

ANTHROPIC TEMPLE AND NUPTIAL SYMBOLISM IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

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1. Introduction

The writers of the New Testament commonly disclose the identity of Christ by means of a broad array of typological images and motifs that are often interconnected. Two of these types are temple and nuptial symbolism. The Gospel of John, for example, presents Jesus as both Bridegroom-Messiah (John 3:29) and new Temple (2:21) or dwelling place of the divine presence (1:14)—later known in rabbinic literature as the *Shekhinah*. Through his rich mystical sacramental theology, John subtly extends these metaphors beyond the person of Jesus to the community of believers: and so the disciples in the Fourth Gospel take on the role of bride of Christ¹ and dwelling place of the Father's presence.² While John's nuptial and temple typology remains primarily Christological, other New Testament authors take a different approach. Commenting on John's account of the cleansing of the Temple, Raymond Brown distinguishes three different strains of early Christian thought in the New Testament on the spiritual temple:³

- ✦ the Christian Temple, or house of God, is the *Church*
(Eph. 2:19–21; 1 Pet. 2:5, 4:17)
- ✦ the Temple is the *individual Christian* (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19)

1 For example, Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well in chapter 4 is known to be modeled on "betrothal-type scenes" of the Old Testament; see Gen. 24:1–67; 29:1.20; Exod. 2:15–22). The woman acts as representative of the Samaritan people, and their faith in Jesus at the end of the narrative parallels the betrothal and wedding that typically conclude the Old Testament scenes. Jerome Neyrey ("Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4:10–26," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 [1979]: 426) states: "Jesus replaces the former 'husbands' of the woman with the true *ba'al*, namely, himself. Since the woman is portrayed as accepting Jesus as Messiah (4:39), he effectively becomes her *ba'al*; and he replaces Samaritan expectations when they too confess him as 'Savior of the world' (4:42). The Jacob matrimonial allusions then seem to lie in Jesus' becoming the husband/lord of these new converts."

2 See, for example, Jesus' promise that both he and the Father will make their home within those who love him (John 14:23).

3 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 124.

- ♦ the Temple is *in heaven* (Heb. 9:11–12; Rev. 11:19)

St. Paul is the champion of the first two dimensions, while the third is especially manifested in the apocalypse. Paul extends nuptial and temple typology to the Church, represented as bride, temple, and Body of Christ, and also to the individual Christian; this Christian embodies a “temple of the Holy Spirit” in whom dwells the divinity. Therefore, Paul tends to develop the temple and nuptial motifs beyond their Christological dimensions into the ecclesiological and mystical realms.

Three Pauline epistles in particular treat of the themes of spiritual temple and nuptiality: 1 and 2 Corinthians and Ephesians.⁴ These writings reveal a clear confluence of the nuptial and temple motifs, with the mystical marriage between Christ and the Church taking place in the temple of the Holy Spirit—the believer. The present article aims at examining the interconnection of these two themes in 1 Corinthians—that is, how nuptial symbolism is related to temple symbolism and how both metaphors are applied ecclesologically to the Church and mystically to the Christian. In other words: how does the new temple serve as the locus of the union between Christ and his bride and how is the mystical marriage portrayed as communion within the divine sanctuary, the Church (or soul of the Christian)?

2. *First Corinthians: General Considerations*

Paul has much to say in 1 Corinthians about earthly marriage and sexuality (1 Cor. 5–7), the Church and believer as temple of the Holy Spirit (3:16–17, 6:19–20),⁵ and the Church as Body of Christ (6:15–17, 10:17, 11:29, 12:12–26). Some scholars, however, criticize this epistle as “poor in doctrinal content” and as “that unit among the major Pauline letters which yields the very least for our understanding of the Pauline faith.”⁶ A superficial scanning of the epistle’s content may initially seem to confirm the impression that Paul writes “an occasional, *ad hoc*, response to the situation that had developed in the Corinthian church”⁷ to address some of their particular problems and questions, such

4 The identification of Jesus with the Temple is further supported by other passages, such as Col. 2:9, which describes Christ as the place of the fullness of God’s dwelling. See also the Epistle to the Hebrews and its related treatment of Christ as both high priest and sacrifice of the heavenly liturgy (Heb. 2:17; 4:14–16; 5:1–11; 7:11–28; 8:1–6; 9:1–28; 10:1–22).

5 On the Church and believer as temple in Corinthians, see Raymond Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians,” *Letter & Spirit—Temple and Contemplation: God’s Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart* 4 (2008): 145–166.

6 Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 219; quoted in Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

7 Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1st ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 4.

as disunity and strife (1:10–17, 3:1–4, 6:1–11, 11:18–19), doubts concerning Paul's authority (4:1–21, 9:1–27), sexual immorality (5:1–13, 6:12–20), marriage and consecrated virginity (7:1–40), food sacrificed to idols and idolatry (8:1–13, 10:14–33), customs and conduct in Christian worship, particularly at the Lord's Supper (11:1–34), and spiritual gifts (12:1–31; 14:1–40). This primary concern for ethics is apparently interspersed with some doctrinal, philosophical, or theological remarks for the sake of strengthening the moral exhortations. Such remarks include an excursus on wisdom (1:18–2:16), agricultural and architectural metaphors for the Church (3:5–17), the necessity and importance of love (13:1–13), and the resurrection of believers (15:1–58).

A closer examination of the text, however, reveals that Paul in fact uses sustained temple imagery and typology throughout in addressing the various issues of the Corinthian community. When viewed in light of temple typology applied to the believer (or *mystagogy*),⁸ Paul's practical directives to the Corinthians turn out to be much more than mere casuistic and occasional moral exhortations. Rather, they actually describe the sanctified life of love that ought to flow from the believer's consecrated nature as temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians is rich in a temple mystagogy that describes the intimate indwelling of the deity within the Corinthian believers and is often associated with nuptial/sexual themes: through baptism, the body is consecrated as temple of the Holy Spirit, and it becomes the locus of communion with God, as the physical Temple in Jerusalem was the place of encounter with the divine presence for the Jewish people.⁹ However, this anthropic temple can become desecrated through sexual immorality, and Paul quotes the "one-flesh" union of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:24 to make his point (1 Cor. 6:16). He also argues that the man-woman hierarchy derives from the created order (Gen. 1–2; 1 Cor. 11:3–16), recalling the ancient tradition of the first androgynous man out of whom God created the female by taking a rib from his body. For Paul, not only the Eucharist (11:23–32) but also the community of disciples is the Body of Christ who is "joined" to him (12:12–31). Moreover, Christ's identity as the New Adam (15:22, 45–49)—and the derivative idea of the

8 The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed. [Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000]), 1075 defines mystagogy as "a liturgical catechesis which aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ" by proceeding "from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the 'sacraments' to the 'mysteries.'"

9 The Catechism makes the same point in describing the graces of baptism: "Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature,' an adopted son of God, who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature,' member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit" (ibid., 1265). In its section on anthropology, the Catechism specifies that the human body shares in the dignity of the image of God precisely because it is "animated by a spiritual soul." It is thus "the whole human person [not just the body as distinct from the soul] that is intended to become, in the Body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit" (ibid., 364).

Church as the New Eve—reveals an additional link between temple and nuptial symbolism.

3. *Wisdom and Temple Building (1 Cor. 1:10–3:23)*

Paul begins by expressing his concern about schisms in the Corinthian church that contradict the unity signified by the common baptism of all believers (1:10–17). This point is interrupted by a long excursus on the wisdom and folly of God and of men in 1:18–2:16, until the theme of unity is resumed in 3:1–4. In order to drive home the importance of unity, Paul uses two metaphors to describe the Corinthian church: it is “God’s field” in which different workers plant and water, but where God alone gives the increase, and “God’s building” in the process of being constructed (3:9).¹⁰ The foundation of this building is Jesus Christ, even though Paul, “as a wise master builder” (*sophos architekton*), has laid its foundation (3:10–11). Given the preceding excursus on wisdom and the temple metaphor that immediately follows in 3:16–17, this mention of the *sophos architekton* may quite possibly serve as an allusion to Solomon, the builder of the Temple who was so reputed for his wisdom. Paul goes on to describe the building materials of this spiritual structure: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw (3:12). Gordon Fee notes how the first three are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament as the building materials of the Temple.¹¹ Perhaps the immediate context of burning (where each one’s work “will be revealed by fire,” 3:13) implies that the latter three (wood, hay, and straw) refer to the materials formerly used to feed the fire on the altar of sacrifices. In verse 16, Paul makes explicit what he has been implicitly saying until now; namely, that the spiritual building being erected, the community of believers, is indeed God’s temple: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God (*naos theou*) and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”¹² Paul uses temple mystagogy to describe the intimate indwelling of the deity within the Corinthian church. Through baptism (1:14–17; 6:11), believers have received the Spirit of divine wisdom to build a holy temple—themselves: “For the temple of God (*naos tou theou*) is holy (*hagios*), which temple you are (*humeis este*)” (3:17). The use of the plural indicates that the temple of God here is the

10 Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians*, 75) has shown that the mixing of these two metaphors is traditional in the Old Testament, Judaism, Hellenism, and Gnosticism; see, for example, Jer. 1:10; Philo, *De Cher.* 100–112.

11 Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 140–141. See Hag. 2:8; 1 Chron. 22:14, 16; 29:2; 2 Chron. 3:6.

12 It is significant that Paul used the word *naos*, denoting the inner sanctuary and dwelling place of the divine presence, and not *hieron*, which describes the entire Temple structure. See Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 146; and Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 71.

community and that, through the community, the Spirit is communicated to individuals.¹³ Within the Church, therefore, the Corinthians can experience a personal union with God comparable to the union that took place between God and his people in the sanctuary of the Jerusalem Temple. As God is holy (*hagios*), so is his temple—his people—also *hagios*, consecrated and set apart for him and for his purposes. The Corinthians are in a sense already sanctified “in Christ”; yet in another sense they are still called to be and become saints (*hagioi*) in practice (1:2). However, through their factions they defile their own temple, undermining their own identity in Christ and corrupting the very mystery they are celebrating. The dire consequences of such behavior are evident: if someone defiles or corrupts (*phtheirei*) the temple and dwelling of God, God will also destroy (*phtheirei*) that person (3:17). In other words, the punishment will fit the crime: “To engage in making divisions is to *destroy* the divine society and thus to invite God to *destroy* the sinner.”¹⁴

4. *Porneia* as Defilement of the Anthropic Temple (1 Cor. 5–9)

In chapter 5, Paul condemns the sexual misconduct plaguing the church in Corinth (here, specifically, a case of incest) with a brief *mystagogical* allusion to Passover and to the cleansing of leaven, which is equated with sin (5:6–8).¹⁵ Just as the Jews must cleanse their homes of all leaven before celebrating the feast of Passover, so the Corinthian Christian community must cleanse itself of sin in order to celebrate the festival of Christ, the Paschal Lamb—perhaps an allusion to the Eucharistic celebration of the Corinthian community. The severity of the punishment prescribed in the book of Exodus for eating leavened bread during the feast—being cut off from Israel (see Exod. 12:15, 19)—helps explain the harsh penalty of excommunication that Paul imposes upon the culprit (asking the community to “deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh,” 5:5).

After expressing his shock at a case of litigation in the Church (6:1–8), Paul returns to his concern for bodily purity and explains more thoroughly the gravity of sexual immorality and the reasons why it defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit. With the words, “but you were washed (*apelousasthe*), but you

13 See Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy,” 157–159. Bertil Gärtner (*The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 1 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 56–60) has shown four points of contact between this passage and the Temple symbolism of the Qumran community: (a) identification of the Temple of God with the community; (b) the Spirit of God ‘dwells’ in the congregation; (c) the Temple of God is holy; (d) this requires the purity of the members.

14 Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 71.

15 For other New Testament references to leaven as symbol of sin, see Matt. 16:11; Luke 12:1; and Gal. 5:9.

were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (v. 11), he reminds the Corinthians that the washing of their common baptism is the foundation of their unity, sanctification, and consecration to God in the Church.¹⁶ In asserting that "the body is not for *porneia* but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (v. 13), he comes close to saying that the Church is married to Christ. The body of the baptized believer—consecrated, sanctified, and set apart for God—can no longer be joined in passing and illicit "one-flesh" unions with women, since this body is now consecrated for a holy union with the deity. It is "for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." A positive description of the love between Christ and the Church as model and blueprint of the ideal "one-flesh" union between husband and wife is formulated more positively in Ephesians 5. But here in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul feels compelled to deal with the opposite, negative example. He must forcibly tell the Corinthians what *not* to do. Fornication is not only a sexual sin, but also a desecration of their own bodily temple and an act liable to damage and even destroy their union with Christ, of which they are the members:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "the two shall become one." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple [*naos*] of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:15–20)

Although this passage is closely related to 3:16–17, it brings in some new ideas. Paul specifies that not only does the *community* stand as a temple of the Holy Spirit, but the believer's *body* does so as well.¹⁷ Because of the body's sanctity, Paul takes pains to explain the serious implications of sexual immorality. The

16 For discussions on the attribution of *apelousasthe* to baptism, see Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 246–247; William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *I Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible 32 (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Bible, 1976), 199; and Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 107.

17 As Corriveau ("Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians," 162) notes: "What is important here is the application of the identity of the Church as Temple to the body of the individual member of the Church. The message is that we cannot separate the community and its members."

problem of *porneia* was widespread in first-century Corinth, a city renowned for its sexual vice and for the cultic prostitution that took place in its pagan temples.¹⁸ The passage highlights how the “one flesh” union affects the bodily temple of the Holy Spirit, which is also a member of Christ. In an interesting twist, Paul quotes the one-flesh union of Genesis 2:24 not as a metaphor for Christ and the Church (as in Ephesians 5:31), but to describe the contemptible union of a Christian with a prostitute. This sin is graver than all others because it constitutes an offense against one’s own body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and against the members of Christ that are “joined to the Lord” and “one spirit with him” in a covenantal relation of love and loyalty that was sealed at baptism.¹⁹ For this reason, Paul is much harsher against those believers who engage in *porneia* than those “of this world” who are not of the household of faith and whose bodies are not temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 5:9–13).

But what precisely is wrong with union with a prostitute? The sexual act *per se* obviously does not defile the spiritual temple or harm the union with Christ, since this union is permitted and even encouraged between husband and wife in the very next chapter (and exalted in Eph. 5 as a sign of the union between Christ and the Church). In sexual intercourse, two bodies become one. Being joined to a prostitute, therefore, means to become a “member” of her body (6:15)—that is, one becomes a “member” of the body of a person who is not a member of Christ and therefore not destined for resurrection (6:14). The Christian is holy (*kadosh/hagios*), meaning sanctified and set apart for God’s service. The harlot, on the other hand, is a *kedeshah*;²⁰ not consecrated to God, but rather, set apart or “consecrated” to her sinful trade that is in open contradiction with the divine purpose of sexuality. Paul’s discussion here assumes Jesus’ teachings on the permanence of marriage, and the passage becomes clearer within the context of the wider New Testament tradition on this topic. Both Jesus in the synoptics and Paul in Ephesians refer to Genesis 2:24 and to Adam and Eve’s nuptial union as the standard and prototype of the “one flesh” union between man and woman, as it was “in the beginning.” In Matthew 19:4–5, Jesus refers to the ancient tradition that God originally made Adam an androgynous being, “male and female” (see Gen. 1:27; 5:2).²¹

18 On the questionable reputation of Corinth, see Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2–3; and Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 11–12.

19 *Catechism*, no. 2355 articulates this point in its discussion of offenses against the sixth commandment: The one who engages in prostitution “violates the chastity to which his baptism pledged him and defiles his body, the temple of the Holy Spirit.”

20 The Hebrew word for harlot, *kedeshah*, is a derivative of the root *kadosh* (holy or set apart).

21 Philo believed that in the beginning, before Eve was taken out of Adam, the original man was bisexual or androgynous, with the two halves (male and female) perfectly united into one. It is the subsequent separation out of this original unity that is at the root of the sexual attraction of each side for the missing half. The first human was thus a complete and harmonious person, free from inner distractions and tensions and reflecting the divine

By taking Eve out of Adam, God created two complementary persons and left in them the insatiable desire to return to their primeval unity and wholeness and again be joined together as “one flesh.”

This original unity, separation, and longing to return to one-flesh unity form the ground for Jesus’ radically new teaching on marriage: “So then,” he declares—since God made them “male and female,” since woman was originally “taken out of man” and is “bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh,” and since a man “shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife”—on this basis, when they return together to their primal unity, “they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:6). In this light, the problem of the union with a prostitute becomes obvious: the one-flesh union no longer expresses the sacred, permanent bond of body and soul that sexual union is meant to represent. This union consequently becomes degraded to that of a contract of convenience where the body is used as an object of consummation, temporarily “purchased” for the man’s pleasure, and “disposed of” after use. In Ephesians 5, Paul emphasizes the sanctity and permanence of human marriage even more strongly because it is modeled on and derived from the covenantal, faithful, and enduring marriage between God and his people. In this indomitable union, the bridegroom bestows holiness (*kedushah*) upon the bride and consecrates her to himself in a permanent bond of love.²² Thus, the innate contradiction of becoming “one

nature in his perfectly united male and female identity. See *De op. mundi* 1:134; 151–52; *Legum allegoriae* 2:13; *Quis rer. div. heres* 164; *Quest. Gen.* 1:25–26. This view was also adopted in rabbinic tradition. See *b. Berakhoth* 61a; *b. Ketuboth* 8a; *b. Yebamoth* 63a; *b. Erubin* 18a; *Genesis Rabbah* 8a, 17; *Leviticus Rabbah* 14 (114a); Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, I:64–71; V: 88–89. The original unity of man and woman is also reflected in Gnostic writings (for example, *Gospel of Philip* 68 [76]; 70 [86]). See Richard A. Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 32–33; Carl H. Kraeling, *Anthropos and Son of Man: A Study in the Religious Syncretism of the Hellenistic Orient* (New York: AMS Press, 1966); Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 725–726; and A. T. Lincoln, “The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 4, no. 14 (1982): 16–57.

- 22 Wayne Meeks (Wayne A. Meeks, “The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” *History of Religions* 13, no. 3 [1974]: 66, 180–181) proposes that “the unification of opposites and especially the opposite sexes, served in early Christianity as a prime symbol of salvation,” and that it was primarily in the baptismal ritual that the “new genus of mankind” or “restored original mankind” comes into being, where there is “neither male nor female” and all become one in Christ. Meeks notes that the “neither male nor female” of Gal. 3:28 is an allusion to Gen. 1:27, implying that the original separation of male and female at creation is overcome in baptism through their reunification: “somehow the act of Christian initiation reverses the fateful division of Genesis 2:21–22. Where the image of God is restored, there, it seems, man is no longer divided—not even by the most fundamental division of all, male and female. The baptismal reunification formula thus belongs to the familiar *Urzeit-Endzeit* pattern, and it presupposes an interpretation of the creation story in which the divine image after which Adam was modeled was masculine-feminine” (*ibid.*, 185). In my opinion, if speaking of a “myth of reunification” is certainly

flesh" with a prostitute, without becoming "one spirit" with her by an enduring covenantal bond, precisely constitutes the offense against the temple of the Holy Spirit. This incongruence undermines and contradicts the very nature of the one-flesh union as a witness to God's faithful love.

Returning to our passage in First Corinthians, Paul concludes his argument against *porneia* by going back to the analogy of the body as temple of the Holy Spirit that he introduced in chapter 3. Illicit sexual union defiles the holy temple consecrated to God, which was "bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:20; see Eph. 5:2, 25) by Christ's death and should signify and represent the "sacred space" where God meets man and enters into communion with him.²³ Paul, here, probably evokes the concept of *tum'at mikdash* (defilement of the sanctuary), whereby the Temple becomes defiled because of Israel's sins.²⁴ The Temple, as God's house, is the place in which the covenant between God and his people is enacted, maintained, and perpetuated. Any breach in the covenant, therefore, has negative ramifications for the Temple. Joshua Berman comments, "When sin taints the covenant, its symbol in the realm of space, the Temple, becomes tainted as well."²⁵ Likewise, the sins of Christians violate the covenant with Christ and taint the bodily temple of the Holy Spirit. The passage fittingly concludes with the exhortation to the Corinthians to "glorify God" in body and spirit through sanctified behavior congruent with their new identity as consecrated sanctuaries of God's presence, since their body and spirit now entirely belong to him (6:20).

The concerns about the effects of *porneia* on the temple of the Holy Spirit make way for a more systematic and positive exposition of the principles of marriage in chapter 7. In chapter 7, St. Paul extols the advantages of the celibate state over married life because the one who remains unmarried is more available to serve the Lord. Worthy of note here are the

true of the later Gnostic texts (that is, the "mystery of the bridal chamber" in the Gospels of Thomas and Philip; see *ibid.*, 189–196), to speak of such a myth in the Pauline writings is perhaps an overstatement. While a "baptismal reunification of opposites" is certainly visible in Eph. 5:22–33, it "has not produced any radical reassessment of the social roles of men and women in the congregation," who remain independent beings, albeit endowed with a new equal dignity in Christ, yet still subject to the social norms, limitations, and divisions of their times—as Meeks acknowledges (205–206).

23 Morris (*1 Corinthians*, 102) proposes that the expression "bought at a price" is possibly "an antithesis to the price paid to a prostitute."

24 Israel's sins are often described as defiling God's sanctuary. When they offer their offspring to Molech, they "defile my sanctuary and profane my holy name" (Lev. 20:3); the sin offering is said to "atone for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions" (Lev. 15:15–16); and Jeremiah refers to the evil deeds of Judah as setting "their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it" (Jer. 7:30).

25 Joshua Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (Northvale, N.J.: J. Aronson, 1995), 142.

apostle's instructions regarding marriages between a believer and an unbeliever (7:12–16). Paul encourages the Christian spouse to remain with the non-Christian, “for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy” (7:14). He is teaching here the remarkable idea that the faith of the believing party confers sanctity upon the other and upon their children through the union of marriage. This perhaps relates to the ancient Jewish concept of *sancta contagio*, whereby the Temple is believed to act as a source of divine power, transmitting holiness to the beholder of its sacred objects.²⁶

Another example of temple mystagogy is found in chapter 9. There, the apostle defends his right to eat and drink and earn his living from his ministry using temple imagery, comparing himself to the priests and workers in the Temple who offer sacrifices and “partake of the offerings of the altar” as a sign of the Lord's approval that “those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (9:13–14). Preaching the Gospel is thus equated with the priestly sacrificial ministry in the Temple.²⁷

5. Of Sinai, Sacrifice and Sacraments (1 Cor. 10)

Chapter 10 is probably the richest chapter of our epistle in its use of Old Testament *mystagogy*. Paul focuses here on the Exodus and the Sinai covenant—understood in Jewish tradition, as we will see below, as the setting of the betrothal between God and Israel:

All our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:1–4)

The apostle uses the example of Israel in the desert as a warning to the Corinthians, recalling that the Israelites experienced a situation similar to theirs in the well-known events of the Exodus narrative: the pillar of cloud

26 On the idea of *sancta contagio* in ancient Judaism, see Eugene Seach, *A Great Mystery: The Secret of the Jerusalem Temple: The Embracing Cherubim and At-One-Ment with the Divine, Deities and Angels of the Ancient World 1* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2008), 65–68, 176–77. Likewise, George T. Montague (George T. Montague, *First Corinthians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011], 121), recalling that the altar of the tabernacle, once consecrated, made holy whatever touched it (Exod. 29:37), suggests that the marriage bond between believer and unbeliever, “far from causing defilement to the believer, becomes a conduit in the other direction for the radiation of the Christian's holiness to the unbeliever.”

27 Compare with Rom. 15:15–16, where Paul portrays his own ministry in terms of temple service and priestly sacrifice.

that led the people along the way (Exod. 13:21), the sea whose waters were divided by the hand of Moses (Exod. 14:21–29), the manna that sustained the Israelites on their journey (Exod. 16:4, 14–18), the spring flowing from the rock (Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:7–13), and the golden calf apostasy (1 Cor. 10:7; Exod. 32). Some commentators see in the cloud “a veiled reference to the presence of God in Israel’s midst, comparable to the Spirit for Christians”—or the indwelling *Shekhinah*.²⁸ But what is remarkable here is how Paul daringly retrojects “proto-sacraments” of baptism and Eucharist back into the history of Israel’s wanderings as prefigurations of the sacraments of the New Covenant. The crossing of the sea becomes the Israelites’ baptism (“into” Moses), while the manna and water from the rock, as “spiritual food” and “spiritual drink,” are a sort of proto-Eucharist. Paul goes as far as identifying the “spiritual rock” with Christ, who accompanied the Israelites through the desert.²⁹ Yet, despite the divine presence that dwelt among the Israelites and the “sacraments” that accompanied them along the way, “God was not well pleased” with them and most died in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:5). These things, Paul writes, have become “examples for us” (*tupoi hemon*), written “for our instruction” (10:6, 11). The Corinthians, therefore, should beware that the same does not happen to them. Of particular relevance is the connection between idolatry and sexual immorality in the recounting of the golden calf episode (10:7; see Exod. 32) and the similar incident at Baal Peor (10:8; see Num. 25:1–9).

It is significant that Jewish tradition sees the Exodus and the Sinai covenant as nuptial events. Prophets such as Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel indicate that God betrothed Israel in the desert during the Exodus.³⁰ Despite Israel’s infidelities, commonly described as spiritual harlotry,³¹ the Exodus is the guarantee and model for the future redemption, portrayed as a new betrothal and “new Exodus” to be characterized by the joyful voice of the bridegroom and bride.³² Later, the rabbis view the Sinai theophany as the

28 Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 445. See n. 22 for a variety of interpretations on this theme.

29 According to some rabbinic traditions, the rock that provided water for the Israelites physically moved and followed them through the wilderness: “And so the well which was with the Israelites in the wilderness was a rock, the size of a large round vessel, surging and gurgling upward, as from the mouth of this little flask, rising with them up onto the mountains, and going down with them into the valleys. Wherever the Israelites would encamp, it made camp with them, on a high place, opposite the entry of the Tent of Meeting (*Tosefta Sukkah* 3:11). Philo wrote that the rock is “the wisdom of God . . . out of which he gave a drink to the souls who love God” (*Legum Allegoriae* 2:86 in Charles Duke Yonge, trans., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993], 47). See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 448; and Orr and Walther, *I Corinthians*, 245.

30 Hos. 2:3, 14–15; Jer. 2:2–6; 31:32; Ezek. 16:7–9.

31 Hos. 2:4–5; 4:10–19; Jer. 2:20; 3:1–13; Ezek. 16:15–52.

32 Hos. 2:18–22; Jer. 16:14–15; 31:6–9, 12–14; 33:11; Ezek. 16:59–63. Isaiah also envisions

particular moment of the betrothal between God and Israel,³³ and they see the sin of the golden calf that occurs almost concurrently as a transgression as heinous as a bride committing harlotry while still under the bridal canopy.³⁴

Furthermore, the Israelite Tabernacle and Temple are imbued with nuptial meaning in rabbinical literature as well. The Torah depicts the sanctuary as the liturgical extension, actualization, and perpetuation of Israel's original union with God celebrated at Sinai, with both places acting as the meeting point between God and Israel—or heaven and earth.³⁵ Since Sinai is considered to be the moment of betrothal between God and Israel, it was fitting that its liturgical extension in time, the Tabernacle and Temple, would also take on a nuptial role in Jewish tradition. Thus the rabbis eventually came to see the sanctuary as a nuptial chamber in which God consorts with his bride, the community of Israel (represented by the High Priest).³⁶

The nuptial meaning of the Exodus, Sinai covenant, and Temple in Jewish tradition sheds light on our passage in First Corinthians 10. For Paul, *porneia* is tantamount to idolatry and to betraying Christ; idolatry is spiritual

the last redemption as a new Exodus and marriage (see Isa. 61–62).

- 33 For example, the Tannaitic Midrash *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* depicts God's appearance at Sinai and his encounter with the people of Israel in Exod. 19:16–17 as a great nuptial moment between them: "Judah used to expound: *The Lord came from Sinai* (Deut. 33:2). Do not read it thus, but read: 'The Lord came to Sinai' to give the Torah to Israel. I, however, do not interpret it thus, but: *The Lord came from Sinai* to receive Israel as a bridegroom comes forth to meet the bride" (Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael* [Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2004], II:306).
- 34 On the golden calf as spiritual adultery, see *b. Shabbat* 88b; *b. Gittin* 36b.
- 35 On the connections between Sinai and the sanctuary, see Berman, *The Temple*, 35–56; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* (Cambridge: HarperOne, 1987), 75–92. Levenson discusses the nuptial dimension of the Sinai covenant (75–80), the need for it to be perpetually renewed (80–86), and the transference of the locus of revelation from Sinai to Zion, which is a new "holy mountain" where the visionary experience of God is perpetuated (95), and the covenant renewal is effected (91–92): "in short, the renewal of the Sinaitic covenant has become the liturgy of the Temple in Jerusalem. . . . That shrine does not have a cult of its own, but has become a locus for the continuing traditions of the old Israelite tribal league. The voice of Sinai is heard on Zion" (207). Umberto Cassuto (*A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* [Skokie, IL: Varda Books, 2005], 319, cited in Berman, *The Temple*, 41) also explains the connections between Sinai and the Tabernacle: "In order to understand the significance and purpose of the Tabernacle, we must realize that the children of Israel, after they had been privileged to witness the Revelation of God on Mount Sinai, were about to journey from there and thus draw away from the site of the theophany. So long as they were encamped in the place, they were conscious of God's nearness; but once they set out on their journey, it would seem to them as though the link had been broken, unless there were in their midst a tangible symbol of God's presence among them. It was the function of the Tabernacle [literally, 'dwelling'] to serve as such a symbol. . . . The nexus between Israel and the Tabernacle is a perpetual extension of the bond that was forged at Sinai between the people and their God."
- 36 On the Tabernacle and Temple as bridal chamber in rabbinical literature, see *Leviticus Rabbah* 9:6; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 5:1; *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* 1:1.

adultery. Both, therefore, should be equally shunned (10:14). The invective against idolatry here, connected with the celebration of the Eucharist, is a continuation of the argument that Paul began in 8:1 concerning the eating of things offered to idols.

Why is the issue of food important? Because participation in cultic or sacred meals is equivalent to a unique sharing and communion (*koinonia*) with the deity that is worshiped—whether in the Jewish Temple (10:18), in the Christian Eucharist (10:16–17), or in pagan cults (10:20). The word *koinonia* is significant because of the close intimacy that it signifies (“fellowship,” “participation,” or “to share with someone in something”).³⁷ Just as sharing in the sacrifices of the Temple means to be a “partaker of the altar” and to share in *koinonia* with YHWH, participating in pagan sacred meals, likewise, involves *koinonia* with demons—a union incompatible with the *koinonia* with Christ in the Eucharist. Partaking of the Lord’s Body and Blood (10:16) is equivalent to intimately becoming one with him: it is a “one-flesh” union that is just as real as the one described in the Fourth Gospel (see John 6:56). Eating food sacrificed to idols, therefore, is a sort of “eucharist” with the demons. It is spiritual adultery, a betrayal of Christ tantamount to Israel’s worship of the golden calf and her subsequent betrayals of YHWH that the Old Testament prophets constantly lament.

6. Woman as Temple? (1 Cor. 11:3–16)

In chapter 11, Paul addresses the issue of head covering for women and men. At first sight, this seems like a trivial, culturally-bound concern following the greater issues of fornication and idolatry. Paul just finishes discussing how worship in temples, be they Jewish, Christian, or pagan, is equivalent to *koinonia* with the respective deity. Then, suddenly, he switches to talking about the hierarchy of subordination between man and woman (a hierarchy that is, in turn, subordinated to the hierarchy of God and Christ) and the need for women to cover their heads with a veil (11:3–7). Paul explains that the subordination of woman to man is in fact *not* an arbitrary, culturally-bound custom. Instead, the practice metaphysically stems from their origins in creation: “For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man” (11:8–9). Since woman is taken *from* man and *for* man, man receives authority over her. The allusion to the origins of woman recalls the tradition of the first androgynous man out of whom God created the female by taking a rib (or “side”) from his body.³⁸ Yet the hierarchical relation between them is not one of qualitative superiority

37 See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 466, n. 18, for references on the meaning of *koinonia* in the New Testament.

38 See above, note 21.

or of domination. Man is the “image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (11:7). The first part of this verse alludes to Genesis 1:26, where man is said to have been created “in the image and likeness” of God. The glory of God is thus equated with God’s likeness, and it is man who reflects this glory and likeness. Yet if what is last in creation was first in intent, then woman is the ultimate achievement of God’s creation. If man embodies the crown of creation, then woman represents the crown jewel. In Batey’s words: “Man who has been created in the image of God reflects the divine nature of his creator. Woman is a reflection of that reflection, for she has been taken from man.”³⁹ 1 Corinthians thus reveals an integral relationship between the man-woman hierarchy and the Genesis creation narrative (somewhat akin to the way that Eph. 5:31 quotes Gen. 2:24). But why the diversion to the subject of veils? Perhaps because veils are found both on women and in temples. Thus, a woman’s body is a sacred temple, consecrated to her husband and reflecting his glory. The nature of the woman’s body is analogous to the sanctity of the Temple, a sacred space consecrated to God, reflecting his glory and endowed with the holiness of a bride.⁴⁰ Granted, this association is only indirectly implied, but it does logically follow from the known metaphors of the Church as temple, body, and bride.

7. *Unity of the Body (1 Cor. 11:17–12:31)*

Paul then returns to the subject of the Lord’s Supper (11:17–33), endowed with great sanctity because it is the memorial of Jesus’ death, while simultaneously an anticipation of his eschatological *parousia* (11:23–26). Divisions and factions also exist in this setting; some approach the Supper out of carnal desires to satisfy their hunger, while others are drunk (11:21). Paul admonishes and warns those who approach the Lord’s table in such an “unworthy manner” that they thereby become “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (11:27). Such behavior openly contradicts the very essence of the Lord’s Supper, for the partaking of the Eucharist is the source and sign of the Church’s unity, and all members of Christ are “one bread and one body” when partaking of the one eucharistic bread (10:17). Factions at the Lord’s Supper (11:17–22), therefore, negate the very mystery that is being celebrated. To be “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” and to “not discern his body” are to break

39 Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, 22–23.

40 Batey (*ibid.*, 23, n. 4) explains the woman’s obligation to wear a veil in a way that lends credence to this idea: “In the first century the veil was not primarily a symbol of modesty or dignity. The direct symbolism is that of being taken possession of, and as a result taken out of circulation as a free woman. The woman wearing the veil was to be unapproachable in a similar sense as a holy object, because she had been set apart for her husband—sanctified for him exclusively. For a wife to refuse to wear the veil was not just a breach of modesty but the rejection of God’s created order of authority.”

the *koinonia* with the Lord and with his body. It is another form of covenant violation, a desecration of the temple of the Holy Spirit and an act of bridal infidelity against the Lord.⁴¹

In chapter 12, Paul continues to discourse on the subject of the unity of the body, now addressing the diversity of gifts that exist within it. The body “is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (12:12). Paul again reminds the Corinthians that they have become members of this spiritual body at baptism, when they were “made to drink into the one Spirit” (12:13).⁴² The unity of this body is not one of bland uniformity. A rich diversity is visible in its members, comparable to the members of the human body where each one plays a different yet indispensable role (12:15–31).

What, then, builds up God’s building, God’s temple and Christ’s Body? It is not worldly wisdom or knowledge, but *agape*: “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies” (8:1). According to Paul’s famous hymn of love in chapter 13, it is the patient, generous and joyful gift of self, in imitation of Christ (11:1, see Eph. 5:1–2, 25). A deep love of truth accompanies this love, which “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (13:7) and constitutes “the more excellent way” by which members of the Church are to build up the Body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Thus, once again, we see the connection between temple and nuptial symbolism, liturgy, and love.

8. *New Adam (and New Eve?) (1 Cor. 15)*

In chapter 15, Paul deals with eschatology and the resurrection of the dead. He portrays Jesus as the last Adam who reverses the curse of death incurred by the first Adam: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (15:22).⁴³ If the natural, earthly body of the first Adam was sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, the spiritual heavenly body of the last Adam is sown in incorruption, glory, and power (15:42–44). While the first Adam,

41 This is the basis for the Church’s discipline on the Eucharist in relation to the unity of Christians and the reason why ecclesial communities that “have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness” cannot be admitted to Eucharistic communion. See Catechism, 1400.

42 The Pauline connection between baptism and “drinking” the Spirit seems related to the water symbolism of baptism and the drinking of living water found in John 3–4.

43 On the relation between Adam, bringer of death, and Christ, restorer of life, see Rom. 5:12–21. On the ideas of the messianic king as new Adam in prophetic and apocalyptic literature, of Christ as the new Adam, and of the continuation in each Christian of this christological recapitulation of Adam, see Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1960), 11–21. Robin Scroggs (*The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966], 75–112) focuses on Christ as the realization of true humanity.

from the earth, passively received life as a “living being,” the last Adam, from heaven, gives life as a “life-giving spirit” (15:45–47). Believers, already bearing the image of the man of dust in their mortality, are also called to bear the image of the man of heaven in putting on immortality (15:48–56). The hope for the final day of the resurrection of the dead “at the last trumpet” means, in effect, that the human temple of the Holy Spirit will reach its fullness of stature as it puts on immortality.

In light of Paul’s multiple metaphors in 1 Corinthians we may infer the following from this passage on the resurrection of the dead: Christ is the last Adam and spiritual “man of heaven” raised in glory (*doxa*, 15:43) who will communicate his glorious image to his community of disciples, the Church (15:49). Given that “woman came from man” (that is, Eve came from Adam, 11:8), that man is the *doxa* of God and woman the *doxa* of man (11:7), and that the Church is Christ’s Body (10:17, 12:27), sustained by the Eucharistic communion of his own Body and Blood (10:16), one comes very close to the concept of the Church as “new Eve.” If Christ is the new Adam, then the Church, the new Eve who is “taken out” of the new Adam, nourished by his Body and Blood, and endowed with his very glory, can be none other than Christ’s own Bride.⁴⁴

9. Conclusion

The First Epistle to the Corinthians does not explicitly refer to the marriage between Christ and the Church, except for perhaps a veiled reference in 6:15–20. But a close examination of Paul’s temple *mystagogy*, especially when read in light of the Adam and Exodus/Sinai motifs, reveals many nuptial allusions: if Christ is the new Adam (15:45), and the “body” of the new Adam is the Church (12:27), called to share in intimate communion (*koinonia*) with him (1:9), then the Church must be Christ’s bride and the new Eve. Believers are baptized into this collective mystical Body by the Holy Spirit (12:13). This sacrament makes the body of every individual believer a temple consecrated to Christ, inhabited by the indwelling presence of the Spirit (6:19). The Christian life is thus understood as temple worship, sacred service, and nuptial mystery. As a living temple, the baptized believer participates in *koinonia* with Christ, especially by sharing at his table and partaking of his Body and Blood (10:16). This exchange, in itself, represents a kind of “one flesh” nuptial union; yet it can be destroyed through sexual immorality, which is tantamount to idolatry (6:18; 10:7–8). Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacramental means of entering into and maintaining communion with Christ, are depicted as the fulfillment

44 This idea, only implicit here, becomes explicit in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians.

of the Exodus and Sinai theophany (10:1–4). The concrete expression of this communion is the call to the members of the community to love each other with a generous and selfless *agape*, in imitation of Christ and for the sake of building up the Body (8:1; 13:1–13).

Finally, Paul's temple and nuptial theology is directed toward a definitive eschatological fulfillment on the day of the final resurrection of the dead, when the Christian's perishable and mortal anthropic temple will put on the imperishable and immortal (15:51–54; see 2 Cor. 5:1–4), and the veiled nuptial mystery will be revealed in all its glory (see Rev. 19:7–9, 21:2).

