Temple, tabernacle and mystical experience in John

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ABSTRACT

The repositioning of the temple incident in John's Gospel to the beginning of the narrative is an important clue to its central interest. John, like 4Q174, interprets 2 Samuel 7 to mean that the Jerusalem temple never should have been built and that the true (heavenly) temple had yet to be built in the last times by the true seed of David. Until then, God's presence is a tented presence as in the wilderness wanderings. The dimensions of John's community as an introversionist sect seeking direct mystical experience of the divine presence to replace the physical destruction of the Jerusalem temple are explored in terms of this temple theme.

1 THE TEMPLE AS HISTORICAL PIVOT POINT

Sanders, in his important contribution to the debate about the historical Jesus, argues that the Sayings tradition is the least secure starting point and that Jesus' doings are more reliable: 'There are several facts about Jesus' career and its aftermath which can be known beyond doubt' (1985:10). His own choice of such historical 'bedrock' is Jesus' controversy in the temple. He claims that Jesus' action in the temple clearly symbolised an attack on the temple and the prophecy of its destruction by God (1985:70-71). The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem would introduce the new age, the restoration of Israel and the gift of a new, purified and more glorious temple:

Thus we conclude that Jesus publicly predicted or threatened the destruction of the temple, that the statement was shaped by his expectation of the arrival of the eschaton, and that he made a demonstration which prophetically symbolised the coming event (1985:75).

Alongside the theme of the renewed temple, Sanders sets the theme of the restoration of Israel, symbolised by Jesus' choice of Twelve. In his view, these things could only mean that Jesus was preaching and undertaking national restoration, despite the absence of these themes in the Sayings tradition (1985:119). It is also likely that his action led directly to his execution by the Jewish authorities. The contention that Jesus intended a 'cleansing of the temple' (e.g Dunn 1991:48-49) is only marginally different: cleansing implies a judgment on the temple, while the purpose of destruction would be its
cleansing and restoration. The 'prophetic critique' of Isaiah and Ezekiel implied the destruction of the temple as the means of its purification.

My own analysis of Jesus as the focus of a peasant resistance movement (1995:183-202), although it begins from a radically different premise from Sanders, would also support the centrality of an action against the Jerusalem temple as a 'breach of the public discourse'. The temple would rightly be perceived as the central point of the whole system of unequal power relations which constitute the exploitation of the peasantry, and in the period of economic and social collapse under the triple taxation system during Roman domination of Palestine (Grant 1926) would be the target of peasant anger. When Galilean peasants briefly did control Jerusalem and the temple in 69 CE, they were responsible for the burning of the debt records, the execution of the aristocratic (non-Zaddokite) high priest and his replacement with an illiterate, peasant (Zaddokite) high priest (Horsley & Hanson 1985:216-259).

Horsley's analysis of peasant movements in Palestine, and of the Jesus movement in that context, also argues that the Jesus movement was concerned with the renewal of Israel, but at the point of the local community and not national structures in the first instance (1987; 1989). His analysis may be right in its outlines, but the temple incident implies that renewal of local community and national restoration could not be held apart by the Jesus movement. The temple remained a focus of hope as well as anger. It is the central symbol of the worship of Yahweh. Sanders quite rightly points to the fact that the first disciples continued to use and meet in the temple after the resurrection, at least according to Acts (1985:76; Dunn 1991:58).

The destruction of the temple in 70 CE must rightly be seen as the major turning point in the development of the Jesus movement from a movement for the physical restoration of Israel into something else. Certainly Paul, whose programme was rejected even by his own community in Antioch (Taylor 1992), set out to convert the Gentiles. But his reference point continued to be Jerusalem and, I would argue, the temple. I believe that this is the meaning behind his collection in the communities he founded: the wealth of the nations is brought in to the temple in Jerusalem in fulfillment of the prophecies. Of course, with the destruction of the temple after his death Paul's programme received a new impetus and a new meaning, but Romans 9-11 indicate that, for Paul at least, the restoration of Israel was still a conscious motivation and that would be unthinkable without the restored temple. It was not, indeed, the destruction of the temple in itself which would have caused the crisis for the followers of Jesus, since he himself pronounced judgment upon it, but rather the failure of the renewal to follow its destruction.1

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1 See, for instance, the story from Ḥeb 5a which illustrates the expectation of a swift
2 JESUS' ACTION IN THE TEMPLE IN JOHN

Given this central historical significance of Jesus' action in the temple in the Synoptic tradition, it would seem to me that the strange positioning of the temple episode in John’s Gospel could provide the interpretive key for the understanding of the whole.² It is, of course, possible in terms of displacement, source and redaction analysis theories, which abound in the study of John, that this insertion of the temple action at the beginning of Jesus' ministry represents a late phase in the evolution of the Gospel (most recently the case has been persuasively argued by Ashton 1991:160-174). Whether that is the case or not, as the gospel stands, the position of this pericope fits strikingly into a strand in the narrative and structure which is not likely to be the work of a late redactor. This strand relates to the symbol of the temple.

A monograph by James McCaffrey entitled The house with many rooms: the temple Theme of Jn. 14,2-3 was published in 1988, arguing on the basis of an identification of the oikôs of John 14:2-3 with the temple, that 'the theme of the new temple...clearly dominates the fourth gospel and the parting discourses' (1988:245). Now McCaffrey’s literary and philological method is, at least for me, somewhat repetitive and flawed.³ Nevertheless, it seems strange that the weighty evidence brought by McCaffrey’s thesis can be so summarily dismissed as it is by the magisterial work of John Ashton in a footnote: ‘This suggestion is surely too far-fetched to gain wide acceptance’ (1991:461). If Sanders is right in setting the action of Jesus in the temple at the heart of the nature of the Jesus movement, then the startling displacement of the story to the beginning of the narrative gives us a prima facie case for understanding the temple as a central concern of the gospel as a whole, even if only in its final redaction.

The major problem with McCaffrey’s study of the temple in John, in my opinion, is that he does not take account of the nature of John’s use of the temple, in other words his special emphasis, which would enable us to integrate this theme with the rest of the Gospel. Key to my understanding

² In an article which reached me after this paper was written, Udo Schnelle comes to a similar conclusion concerning the significance of this episode: ‘Damit gewinnt die Tempelreinigung den Charakter einer Grundsätzenerklärung’ (1996:359-373, esp 364). However, his interest is in the christological significance of the incident and its relation to a theology of the cross in John.

³ In particular, one might mention McCaffrey’s method of taking each word in succession and analyzing it by itself, as if words have a meaning outside of sentences. His conclusions in this respect are particularly suspect.
would be John's rejection of the building in Jerusalem (cf Schnelle 1996:368-369) and his elevation of the theme of the σκηνή of the desert wanderings. Jesus incarnation is actually his 'tenting' among us (καὶ ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ὑμῖν 1:14), so that the divine glory usually understood to be present in the temple building may instead be experienced by those with eyes to see in him (καὶ εἴδεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ 1:14). This theme is supplemented by a re-interpretation of the symbol of the temple in terms of merkabah mysticism, that is in terms of ecstatic experience of the divine presence interpreted in terms of temple symbolism. Jesus is in his own person the σκηνή presence of God during his descent and earthly ministry, but builds and constituttes the heavenly temple after his ascent and return to the Father. Not only so, but he opens a way for his disciples to gain access to the heavenly sanctuary. The central symbolic mode of this mystical experience is expressed in terms of ἀναβαίνω and καταβαίνω. In this way the lost means of access to the divine destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE is reconstituted by Jesus in his own person and made available to his own (cf Lemmer 1996:371).

3 JOHN'S COMMUNITY AS AN INTROVERSIONIST SECT

In my study of the Paraclete in the Farewell Discourses (Draper 1992:13-29) I had already come to the conclusion that the dynamics present in this tradition function as 'boundary maintenance in a community which could be described as an introversionist sect' which emerged after the failure of the war of 68-70 CE In the case of the σκηνή theme in the Gospel, it seems equally helpful to look at this question in terms of Bryan Wilson's work on colonised peoples in *Magic and the millennium: A sociological study of religious movements of protest among tribal and third-world peoples* (1973). His work, like most of the studies of millenarian movements is concerned with the relationship between religion and social change (Wilson 1959; Talmon 1962:401). This is one of the central concerns of this paper also.

To examine the Johannine community in terms of such a common anthropological pattern is not by any means to detract from its uniqueness but to test our understanding of its dynamics against what is known of similar movements elsewhere in space and time (cf Talmon 1962:402). In addition, focussing on this aspect of the John's Gospel allows us to counteract an over-literary approach which utilises sources from the 'great traditions' of Jewish and Graeco-Roman society to interpret what is a protest writing from the 'little tradition', using the terminology of James Scott (1977). While it must be admitted that the study of such a 'shadow' tradition will inevitably be problematic, this is no different from the work of the anthropologists in this field elsewhere:
The historical data are generally speaking too problematical, too poor to use for self-contained and largely independent case studies. The historians dealing with such materials are therefore driven to seek external controls and supplementary information by means of a more morphological analysis and more or less systematic comparisons with similar movements elsewhere (Talmon 1962:403).

Anthropologists have increasingly come to recognize the importance of understanding a society as rooted in a historical process and constantly undergoing transformation.

3.1 Profile of an introversionist sect
The main outlines of the profile of the introversionist sect according to Wilson may be drawn as follows:

1. It succeeds failed millenarian revolutionary movements in colonised societies, not directly as in a millenarian movement becoming an introversionist one, but in the broad context of a response of such societies to the new situation (1973:384, 441).

2. It reconstructs central elements of nativist traditions into a new synthesis. Features of the old pre-colonial society are refigured into a new and stable configuration which nevertheless is experienced as authentically indigenous: 'It might, at times, be regarded as an over-institutionalisation, a rigidification, not only of religious practices, beliefs, and procedures, but also of the entire pattern of life of a new community. What is rigidified is not, in fact, the actual pattern of the past, although it may be represented as such (or as a perfected pattern of social order). It is always a reconstruction, but in acquiring special sanctity, such a reconstructed way of life may be perpetuated, and even fossilised, as a total social system' (:384).

As Burridge has expressed it, 'Religious activities will change when the assumptions about the nature of power, and hence the rules which govern its use and control, can no longer guarantee the truth of things' (1969:7, cf 13).

'Tativist' is used here in the sense given by Linton (1979:415-421), namely the conscious, organized attempt to revive or perpetuate particular aspects of its culture in the face of an overwhelming threat from a culture other than its own.

What really happens in all nativistic movements is that certain current or remembered elements of culture are selected for emphasis and given symbolic value. The more distinctive such elements are with respect to other cultures with which the society is in contact, the greater their potential value as symbols of the society's unique character. The main considerations involved in this selective process seem to be those of distinctiveness and of the practicability of reviving or perpetuating the element under current conditions' (Linton 1979:416). This is true for revolutionary millenarian movements as well as introversionist ones. See Wallace (1956:278); Talmon (1962:420); Burridge (1969:47-48, 91-92).
3. It is essentially corporate and communal rather than individualistic (:385), but it tends to have a low organisational structure, relying rather on existing local structures (:448).

4. It withdraws from the world to create the new community, has none of the urgency of the revolutionist sect, and is resigned to the situation of the collapse of the old order (:387).

5. It is simultaneously conservative and accommodationist, paradoxically at one and the same time an attempt to preserve a distinctive nativistic way of life and ‘always an accommodation to the dominant culture, a compromise between life-patterns drawn from both the aboriginal past and the culture of the invader, but its cultural meaning to the faithful is of a separate native way’ (:401). In other words, the introversionist sect does not try to restore the lost past but to ‘preserve the faithful in a native and separate way of life. Tactily they endorse the surrender of those cultural traits that have had to be abandoned’ (:410). Values from the dominant culture are absorbed unconsciously: ‘The Peyote cult might inculcate the moral ideas of white society, but it did not do so in general adjustment to it, as would a conversionist faith, but rather in separation from it. The internalisation of the new values was a guarantee not of conscious accommodation, but rather of the integrity of sustained independence’ (:448).

6. It is only a minority of the native population who accept the new sectarian way, so that they are likely to be persecuted both by those who cling to the lost order and those who wish to accommodate to the victors and share in the new dominant society (:412). Persecution is likely to lead to the evolution of a new formal community (:438-439).

7. In modern Western categories, the response is essentially supernaturalist rather than political and economic (:412). Yet this division is not satisfactory since such societies do not make the distinction but conceive of reality as a single order.

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7 In his analysis of the same phenomenon, though with more emphasis on the role of the new prophetic initiator, Burridge argues that the prophet digs into tradition for the initial sources of his/her new authority and ‘provides new channels for tradition and fills out these new channels with new assumptions, new rules’ drawn in part from the cultural idiom of the oppressive colonial order to create a new synthesis (1969:47-48, 91-92).

8 ‘There is no impermeable membrane between the ‘mundane’ and the ‘magical’, for the primitive is not a dualist, operating with a model of ‘two worlds’, nor a schizophrenic operating with different principles—empirical and mystical—in different situations.... The spirits are at work in our real world and equally incontrovertibly, men go to the spirit world and return’ (Worsley 1968:xxvii-xxviii). It is for this reason that the use of the word ‘irrational’ to describe such introversionist responses is inappropriate, as Jarvie has rightly argued (1963:1-31; cf Worsley
8. Voluntarism will increasingly be stressed, even if at the same time the sect claims to speak for the 'native society' as a whole (:385, 412-413). While in theory the new movement is open to all members of the native society, religious affiliation becomes primary and this generates increasing conflict in that society.

9. It withdraws into a private realm, but the concern is nevertheless power, associated with rituals, dreams, visions which mediate power through inspirationalism (:414-417). It is a power associated with direct experience of the divine. It may stress (secret) knowledge, but it is experiential knowledge which is at stake: 'The Peyotist obtains power from the sacramental Peyote... The Indian's means of achieving knowledge is superior to that of the white man. The latter learns from books merely what other people have to say; the former learns from Peyote by direct experience... The vision provides a direct experience (visual, auditory, or a combination of both) of God or some intermediary spirit' (Slotkin 1979:298-9).

10. Introversionist movements are characterised by almost immediate schisms (:423-425). There are many simultaneous, competing attempts to produce the new synthesis. To some extent the ideas which result in a new introversionist sect may be 'in the air' rather than the creations of an individual religious genius, so that several manifestations of the same phenomena may appear independently of each other.

11. The new movement tends to reflect and promote inter-tribalism (:423).


9 Here I agree with Burridge that, 'All religions are concerned with power... Religions, let us say, are concerned with the systematic ordering of different kinds of power, particularly those seen as significantly beneficial or dangerous' (1969:5). In Israelite religion, the temple became the central medium of power and hence is of central importance in any re-ordering of power in a new religious synthesis.

10 Burridge provides an important analysis of the process by which the graduate emergence of a pool of communal wisdom leads first to tentative overt testing of new solutions and finally to the emergence of a sect(s) (1969:106-116). What Max Weber describes as 'charisma' can also be ascribed to the way in which the prophetic initiator articulates the inarticulate groundswell of emergent values in the social group. As Peter Worsley notes, 'Charisma, therefore, sociologically viewed is a social relationship, not an attribute of individual personality or a mystical quality' (1968:xii-xiv). James Scott similarly ascribes charisma to the power generated when the hidden transcript of the oppressed is first openly expressed in a breach of the public transcript of the ruling elite, although the way may have been prepared by a myriad of small probing explorations by others (1990:221-223).

11 Worsley also remarks that, 'The main effect of the millenarian cult is to overcome these divisions and to weld previously hostile and separate groups together into a new unity' (1968:228).
Summarising his findings concerning the Peyote cult of North American tribes, Wilson argues:

Peyotism appears, then to have been both an agency in which some, much simplified and adjusted, expression of Indian native identity was maintained, and, simultaneously, to have been a cultural innovation. It was easier than all the old ceremonies for which neither the objective environmental conditions nor the social structural base remained. It was still the expression of something distinctively Indian, which its mythology emphasized, and a ritual that accommodated some elements of the religious preoccupations of that past. Understandably, it appeared first as the solvent of the Indian way of life, and subsequently as the preservative for it (430).

For the Native American tribes, the medicine bundles as central loci of power for the community are replaced by the peyoti button and its rituals. The orientation of dreams and visions to war and buffalo hunting is transformed into mystical experience. The alienation resulting from social collapse under the pressure American colonialism is ameliorated by the experience of new community.

3.2 John’s Gospel as an introversionist response

In the same way, the treatment of the temple presented by John’s Gospel finds a new and meaningful synthesis of this fundamental native Israelite locus of power and ritual. It takes account of the irretrievable loss of the temple building after 70 CE and of the destruction of ritual and national culture which this entailed. At the same time, his synthesis reflects elements which can be found in a number of contemporary sources independently of the gospel, most notably in the writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls, with which it shares many ideas. Yet it is not simply to be explained by seeing John as an Essene writer become a Christian (even if that were to be so, as argued by Leaney 1972:38–61). The combination of themes and cultural patterns is a new and authentic response to the national crisis after 70 CE.

In essence, the breakthrough made by John’s Gospel consists in bringing together two well documented phenomena: the assertion of the tent of the desert wanderings against the temple on the basis of 2 Samuel 7, and the mystic experience of the heavenly temple worship through merkabah mysticism. The particular advantage of the knowledge we have through the Dead Sea Scrolls, is that both phenomena were found in those writings, without having been brought together and integrated. In other words, they were undeniably a contemporary part of the vortex of traditions in which the Fourth Gospel was shaped.
4 2 SAMUEL 7 AND THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE

4.1 2 Samuel 7 in John’s Gospel

The text of 2 Samuel 7:1-29 (with its parallel in 1 Chronicles 17:12-13) has played an important part in the development of Messianic hope in Israel, since God promises David that his seed will be established for ever on the throne of Israel:

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, 'Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house (n'לי) to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling (נלאתי ובהשלחנ). In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house (n'לי). When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name (בית לשם), and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house (נלי) and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.' (7:4-16)12

2 Samuel 7 seems to lie behind several passages in John’s Gospel, in particular John 7:42 and 12:34. Reim (1974:18-21; 156) concludes that this dependence on 2 Samuel 7:12-13 derives from the tradition and not the evangelist, who did not know the writing. This seems to be too great an assumption, since John’s method of utilising the Old Testament is often allusive and indirect. In any case, it is significant that the use of 2 Samuel to argue for a Davidic Messiah is put by the evangelists on the lips of the crowds. It does not represent the thinking of his own community concerning

12 Quotations from Scripture are taken from the Revised Standard Version.
the Christ. In terms of John's methodology, we would expect there to be an ironic reference in the words of the crowd which point to an underlying deeper meaning (O'Day 1986:97-104). The understanding of the crowd is not exactly false, it speaks correctly of what it does not know, but does not go far enough. The reader knows the true reference of the text of 2 Samuel and the way it applies to Jesus. The background to the way this important text may have been read by John is fortunately provided for us by a fragmentary commentary from Qumran, which it is worth quoting at some length.

4.2 2 Samuel 7 at Qumran

In the Midrash on this text from Qumran (4Q174), the text of 2 Samuel 7:10, 'I will appoint a place (אִמְתִּים) for my people Israel' is interpreted with respect to the eschatological temple which God will build in the last days (יִשְׂרָאֵל). This is then further interpreted by the citation of Exodus 15:17-18 as the fulfillment of the promise of a sanctuary on Mount Zion made to the people of Israel during their desert wanderings. The implication is, it seems, that the promise to Moses has not yet been fulfilled. Instead, the promise refers to the temple (מקדש) yet unbuilt into which no foreign or unclean people shall ever enter as they have done historically into the Jerusalem temple because of Israel's sin (1:3-6). Significantly, the basis for the security of the eschatological temple seems to be the presence of the angels of the Name who will continually be seen above it (הוֹלֵךְ עַל מְלוֹא לִבָּו). This eschatological temple is to be constituted by the new community, whose works of Torah will replace the sacrifices of the physical temple in Jerusalem (1:6-7).

The reference to the presence and work of angels in the eschatological temple is again taken up in 1:7-9, where 2 Samuel 7:11 ('And I will give you rest from all your enemies') is interpreted as the relief promised to the community from the plots of the sons of Belial (בני ביליא) who cause the members of the community to stumble. This is the role of the powerful Angel of Truth (מלאךحق) or Prince of Light (שביעם) according to 1QS 3:20, 24-25.

A telescoped version of 2 Samuel 7:11-14 is then interpreted as referring to The 'Branch of David who shall arise with the Interpreter of the Law [to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time.' This is further explicited by a citation of Amos 9:11, 'As it is written, I will raise up the tent (קְלוֹן) of David that is fallen (Amos ix,11). That is to say, the fallen tent of David is he who shall arise to save Israel.' A number of difficult issues in the text of 2 Samuel are omitted

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13 All references to the Scrolls in English are drawn from Vermes (1987).
in the Qumran interpretation by telescoping, including the double citation of the Divine Name in verse 11, which could give rise to dangerous speculation. On the other hand, it is significant that the building of a house (יהֵיכֹל) is referred to the emergence of the sprout of David described as a Sukkah or temporary shelter/tent (not however using the terminology of the לְצָרֵן in the desert).

4Q174 1:14-17 refer again to the formation of the community of the Scrolls utilising a concatenation of references to Psalm 1:1, Isaiah 8:11 and Ezekiel 44:10. 4Q174 1:18-2:15 describes the trials of the people of God under the rule of Belial and the nations under his control. Interestingly the fragment ends with a reference to the revelation of secret knowledge of the last days to Daniel by an angelic figure (Daniel 12:10). It is unfortunate indeed that we have no more of this fascinating midrash on 2 Samuel 7, especially since it includes the reference in Daniel to Lebanon, which the Scrolls seem uniformly to apply to the temple and to the community as the new temple of the Last Days (Vermes 1958:1-12).

What is interesting here is that a reference to the building of the temple by Solomon is nowhere in sight. Instead the prophecy to David is held to refer to the building of the eschatological temple, which is connected firmly to the foundation of the community, to the emergence of the Davidic messiah, and to the presence and mediation of angels. What is promised to David in the prophecy is a temple which still has not yet been built at the time of the writing at Qumran!

The same pesher refers to the coming messiah in terms of the Sukkah, the temporary shelter of Amos 9:11. In other words, if this elaboration on Amos is taken together with 2 Samuel 7, then the Davidic Messiah in his earthly career would be identified with a tent, whereas the future promise is of a new eschatological sanctuary. The play on the two senses of יהֵיכֹל in 2 Samuel 7 is obvious. It can mean either the ‘house’ of the temple or the ‘house’ of David (his descendents) (see McCaffrey 1988:94). 4Q174 takes the prophecy in the one sense as a שַעֲרֵי ו and in other sense as a נֹכּו. It provides a tantalising parallel to the understanding of Jesus as tent (ἐσκηνώσεως), which we have already observed.

4.3 Further echoes in the New Testament

This phenomenon at Qumran is not an isolated or eccentric interpretation of 2 Samuel 7, as the speech of Stephen in Acts 7:44-51 shows (cf Dunn 1991:64-70). This speech provides an interpretation of the prophecy of Nathan:

‘Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. Our
fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations which
God thrust out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, who found
favour in the sight of God and asked leave to find a habitation for the God of
Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not
dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says,
“Heaven is my throne,
and earth my footstool.
What house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?
Did not my hand make all these things?”
You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the
Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.’

Here the tent of witness (τιμωρία) is specifically contrasted favourably with
the house build by hand by Solomon, in which God could not possibly be
held to dwell. The rebuke to the stiff-necked people is addressed to the high
priest and the sanhedrin, that is, to the temple authorities (7:1). In the place
of the building made by hands Stephen contrasts the direct access to the glory
of the heavenly place where Jesus stands at the right hand of God. This is
seen as in continuity with the tented presence of God in the wilderness.

The temple and sacrificial symbolism of the Epistle to the Hebrews is
well known. Here we need only to cite the deliberate juxtaposition of an
earthly temple made with hands with the heavenly one Christ enters:

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true
one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf...
Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings
thou has not desired, but a body has thou prepared for me’ (9:23-10:5).

4.4 Conclusion
2 Samuel 7 has had a major role to play in the formation of the thinking of
one strand of Palestinian Judaism, which stands in the tradition of the desert
wanderings and the presence of God in the Tent of the Presence, in opposi-
tion to the claims of the temple and priesthood in Jerusalem. The author(s) of
John’s Gospel knew the traditions relating to 2 Samuel 7, although they are
not directly cited.

5 THE TENTED PRESENCE OF YAHWEH IN THE HUMAN
BODY OF JESUS
In the light of this tradition, the famous climax of the Logos Hymn with the
incarnation of the Logos take on a new significance: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἀρχι
εγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν εἰς ἦμιν, καὶ θεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς
μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας (1:14).
Brown has already drawn attention to the important associations of the word σκηνοθέτησις in the Old Testament, as the 'site of God's localized presence on earth' (1982:32; cf. Lindars 1972:94 though he, like Barrett 1955:138, prefers to see a reference to the tent of Wisdom) and draws attention to the promise of a future 'tented' presence of God in Zion in a number of prophecies, for example Joel 3:17 and Ezekiel 43:7. Kasemann is right in his assertion against Bultmann, that the emphasis lies on glory and not on flesh (1968:9-10). Brown concludes:

When the Prologue proclaims that the Word made his dwelling among men, we are being told that the flesh of Jesus Christ is the new localisation of God's presence on earth, and that Jesus is the replacement of the ancient Tabernacle. The Gospel will present Jesus as the replacement of the temple (ii 19-22), which is a variation of the same theme (:33).

If this is the case, it seems strange that this σκηνοθέτησις theme is not given greater prominence by Brown in his consideration of the overall theme of the Gospel. It is also strange that the suggestion of McCaffrey can be dismissed as cavalierly as it is by Ashton. There is a strong likelihood that it is a central theme, given the central significance of the temple in Israelite society. The displacement of Jesus' action in the temple to the beginning of the narrative seems to me to be conclusive in this regard.

6 THE ANGELS, THE MERKABAH AND THE TEMPLE

Merkabah mysticism has often been regarded as a late expression of Jewish piety, and has not received the attention it deserves from New Testament scholars. The extent to which fully developed mysticism, such as is evidenced later in the Kabbala, is present in first century Palestine is a matter of debate, but there is no doubt that interest in the divine throne-chariot was growing during this period. Gershom Scholem's major study of Jewish mysticism (1955:83) has shown that the main elements of subsequent Merkabah mysticism are already present in the first century BCE. Rowland demonstrated the essential continuity between apocalyptic as 'direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity' (1982:14) and later Rabbinic mysticism. By the time of Merkel Megillah 4:10 and Merkel Hagigah 2:1 the tradition is developed enough to cause unease to the authorities and lead to certain reservations and prohibitions (Rowland 1982:276; Gruenwald 1980:75; cf. Kanagaraj 1996:351 n 4). Restrictions were more stringently enforced in Babylonian circles than in Palestine it seems (Gruenwald 1980:78-82). Such interest in apocalyptic matters was not, Rowland argues, marginal to the interests of the Rabbis:
Thus we are probably not faced here with a few teachers indulging in speculative pursuits while the majority regarded them with suspicion, for it is likely that most rabbis were interested in the chariot-chapter and the account of creation, though only a few allowed such activities to lead them astray from the heart of Jewish piety (1982:347).

Nevertheless, it seems important to question whether it is right simply to identify apocalyptic works in general with merkabah mysticism in particular. Rowland rightly sees the characteristic interest of apocalyptic in the revelation of secrets hidden from normal human understanding, but the specific interest of merkabah mysticism is not knowledge but worship. In other words its concern is with direct experience of the presence of God or ecstasy (Gruenwald 1980:86; cf Scholem 1955:57–63). This experience should not be understood as a mere literary device, but as something actively sought by means of fasting, meditation on particular passages of Scripture (e.g Genesis 1 or Ezekiel 1), repetitive prayer, hymns, use of theurgic names, seals, adopting particular physical postures and purification rites leading to an altered state of consciousness in which the mystic receives the numinous experience of participation in the worship of heaven (Pilch 1993:231–244; Malina 1995:26–29 and passim). Gruenwald argues that the Hekhalot literature, at least, could be described as ‘technical guides, or manuals for mystics’ (1980:99).

It is no accident that merkabah mysticism is connected with traditions about the temple, which influence or even determine the picture of heaven and angelic worship (Rowland 1982:83). Mystical knowledge, vision and experience of the Divine comes through ascent into heaven through various courts of a cosmic temple towards the central sanctuary and the presence of God seated on the Divine throne-chariot or merkabah. The angelic seraphim hover above the chariot-throne (1 Chronicles 28:18) but also come and go from the Divine presence as mediaries between God and human beings (e.g Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1–3).

Intertestamental literature sees a steady increase of this kind of mysticism, spurred on no doubt by the vicissitudes suffered by the earthly temple during this period. Thus Sirach 49:8 identifies the vision of Ezekiel directly with a chariot of Cherubim (ἐπὶ ἄρματος χερουβίων). 1 Enoch 14:8–25 ascends to heaven and enters an inner house/temple greater than the outer:

And in every respect it excelled (the other)—in glory and great honour—to the extent that it is impossible for me to recount to you concerning its glory and greatness. And for its floor, it was of fire and above it was lightning and the path of the stars; and as for the ceiling, it was flaming fire. And I observed and saw inside it a lofty throne—its appearance was like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun; and (I heard?) the voice of the cherubim; and from beneath the throne were issuing streams of flaming fire.... And the Lord called me with his own mouth and said to
me, 'Come near to me, Enoch, and to my holy Word.' And he lifted me up and brought me near to the gate, but I (continued) to look down with my face (14:16–25).

Here, as Christopher Morray-Jones (1994:5)\(^ {14} \) has pointed out, language about up and down co-exists comfortably though paradoxically with language about inner and outer. Indeed, the innermost chamber is larger than the outermost. The number of chambers is variable, initially three as in the earthly temple, but later seven, or even myriads!

This merkabah mysticism can be firmly located within the cultural and theological world of the writer of John's Gospel, since it can be found also in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Firstly, a number of copies of a paraphrase of Ezekiel 1 have been found (4Q385.4), which conflates it with details from 2 Chronicles 3:12 and Isaiah 6:2. Secondly, ten copies have been recovered, not only from Caves 4 and 11 at Qumran, but also from the ruins of Masada, of thirteen Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. These songs of an angelic liturgy envisage worship in the community which draws it up into the presence of the heavenly worship. The songs are carefully structured, each opening with a call to the angels to praise God, followed by a liturgy of praise. The heavenly temple consists of seven concentric sanctuaries (ܸܠܠܐܽܘܕ or רבידָם) with an angel set over each, and the worship creates 'the framework of a ritual journey through the courts of the temple towards the sacred centre' (Morray-Jones 1994:9). As in Enoch, the innermost sanctuary is also the highest heaven, so that the terminology is both inner/outer and up/down. At the centre of the innermost sanctuary is the throne-chariot of God:

The [cherub]him prostrate themselves before him and bless. As they rise, a whispered divine voice [is heard] and there is a roar of praise. When they drop their wings, there is a [whispered] divine voice. The cherubim bless the image of the throne-chariot (ܡܪܟܒܐܐ) above the firmament, [and] they praise [the majesty of] the luminous firmament beneath his seat of glory. When the wheels advance, angels of holiness come and go. From between his glorious wheels there is as it were a fiery vision of most holy spirits. About them, the appearance of rivulets of fire in the likeness of gleaming brass... (4Q405 20.2.21–22).

The language is difficult to pin down and to specify, but the throne-chariot(s) (in this case perhaps one in each of the seven sanctuaries or רבידָם) come(s) to be identified with (an) angelic entity(ies). The merkabah understood as an angelic entity also is active in conveying the praise and

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\(^ {14} \) I am grateful to Christopher Morray-Jones for making available to me the text of this valuable paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Congress in Chicago, 1994, which is as yet unpublished.
The glory of God from one sanctuary to another. The climax of all the praise and glory is reached in the Twelfth Song of the Qumran Sabbath Sacrifice, when the whole heavenly court falls silent and God is enthroned on the *merkabah* (Murray-Jones 1994:16-17).

The point of the ritual celebration of these *merkabah* texts at Qumran as in the later Jewish mysticism of the Shi'ur Qomah is to enable the worshipers to be lifted up into the worship of the heavenly temple, to join the worship of the angels (Newsom 1985:19). They undertake a ritual journey of mystical experience. There is clear evidence that the Qumran community saw itself building this eschatological temple in its own community, so that its worship replaced the sacrifices in Jerusalem (Gartner 1965; Draper 1988:44-50). Later mystical Rabbinic writings developed the same complex of traditions in the direction of mystical ascent through the various celestial levels which represent the seven *hekhalot*. Knowledge of the names is essential if one is to pass from one level to the next. An important feature for our purposes is that there is a confusion in these mystical texts between ascent/descent and inward/outwards, since the journey is simultaneously envisaged as ascent to the heavenly places and a spiritual journey inwards to the temple within, which is associated with the ‘Glory of Adam’, the divine image at the centre of the human being (Murray-Jones 1994:21). However, what is clear is that the terminology of the mystical journey is described in terms of the words הַלָּיָה and יִדּוֹ.

The *merkabah* mysticism envisages the Holy of Holies as a body, which is reflected in speculation on the body of God (Rowland 1982:341-342; 1997:24). Finally, the ascent/descent of the *merkabah* mystic is understood as accomplished by means of the Divine Name, either assumed by the mystic directly in speaking forms of the Name, or mediated by a Name bearing angel(s) such as Metatron or Yaoel. This manipulation of numinous power is a guarantee of safety for the mystic in his ascent/descent, but is also fraught with danger (Gruenwald 1980:104-105). The commentator Rashi says, ‘they ascended to heaven by means of a Name’ (in Gruenwald 1980:108). If accomplished successfully, the ascent/descent resulted in a transformation of the mystic himself into the likeness of God (Murray-Jones 1994:25).

### 7 JESUS AS THE TEMPLE/ MERKABAH

In John’s Gospel, the concept of Jesus as the tented wilderness presence of God with his people on earth, is supplemented it seems with the idea of Jesus constituting or building the heavenly temple on his return to the Father. In doing so, he opens up the way for his disciples to gain mystic experience of

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15 Note the affinity between *merkabah* mystical literature and Jewish and Christian
the heavenly throne room by means of ascent and descent obtained through the worship of the community. It remains to chart the key points at which this theme emerges in the course of the narrative. Clearly this can only be done in a preliminary fashion here, and no attempt will be made to dialogue with the vast body of literature on these texts. That is a task which will have to be taken up elsewhere.

7.1 John 1:47-51

A key text is John 1:47-51:

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!' Nathanael said to him, 'How do you know me?' Jesus answered him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree (ὑπὸ τῆν σύκην), I saw you.' Nathanael answered him, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered him, 'Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree (ὑποκάτω τῆς συκῆς), do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man (δεισάθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγόνα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν οὐδό τοῦ ἄνθρωπο).

This is a path which has been well-trodden, of course, and most scholars agree that the story of Jacob’s ladder in Genesis 28:10-22 lies behind the passage (Barrett 1955:156; Brown 1966:89-90). What is clear is that Nathanael has had an experience of the divine which is substantial but inadequate. There is considerable speculation about the reference of ὑπὸ (ὑποκάτω) τῆς συκῆς. No solution to date has proved conclusive or satisfactory. In view of the fact that the partial but inadequate vision of the divine is contrasted with Bethel, the House of God which is not a building in Jerusalem (οὐκ ἐστιν τοῦτο ἄλλα ἢ οἶκος θεοῦ, καὶ ἡ πύλη τοῦ οὐρανοῦ Gen 28:17), it seems possible that the reference is in some way to the temple (Fritsch 1959:3-11, rather than to the study of Torah, Barrett 1955:154; Brown 1966:83; Lindars 1972:118). This matches the reference in the Synoptic tradition to the cursing of the fig tree and its resultant withering, which brackets the action of Jesus in the temple in Mark 11:12-24.

Another suggestion, which is appealing but would need much more research would be that the σύκη is a transliteration of the πυῆ and has been misunderstood. There is evidence that the various Hebraisms and Jewish customs so common in John were explained in subsequent redactions, usually with a formula, for example ὁ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον (1:41), ὁ ἐρμηνεύεται liturgy which is observed by Flusser (1963:129-162).
If an interpretation were not provided, then non-Aramaic speakers would have lost the point of reference. The possibility of a reference to the Sukkah is interesting because of John’s interest in this feast (see 7-9, especially 7:2), but also because it is a feast of theophany (see m.Sukkah 3:9). It would provide an ironic counterpoint to the understanding of Jesus as the Tent of the Presence. In Aramaic, a pun on the word would also allow the Sukkah (ﾉﾝ) to refer to vision or foreseeing (ﾉ☒, Jastrow 989). This would connect this passage with the story which follows, where the water, so much a part of the temple celebration of Tabernacles, is turned into wine. This would form a narrative bridge to the theme of the denunciation of the Jerusalem temple and its replacement by the body of Jesus.

Either way, what is important is that Jesus promises to Nathaniel that the partial vision he has had of the divine will be replaced by Jesus as the Son of Man, the new House of God, the mediator of a new vision still to come (οὐκεκαθή) of the open heaven (τὸν οὐρανὸν ἄνειμα, where ‘open’ has been added to the LXX). Note that this is referred to the future, in other words to the period after Jesus ascends to build the heavenly temple referred to John 14:1-6. I believe that Quispel (1956:281-283) is right to see here traces of merkabah mysticism. In the much later Hekaloth Rabbati 13:2, 14:1, 20:3 the mystic ascends by means of a ladder (Gruenwald 1980:120; Rowland 1982:22, 274). Here Nathaniel is promised mystic experience of the heavenly temple which Jesus builds in heaven when he returns to the Father (14:2-3). In the meantime the acts of Jesus during his earthly life reveal him to be the tabernacling presence of God with his people, they reveal his glory, glory which is the sign of the presence of God in the temple. In other words, Nathaniel represents the true Israelite who once experienced God incompletely through the Jerusalem temple but will now experience God fully in heavenly worship through Jesus as the Son of man.

7.2 John 2:12-22

In his version of the action in the temple in Jerusalem, John’s Jesus performs a more radical and violent act, not only turning over the tables but making a whip and driving the dealers out. Cullmann has already observed that this connects John with the anti-temple tradition we have traced (1976:49-51). The act of Jesus is not a cleansing of a legitimate temple, but an act of rejection and condemnation (Sanders 1985:61-76). Certainly, the first of the two Scriptural references from Zechariah 14:21 implies that the Jerusalem temple is corrupt and exploitative, a common enough theme both in the Psalms of Solomon and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, even in Rabbinic traditions (e.g m Ker 1.7), but the provision and testing of animals was an integral part of the sacrificial system. To prevent this would constitute an attack on the
earthly temple and its functioning. In the eschatological time promised by Zechariah 14:21 there will be no more traders in the house of the Lord. But Qumran saw no contradiction in condemning corrupt priest and temple, while simultaneously maintaining that the temple was illegitimate and had been replaced by the community as a spiritual community. Yet again, Qumran could cherish hope for the future construction of an idealised temple (11QTemple). Here Jesus, the true σκηνή presence of God with his people, confronts and condemns the building in Jerusalem, which never was legitimately God’s temple.

The saying concerning the destruction of the temple is referred instead to his body. The citation of Psalm 69:9 diverges significantly from LXX in that the future is used (κατεφώγεσαι με) instead of the Aorist. His body is the temple which will be destroyed on the Cross by God’s disobedient people, and still more significantly, will be raised up on the third day (cf Schnelle 1996:362). The temple will be reconstituted in a new way not on earth but in heaven. This will be the legitimate temple which the seed of David would build (not Solomon but Jesus). I believe this is the significance of both the Nathaniel reference and also the promise that Jesus would prepare a house with many μνακái (14:2). The goal of salvation is the open heaven, which Jesus prepares for his own, so that they can experience the new temple worship through mystic experience. In any case, the citation of Psalm 69:9 implies that the question of the temple held a central place in Jesus own ministry (ο θηλος του οικου σου) and therefore implicitly also in the understanding of the Johannine community. It was explicitly Jesus’ θηλος for the temple which resulted in his death. Presumably therefore it remained an issue in the relations of the community with the authorities in their own day, since it is highlighted in this way in the text.

7.3 John 2:23–3:21

One advantage of seeing this pattern of temple/Merkabah mysticism in John 2:12–22, 31 is that it makes sense of the Nicodemus passage which follows. We have already seen, that the theme of ascending and descending is a major part of the language and practice of merkabah mysticism. The emphasis here is on vision (αι δυναται ιδειν) by means of heavenly ascent/birth from above (γενεθη δι' ανωθεν) in 3:3. Seeing the signs and accepting that they come from God is not enough. Jesus comes from above to enable those below to ascend and experience the worship of the heavenly temple. Dunn (1991:225) rightly sees in 3:13 (καὶ οὕδεις ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ νῦς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) a polemic against the claims of mystics to ascend into heaven by their own work. Nevertheless, access to the Father is open through Jesus, who takes his disciples to himself and provides birth
from above' (14:3-6). This is the goal of his being ‘lifted up’ (ἐσωθη) as the Son of Man, in order that he may draw all people to himself (12:32f; cf Draper 1993:17-19). It is no accident that the gospel so often uses the concept of seeing and believing (e.g. 1:39, 46; 9:1-41; though note 20:29). The vision of God is the goal of worship in the new temple.


The story of the Samaritan woman is interesting for a number of reasons. Not least is the evidence it provides of the introversionist response of the Johannine community overcoming the traditional tribal hostilities between Judaeans and Samaritans. I would see the central impulse of the story in John being the question of the temple. What overcomes the traditional and deep rooted hostility is that the Jerusalem temple, which has in any case been destroyed at the time of the writing of the gospel, has been replaced by the heavenly temple built by Jesus. The theme of water is a central temple image. Jesus pronounces that he is the source of water and not the temple in Jerusalem or the temple at Gerizim (4:10, 14). This theme is, of course taken up in the courts of the Jerusalem temple in 7:37-39 (cf MacCaffrey 1987:320-232; Schnelle 1996:370-371). Jesus in his presence before the woman on earth already constitutes the ἐσωθή presence of God, but will in the coming time build the new temple in spirit and in truth, so that people will worship neither at Gerizim nor in Jerusalem (4:21). In 7:37-39, the image of water flowing from the temple may have converged with the idea of the idea of the rock struck by Moses from which water flowed, and which accompanied the people in the desert wanderings (as the Tent of the Presence?) according to later speculation which is reflected in Paul (1 Cor 10:4).

7.5 John 10:3-5

An important aspect of merkabah mysticism which we have already noted is that the mystic receives the name of God. Here the sheep are called κατ’ ὄνομα. Jesus goes ahead and the sheep follow, knowing his voice. A further verse which fits in well with this theme is the idea of Jesus as the door, through which his own go in and out, since ‘the idea of a door which is opened in heaven is characteristic of the tradition describing heavenly ascensions’ (Gruenwald 1980:58). The doors or gates to each of the concentric ἑκαλότ are guarded by hostile angels, which is why knowing and being known by names is so important. Up and down or in and out, both themes are used in descriptions of the vision of the throne. Again the introversionist overcoming of tribal divisions is indicated by the acknowledgement of ‘other sheep of mine, who do not belong to this fold; I must lead them as well, and
they too will listen to my voice. There will then be one flock, one shepherd' (10:16).

7.6 John 10:34–36

The puzzling saying in which Jesus replies to the accusation of claiming to be God by quoting Psalm 82:6, seems to refer to the angelic beings in the heavens, who are called ‘gods’ and are judged by God. Thus Jesus’ claim to be Son of God is vindicated. This also seems to take us into the realm of merkabah mysticism of angelic beings and the worship of the heavenly temple.

7.7 John 12:28–30

The Name of God is a theme closely linked with the temple in Jerusalem in traditional thinking (e.g. 1 Kings 8:27–29). The Name of God and Name-bearing Angels play a central role also in merkabah mysticism. The uttering of the Divine Name and thunder in Heaven and on earth are common, as is the idea that one particular angelic being bears the Divine Name, usually called Metatron or Jaoel (Gruenwald 1980:53–55; Rowland 1982:94–103). In this passage in John, Jesus refuses to turn away from the Cross, which is the hour of his glory. By his death, God glorifies his Name.

7.8 John 12:37–41

This whole passage is charged with significance in the context of the temple and merkabah mysticism, since here John refers twice to the vision of Isaiah of worship before the heavenly throne, firstly in citing 6:10 and secondly in his claim that ‘Isaiah saw his glory and spoke about him’ (Isaiah 6:1, 4). The passage was, needless to say, a favourite text in the merkabah tradition.

7.9 John 14:1–6

The climactic text in the theme we have been tracing is Jesus’ promise to prepare a τόπος for his own, and to come back to show them the right way to reach it:

Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house (ἐν τῷ οίκῳ τοῦ Πατρός μου) are many rooms (μοναὶ πολλαί); if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place (τόπος) for you? And when I go and prepare a place (τόπος) for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.
We have already seen in our look at merkabah texts, that a central idea (with many variations) is that of a heavenly temple or יִלְךָל with many sanctuaries or דְבוֹרָי, leading on into the innermost sanctuary where God is enthroned on the Name-bearing merkabah. The mystic is concerned to learn the way to the throne room, to join in the heavenly worship, often needing to learn the Divine Name. The journey is dangerous and a heavenly guide is often required.

John's Gospel takes up this tradition, which had been limited to the learned and literate. His gospel envisages this way to the experience of worship in the heavenly temple opened through Jesus to all those who are born from above. Indeed, Jesus is both the way, the means and the goal, since he himself builds the heavenly temple in his own person and is one with the Father. Jesus calls his own by the Name, and in the power of that Name (14:13) they can find their way to the experience of the Divine which had seemed closed after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.

This interpretation of John 14:2-6 is envisaged by Origen in de Principiis 2.11.6, where the μορφαί are understood to be the various heavens through which the saints must pass to reach the kingdom of heaven (i.e., the central sanctuary:

If anyone indeed be pure in heart, and holy in mind, and more practised in perception, he will, by making more reapid progress, quickly ascend to a place in the air, and reach the kingdom of heaven, through those mansions, so to speak, in the various places which the Greeks have termed the spheres, i.e., globes, but which holy Scripture has called heavens; in each of which he will first see clearly what is done there, and in the second place, will discover the reason why things are so done: and thus he will in order pass through all gradations, following Him who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who said, 'I will that where I am, these may be also.' And of this diversity of places He speaks, when He says, 'In My Father's house are many mansions.'

The Jewish conception is taking on the colouring of Gnosticism, but the contours are essentially the same.

It is characteristic of this kind of mystical experience of merkabah worship, that the journey is both up and down and in and out. The heavenly temple is envisaged as in one sense above, so that the worshiper undertakes a
journey up, but also is envisaged as a temple within, so that the adept journeys in to the Divine image in the centre of her/himself: ‘In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you’ (14:20).

7.10 John 15:1-10
I conclude with the reference to Jesus as the true vine, since, as has often been observed, the vine is often used as a symbol of the Jerusalem temple. The building itself was adorned at its entrance with a massive carved vine, plated with gold, which was one of the wonder of the world, according to Josephus. The temple is usually depicted visually with the vine over the entrance (cf Rordorf 1971). In this image of Jesus as the temple, his own are described as organically connected to him, as drawing life and sustenance from him. This unity with the Father and the Son is the source and goal of the ethical behaviour of the introversionist movement. Characteristically, their ethics are resolved into a matter of inner community harmony (Draper 1992:22, 27).

8 CONCLUSION
John’s Gospel may be characterised as a fundamental response to the failed millenarian movement in 68-70 CE, which left the central symbol of the Jewish people and culture in ruins. Its importance can be seen in the vain attempt fifty years later to undo the catastrophe on the battle field. To most, the loss of the temple must have seemed to be a permanent loss of the presence of God with his people. John’s introversionist response is to utilise existing strands in the Jewish religion and culture into new patterns, opening the way to direct experience of the divine presence in the heavenly realms.

Like all introversionist responses, however, his response is at once nativistic and accommodationist. This is why the gospel has so puzzled scholars, confused as to whether this represents Hellenism or Judaism. In order to express the new mystic experience of the divine through Jesus, John’s community utilises elements which are clearly related to the dominant culture of the Graeco-Roman world. The central puzzle of the Logos is to be explained in this way. It is not important whether the breakthrough was made by the writer of the Gospel or by his community, or was already ‘in the air’ in other nativistic responses to cultural and social domination. In particular, we can see in the Qumran community and its writings that both the idea of the non-material temple from 2 Samuel 7 and the idea of participation in heavenly worship by the elect are already firmly entrenched. The utilisation of these ideas was probably not experienced as syncretism, but it was nevertheless an innovation. John’s community experienced itself as possessing the means of the mystic experience of the divine presence, but its
innovations drew on it the wrath of both those who were clinging to the lost hope of a restoration of the physical temple and of those who were busy accommodating themselves to the new reality of the Graeco-Roman world and becoming its client rulers of the Jewish ἱστορ.

Of course this all had Christological implications, and related to the debate about the relationship between God and the angel who bore his Name. Some Jewish mystics seem to have gone as far as seeing 'seeing a second Power in heaven', an angelic mediator. However the debate over continuity between this speculation and primitive Christian christology (see Rowland 1982:271-348 and Dunn 1991:215-229) falls outside the scope of this paper.

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