts it, is between "life and prosperity, [or] death and adversity" (Deut 30:15). If Israel obeys God, then life, prosperity, and blessing will be theirs (Deut 30:1–10, 16); but if they disobey, if they forsake him, their lot will be curses and death (Deut 28:20, 30:17–18). And as the Lord foresaw (Deut 31:16–18), they forsook him repeatedly.

Scripture draws upon a rich and varied range of terms and expressions to depict the Lord's response to Israel's sin. One of the concepts used in this description is *עָזַב*, of which "the basic meaning is 'leave,'" wherein "a person or a being conceived with personal characteristics removes itself from an object, dissolving thereby its connections with that object."⁶ When used in the context of the creator God's covenantal relationship with his people, "leaving" or "forsaking" takes on an immensely more significant meaning, as we see in the latter part of Deuteronomy. There Lord foretells Israel forsaking him and breaking his covenant, and his own response: "My anger will be kindled against them in that day. I will forsake them [*וְעָזַבְתִּים*] and hide my face from them; they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them. . . . On that day I will surely hide my face on account of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods" (Deut 31:17–18).

⁴ Along these lines, Adam Neder writes: "If God were to reveal himself directly to sinful human beings apart from the veil of creaturely media, there could be only one result: the total annihilation of the sinner." Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry Into Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009) 4.

⁵ The concern that nothing with a blemish enter through the veil lest it profane God's sanctuaries (Lev 21:22) is a comparably minor theme. The much more pressing concern is that the people not die as a result of coming into God's presence improperly.

⁶ E. Gerstenberger, "*עָזַב*," *TDOT*.

The Psalms are particularly fruitful for exploring the meaning of this concept.⁷ “Forsaking” is a matter of God failing to help and hear one’s need (Psalm 21), hiding his face, turning away in anger and casting off (Ps 27:9), being “far from [us]” (Ps 38:21), or “abandoning” his heritage (Ps 94:14). Those who are forsaken among the dead are like those “counted among those who go down to the Pit . . . who have no help . . . like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom [God] remember[s] no more, for they are cut off from [his] hand;” it is a matter of being “put . . . in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep,” where the wrath of God lies heavy (Ps 88:4–7). The enemies of the Psalmist say: “Pursue and seize that person whom God has forsaken, for there is no one to deliver” (Ps 71:11). In short, abandoning or forsaking is a complex reality, spanning personal and social, temporal and eternal realities, while ultimately centering on the relationship of God to the one who is forsaken.

The fact that so often forsakenness occurs in conjunction with persecution from enemies is significant (e.g. Ps 27:11–12, 38:19–20), for the OT does not see Israel in a neutral position which is basically good, unless God either blesses them (which is very good) or curses them (which is very bad). Rather, Israel is hedged around by enemies seeking to destroy her. The mutually exclusive alternatives are God’s saving presence or Israel’s total destruction. For God to leave or forsake Israel, to hide his face and be far from her, is for him to sign Israel’s death warrant, to abandon her to Sheol, to the pit (Ps 16:10). To be cast out or cut off from the presence of God is to die (Gen 3:23–24, 4:14; Exod 12:15, 30:33, 31:14–15). And because these are mutually exclusive alternatives, God’s forsaking or “casting off” (Ps 71:6–11 ties these concepts together) is a matter of his wrath, of renouncing his covenant (Ps 89:38–39). In short, for God to remove his presence or to leave and forsake his people is for him to act in wrath by renouncing his covenant, handing them over to be destroyed by their enemies and abandoning them to Sheol.⁸ God’s presence ultimately means the fulfillment of his covenant with an obedient people thriving under his blessing, while his leaving or forsaking entails an equally complete destruction of that people at the hand of his wrath.⁹

⁷ Bauckham similarly notes the wide range of meaning of forsakenness in the Psalms. Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 256–57.

⁸ J. M. Hamilton ties in this consideration with a reflection on the nature of God’s (omni)presence: “Since texts testify to the wicked actually experiencing the angry presence of Yahweh (Ps 68:1–2; 78:66; 83:15, 10; 139:19), we must conclude that this withdrawal [of God’s presence] is relational rather than physical. That is, wicked covenant-breakers do not escape God’s presence; rather, instead of his face shining on them, they experience him pursuing them in justice.” J. M. Hamilton, “Divine Presence,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (ed. Tremper Longman and Peter Enns; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008) 118. John Yocum’s attempt to offer a different reading of Psalm 22, on the basis that “the details of suffering described in the first half of the psalm relate to treatment by others, and the apparent refusal of God to intervene” does little to distinguish God’s lack of intervention from his wrath in the mind of the Israelite. John Yocum, “A Cry of Dereliction? Reconsidering a Recent Theological Commonplace,” *IJST* 7 (2005) 76.

⁹ Moses promises to Joshua and Israel that God will not forsake them (Deut 31:8). This promise, I think, is best understood within the broader context of Deuteronomy 27–32, such that it means that God, for his part, and as long as they are obedient, will not abandon his people. It is a conditional promise in which God will certainly be faithful not to forsake them, as long as they also are faithful.

Again and again we see God forsaking his people, casting them out of his presence and allowing them to fall into destruction at the hands of their enemies: “Like Adam, Israel sinned and was cast away from God’s presence and out of the land. At the same time God withdrew his presence from their temple (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23). The same thing happened to restored Israel in AD 70, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, though God’s presence had long since left that temple.”¹⁰ And until Yahweh returns and saves Israel once and for all, “the great story is not yet complete, is still full of ambiguity” and the cycle of abandoning and returning continues.¹¹

II. A TEMPLE FRAMEWORK OF THE ATONEMENT¹²

The will of God was to tabernacle with his people. But the presence of God amidst a people intent on hiding, rebelling, and fleeing his presence can mean nothing but death for that people when the one from whom they flee is the maker of heaven and earth, the covenant God of Israel. For life is not “neutral”—to flee the presence of the Lord is to die at the hand of his wrath. In coming as the true temple, Jesus ensured that the time of hiding and fleeing would come to an end, and that the threats and promises of the Lord throughout the OT would be fulfilled—for with the coming of the true temple all false, adulterous and perverted temples must collapse into rubble—for nothing can withstand God’s presence. The only question was: how would this destruction take place? But it would happen—the time of humankind fleeing and forsaking the Lord while he broke out now in wrath and then in mercy had come to an end. God was fulfilling his original purpose to be present with his people.

1. *Jesus Christ is the One who was abandoned and forsaken in the place of the old Temple.* N. T. Wright suggests that “as would-be Messiah, Jesus identified with Israel; he would therefore go ahead of her, and take upon himself precisely that fate, actual and symbolic, which he had announced for nation, city, and Temple”¹³—an announcement drawing on the OT trajectory in which the mercy and patience of God were in continuous tension with his wrath and righteous anger, and his threats and acts of abandonment

This fits with Psalm 9:10; 37:35; Zech 1:3 and a host of other passages which claim that God will not forsake the righteous or those who seek him, or that he will return to those who return to him. Though God will not forsake his people of his own accord, he demonstrates himself to be more than willing to disinherit them and to establish a new line so as to complete his purposes. Cf. Exod 32:10; 33:3–5; Num 14:11–19; 16:20–25, 41–50. It also points to the gratuity of God’s new covenant where he not only guarantees his own faithfulness but that of his people (cf. Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 34–37).

¹⁰ Beale, *Temple* 117.

¹¹ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 217.

¹² A full account of this subject would develop a “temple” Christology. For a helpful start on this subject, see Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006); N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

¹³ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 608. In keeping with this statement, Beale notes that “the destruction of Israel and her temple, however, was the mere outward expression of the judgment that had already taken place in Christ’s death, resurrection and at Pentecost.” Beale, *Temple* 214.

and destruction were accompanied by promises of a day to come when God's blessing would once again be upon the people of Israel. Jesus identifies with Israel and the Temple in particular in such a way as to take upon himself the fate of the God-forsaking temple announced throughout the OT and most recently by Jesus himself (Matt 24:2, John 2:19). We find this aspect of his substitutionary work most clearly proclaimed in the Gospels, at the scene of Christ's crucifixion: in Jesus' cry of dereliction (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34) and in the tearing of the temple veil (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).¹⁴

Of the many difficult passages in Scripture, Jesus' cry of dereliction might well be the most shocking. The beloved Son with whom God is well pleased (Matt 3:17; 17:5) cries out to his Father: "if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want" (Matt 26:39). And, upon the answer to this prayer in the form of the offered cup of his suffering and death, he cries out: "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me [με ἐγκατέλιπες]?' (Matt 27:46). What does it mean that the Word of God, he who is favored by God and one with the Father be abandoned and forsaken by him?

Jesus' cry draws from the opening lines of Psalm 22.¹⁵ But what are we to make of this reference? Holly Carey argues convincingly that the Gospel of Mark draws on Psalm 22 throughout the passion narrative, and that Mark's readers would appreciate the larger context of the psalm (which speaks of the vindication of the suffering servant).¹⁶ But does interpreting Jesus' cry in light of the vindication at the conclusion of Psalm 22 and in conjunction with the theme of Christ's vindication throughout the Gospel¹⁷ warrant claiming that "the Markan Jesus has not been abandoned by God in the sense that the presence of God has left him altogether," and that instead "these phenomena suggest that the 'abandonment' of Jesus refers to his helpless situation at the hands of his enemies"?¹⁸ At this point our study of the "dreadful side" of the Temple theme bears significant fruit.

Carey is correct that we must hold the whole of Psalm 22 in mind, but she makes two significant mistakes. First, she allows the conclusion of the psalm

¹⁴ A third theme, which I will not explore in this essay, is that of the darkness preceding Jesus' cry (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33). Several references to "outer darkness" in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) strongly suggest that this is a way of speaking about hell. Wright suggests that "darkness, cosmic darkness" is "the dominant image when YHWH acts to judge the Babylons of this world." Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* 356. Along these lines, Bauckham argues that there is good reason to interpret the darkness at the scene of the crucifixion as "symboliz[ing] the absence of God. It is not that with the cry Jesus emerges from the darkness; rather the cry is the awful culmination of his experience of the darkness. By then he knows that God really has left him to die and will not intervene." Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* 259.

¹⁵ Bauckham notes that while Mark draws heavily on the psalms of lament in general, Jesus' use of Psalm 22 echoes "the most extreme of the situations in the psalms of lament: those in which the psalmist not merely fears abandonment by God, but experiences it as realized fact." Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* 256–57.

¹⁶ This is the argument of Holly J. Carey, *Jesus' Cry From the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship Between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark's Gospel* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009). Against this, see Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* 255.

¹⁷ Carey, *Jesus' Cry From the Cross* 45–69.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 163.

to overwhelm its introduction, such that the abandonment in question becomes rather inconsequential.¹⁹ Second, the dichotomy she poses between falling into the hands of one's enemies and suffering the loss of the presence of God runs altogether against the grain of the OT understanding of God's presence. As we saw earlier, the OT eschews a vision of life as a neutral reality—life is continually under the threat of death, and only God's presence can save us. For God to hide his face, to hold back from offering help, is to sign our death warrant, to abandon us to Sheol; and because these are the mutually exclusive alternatives, God's forsaking is a matter of his wrath. The idea that God could be present to Jesus and yet hand him over to his enemies is utterly foreign to the OT and the theology of the Psalms from which Jesus is drawing.

While we must interpret the cry of Jesus in light of the psalm as a whole, this begins by fully honoring the significance of the first two verses. What does it mean for Jesus to be forsaken by God? It means that God is abandoning him into the hands of his enemies, and letting him fall down into Sheol; that he has removed his covenantal blessings from Jesus and ultimately is casting Jesus away from himself as an object of his wrath.²⁰ From another angle, Cranfield makes the same point: "the cry ought to be understood in the light of [Mark] xiv.36, II Cor. v. 21, Gal. iii.13. The burden of the world's sin, his complete self-identification with sinners, involved not merely a felt, but a real abandonment by his Father."²¹ Jesus' cry of dereliction signifies the wrath and curse of God poured out on him in the act of forsaking. God's wrath burns hot against him and consumes him (Exod 32:10), brings disaster on him (1 Kgs 9:8–9), makes him a byword (2 Chr 7:20–21), abandons him into the hands of his enemies (Jer 12:7), does to him as he did to Shiloh (Jer 7:14–15), and delivers his power to captivity and his glory to the hands of his foes (Ps 78:61).²²

But in doing this Jesus fulfils in himself God's threats against the Temple. In him the Temple lies in ruins, deprived of the presence of the Creator God

¹⁹ While the term "inconsequential" may seem rather harsh, it is appropriate. If the plight of Jesus' situation refers to his "helpless situation at the hands of his enemies" as Carey suggests, then in fact Jesus makes for a remarkably poor and uninspiring martyr, whose prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane pales in comparison to similar prayers offered by saints and pagans alike before their deaths at the hands of their oppressors.

Admittedly, the whole tone of her book argues against such a dichotomy. Unfortunately, however, the conclusion of her argument ran somewhat against the grain of the book as a whole.

²⁰ It is vital to keep in mind the trinitarian framework for this event. God takes upon himself (in the person of the Son) the condition and fate of the old temple, so as to deal with it within and by means of the resources within his own proper life as the triune God, so as to bear its abandonment and destruction within himself so as to spare the temple and his people that eternal fate. Only the triune God can bear this abandonment within himself without destroying himself, so as to be with us as the one he is without destroying us in the process.

²¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 458. Cranfield makes two points in this passage, the second of which I return to later in the chapter.

²² Psalm 78:59–63 fills out both this event and our understanding of what it means for God to forsake: "When God heard, he was full of wrath, and he utterly rejected Israel. He forsook [שָׁטָט; ἀπόσπαστο] his dwelling [קִנְיָה; σκηνην] at Shiloh, the tent [לִלְוָה; σκήνωμα] where he dwelt [קָנָה; κατεσκήνωσεν] among mankind, and delivered his power to captivity, his glory [καλλονήν] to the hand of the foe. He gave his people over to the sword and vented his wrath on his heritage. Fire devoured their young men, and their young women had no marriage song."

and his glory, deprived of his covenant blessing and with it the only source of life and salvation. He who was the Temple of God, the presence of God with us, now fulfills the demise and destruction of the Temple in himself, as he dies abandoned by God, in such a way as “God has never forsaken, and does not and will not forsake any man as He forsook this man,” turning “against Him as never before or since against any.”²³

Both Matthew and Mark²⁴ continue the theme of God’s forsaking of Jesus as the abandonment of the temple by noting the tearing of the temple veil.²⁵ Most commentators hold “that the ‘veil of the temple was torn in two’ in [Matthew 27] verse 51 is a direct result of his death in verse 50.” Beale’s further contention, however, that “the temple veil was a part of the temple, so that its tearing symbolically represented the destruction of the temple” is the subject of a great deal of debate.²⁶ For our purposes, we will focus on a two-fold line of thought, in keeping with two of the most significant functions of the temple veil.

Most scholars concede that the veil is the one separating the holy place from the most holy place (Exod 26:31–33).²⁷ This veil (1) marked off a distinct place in which the presence of God could dwell, filling it with his glory; and (2) established a boundary, protecting the Israelites from coming into the presence of God under any but the strictest conditions, lest they be struck down and killed. In keeping with this twofold function, in the present section we explore the meaning of the torn veil in light of Jesus Christ’s substitutionary work as the Temple which is abandoned and destroyed, while in the next section we will explore its meaning from the standpoint of Jesus Christ as the one who is the new and eternal temple of God’s presence for us.

As suggested earlier, the presence of the Lord is dangerous. While one of the effects of “the demise of the old temple” may have been “the release of the

²³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/3, 1st Half: The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961) 414.

²⁴ I am aware that each of the Gospels approaches its subject matter from a distinct perspective, such that each contains nuances the others might lack. For this reason it is dangerous to move between Gospels in an account of the theme of the Temple. Nevertheless, my purpose is to sketch a canonical vista of this theme. I have sought, however, to use different Gospels studies in awareness of these tensions, so as to not import the nuances of a specific Gospel into the argument of another.

²⁵ The connection of Jesus’ cry and the tearing of the veil “is supported by the presence of the conjunction καὶ at the beginning of Mark 15.38, which suggests a linking of the two verses. This is in contrast to the presence of the disjunctive δὲ at the beginning of Mark 15.37, which indicates a subtle distancing from 15.36, and another δὲ immediately following in 15.39.” Carey, *Jesus’ Cry From the Cross* 167.

²⁶ Beale, *Temple* 189. Timothy Geddert lists some thirty-five different interpretations of this passage, happily adding that we ought to “assume that Mark has a broadly conceived but subtly presented understanding of the meaning of the death of Jesus, of the implications of it for the temple, and of the outcomes that flow from the interaction of the two,” such that numerous of these interpretations may in fact be intended by Mark. Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 141–44. Daniel Gurtner offers a far more detailed account of scholarship, both contemporary and ancient, on this passage: Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew’s Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 1–28.

²⁷ Cf. Gurtner’s argument for this thesis on lexical, syntactical, and functional grounds (both explicit and implicit). Gurtner, *Torn Veil* 59–60, 62 and 69.

divine presence from the holy of holies"²⁸ in the positive sense of the saving divine presence extending beyond these confining boundaries, it behooves us to honor the relevant elements in due order, lest we jump too hastily to the "release of the divine presence" as if this were an unambiguously good event. Recall that when the divine presence was released among the Israelites, it meant death in great numbers (Exod 33:5, Lev 10:2). What is needed is not the simple release of the divine presence (which would mean instant death); rather, what we need is a new temple, a new form of the presence of God. And in needing a new temple (and the fulfillment of those divine promises), we need the destruction of the old temple (and the fulfillment of those divine promises as well). We need the fulfillment of both God's saving presence and his abandoning and destructive presence, both of which were prophesied throughout the OT and in the ministry of Jesus.

In the tearing of the temple veil, therefore, we first see that God has removed his presence, or rather unleashed it in the form of abandonment and judgment upon the temple, for the removal of God's presence or his act of abandonment does not create a purely secular space in which God is not present. Rather, God's withdrawal or forsaking is identical with the act of his wrath, of destruction. Jesus, fulfilling in himself the demise of the old temple, bears in himself this abandonment, what is the same thing, the judging and wrathful presence of God as he destroys the Temple. The tearing of the veil in the Temple is that hideous sacrament of this event: the outward manifestation of God's invisible wrath, as the temple now stands desolate, awaiting the final outward manifestation of its inner fate in the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy that is to come in AD 70.

Rather than destroying the people of his covenant by unleashing his destroying presence among them as he had done at Sinai and elsewhere, God took upon himself the nature and fate of the old temple in the person of his Son, bearing his own destructive presence in himself, so as to save those upon whom it would otherwise fall. To adapt Wright's point, Jesus "was dying as the rejected [temple] . . . as the representative [temple], taking Israel's suffering upon himself," and in this way went "ahead of her . . . tak[ing] upon himself precisely that fate, actual and symbolic, which he had announced for the . . . temple."²⁹

2. *In the place of the old, Jesus was the true Temple.* But just as Jesus did not simply bear the punishment for our sins and also acted righteously in our place, so as the perfect temple into which we are united by his Holy Spirit, he awaits, receives, and proclaims the indwelling presence of the Lord. Because "God's presence—or heaven—is 'the greater and more perfect tent,'"³⁰ the notion of "temple" is first and foremost a personal reality within the divine life and only secondarily an architectural reality. We now turn to reflect on how

²⁸ Beale, *Temple* 193. Similarly, Gurtner writes that "the rending of the veil depicts the cessation of its function, which I have argued is generally to separate God from people. Its rending then permits accessibility to God in a manner not seen since Genesis 3." Gurtner, *Torn Veil* 138, 188–89.

²⁹ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* 570, 608.

³⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006) 235.

Jesus Christ in his substitutionary work was the true temple in the place of the old, just as he acted justly in our place. In doing so we must personalize the role of the Temple in the OT in accordance with the heavenly and personal reality which is its antecedent and fulfillment.

Like the Temple in the OT, Jesus received and was filled with the presence of the Lord—in the form of the Holy Spirit.³¹ The Spirit was upon him as a child (Luke 1:15, 80), and at his baptism the Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove (Matt 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22), with John in particular noting that the Spirit remained on him (John 1:32–33). Throughout his ministry he was filled with and led by the Holy Spirit (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1, 14–18). Just as the Temple was filled with the presence of God, so Jesus Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit.

The connection between the indwelling of the Spirit and the Temple is a significant one. We see in 1 Cor 3:16: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” Gordon Fee notes that “the word used (*naos*) refers to the actual sanctuary, the place of the deity’s dwelling,” a point which, when noted in conjunction with Paul’s statement that “God’s spirit dwells [οἰκεῖ] in you,” ties together the themes of the Temple and Spirit quite closely, as the Spirit is the mode of God’s activity by which he builds and sustains the new temple. What is more, Fee notes that “it is possible, though by no means certain, that the imagery also had eschatological overtones for Paul,” such that “the present experience of the church as the place where the (eschatological) Spirit dwells would thus be the restored temple of Ezekiel’s vision (chaps. 40–48), where God promised ‘to live among them forever’ (43:9).”³² Working backwards from this Pauline vantage point, we can see how the Spirit’s indwelling of Jesus is in fact Jesus’ fulfillment of the role of the true temple: just as the Spirit dwelling in us is what makes us to be God’s temple, so the Spirit dwelling in Christ is what makes him the Temple in which we are included through the ongoing work of the Spirit.

While Jesus was filled with and guided by the presence of God through the Holy Spirit, he also proclaimed the presence of the Lord and glorified God—two active or personalized forms of the function of the OT temple. A significant amount of Jesus’ proclamation revolves around the presence of the kingdom of God (cf. Mk 1:15). “The phrase . . . carried unambiguously the *hope* that YHWH would act . . . within history, to vindicate Israel,” such that “the

³¹ Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007) 149–71. The Holy Spirit, of course, is not the only way in which Jesus is the locus of God’s presence with us, for he himself is Immanuel, God with us (Matt 1:23; John 1:1; 1:18; 20:28). But that Jesus is God with us is not merely a Christological statement about the person of the eternal Son, but rather a statement about the triune God—for the whole triune God is present with us in Jesus Christ, according to the diverse ways of being. And the Son is incarnate in such a way as to be filled with the presence of God not only by his very nature as the incarnate Son, but also in the power of the Holy Spirit.

³² Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 146–47. Later, Fee notes that “through the phenomenon of the indwelling Spirit, Paul now images the body as the *Spirit’s* temple, emphasizing that it is the ‘place’ of the Spirit’s dwelling in the individual believers’ lives. In the same way that the temple in Jerusalem ‘housed’ the presence of the living God, so the Spirit of God is ‘housed’ in the believer’s body.” Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 246.

whole world . . . would at last be put to rights,” by his coming “in his power and rul[ing] the world in the way he had always intended.”³³ Put differently, the kingdom of God was a matter of the Creator of heaven and earth being present to his creation in the way in which he had always intended. Jesus not only embodied but proclaimed that presence, in a way that the old temple could only mutely and passively foreshadow.

Proceeding, just as the Temple was filled with the glory of God, so Jesus actively glorified his Father, a theme highlighted throughout the Gospel of John, where it is found in conjunction with the theme of God’s presence: “Father . . . glorify [δοξασόν] your Son so that the Son may glorify [δοξάσῃ] you. . . . I glorified [ἐδόξασα] you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify [δοξασόν] me in your own presence [παρὰ σεαυτῶ] with the glory [δόξῃ] that I had in your presence [παρὰ σοί] before the world existed” (John 17:1–5). Just as the Temple “housed” the glory of the Lord, so now Jesus both is the glory of God and glorifies the Father. In this work of glorification, he anticipates his return to the Father, the glorious presence within God’s triune life which was the antecedent basis within God’s being for that which he shared with us through Jesus Christ.

Finally, as Jesus received and proclaimed the presence of God as the new and perfect temple, so he waited and hoped for the presence of God, learning even this by patience and suffering.³⁴ It is at this point that we return to Psalm 22, having firmly established the meaning and significance of its first lines.³⁵ For in fact the hope with which the psalm ends has a vital place in understanding Christ’s work.³⁶ In this psalm, the sufferer anticipates telling “of [the Lord’s] name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you,” how he will recount that God “did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him” (Ps 22:22–24). Nowhere else in the Psalms “is this [assurance of deliverance] . . . more emphatically and extensively represented than in Psalm 22.”³⁷ This fact, when combined with Jesus’ firm belief in his resurrection on the third day, coalesce to give us every reason to hold that in the midst of Jesus’ experience of the Father’s abandonment he did not, for his part, abandon or forsake his Father, but trusted in him, commending to

³³ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* 203.

³⁴ Just as Hebrews affirms that “although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb 5:8), so we might say that although he was God’s tabernacling presence with us, he learned to wait and hope for God’s presence through what he suffered.

³⁵ The key is to affirm both elements in this psalm, without allowing one to trump the other. Along these lines, see Calvin’s claim that “the first verse contains two remarkable sentences, which, although apparently contrary to each other, are yet ever entering into the minds of the godly together. When the Psalmist speaks of being forsaken and cast off by God, it seems to be the complaint of a man in despair. . . . And yet, in calling God twice his own God, and depositing his groaning into his bosom, he makes a very distinct confession of his faith.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. William Pringle; Grant Rapids: Baker, 2009) I:357.

³⁶ The beginning of the Psalm is equally significant, however, for “the doubled expression [‘my God, my God’] is found nowhere else, and serves . . . to emphasize the psalmist’s personal relationship with God and his persistence in addressing God as ‘my God’ even when abandoned by God.” Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* 258.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 259.

him his spirit and awaiting his vindication.³⁸ Just as the Temple was utterly passive and had no power or claim upon the Lord but could only wait for the manifestation of his presence, so Jesus Christ, as the true and eternal temple, trusted and awaited the vindicating presence of the Lord, even in the midst of his experience of utmost abandonment and forsakenness. Without in any sense minimizing Jesus' God-forsakenness, therefore, we can agree with Cranfield that "the triumphant *tetelestai* of Jn xix. 30 is, paradoxically," the "true interpretation" of the cry of dereliction.³⁹

And just as the cry of dereliction has two dimensions, so too does the tearing of the veil. While "the rending of the veil signifies in the first place the end of the former system of worship" (with the "end" in this case being a wrathful and complete destruction at the hand of God), so it also "signifies. . . that access to the true Holy of Holies is henceforth free," in the sense that the temple through which we now enter God's presence is no longer of the Israelite temple of stone, but the temple which is Christ, through his Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ As long as the nature of both the danger of God's presence and the mode of its current manifestation through the work of the Holy Spirit are properly established, we have every reason therefore to agree with those who emphasize that the tearing of the veil is a revelatory or freeing act,⁴¹ ushering in a new era of God's saving presence with his people.

III. CONCLUSION

Of the making of theories of the atonement there is no end. Such effort should further some aspect of the church's theological understanding and strengthen its ability to fulfill its vocation. What then might be some of the theological and practical benefits of this essay?

Generally speaking, studies of the atonement draw relatively little from the OT. The exception proving the rule is an occasional interest in the Israelite

³⁸ In this I do not explore the relationship of the resurrection to the doctrine of the atonement—a pragmatic decision determined by the scope of the project. A full elaboration of a temple framework of the atonement would need to include the role of the resurrection. Beale, for instance, notes that Jesus' "subsequent resurrection as new creation was the formal rebuilding of the temple." Beale, *Temple* 190. Along these lines, Calvin notes that the resurrection "banished the separation between us and God." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) I: 507.

³⁹ Cranfield, *Mark* 458–59.

⁴⁰ Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple: Or the Manner of God's Presence to His Creatures from Genesis to Apocalypse* (London: Burns and Oates, 1962) 143.

⁴¹ "The revelatory interpretation of the tearing of the Temple curtain is also consonant with the other Markan use of the verb *schizein* ('to rip'), which occurs at Jesus' baptism. . . (1:10–11); here the result of the heavenly curtain being torn is that something comes out from behind it (cf. Motyer, 'Rending'). As in Revelation 21:22–27, therefore, the radiance of God, which was formerly confined to the protective shell of the Temple's interior, emerges into public manifestation at the dawning of the new age. . . ." Joel Marcus, *Mark* (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 1067. Cf. Gurtner, *Torn Veil* 174–76. Within this line of thought, however, it is important to note with Bauckham that in this shift the presence or revelation of God is not generalized but relocated: "it transfers the place of God's presence from its hiddenness in the holy of holies to the openly godforsaken cross of the dead Jesus." Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* 267.

sacrificial system. While outcries sometimes emerge seeking to anchor theology more firmly in the concrete world of the OT,⁴² these fall on deaf ears not due to the message itself, but because of the lack of compelling work on the doctrine of the atonement emerging from careful study of the OT which significantly expands or challenges our understanding. While the path of the sacrificial system is well trod (though by no means a major thoroughfare), other trails mark that lush country, waiting to be followed so as to show forth their vistas. Exploring the atonement from the vantage point of the Temple theme draws on a mass of biblical data from both the Old and New Testaments which typically plays little or no role in an account of Christ's work, thus further integrating Scripture as a whole with the Lordship of Christ and thereby paving the way for a fuller and more well-rounded proclamation of Christ's saving work by the church.

A second benefit of approaching the doctrine of the atonement in this manner is the way that it naturally blossoms into ecclesiology and pneumatology. Whereas one can study many a work on the doctrine of penal substitution or *Christus Victor* without receiving the impression that God had a vested interest in a people or the church, a "temple" framework of the atonement exudes the corporate nature of God's purposes from start to finish.⁴³ It was the people of Israel, and now the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles, which was the focus of Jesus' mission. Jesus Christ, the true and eternal temple, is the locus of God's presence with his people. Atonement in this sense is much closer to its original meaning, at-one-ment, in which the goal is bringing unity of fellowship to God and his people. This standpoint also offers far more resources to the church for integrating the doctrine of the Holy Spirit within that of the atonement, for it is the Spirit's indwelling in Christ by which he is the new temple, and it is through the repetition of this fact by the indwelling of the Spirit in believers that they are made to be part of this temple.⁴⁴

Finally, a temple framework of the atonement has the potential to emphasize certain aspects of our sinful condition which we might otherwise minimize, opening up significant new lines of pastoral application. Jesus, coming to us as the fulfillment of the Temple, exposes in us the desire to abandon God and flee from his presence. As the one who tabernacles with us, he exposes us as the ones who like Adam and Eve hide from the presence of the Lord (Gen 3:8), like the Israelites beg God to leave them alone (Exod 14:12) and like

⁴² See, for instance, Robert Jenson's claim that early on "Christian theology of the cross made two paired errors," the second of which "was to sever the cross from its *past*, in the canonical history of Israel. . . . The inherited theories [of the atonement] discuss the Crucifixion in essential abstraction from Israel's history." Robert Jenson, "On the Doctrine of the Atonement," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 27/2 (2006) 101–2. The first error has to do with cutting off the cross from the resurrection.

⁴³ Cf. Scot McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007) 9–14, 88.

⁴⁴ Vanhoozer writes along these lines that "the saving significance of Christ's death consists in making possible God's gift of the Holy Spirit. The 'wonderful exchange' is thus not economic but thoroughly eschatological: *Jesus gives his body and blood for us, and in return we receive his Spirit* . . . Jesus' death both creates and cleanses a new temple, the people of God." Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Atonement in Postmodernity: Guilt, Goats and Gifts," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004) 398–99.

Jonah seek to flee from his presence (Jon 1:3). “Enslaved to sin,” we “cannot take up another attitude towards God but that of escape from him, be it only by denying him, which is also a manner of hiding from him,”⁴⁵ or by “employ[ing this] truth . . . in the evasion of its attack and seizure of control.”⁴⁶

And in doing this Jesus likewise awakens us to ways in which we hide physically, emotionally, and otherwise from the presence of others. For we cannot separate these two dimensions (hiding from or forsaking God and hiding from and forsaking others), for just as the second greatest commandment is like the first, so there is a likeness in the human realm to our attempts to flee the presence of God.⁴⁷ Jesus opens our eyes to everyday abandonment, whether it be in the form of the student or church member whose desperation for love and attention is so intense as to drive away those who otherwise might befriend her, or those few rare friends who can really help us by saying that most needed, painful and unwanted truth. And he awakens us to the bondage accompanying the state of abandonment—the slavish seeking of acceptance (from God and our neighbors) or the equally rigid refusal to invest oneself in relationships and pursuits for fear of failing and incurring further forsakenness. Christ, as the true temple to whom we are united by his Holy Spirit frees us by bearing of our abandonment and embracing us as his own, freeing us to live amidst threats of failure, mediocrity, and abandonment, without fear that we will ever be abandoned by him.

⁴⁵ François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 216.

⁴⁶ Barth, *CD 4/3.1* 436.

⁴⁷ Cf. George Hunsinger, “After Luther: How Barth Socialized the Evangelical ‘As’,” in *Reformed Perspectives on the Doctrine of Justification* (ed. John Burgess and Michael Weinrich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 210–17.