

TEMPLE, SIGN, AND SACRAMENT: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John

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The significance of the Jerusalem Temple in John's Gospel has been the subject of a large number of monographs in the last decade. As a result of this work, scholars now generally accept not only that the Temple is a central theme in the Fourth Gospel, but that John is advancing what might be characterized as a "Temple christology"—that is, John wishes to show how the Temple and its liturgy find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, especially in his death and resurrection.¹

However, if our interpretation of John stops with that scholarly consensus—that John portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of the Temple—we are left with an apparently disconcerting situation; for, since Christ is now ascended, our Temple must be gone. And if this is true, the Church's situation would be not unlike that of Judaism after 70 A.D. and the destruction of the Temple.² But John's Temple christology is not conceived so narrowly as to limit it to Christ's immediate person and earthly ministry. Rather, the evangelist insists that Jesus' ministry continues in and through the intermediaries of the Spirit and the apostles.

In this article, I want to pursue these broader lines of the Temple fulfillment theme in John. In particular, I want to explore how John envisions Christ's fulfillment of the Temple and its festivals through the sacraments celebrated by the power of the Spirit, especially the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.³ I

¹ See, for example, Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells With Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001); Johannes Frühwald-König, *Tempel und Kult: Ein Beitrag zur Christologie des Johannesevangeliums* [Temple and Cult: A Contribution to the Christology of the Gospel of John], *Biblische Untersuchungen* 27 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1998); Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John*, *Paternoster Biblical Monographs* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006); Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 220 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002); Mark Kinzer, "Temple Christology in the Gospel of John," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37:1 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1998): 447–464; Lucius Nereparampil, *Destroy This Temple: An Exegetico-Theological Study on the Meaning of Jesus' Temple-Logion in Jn 2:19* (Bangalore: Dharmaram, 1978); Gunnar H. Østenstad, *Patterns of Redemption in the Fourth Gospel: An Experiment in Structural Analysis*, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* 38 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1998); Antony Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical and Theological Inquiry into Johannine Geography* (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1999); Stephen T. Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*, *Library of New Testament Studies* 312 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2006).

² Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 216.

³ On the presence of sacramental symbolism in John, see Raymond E. Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary" in *New Testament Essays* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965), 51–76; Alf Correll, *Consummat-*

present this article as more exploratory than demonstrative. That said, by bringing together some of the most fruitful findings of Johannine scholarship, I hope this reading of John will offer a new perspective on the many signs Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples and the relationship of those signs to the new life that John wishes to communicate by his writing (see John 20:30–31).

I will begin by briefly reviewing the depiction of the Temple in the Old Testament and its significance for the old covenant People of God. This will enable us to better understand how John's first-century Jewish readers would have received his identification of Jesus as the replacement of the Temple and its festivals.

Following that, I will examine the first Passover narrative in John (2:13–3:21). This will show three things: First, that John depicts Jesus as the "new Temple" at the outset of his public ministry, a theme he pursues throughout his gospel. Second, that Jesus performs his "signs" in the context of this broader fulfillment of the Temple and the Temple festivals. Third, that in the dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus moves from his "signs" to the sacrament of baptism, that is, rebirth by the Spirit (John 3:3, 5).

I will then consider John's narratives of the second Passover (John 6) and the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7–9). I hope to show that in these accounts, too, Jesus functions as new Temple, that the Temple festivals are the context for Jesus' "signs," and that the "signs" he performs point forward to the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.

Moving to the third and final Passover narrative of the gospel (John 11:55–20:31), I will focus on Jesus' last discourse (John 13–17), in which he confers on the disciples his own "Templeness" and commissions them to continue his mission—indeed, to perform "greater works than these." I will suggest that the

um Est: Eschatology and Church in the Gospel of St. John (New York: Macmillan, 1958); Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, trans. A. Stewart Todd and James B. Torrance, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 10 (London: SCM, 1953); Frederick W. Guyette, "Sacramentality in the Fourth Gospel: Conflicting Interpretations," *Ecclesiology* 3 (2007): 235–250; Francis J. Moloney, "When is John Talking about the Sacraments?" in *A Hard Saying: The Gospel and Culture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 109–130; P. Paul Niewalda, *Sakramentssymbolik im Johannesevangelium? Eine Exegetisch-Historische Studie* [Sacramental Symbolism in the Gospel of John? An Exegetical-Historical Study (Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1958)]; Bruce Vawter, "The Johannine Sacramentary," *Theological Studies* 17 (1956): 151–166. Johannine scholars range from the anti- or non-sacramental to the ultra-sacramental. Writing near the end of his life Raymond Brown claimed: "Most scholars recognize some form of sacramentalism" (*An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney [New York: Doubleday, 2003], 231). Brown's own moderate approach, outlined in "The Johannine Sacramentary" and pursued in his various commentaries, recommends itself for its exegetical common sense. Ironically, it is from Baptist scholar David Aune that one finds one of the most forceful defenses of sacramental and liturgical allusions in John: "It would therefore be incorrect to claim ... that basic elements of congregational life, worship, sacraments and the ministry play only insignificant roles in the Fourth Gospel. Such elements do not receive explicit treatment precisely because they are the presuppositions of the ecclesial context out of which the gospel arose." See *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, *Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 73. Emphasis mine.

sacraments fall under this category of “greater works,” and that this interpretation is supported by consideration of John 19:34, which symbolically depicts the sacraments flowing from the death and resurrection of Christ, and John 20:22–23, in which the apostles receive the Spirit in order to perform the “greater work” of remitting sins.

This exploration will allow me to suggest the following conclusion: that, if one follows the logic and symbolism of John’s Gospel, the sacraments, primarily baptism and Eucharist, truly are the specific times and places where the believer continues to experience Christ as the new Temple. Having established this central thesis, I will make some corollary conclusions in a brief theological reflection.

The Embodiment of God’s Covenant with David

The literature on both the historical role of the Temple in Israel and its literary importance in the Scriptures is enormous.⁴ From this literature, I want to stress the following points:

First, the Temple was *the embodiment of God’s covenant with David*.⁵ The central text of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:8–16), focuses on a son of David who will build a “house” for God (that is, the Temple), and for whom God will build a “house” (that is, a dynasty). The immediate, though penultimate, fulfillment of this covenant was found in David’s son, Solomon, who, like David, was an “anointed”

4 See, for example, the brief reviews by Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 31–63; and Hoskins, *Jesus as the Temple*, 38–107, and longer treatments by G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Jon D. Levenson, “The Temple and the World,” *Journal of Religion* 64 (1984): 275–298; John M. Lundquist, “What is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology,” in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, eds. H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, and A. R. W. Green (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983); Lundquist, “The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 21 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1982): 271–297; Lundquist, “Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament,” in *Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 293–305; Donald W. Parry, “Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1994), 126–151; Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (New York: Ktav, 1967).

5 “The Temple was the embodiment of the covenant of David, in which the triple relationship between Yahweh, the House of David, and the people of Israel was established.” Toomo Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel. A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-Dynastic Ideology*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 142 (New York: W. de Gruyter, 1977), 145; “Reinforcing the covenant with David, which formulated Yahweh’s election of him, the Temple now testified to Yahweh’s election of Mount Zion as his eternal dwelling-place” (Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 147). Besides the work of Ishida, we may mention the extensive research of John M. Lundquist (see n. 4 above), much of it collected in *Temples of the Ancient World*. Lundquist demonstrates the key position of the temple in the center of the ancient Near Eastern world-view or cosmology, not only for Israel’s neighbors (Egyptian, Canaanite, Mesopotamian, or Hittite cultures) but for Israel herself, as reflected in the Old Testament.

one—that is, a “Messiah” (Hebrew) or “Christ” (Greek).⁶ He also enjoyed the status of “son of God” according to the terms of the covenant.⁷ In Solomon we have a “Christ,” a Temple-builder, and the first *individual* in the canon of Scripture to be described as “son of God.”

Second, the Temple was *the dwelling place* of God’s “name,”⁸ his “glory,”⁹ and finally, God himself.¹⁰ Third, the Temple was *the place of pilgrimage*. Three times a year, all the men of Israel were required to journey to the Temple to celebrate the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.¹¹ For Israelites, participating in these feasts meant undergoing water washings (ablutions) to enter a state of ritually purity.¹² Only then were Israelites able to offer sacrifice¹³ and participate in the feast, which principally involved eating:¹⁴ usually the meat of the sacrifice,¹⁵ with bread¹⁶ and wine,¹⁷ the fruits of the Promised Land.¹⁸ Through participation in these Temple sacrifices, Israelites made atonement for their sins.¹⁹ The entire experience of the Temple—the ritual washings, the sacrifice, the eating and drinking, and the remission of sin—was only possible because of the work of the Temple ministers: the High Priest, his fellow priests, and the Levites.

Finally, a new Temple, often with divine properties, is a *central feature of the eschatology* of some of the prophets,²⁰ and at least an important feature in several

6 1 Kings 1:34, 39.

7 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:6–7.

8 Deut. 16:2; Ps. 74:7.

9 1 Kings 8:10–11; Ezek. 43:2–5.

10 Ps. 68:16; Ezek. 43:6.

11 Deut. 16:1–17.

12 Exod. 19:10–11; 2 Chron. 30:17–20; Lev. 11–15; esp. 15:31. The necessity of water washings is not explicit in the Pentateuch’s descriptions of the feast, but it was required by the logic of the laws of cleanliness in Lev. 11–15 and elsewhere. The penalty for defiling the sanctuary with uncleanness was death (Lev. 15:31); therefore, worshipers had to be ritually clean. Moreover, there were a wide variety of causes of unseemliness (see Lev. 11–15); thus, the average Israelite would need to purify himself by ritual washing at some point before participating in one of the Temple festivals. Archeologists have found large numbers of *miqva’ot*—ritual baths—in Jerusalem and its environs, used for these ritual cleansings during the Second Temple period.

13 Deut. 16:2, 6; Lev. 23:8.

14 Deut. 16:3, 7–8; see also Lev. 7:11–17; 2 Chron. 30:22; Isa. 25:6.

15 Deut 16:4, 7.

16 Deut 16:3; Lev. 23:6.

17 Isa. 25:6; Luke 22:18, 20.

18 Deut. 16:13. Although the texts cited are largely for the feast of Passover, celebratory eating was an important part of all the feasts, even when not mentioned in the biblical descriptions. All three pilgrimage feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) marked important agricultural events (barley harvest, wheat harvest, and fruit harvest, respectively) and were natural times to enjoy the Creator’s abundant gifts, similar to the American holiday, Thanksgiving.

19 See, for example, Lev. 4:20, 26, 35; 5:10, 13; 19:22; 15:25.

20 For example, Ezek. 40–48 and Joel 3:17–18.

others²¹—especially when one takes into account the relationship of the Temple, Zion, and Jerusalem.²² It will be useful to bear in mind these points concerning the Temple as we proceed to explore John’s deployment of Temple and Temple-festival motifs in his gospel, especially in relation to Jesus.

The First Passover and the Cleansing of the Temple

While the synoptic tradition describes the public ministry of Jesus as beginning in Galilee, John chooses instead to show Jesus revealing himself first in Judea, beginning in Jerusalem, at the Temple during the Passover (John 2:13–3:21).²³ Moreover, during these opening public scenes, John depicts Jesus proclaiming himself to be the new Temple (John 2:19–21). The account of Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple thus announces themes that are unique to John and will continue to be emphasized throughout his Gospel—Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Temple feasts.²⁴

Until the final week of his earthly life, Galilee forms the setting for most of Jesus’ ministry as it is depicted in the synoptics. By contrast, the majority of John’s Gospel is set in Jerusalem, and specifically in the Temple.²⁵ Moreover, most of the events in John take place during the Temple festivals, the succession of which serve to structure much of the narrative:²⁶ Passover;²⁷ an unnamed feast, possibly Pentecost;²⁸ Passover again;²⁹ Tabernacles;³⁰ Dedication;³¹ and the final Passover.³²

Jesus’ teachings and “signs” during these liturgical festivals often correspond to the central themes of the festivals themselves; some scholars have gone so far as to argue that they relate specifically to the Jewish lectionary readings for those

21 Compare Zech. 6:12–15; 8:9–12; 14:16–21; Isa. 2:1–4; 56:3–6; 66:18–22; Jer. 33:10–11; Hag. 2:1–9, 15–19; Dan. 8:14; 9:17, 24–27; Mic. 1:1–4),

22 See Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, 64–65; Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 69–89.

23 Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, xix.

24 Compare Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, 59.

25 See Correll, *Consummatum Est*, 44; Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, xiii–xix. For parts of the Gospel set in or near Jerusalem: see John 2:13–4:2; 5:1–47; 7:10–10:39; 12:12–20:31 (Jerusalem); 11:17–53; 12:1–11 (Bethany)—roughly three-quarters of the Gospel.

26 For a sustained treatment of the subject, see Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989). Concerning the structure of the Fourth Gospel, the feasts are only one of several structuring elements. For a review of almost all the major structural proposals, see George Mlakushyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, *Analecta Biblica* 117 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1987), 17–85.

27 John 2:13–3:21.

28 John 5:1–47.

29 John 6:1–71.

30 John 7:1–10:21.

31 John 10:22–39.

32 John 11:55–20:31.

feasts.³³ What is John's intent in emphasizing the Temple and the festivals? I would argue that it is to demonstrate that Christ is the fulfillment of the Temple and the worship performed there.³⁴

The Passover was the greatest feast of Judaism in the period of the Second Temple, roughly 520 B.C. to 70 A.D. Its importance is reflected in the fact that John records three Passover celebrations during Jesus' public ministry. John may have known of Jewish traditions that anticipated the arrival of the Messiah at Passover.³⁵ Since Deuteronomy specified that the Passover lamb must be sacrificed at the central sanctuary (Deut. 16:2), the celebration of Passover was inextricably bound to the Temple. It was a national festival—again we think of the great national Passovers presided over by Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30) and Josiah (2 Chron. 35), those righteous sons of David and kings of Israel, who were solicitous for the care and maintenance of the Temple.

In John 2:13–25, we see Jesus, recently hailed as king of Israel (see John 1:49), showing his solicitude for the well-being of the Temple. Driving out the merchants and money changers, he rebukes them for making his "Father's house" (*oikon tou patros mou*) a "house of trade" (*oikon emporiou*). Jesus' actions and words here should be understood in light of Zechariah 14:21, which says of the eschatological Temple: "there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day."³⁶ The Judeans question Jesus, "What sign will you show us, since you do these things?" to which Jesus responds, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up." They misunderstand, but the evangelist clarifies: "He spoke about the Temple of his body."

Although the literature on this passage is vast,³⁷ here we should summarize just some salient points. First, by beginning Jesus' public ministry with the Temple cleansing, John casts his whole ministry in light of the concept that he is the new Temple.³⁸ Second, by calling the destruction and raising of his Temple-body a

33 Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship: A Study in the Relation of St. John's Gospel to the Ancient Jewish Lectionary System* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960). But see the cautions of Michael A. Daise, *Feasts in John: Jewish Festivals and Jesus' "Hour" in the Fourth Gospel*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2 Reihe* 229 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 81–87.

34 See Hoskins, *Jesus as the Temple*, 2.

35 Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, 60–61.

36 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII*, Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 121.

37 Lucius Nereparampil has devoted a monograph to the pericope (*Destroy This Temple*, see n. 1), and every major work on the Temple-theme in John devotes extensive space to its exegesis.

38 Compare Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 84; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 101; Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, 59. Also, see Rudolf Schnackenburg's summary: "The explanation given in [John] 2:21 gives the saying about the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple a similar, supremely christological significance. Further this explanation makes Jesus the 'place' where God is to be adored, the true 'house of God' (compare 1:51). With him and in him the time of

“sign,” John establishes a strong link between this narrative and the account of Jesus’ death and resurrection. This suggests that his death and resurrection should be interpreted as a Temple-(re)building account, while at the same time identifying in advance these events as the climactic “sign” in the sequence of “signs” that help to structure the narrative.³⁹ The “sign” of his death and resurrection—the “destruction” and “raising up” of his Temple-body—is the definitive “sign” toward which all the others are ordered: “In the context of the *definitive* sign that Jesus speaks about, all the other ‘signs’ take on their significance.”⁴⁰

Finally, the proximity of Passover (John 2:13), the reference to Jesus’ body, and to the consuming or “eating up” (*kataphago*) of Jesus (John 2:17), establish links between this episode and John 6, where, on another Passover, Jesus will speak of the necessity of eating (*phago*) his flesh and blood.⁴¹

The concept of Jesus as new Temple is, of course, not limited to this passage.⁴² Already in John 1:14 (which reads, literally: “The Word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us”) and in John 1:51 (“you shall see angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man”), Jesus has been compared to two precursors of the Temple: the Mosaic Tabernacle and Jacob’s sanctuary at Bethel.⁴³ In John 4, the concept of Jesus as the “new sanctuary” is present during the discussion of the future irrelevance of both the Gerizim and Jerusalem temples.⁴⁴

the worship of God ‘in spirit and truth’ (4:23) has dawned. His body is the source of the waters of life (19:34; so too 7:38), his person is the vine through whose vital force the disciples can work and bear fruit (15:4–8). ... [John’s] ecclesiology is based entirely on christology, though he does not reflect further on the relationship between the glorified body of Christ and the ‘body’ of the Church. This Pauline thought is not found in John, though the evangelist in his own way gives equally strong expression to the doctrine of the unity of the risen Lord with his Church.” *The Gospel according to John*, 3 vols. (New York: Seabury, 1980–82), 1:352; cited by Celestino G. Lingad, Jr., *The Problems of Jewish Christians in the Johannine Community*, *Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia* 73 (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2001), 257.

39 Nereparampil, *Destroy this Temple*, 92–98; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 96–97.

40 Lingad, *The Problems of Jewish Christians*, 270;

41 Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 85–86. “Jesus will be consumed. The Hebrew word lying behind ‘consume’ commonly means ‘to eat,’ but it ... can be used of the fire that consumes the sacrifice offered to God. ... It is possible that here too there is an allusion to Jesus’ death being a sacrifice.” Kerr does not see the connection with John 6, where Jesus speaks of his “flesh” (*sarx*) and “blood” (*haima*) being “consumed” (*phago*). In John 6, too, there are strong sacrificial overtones and omens of the passion: “The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (6:51). Granted, in 2:21 Jesus speaks of his “body” (*soma*) and in 6:51–58 of his “flesh” (*sarx*) and “blood” (*haima*), but did the evangelist really expect his first-century readers to make *no connection* between Jesus’ “body” and his “flesh” and “blood”? Kerr thinks that is the case (*The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 94), but this seems to me quite unreasonable.

42 On Jesus as the New Temple in John, see the concise summary of Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 192–200.

43 Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 72, 133, 136–166; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 23–27; Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 116–135.

44 This is the major thesis of Um’s monograph, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John’s Gospel*

We also see a dramatic identification of Jesus and the Temple in John 7–10:21. There, the backdrop is the festival celebrating the building of the Temple (Tabernacles), during which the priests daily poured out water from the Pool of Siloam on the altar steps and kept the Temple courts illuminated twenty-four hours a day in anticipation of the eschatological prophecies.⁴⁵ In the midst of this, Jesus claims himself to be the true source of water and light, and brings light to a blind man through the waters of Siloam, thus supporting his claim to be the true Temple.⁴⁶

In John 10:22–42, during the Feast of Dedication, which commemorates the re-consecration of the Temple by the Maccabees, Jesus describes himself as the one “consecrated” by the Father and sent into the world—that is, he calls himself the new sanctuary.⁴⁷ In John 14:2–3, Jesus again refers to his “Father’s House,” a Temple reference alluding to John 2:16 and supported by other Temple references—the house with many “rooms” is probably the many-chambered Temple of Ezekiel 41–43; and the “place” (Greek: *topos*; Hebrew: *māqôm*) he goes to prepare connotes the “sacred place” of the Temple. In the final analysis, this passage describes Jesus’ departure to be prepared as a Temple wherein his disciples will “dwell.”⁴⁸

Finally, in the climax of this Temple symbolism, in John 19:34, the evangelist records the flow of blood and water from the side of Christ, which is to be understood against the background of the river prophesied to flow from the eschatological Temple as well as the blood and water which flowed from the Temple altar in Jerusalem.⁴⁹

(see note 1), which, despite its sweeping title, is actually an exegetical study limited to John 4:1–26. See also Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 85–113; Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 135–145; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 167–204; Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, 78–94.

45 See Ezek. 47:1–12; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8.

46 Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 115–143; Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 160–170; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 226–241.

47 See Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 145–155, esp. 153; Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 170–175; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 253–255.

48 This is the major thesis of James McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms: The Temple Theme of Jn. 14,2–3*, *Analecta Biblica* 114 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1998), 246–255.

49 “At the south-western corner [of the altar] there were two holes like two narrow nostrils by which the blood that was poured over the western base and the southern base used to run down and mingle in the water-channel and flow out into the brook Kidron.” (Mishnah Middoth [Measurements] 3:2). For other mentions of this drainage channel, see Mishnah tractates *Yoma* [Day of Atonement] 5:6; *Zebahim* [Sacrifices] 8:7; *Temurah* [Exchange] 7:6; *Tamid* [Always] 5:5. The same channel that was used to drain the blood into the river was also used for pouring out drink-offerings of wine. See Mishnah *Meliah* [Sacrilige] 3:3. Texts in *The Mishnah*, trans. Herbert Danby (Oxford: Oxford University, 1933); Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988). McCaffrey, Kerr, Hoskins, and many commentators link John 7:37–39 with 19:34. Coloe demurs (*God Dwells With Us*, 208–209).

Jesus' Baptismal Mystagogy

Thus, we can see that John introduces the theme of Jesus as new Temple in John 2:13–21 in order to pursue that theme at key points throughout the remainder of his gospel. As numerous scholars have noted from the strong literary connections, the Passover and new Temple contexts of John 2:13–25 are carried over to the next passage, Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus (John 3:1–21).⁵⁰

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many trusted in his name, seeing the signs (*semeia*) which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself to them, since he knew all (*pantas*), and he had no need that anyone should testify about a man (*anthropos*), for he himself knew what was in a man (*anthropos*).

Now there was a man (*anthropos*) of the Pharisees, Nicodemus his name, ruler of the Judeans. This (man) came to him (at) night and said to him "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one would be able to do these signs (*semeia*) which you do, unless God was with him."

The Temple cleansing culminated in a discussion of the "signs" (*semeia*) which Jesus performed, and how "men" (*anthropoi*) came to believe in his name because of the signs. This leads directly into Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, who is presented in the very next verse (John 3:1) as a "man" (*anthropos*) who has come to believe because of the "signs" (*semeia*). Thus, the conversation with Nicodemus should be understood against the context of Jesus having indicated himself to be the new Temple during Passover.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus to discuss the "signs." The use of the term *semeia* ("signs") to describe Jesus' miracles is characteristic of John's Gospel. The synoptics typically use the term *dynameis* ("mighty deeds"), to describe the same phenomena. The difference in terminology seems intentional. John employs "signs" because he wishes to stress the role of the miracles, not as ends in themselves, but as indicators or pointers to a deeper reality—such as Jesus' identity as Messiah, Son of God, indeed, God himself.⁵¹ The signs do point to Jesus' messianic and divine identity, to be sure; but, as I will argue, they also point to something greater than

50 See Mlakuzhyil, *Christocentric Literary Structure*, 105: "A good example of a few verses forming a 'bridge' between two adjacent pericopes is found in 2:23–25, which joins Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (2:13–22) to his dialogue-discourse with Nicodemus (3:1–21)"; also Lingad, *The Problems of Jewish Christians*, 263; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary 4 (London: Continuum, 2005), 144; George F. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary 36 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 45–46.

51 "The writer does not use our modern concept of incident, but that of a 'sign' (*semeion*) and thereby he means to point again to the double quality of an event at once visible and demanding a higher understanding in the context of faith." Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 46.

themselves—the coming activity of the Spirit in the sacraments, which continues the presence and work of Christ himself.

The gospel, as scholars have suggested, is structured according to a succession of Jesus' signs which are all associated with Israel's liturgical feasts.⁵² Usually, commentators point to seven signs performed by Jesus:⁵³ the changing of water into wine at Cana;⁵⁴ the healing of the royal official's son;⁵⁵ the healing of the paralytic at Bethesda;⁵⁶ the feeding of the 5000;⁵⁷ the walking on water;⁵⁸ the healing of the man born blind;⁵⁹ and the raising of Lazarus.⁶⁰ Although this is a popular reckoning of John's "signs," it should be noted that there is no textual indication that the walking on water is to be considered a "sign." At the same time, Jesus' death and resurrection is called a "sign" already in John 2:21. Therefore, I would suggest that the walking on water is not one of John's intended "signs," but rather that the death and resurrection of Christ is the seventh and climactic "sign" of his gospel.

The term "sign" (*semeion*) is deployed frequently (sixteen times) in John's first twelve chapters, but only once in the remaining chapters (see John 20:30). This is one of the reasons scholars generally see a two-fold division of John into a so-called "Book of Signs" (roughly John 1–12) and a "Book of Glory" (John 13–21). Arguably, John 2:18–19 already indicates—from the very start of Jesus' ministry—that the destruction and raising up of his body (which occurs in the "Book of Glory") is the ultimate "sign" confirming Jesus' authority. Therefore, the "Book of Glory" is related to the "Book of Signs" as its climax, bearing witness to the greatest of all Christ's "signs."

With this background and context, we return to the dialogue of Nicodemus and Jesus. Nicodemus wants to discuss Jesus' signs, which he understands as physical miracles indicating divine power at work through Jesus:

52 "The overall plan which John gave his Gospel flows immediately from his understanding of Jesus' ministry as one of 'signs.'" Dominic Crossan, *The Gospel of Eternal Life: Reflections on the Theology of St. John* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), 41.

53 Many scholars (for example, recently Willis Hedley Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2 Reihe* 186 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004]) insert the walking on water (John 6:16–21) as the fifth sign, and omit the resurrection. However, the walking on water is never called a sign, it receives no further development or discussion, and was witnessed by no one but the disciples. The death and resurrection, on the other hand, is announced as a sign already in John 2:18–21. On this see Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 10–11.

54 John 2:1–11; compare John 2:11.

55 John 4:43–54; compare John 4:54.

56 John 5:1–15; compare John 6:2; 7:21–24, 31.

57 John 6:1–15; compare John 6:14.

58 John 6:16–21.

59 John 9:1–41; compare John 9:16.

60 John 11:1–54; compare John 12:18.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew (*anōthen*), he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus understands enough to know that the *semeia* suggest that Jesus is a teacher of divine origin. While Nicodemus does not ask a question, the evangelist suggests that his remark implied a question about the nature of the signs; hence, Jesus is described as “answering” him. However, Jesus’ “answer” (as is so often the case in John) initially seems unrelated to the stated or implied question. Jesus begins to speak to Nicodemus about a spiritual and divine birth, a birth “from above” (*anōthen*) necessary to “see the Kingdom of God.” In this, he picks up on the royal theme announced in John 1:49 (“You are the King of Israel!”) and perhaps implied by Jesus’ exercise of king-like prerogatives over the function of the Temple in the narrative immediately preceding.

Nicodemus interprets Jesus’ words in terms of *physical miracles*—this is as much as he has been able to comprehend about the “signs” to this point. His incomprehension is detected in his inquiry about how a man can return to his mother’s womb. He is understandably baffled because—even granted that Jesus has miraculous powers over the physical world, the physical requirements for a rebirth in the natural sense seem not only supernatural but counter-natural and positively absurd. Jesus continues, “Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”

This statement clarifies his meaning and now the reader, if not Nicodemus, begins to understand that Jesus is talking about baptism.⁶¹ John has prepared the reader to associate water, baptism, the Spirit, and divine sonship almost from the beginning of the gospel. In his prologue, he emphasized the need to become “children of God” by being “born of God”—as opposed to natural birth “of blood, of the will of the flesh or the will of a man.”⁶² In addition, John has already given the reader an account of Jesus’ own baptism in water, in which the Spirit descends and marks Jesus out, not only as child, but as “Son of God.”⁶³

Here in his audience with Nicodemus, the motifs of water, baptism, Spirit, and divine sonship are all correlated. Jesus’ words about being “born again (anew),”

61 See Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 76; Lingard, *The Problems of Jewish Christians*, 280–282.

62 John 1:12–13.

63 John 1:31–34.

that is, becoming a child once more, and being “born of water and Spirit,” pick up on those motifs of divine begetting associated with water and Spirit announced earlier in the gospel.⁶⁴ John’s Christian readers would have understood the reference to rebirth by “water and Spirit” as a reference to Christian baptism, as the evangelist no doubt intended them to.⁶⁵ It is not accidental that the Nicodemus dialogue is followed immediately by references to Jesus and the disciples baptizing,⁶⁶ further description of John the Baptist’s baptismal ministry, and a discussion of ritual washing leading to affirmation of Jesus’ divine sonship,⁶⁷ and yet another account of Jesus’ baptismal ministry.⁶⁸

The dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus continues:

Nicodemus said to him, “How can this be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.”⁶⁹

While a baptismal reference is certainly intended in John 3:5, Jesus’ subsequent dialogue does not develop the water motif or deal with the specific actions of baptism; instead he focuses on the reality of the Spirit’s action. The emphasis in John’s gospel is always on the divine initiative; baptism, then, is not described as

64 Thus it is unnecessary to regard the mention of “water” in John 3:5 as intrusive in context and relegate it to a second hand, as Bultmann and others have done.

65 Some see in “water and Spirit” a reference to natural birth (water) followed by spiritual birth (Spirit). But Beasley-Murray points out that in context, “born of water and Spirit” is one event, an explication of what it means to be “born from above” (*John*, 47–49). Others suggest “water” simply means “Spirit” (Lincoln, *John*, 150), but this reduces Jesus’ statement to a banal redundancy: “You must be born of Spirit and Spirit.” See Matthew Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, *Analecta Biblica* 72 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1977), 181: “If the word ‘Spirit’ is to be taken in a real sense, and not figurative, the same should also be said of ‘water’, as both are put in the same way and coordinated with *kai*. It is worth noting that John 3:5 is in a context where John speaks often of baptism (compare John 1:25–33; 3:22, 23, 26; 4:1–2). Besides, the figurative understanding of ‘water’ is opposed to the whole tradition, which as we shall see, usually took it for granted, that ‘water’ here referred to Christian baptism.”

66 John 3:22.

67 John 3:23–36.

68 John 4:1–3.

69 At some point after verse 13, the dialogue format is lost and the voice of the evangelist seems to take over. Some place the division between vv. 13 and 14, others between vv. 15 and 16, still others argue for understanding the quotation of Jesus’ words as extending all the way to the end of v. 21.

a human action but as the human reception of divine action. One does not “birth oneself,” rather one “is born” (*gennethenai*). The verb *gennaō*, “to bear, beget” in John always appears in the passive, as the individual (*anthropos*) is always acted upon by the Spirit. As in John 1:13, where the evangelist stresses that the human will is not involved in the begetting of children of God, so in his conversation with Nicodemus Jesus emphasizes divine sovereignty in spiritual birth (John 3:8: “the wind blows where it wills ... you do not know ... where it goes,” John 3:8).

Nicodemus has not understood Jesus’ teaching on “birth from above” by means of “water and Spirit.” His response (“How can this be?”) is a rhetorical question implying: “This cannot be.” As such, it is an expression of disbelief and therefore a rejection of the testimony of Jesus and John the Baptist. This reading is supported by Jesus’ response (“You do not receive our testimony ... you do not believe”).⁷⁰

There is a discernible effort made by Jesus in this dialogue to lead Nicodemus from an “earthly” sphere of reference to a “heavenly” one.⁷¹ Jesus’ conversation implies a dualism between the “Spirit” (*pneuma*) and the “flesh” (*sarx*), between the “heavenly” (*epourania*) and the “earthly” (*epigeia*).⁷² Clearly, his intent is to guide Nicodemus from the lower to the higher, from the earthly to the heavenly,⁷³ with the earthly regarded as precondition of the heavenly: “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”⁷⁴

70 Lingad takes Nicodemus as a representative of a type of Jewish Christian encountered by the “Johannine community”: “This nonplused reaction [in 3:9] just shows their inability to move away from their own categories into the mysterious life in the Spirit that Jesus is offering. ... Nicodemus and the type of Jewish Christians he symbolizes can be [characterized by] their basic attitude of partial faith” (*The Problems of Jewish Christians*, 297).

71 “Jesus claims [in v. 12] that so far he has spoken to Nicodemus of earthly things, and that, since he has failed to believe, there is no point in going on to speak of heavenly things. Readers might well ask whether the topic of Jesus’ conversation in vv. 3–8 was not already heavenly realities. It is likely, however, that ‘earthly things’ is a reference to Jesus’ attempt to move from the earthly level of physical birth and the blowing of wind to the heavenly. Since such an attempt failed to evoke faith, it would be useless to try to speak directly of heavenly things without analogy to the earthly.” Lincoln, *John*, 152.

72 Jesus’ mode of instruction here is identical to the mode of instruction St. Irenaeus, circa 180 A.D., attributes to God in the Old Testament: “He instructed the people, who were prone to turn to idols, instructing them by repeated appeals to persevere and to serve God, calling them to the things of *primary* importance by means of those which were *secondary*; that is, to things that are *real* by means of those that are *typical*; and by things *temporal*, to *eternal*; and by the *carnal* to the *spiritual*; and by the *earthly* to the *heavenly*; as was also said to Moses, ‘You shall make all things after the pattern of those things which thou saw in the mount.’” *Against the Heresies*, Bk. 4, Chap. 14, 3. Text in in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 479.

73 “The tactic of the Johannine discourse is always for the answer to transpose the topic to a higher level; the questioner is on the level of the sensible, but he must be raised to the level of the spiritual. An appreciation of the radical difference between the flesh and the Spirit is the true answer to Nicodemus.” Brown, *John I–XII*, 128.

74 See Lingad, *The Problems of Jewish Christians*, 298–299.

This form of pedagogy from the “earthly” to “heavenly” may aptly be described by the Church’s term “mystagogy.”⁷⁵ In particular, in the Nicodemus dialogue there is a mystagogy that leads from the *signs* that Jesus performs to the activity of the Spirit in the *sacraments*—in this case, the sacrament of baptism.

At this point, we are in the position to step back and take in all of John 2:13–3:21 in one glance. During Passover, Jesus enters the Temple and cleanses it, fulfilling prophecies of the eschatological Temple (Zech. 14:21). Asked to produce a “sign,” he speaks of his coming death and resurrection as a destruction and rebuilding of the Temple. During the Passover festival, he performs other *semeia* which elicit a superficial belief among the *anthropoi*. A paradigmatic example of the superficially-believing *anthropoi* is this *anthropos*, Nicodemus, who comes to talk with him about the *semeia*. Jesus wishes to move the conversation from the *semeia* to the deeper realities they are intended to signify—in this case the divine birth wrought by the Spirit in baptism. But Nicodemus is unable, at least at this point in his experience, to receive this mystagogical teaching.

Jesus’ words and actions in this Passover narrative, then, point forward to a great “sign” yet to come—the destruction and raising of his body, also during the Passover. By this great sign, Jesus will replace the stone Temple (with his body, the new Temple⁷⁶), and will fulfill the Passover (himself becoming the “Lamb of God”⁷⁷). But the fulfillment of Temple and Passover is not the final *terminus* toward which this climactic finish to his “signs” points. This reading is supported by the mystagogical catechesis given to Nicodemus. All of this suggests that John envisions the fulfillment of the Temple and the Passover continuing in the sacramental signs of the Church, which themselves point to the work of the Spirit.⁷⁸

75 Mystagogy (literally “revelation of the mysteries”) is the theological explanation of the mysteries that are communicated in the Church’s sacraments. In the original faith of the Church, everything in Jesus’ life was a sign of the mystery, the plan of God (see Eph. 3:19), and, as Pope St. Leo the Great (d. 461) taught, “what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries,” that is, his sacraments. Quoted in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2d. ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 1115. Traditional liturgical catechesis in the Church followed the example of Jesus in John, “proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the ‘sacraments’ to the ‘mysteries.’” *Catechism*, no. 1075. See generally, Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Pueblo, 1989).

76 Compare John 2:21.

77 Compare John 1:29, 36.

78 “We would insist here that the connection between these ‘signs’ and the later sacraments cannot be taken as simply the relation of past material action (cure of blindness) and present spiritual reality (gift of faith). Jesus’ earthy activity attacked *all* the evils of human existence, including both sin and sickness. . . . That the ‘signs’ reach consummation after the hour of glorification and retain power in the sacraments of the community is perfectly true, but the line between them is homogenous and not a jump from the material level to the spiritual.” Crossan, *Gospel of Eternal Life*, 41.

The Second Passover and the Eucharist

The events of Jesus' second Passover as recorded in John take place in Galilee. Somewhat ironically, this section (John 6:1–71) constitutes the longest narrative in the gospel that is *not* set in or near Jerusalem. Obviously the entire chapter is too complex to interpret in detail.⁷⁹ I will confine myself, then, to making some observations about Jesus' feeding of the 5,000⁸⁰ and focusing on some key sections in his dialogue concerning the "bread of life."⁸¹

Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 is briefly narrated. Jesus sees the crowds and questions his disciples concerning how to feed them. A young boy is present with barley loaves and fish—appropriately so, since Passover fell at the barley harvest, and the Sea of Galilee was nearby. Jesus makes the crowd sit down on the abundant grass, and multiplies the loaves and fish so as to satisfy all. The references to the hills, the grass, the sitting down, and the plentiful food evoke Ezekiel's prophecy of God as a shepherd feeding his people with abundant pasture on the mountains of Israel.⁸²

Probably a majority of commentators now recognize a eucharistic background to this narrative—certainly in the subsequent dialogue,⁸³ but even in the narration of the miracle itself. The arguments in favor of this are not confessional but exegetical. First, the diction of John 6:11 ("Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them to those who were seated ...") closely parallels, and seems intended to evoke, the narratives of the institution of the Eucharist in the synoptics and Paul.⁸⁴ Likewise, in John 6:23 the evangelist refers to the miracle as the eating of bread "after the Lord had given thanks (*eucharisteō*)," which is an odd description unless there is an intention to evoke the eucharistic practice of the early Church.⁸⁵

Also arguing for a eucharistic interpretation is the constellation of motifs in John 6. These motifs strikingly parallel those of the eucharistic institution narra-

79 The narrative breaks into a clear threefold division: the feeding of 5,000 (John 6:1–15); the walking on water (John 6:16–21); and the bread of life discourse (John 6:22–71). Within this last division there are several subsections marked by transitions (for example, at vv. 41, 52, 60, 66), but the narrative progression and continuity is strong enough to consider the entire discourse John 6:22–71 as a literary unit.

80 John 6:1–15.

81 John 6:22–71.

82 Ezek. 34:13–15; compare John 6:3, 10–12.

83 See, especially, John 6:51–58.

84 Compare John 6:11; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23–24, observing the correlation of terms, usually in sequence: "take" (*lambanō*), "bread" (*artos*), "give thanks" (*eucharisteō/eulogeō*), and "gave/distributed" (*didōmi/diadidōmi*). See also Brown, *John I–XII*, 247–248.

85 See Brown (*John I–XII*, 258) who recognizes the eucharistic allusion but doubts the originality of the phrase. While Brown expresses doubts, note that the Greek text UBS 4/NA 27 comes down on the side of its authenticity. See Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Kurt Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* [The Greek New Testament] (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979).

tives in the other gospels—the proximity of Passover; the body of Christ *given for* others (sacrificial terminology); the equation of Jesus’ body with bread; the eating of his body and drinking of his blood, and even a reference to Judas’ betrayal.⁸⁶ Moreover, the introduction of the “drink my blood” concept (John 6:53), when the dominant image and Old Testament background referent has been “bread” throughout, is inexplicable unless a eucharistic allusion is intended—all the more so since the drinking of blood was always viewed negatively in the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism.⁸⁷

Besides anticipating the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, with which the evangelist presumes his readers are familiar,⁸⁸ the miracle of the loaves also relates to various prophecies of the abundant eschatological feast.⁸⁹

This miraculous sign prepares for Jesus’ long “bread of life” discourse. The main body of this discourse is composed of six interactions or dialogical units between the people and Jesus, each composed of a question or request from the people and a reply from Jesus. The following table gives a synopsis of the people’s questions and Jesus’ replies. In each case, the key words of Jesus that elicit the next question are marked:

<i>People’s Question/Request</i>	<i>Jesus’ Response</i>
Rabbi, when did you come here?	You seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill. Do not <i>work</i> for food that perishes ... (John 6:26–27)

86 Compare John 6:51–71 with Matt 26:21–28; Mark 14:18–24; Luke 22:19–23; 1 Cor. 11:23–24. See also Brown, *John I–XII*, 284–285, 287, 291–293.

87 See Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 168; Brown, *John I–XII*, 284.

88 See Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 93–102. As Cullmann points out, unless the obviously eucharistic verses of John 6:51–58 are excised—which is unjustified (see Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 10 [Leiden: Brill, 1965]), one must presume that, during the entire writing down of John 6:1–50, the author *knew* he would eventually be making a strong eucharistic connection at the conclusion of the narrative.

89 See, for example, Isa. 25:6–8, 55:1–3, and Ezek. 34:13–15. This is perhaps why, upon witnessing the “sign,” the people exclaim, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!” (John 6:14). They wish to make him king by force, but Jesus eludes him. As in John 3:2–3, so here, we observe a connection between the “signs” and the Kingdom of God. The people in Galilee are correct that Jesus’ signs point to his kingly identity, but they are mistaken in their ideas about the form his kingdom will take.

What must we do, to <i>work</i> the <i>works</i> of God?	This is the work of God, that you <i>believe</i> in him whom he has sent. (John 6:28–29)
What sign do you do, that we may ... <i>believe</i> you?	My Father gives you the true <i>bread</i> from heaven ... (John 6:30, 32)
Lord, give us this <i>bread</i> always.	I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger ... [or] thirst. ... <i>I have come down from heaven</i> ... (John 6:34–35, 38)
Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? ... How does he say, <i>I have come down from heaven</i> ?	No one can come to me unless the Father ... draws him. ... <i>The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh</i> . (John 6:42, 44, 51)
How can this man <i>give us his flesh to eat</i> ?	He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:52, 54)

The people's understanding always remains on the level of "earthly" or natural-sensible reality. In the first four exchanges, their motivation is to get Jesus to repeat the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. Though their words do not indicate it, Jesus perceives that is their motivation in initiating the exchange (see John 6:26). The people interpret Jesus' exhortation to "work for food that endures to eternal life" as a condition that he is requiring of them before he will multiply loaves again, so they ask for some clarification ("What must we do?"). When Jesus responds, "Believe in the one he has sent," the people ask for sign to justify their belief, and with no subtlety indicate the nature of the sign they wish—a repeat performance of the multiplication of bread. When Jesus explains that the true "bread from heaven" is "that which comes from heaven," they become most blunt: "Lord, give us this bread always."

From this point on in the conversation, Jesus becomes increasingly specific and direct. While the christological teaching in the first three responses was stated indirectly, beginning from John 6:35 his christological claims are open and explicit, and lead further to specifically eucharistic claims (beginning from John 6:51). Meanwhile, the questions from the people grow hostile. The fifth and sixth questions, in which the people are described for the first time as "Jews" (*Ioudaioi*),

amount to statements of disbelief, similar to Nicodemus' final statement in John 3:9.

Thus, we observe this pattern: In his dialogue with the people, Jesus attempts a "mystagogy," trying to lead them to realize that the "earthly" miracle he has performed is a "sign" pointing to a "heavenly" reality.⁹⁰ Yet the people continue to understand Jesus' words in "earthly" terms. They persist in their desire that he repeat the miracle that gives them earthly food. As Jesus advances deeper into his mystagogy, explaining that the sign points to himself as the "Christ," and beyond that to his true and divine presence in the Eucharist, the crowd is left further and further behind and becomes increasingly unfriendly.

We sense a certain parallel with the Nicodemus episode. In both cases, some seek Jesus, approaching him on the basis of a certain "earthly" trust inspired by the signs he has worked. And in both cases, when Jesus attempts a mystagogical or sacramental instruction that explains the heavenly realities that these earthly signs point to, the seekers respond in confusion and disbelief. In both cases, it is Jesus' insistence on the reality of the sacramental miracle—baptismal rebirth by water and Spirit, and eternal life through eating the flesh of the Son of Man—that provokes disbelief.⁹¹

In the dialogue with the disciples that follows this confrontation (John 6:70–71), the parallel with the Nicodemus dialogue is again strong. With Nicodemus, after stressing the need of baptism, Jesus emphasized the divine initiative and sovereignty of the Spirit to bring about new life. Here, after stressing the role of eucharistic communion in the reception of eternal life, Jesus points to the Spirit as the sole and sovereign source of that life, rather than any human effort ("the flesh"). As baptism is portrayed primarily as an act of the Spirit received by humanity (*anthropoi*) rather than a human action, so to is the Eucharist.

We see then that in John's second Passover narrative the "sign" of the multiplication of the loaves is strongly connected to the celebration of the Passover in the Temple. The sign takes place in the context of the Passover and anticipates, in its very language (John 6:11, 23), the last Passover that Jesus will celebrate with his disciples. In the aftermath of this great sign, Jesus engages the crowd in a mystagogical dialogue attempting to lead them from the "fleshly" understanding of the

90 "The Johannine sign narrative, quite unlike in the synoptic accounts, is usually followed by a revelatory discourse that brings out the *significance* of the miracle wrought. ... Many of the Jews and the crowd(s) ... see Jesus' signs and are said to believe but do not really grasp their *significance*." Lingad, *The Problems of Jewish Christians*, 377.

91 Compare John 3:9; 6:52, 60. There are differences: in John 3, the dialogue begins with reference to a sacrament and then becomes pneumatological and christological. In John 6 there is a clear development of ever-more explicit christology and finally sacramentology. Moreover, in John 6 the final disbelief is more vehement than in John 3, and even becomes hostile.

physical miracle⁹² to the “spiritual” realities of Jesus’ identity,⁹³ and to how his presence is continued in the sacrament of the Church⁹⁴ through the power of the Spirit.⁹⁵ The move from *sign* to *sacrament* is even clearer here than in John 3:1–14. Here, the *nature of the sign itself* points to the sacramental content of Jesus’ teaching in John 6:22–59.

The Eschatological River and the Man Born Blind

While the Passover is the dominant Jewish feast in the structure and theology of John’s gospel, some treatment of John’s narrative of the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:1–10:21) is necessary⁹⁶ because it illustrates so clearly the relationship between the Temple, the signs, and the sacraments in John.

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated God’s dwelling with Israel—in the Tabernacle of Moses, the Jerusalem Temple, and ultimately in the eschatological Temple foretold by the prophets.⁹⁷ Two liturgical rites celebrated during this feast are of particular significance to understanding John—the water ceremony and the lighting of the Temple courts.⁹⁸

Inspired by prophecies of an eschatological river from the Temple,⁹⁹ each day of the feast the Temple priests would fill a golden pitcher with water from the Pool of Siloam, carry it in liturgical procession to the Temple, and pour it out there at the base of the altar. Inspired by Zechariah 14:6–8 (“There shall be continuous day ...”), it was the custom to light four menorahs of enormous scale within the Temple courts during the Feast of Tabernacles and to keep them lit continuously. Priests and Levites danced with torches while singing the “psalms of ascent.”¹⁰⁰ According to tradition, the light from the Temple illuminated much of the city.¹⁰¹

92 John 6:26 (“you ate your fill of the loaves ...”).

93 John 6:35 (“I am the bread of life.”).

94 John 6:56 (“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me ...”).

95 See John 6:63.

96 In John 7:2 there is a note that “the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand,” and the feast forms the backdrop for the narrative until John 10:22, when the temporal scene is changed to the Feast of Dedication.

97 See Therath, *Jerusalem in the Gospel of John*, 157–159. On the character of the Feast of Tabernacles, see Brown, *John I–XII*, 326–327; George W. MacRae, “The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (1960): 251–276; Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* [Commentary on the New Testament from Talmud and Midrash], 6 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1924), 2:774–812.

98 On the relevance of Tabernacles to Jesus’ discourses in John 7–8, see Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 115–143; Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 160–170; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 226–250.

99 Ezek. 47:1–17; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8.

100 The “psalms of ascent” are Pss. 120–134, thought to have been sung when the Israelites journeyed to Jerusalem and the Temple to celebrate the festivals.

101 See the description in Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2d. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 157–158. Raphael Patai points out

It is almost universally recognized that Jesus takes advantage of the symbolism of Tabernacles' liturgical rituals by applying them to himself in John 7:38–39 (“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me ...”) and John 8:12 (“I am the light of the world.”). To make these claims during the feast itself was tantamount to declaring himself to be the eschatological Temple.

Both these symbols of Temple fulfillment or replacement—water and light—converge in the “sign” that Jesus performs in healing the man born blind (John 9). Here, Jesus declares himself again to be the “light of the world,” and validates that claim by bringing light to the eyes of a blind man by means of the Temple waters of the Pool of Siloam—the water source for the ceremonies of Tabernacles.

Already from the second century, the Church recognized the intentional baptismal symbolism in the way John relates this healing.¹⁰² Jesus begins the healing by declaring himself to be the “light of the world” (John 9:5), evoking the early Christian understanding of baptism as “enlightenment.”¹⁰³ Though Jesus could heal by uttering a word (John 4:53), he uses the Pool of Siloam in order to link his healing power with the baptismal washing in water.¹⁰⁴ To emphasize this point, John notes the etymology of Siloam (“which means sent”: John 9:7), associating the pool with Jesus himself, the sent one (John 3:34).¹⁰⁵ The man's blindness *from birth* is ostentatiously reemphasized throughout because it seems to symbolize John's view of all mankind prior to the spiritual rebirth of baptism.¹⁰⁶

In John 3 and John 6, we observed a post-sign mystagogical dialogue leading to a spiritual and sacramental comprehension. Likewise here, Jesus' final exchange with the Pharisees (John 9:39–41) makes clear that the real issue behind the entire

that in Jewish thought, the Temple was the mystical center of the universe and the source of cosmic water and cosmic light; furthermore, the furnishings and structure of the Temple were compared to features of a man's body: “The Temple corresponds to the whole world and to the creation of man who is a small world.” Obviously, the Gospel of John resonates deeply with these concepts. See Patai, *Man and Temple*, 105–117, esp. 117.

102 This is demonstrated in the art of the early Christian catacombs; see Brown, *John I–XII*, 380–381; Cullmann, *Christian Worship*, 102–103.

103 Heb. 6:4; 10:32. Brown, *John I–XII*, 381; Alf Correll, *Consumatum Est*, 67–68; Cullmann, *Christian Worship*, 103.

104 Compare Brown, *John I–XII*, 381: “the story in John 9 illustrates the healing power of water.”

105 The early tradition of baptismal interpretation of this event is well expressed by St. Augustine: “He washes his eyes in that pool which is interpreted ‘one who has been sent’: he was baptized in Christ.” Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 44:1–2, quoted in Brown, *John I–XII*, 381. See Brown's own comment in *The Gospel of St. John and the Johannine Epistles*, 2d. rev. ed., New Testament Reading Guide 13 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1965), 51: “This pool, bearing a name interpreted as ‘sent,’ stands, in John, for Christ, who is the one *sent* by the Father. It is John's emphasis on the symbolic meaning of the pool that suggested to Tertullian and St. Augustine a baptismal reference.” See also Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 104.

106 John 9:1, 2, 13, 18, 19, 20, 24, 32; Compare John 3:3: “Unless one is born from above, he cannot see.” (compare John 1:4–5, 9); John 3:5: “Unless one is born of *water* and Spirit.”

narrative has been spiritual, not physical blindness.¹⁰⁷ The enlightenment of the blind man by water points to the more profound “enlightenment” that Jesus offers in the waters of baptism—an enlightenment that many, like the Pharisees, reject.

Hearing these words in context, the astute in John’s audience could discern once again that Jesus is the eschatological Temple from which we receive life-giving water and light, and that both the Temple and the Feast of Tabernacles are fulfilled in him. Moreover, John’s original audience likewise would have understood from these words that the reality toward which the Feast of Tabernacles pointed is fulfilled in baptism, where believers receive spiritual light and wash in the water of rebirth. For those who hear these words today, the sacrament of baptism becomes all that the Feast of Tabernacles was meant to be. It remains the means by which the Christian experiences Jesus as the new Temple.

“The Holy Place” and the Temple of the Church

The account of the first Passover in John (2:13–3:21) has prepared the reader to interpret the death and resurrection of Jesus in the third Passover (John 11:55–20:31) as the destruction and rebuilding of the true Temple, and nothing less. The clearest references to the Temple motif in the last discourse is to be found in John 14:2–3:

In my Father’s house (*oikia tou patros mou*) are many rooms (*monē*); if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place (*topos*) for you? And when I go and prepare a place (*topos*) for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

We have here several significant deployments of Temple terms and images.¹⁰⁸ First, the phrase, “Father’s house,” recalls the nearly identical description of the Temple in John 2:16 (“my Father’s house”). The two expressions are certainly close enough for the connection to easily be made, yet there is a subtle, theologically significant alteration. In John 2:16 the phrase (*oikos tou patros mou*), employs the expected term, *oikos*, used in the Septuagint translation to describe the Temple, the palace, and other large buildings in the Temple complex. In John 14:2, however, the phrase is *oikia tou patros mou*, using *oikia*, which also means “house,” but frequently tends toward a more personal and familial rather than architectural sense—“household,” “home,” or even “family.” I concur with the detailed arguments of Mary Coloe and James McCaffrey that a shift is taking place in John

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *John I–XII*, 377.

¹⁰⁸ It what follows, we are dependent primarily on McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms*. See also Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 268–313. Kerr finds Temple allusions not only in 14:2–3, but in John 13 as well. He likens the footwashing of the disciples to the Old Testament requirement that both priests and sacrificial animals have their feet washed when entering the sanctuary. Thus, John 13 is a preparation for entering the new Temple.

14:2–3 as compared with John 2:16: the sense of the new Temple is being extended from Jesus' physical body to the community of God, that is, to God's "household" or "family."¹⁰⁹ The Temple concept is being applied to what the later Church tradition would call the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Temple reference in the phrase "Father's house" is confirmed by other Temple allusions in these verses. The reference to a "house" with "many rooms" could not fail to bring to mind the Jerusalem Temple, the largest and most multi-chambered edifice known to the Jewish reader. Indeed, the Temple's "many rooms" are immortalized in certain passages of the Old Testament (Ezek. 40–42).¹¹⁰

Jesus goes on to speak of preparing a "place" (*topos*; *mâqôm*) for the disciples. It is not coincidental that the last employment of "place" (*topos*) was in John 11:48, where Caiaphas, the High Priest, used it as shorthand for "holy place," a meaning it bears frequently throughout the Old Testament, especially in Deuteronomy and related texts.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the Septuagint translation employs the exact phrase John uses—"prepare a place" (*etoimazō ton topon*)—exclusively with respect to the tent-shrine of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chron. 15:1, 3) or the Temple itself (2 Chron. 3:1).

Thus, Jesus is telling his disciples that his departure is necessary to prepare a Temple sanctuary for them in which they will dwell with him. Frequently this is understood in terms of a heavenly, eschatological fulfillment—the disciples will dwell with Jesus forever in the "Temple" of heaven. While an eschatological sense should not be excluded, one must also take into account that in the chapter that follows this, Jesus clearly speaks of the disciples "abiding" (*menō*) in Christ even now, in this life. The sense of "abiding" should not be isolated from the sense of the "abiding places" (*monē*) that Jesus will prepare for the disciples in John 14:2. One also must be cognizant of John 14:23: "If a man loves me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling (*monē*) with him."

Thus, Jesus goes to prepare a (holy) "place" for the disciples, with dwellings (*monē*) for them, but simultaneously the Father and Son will come to the faithful disciple and make their dwelling (*monē*) with him. Therefore, John 14 taken as a whole, describes a mutual indwelling of Father and Son with the disciples, a mutual indwelling which is treated at greater length and more explicitly in the (eucharistic) vine discourse of John 15:1–17, with its stress on "abiding" or "dwelling" (*menō*). All this suggests that Jesus' promise to prepare a Temple in which the disciples shall abide will be realized now, in this age, through the mutual indwelling

109 See McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms*, 177–184; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 160–162.

110 McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms*, 67–69, 73–75.

111 For example, Deut. 12:5, 11–14, 18, 21, 26; Jer. 7:12, 14, 20; 1 Kings 8:6–7, 21, 29–30, 35, 42. See McCaffrey, *House with Many Rooms*, 185; Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 164–167.

of the disciples, the Father, Son, and Spirit.¹¹² The disciples will be constituted a Temple by the Spirit, whom the Father and the Son will send after Jesus departs.

The idea of the disciples as Temple—a concept also present in the scrolls found at Qumran¹¹³—resonates on a deep level with other themes of the last discourse, especially when these are understood in light of Old Testament Temple traditions. As I noted above, the Temple was the dwelling place of the name of God,¹¹⁴ the glory of God,¹¹⁵ and indeed, of God himself.¹¹⁶ Compare these characteristics of the Temple with what is said about the disciples during the last discourse: they are the locus of the *name* of God: “I have manifested your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world. ... I have made known to them your name.” They have received the *glory*: “The glory which you have given me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one” (John 17:22). They are the dwelling of God: “the Spirit of Truth ... dwells with you, and will be in you” (14:17); “If a man loves me. ... We will come to him and make our home with him” (14:23). As Jesus spoke of the Father having “consecrated” (*hagiazō*) him as the new Temple during the Feast of Dedication (10:36), so now Jesus prays for the Father to “consecrate” the apostles (John 17:17, *hagiazō*) to continue the ministry of Jesus, the new Temple in the world.¹¹⁷

While John does not develop the theme of the Mystical Body of Christ as Temple as explicitly as Paul, a close reading of the last discourse does indicate that the role of the Temple is being communicated from Jesus to the disciples. It follows that they will continue to fulfill the function of the Temple after his departure.¹¹⁸

Signs and the “Greater Works” of the Disciples

A major theme in the last discourse is the commissioning of the disciples for ministry apart from the physical presence of Jesus. Jesus is “sending out” the disciples

112 “The divine indwelling in the midst of a believing community makes it appropriate to speak of the community as a living Temple. The community is the house (household) of God. Aune goes so far as to claim that this image is so all pervasive that it is the self-perception of the believing community. ‘It is possible that in John 14:2 (and also 8:35) the term *oikia* (*tou patros*) reflects the self-designation of the Johannine community.’” Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 163; quoting Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology*, 130.

113 See the discussion in Margaret Daly-Denton, *David in the Fourth Gospel: The Johannine Reception of the Psalms*, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 47 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 78–79.

114 See, for example, Deut. 16:2; Ps. 74:7.

115 See, for example, 1 Kings 8:1; Ezek. 43:2.

116 Ps. 68:16; Ezek. 43:6.

117 Coloe, *God With Us*, 154.

118 See Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 275–313.

just as he was sent from the Father.¹¹⁹ This theme is reinforced by statements affirming that the experiences of Jesus will be replicated in those of his disciples.¹²⁰ One statement in particular deserves special attention:

He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father.
(John 14:12)

The term “works” (*erga*) is used as a synonym for “signs,” that is, referring to Jesus’ miracles, in many places in the gospel.¹²¹ What could it possibly mean that the disciples will do the same “works” and even greater “works” than Jesus? It could mean that the apostles would perform miracles, even more spectacular ones than those Jesus performed. There are two problems with this interpretation. First, a historical problem. While Acts does record the apostles, especially Peter and Paul, performing miracles similar to those of Jesus himself, one would be hard pressed to argue that they exceeded the “grandeur” of, say, the raising of Lazarus or the resurrection itself. Second, a theological problem. The “signs” and “works” Jesus performed were never ends in themselves. In fact, his comment, hinting at a kind of exasperation, in John 4:48 (“Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe”), suggests that the performance of miracles was a concession to a lack of faith among his contemporaries (compare John 20:29), but not a practice Jesus thought should be normative. Thus, the thesis that the “greater works” refers to miracles performed by the disciples that would “outdo” those of Jesus himself faces some formidable objections. But what other interpretive options are available?

One clue to the nature of the “greater works” is the explanation given at the end of Jesus’ statement, “Because I go to the Father.” Taken at face value, this is not much of an explanation: there seems to be no reason why Jesus’ departure to the Father would result in the disciples accomplishing greater works than those of Jesus himself. The statement must be taken in conjunction with John 16:7: “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” The reason the disciples will perform “greater works” is not because of the absence of Jesus, but because Jesus’ departure will result in the *gift of the Spirit, through which the disciples will be empowered to perform these works.*

Another clue is the pattern we have observed—that, in the aftermath of performing signs, Jesus attempts to move those who have witnessed the sign from the “earthly” to the “heavenly”—from the physical miracle to that to which it points.

¹¹⁹ John 13:16, 20; 15:15; 17:18.

¹²⁰ John 13:15; 15:20.

¹²¹ John 5:20, 36; 7:3, 21; 9:3; 10:25, 32, 38; 14:11; 15:24.

In John 3, Jesus tries to move Nicodemus from thinking of the “signs” in terms of “earthly things” (a physical re-birth) to “heavenly things”—rebirth by the Spirit, inseparably tied to baptism. In John 6, he urges the people not to seek earthly bread through another multiplication miracle, but heavenly bread—himself and his eucharistic presence, through which the Spirit gives life. And without doubt, in Jesus’ hierarchy of significance, the eucharistic bread of his “flesh” is “greater” than the bread created by the multiplication of loaves.

Could the “greater works than these” that the disciples will perform include the divine works of baptism and Eucharist carried out by the power of the Spirit? This was noted long ago by Oscar Cullmann: “The ‘sacraments have this in common, that in the time after the resurrection they take the place of the miracles performed by the incarnate Christ.’¹²² At least the following conclusions may be warranted exegetically: whatever the “greater works” will be, they will not be performed apart from the power of the Paraclete sent by Jesus; and whatever they are, they will not be unrelated to the rebirth of baptism and the nourishment of the Eucharist, toward which Jesus’ own “works” pointed.

That the “greater works” to be performed by the disciples do indeed relate in some way to baptism and Eucharist is supported by some of the imagery in the last discourse itself. Take, for example, the footwashing scene (John 13:1–20), where there is a strong emphasis on commissioning the disciples to continue the activity of Jesus himself: “You should do as I have done to you ... if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them ... he who receives any one whom I send receives me” (John 13:20). There is also reason to understand a baptismal motif throughout this scene.¹²³ Although the footwashing itself is unlikely to be a *direct* baptismal symbol, most commentators find it difficult to avoid a baptismal reference at least in John 13:9–10 (“He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet; but he is clean all over.”)¹²⁴ Whatever the footwashing symbolizes, it is related to the

122 See Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 118. But Cullmann does not explain exactly how he arrives at this conclusion. Crossan comments: “Each of these works/words of Jesus were protosacraments, fragmented promises of the one great sacrament of the risen Lord who abides in the community of faith.” *Gospel of Eternal Life*, 42.

123 See Francis J. Moloney, “A Sacramental Reading of John 13:1–38,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991): 237–256. Moloney sees not only baptismal symbolism in the footwashing, but Eucharistic allusions in the account of the morsel given to Judas. He is convinced that John 13:9–10 would recall baptism for the early readers of the gospel. As for eucharistic references, in John 13:18 Jesus quotes Ps. 41:9, but John changes the Septuagint’s verb *esthiō* (“eat”) to the rarer *trōgō* (“munch”) to make an allusion to John 6:51–58, where *trōgō* is used three times in a eucharistic context. Moloney is persuaded that the morsel to Judas is eucharistic, the point being that Jesus lays down his love for his disciples unconditionally, even for those, like Judas (and Peter!), who will fail him. Thus, in John 13 we have motifs of Jesus ministering to the disciples through baptism and the Eucharist—despite their sinfulness—as they in turn will minister to the early Church.

124 So Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 108; Correll sees baptismal significance in John 13:10, and

cleansing accomplished in baptism. And the fullest meaning must be some form of continuation of the ministry of forgiveness of sins related to that which is achieved in baptism.

In addition to baptismal imagery, we also find eucharistic imagery in the last discourse. In Jesus' image of the vine and the branches there seems to be a strong Eucharistic theme.¹²⁵ The image of the vine itself is not distant from the "fruit of the vine," the wine of the Eucharist. The external attestation of an association of this passage with the eucharistic wine is, in fact, strong and ancient. As Cullman, Raymond Brown, and others have noted, the first-century Church manual, the *Didache*, records the following Eucharistic Prayer: "We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, that you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant."¹²⁶

It should also be noted that the vine discussion takes place during the Last Supper. Although John does not recount the supper *per se*, his readers would have known of it and indeed, could scarcely have avoided understanding Chapters 13–17 in light of the synoptic accounts of the institution of the Eucharist.¹²⁷ Moreover, there is a strong connection between the theme of "abiding" in the vine discourse and the bread of life discourse in John 6.¹²⁸ The term "abide" (Greek *menō*), employed forty times in John, appears eleven times in John 15—by far the highest concentration of the term anywhere in the gospel. The theme of "abiding" is stated at the outset: "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). Outside of John 15, "abide" appears twenty-nine times, but *only once* when referring to the mutual abiding of Jesus in his followers and vice-versa; this one occurrence is in the bread of life discourse: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood *abides* in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Thus, the idea of mutual abiding is only stated directly in John 6 and John 15.

To recap our findings thus far: the major block of teaching in John's third Passover narrative is the last discourse, which implies that the disciples will be formed into a new Temple through the work of Christ (John 14:2–3), and strongly emphasizes the commissioning of the disciples to continue the ministry of Christ after his departure. The disciples will, in fact, perform "greater works" than those

understands the footwashing itself as a symbol of the sacrament of penance (*Consummatum Est*, 69–73).

125 John 15:1–17; See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI*, Anchor Bible 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 672–674; Correll, *Consummatum Est*, 74.

126 See Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 111–12. "Such an early connection of the vine and the Eucharist is impressive." Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary," 72.

127 See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 222.

128 For a comparison of the true vine and bread of life discourses, see Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 111–113.

Christ has displayed, once the Spirit is given to them. There is reason to think these “greater works” are related to the celebration of baptism and Eucharist, because in John 3 and 6 Jesus himself indicates that the reality of these two sacraments are of more value than the sensible “signs” he has performed. A possible sacramental sense of the “greater works” is supported by the fact that Jesus’ commission to “wash feet” and to “abide in me” have baptismal and eucharistic connotations respectively. It is possible, then, that in the last discourse, we are to see that one of the ways the “works” or “signs” of Jesus will be continued is through the Spirit-empowered administration of baptism and Eucharist.

From His Pierced Side, a Stream of Blood and Water

There are several indications that John understands Jesus’ death as the fulfillment of the Feast of Passover. First, he depicts the crucifixion beginning at noon on the day of preparation for the feast (John 19:14), at the time when the priests began to slaughter the Passover lambs in the Temple. In addition, the bystanders offer Jesus wine vinegar, the “blood of the grape,” on a stalk of hyssop, the plant that was used to mark the lintels of houses with blood during the Passover ritual. John records the curious detail that not one of Christ’s bones was broken (John 19:36), in fulfillment of the legal provisions concerning the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:46). Finally, Jesus’ body was pierced, as the Passover lamb was pierced from end to end and placed over the roasting fire. Thus, at the crucifixion scene, the reader sees the culmination of the paschal lamb theme introduced at the beginning of the gospel: “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!” (John 1:29).

No less important are the indications of Temple fulfillment in John’s passion narrative. That Jesus’ death and resurrection should be understood as Temple destruction and rebuilding was, of course, forecast in John 2:21. A dramatic visual indication of Jesus as Temple at the cross is to be found in the “sudden flow of blood and water” from the side of the crucified Christ (19:34). This key, polyvalent image simultaneously evokes the themes of Temple, Spirit, and sacraments that have been running explicitly and implicitly throughout John.

Arguably, the first image that this bloody stream from Christ would evoke for a first-century Jew was the brook Kidron, which flowed along the base of the Temple Mount. The brook was connected to the Temple altar by a guttering system that channeled down the enormous amounts of blood from the thousands of Passover lambs being slaughtered, producing a torrent of bloody water.¹²⁹ At the cross, Jesus has become, in fulfillment of John 2:19–21, the new Temple from which flows this river of sacrifice.

129 See the Midrashic sources cited above, n. 49.

But the significance of the blood and water is not exhausted by the Temple reference. The magnetism between John 7:37–39 and John 19:34 has proved inexorable for most commentators. In the bloody flow from the side of the crucified Christ, we have a symbolic fulfillment of the promise of the river of the Spirit flowing from the “belly” of Jesus (compare John 7:37–39). It is not coincidental that only a few verses earlier (John 19:30), the evangelist speaks of Jesus “handing over his Spirit.” While in one sense this speaks of his death, few commentators would deny the connection with the promise of the gift of the Spirit at Jesus’ hour of “glorification,” that is, the hour of his crucifixion. The Father is able to pour out the Spirit because of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross: this truth is visualized in the “river” flowing from Christ’s body in John 19:34.

Of course, the Spirit has already been linked to the sacraments in earlier passages of John.¹³⁰ It is not surprising that many commentators have understood the dual flow as representative of baptism and Eucharist,¹³¹ including mainstream critical scholars like Rudolf Bultmann, Raymond Brown and Andrew Lincoln.¹³²

Addressing the symbolism of the blood first, we may note that the only mention of blood (*haima*) in its plain sense anywhere else in the gospel besides John 19:34 occurs in John 6:53–56, the eucharistic discussion of the necessity of “drinking the blood of the Son of Man.”¹³³ Thus, within John, the association of these two passages is not only easy to make, it is difficult to avoid.¹³⁴ And if a sacramental symbolism is readily available for the blood, it is logical for the reader to expect

130 For example, John 3:3, 5; 6:51–59, 63.

131 So Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 200–201; Correll, *Consummatum Est*, 74–75; Cullmann, 114–116; John Paul Heil, *Blood and Water: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus in John 18–20*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 27 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1995) 105–109.

132 See Moloney, “When is John Talking about the Sacraments?” 130; Lincoln, *John*, 479: “Within the frame of reference of the gospel itself the significance of the blood and water is not hard to discover. The significance of the blood is set out in John 6:52–59, where there are clear eucharistic overtones.” For Lincoln, sacramental symbolism is definitely secondary to what he calls “the theme of life,” but he does recognize its presence. Bultmann is, ironically, the most emphatic about the sacramental symbolism: the flow of blood and water “can scarcely have any meaning other than that in the death of Jesus on the cross the sacraments of baptism and of the Lord’s Supper have their origin” (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, ed. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches [Oxford: Blackwell, 1971], 525).

133 John 1:13, sometimes translated “blood” (so the Revised Standard Version), actually uses the plural *haimaton*, “of bloods,” referring to generative bodily fluids generally, not Jesus’ actual blood as in John 6:53–56 and 19:34.

134 “The mention of blood in John 19:34 creates the impression that 19:33–36 should be read alongside 6:51–58, which contains the only comparable mention of blood in the Fourth Gospel and occurs in a Passover context.” Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 178, following Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1991), 125–126.

it for the water as well. Such symbolism, too, is close at hand: baptism has been associated with water since the beginning of the gospel, as we have noted.¹³⁵

Furthermore, the most obvious parallel for the flow of water from Christ's side is his declaration concerning "living waters" flowing from his "belly" (*koilia*) in John 7:38, a passage that itself alludes to baptism, in the opinion of many.¹³⁶ But in John 7:38–39, the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus had not been glorified. In John 19, Jesus has experienced the "hour" of his "glorification" on the cross¹³⁷ and so hands over the Spirit in verse 30.¹³⁸ Now in John 19:34 the reader sees the flow of water that one has been lead to expect in association with the giving of the Spirit.¹³⁹ The connection with baptism—the rebirth by "water and Spirit"—would be natural for the first Christian readers to make. After all, the correlation of baptism, the reception of the Spirit, and the body of Christ was already traditional long before John's Gospel was written:

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
(1 Cor. 12:13)

Notably, the last phrase of this quotation from St. Paul associates baptism with "drinking" the Spirit, even though the rite itself involved only washing. This suggests that a "drinking" metaphor was also part of pre-Johannine baptismal symbolism, and therefore the thirst-quenching water of the Spirit imagery in John 4:7–15 (the woman at the well) and John 7:38–39 may well allude to this sacrament.¹⁴⁰

In this compressed, polyvalent image of Christ pouring forth blood and water on the cross (John 19:34), close on the release of his Spirit (John 19:30) we see a convergence of the themes we have been pursuing in this paper: Temple, sign, Spirit, and sacrament.¹⁴¹ Jesus is the New Temple from which flows the bloody stream of sacrifice, dying as the true Passover lamb to fulfill that great feast, as part

¹³⁵ John 1:26, 31, 33; 3:5. Brown, curiously, regards the baptismal symbolism of the water an easier exegetical conclusion to reach than eucharistic symbolism in the blood: Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 951–52; compare *John I–XII*, 142, 179–180.

¹³⁶ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 45; Correll, *Consumatum Est*, 60–62.

¹³⁷ Compare John 12:23; 13:31–32; 17:1.

¹³⁸ On the handing over of the Spirit, see Heil, *Blood and Water*, 102–103; Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body*, 244–245.

¹³⁹ John 3:5, 7:38–39.

¹⁴⁰ For baptismal allusions in John 4:1–30, see Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 80–84.

¹⁴¹ "In a remarkable way John has brought together the prophecy of the waters flowing from the eschatological Temple (Ezek. 47:1–11) and the proclamation of Jesus at the Festival of Tabernacles (7:37–38) in the climactic moment on the cross. Here Jesus' body, soon to become

of the great “sign” of his death and resurrection (John 2:19–21). And now, at what may be considered the heart or climax of Jesus’ final “sign,” there flows forth water and blood, the river of the Spirit, baptism and Eucharist.¹⁴²

The flow of blood and water appear to us in the context of the third and final Passover of the gospel. It should be recalled that at the first Passover, Jesus discoursed to Nicodemus on the necessity of birth “from above” through “water and Spirit,” that is, through baptism. At the second Passover, he urged the crowds to “eat my flesh and drink my blood” in order to have “life” and be raised “on the last day.” Now at the final Passover, we see both sacramental signs flowing together from the Temple-body of Christ. Coloe comments:

The blood and water is the link between the events narrated and the community of believers of later generations. ... When Jesus is no longer a physical presence with them, the community can still be drawn into his filial relationship with God and participate in the sacrificial gift of his life in their sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.¹⁴³

the new Temple (2:21), becomes the source of living waters—the Spirit.” Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 244–245.

142 Raymond Brown’s comments on this passage, written near the end of his illustrious career and culminating a lifetime of study of this gospel, are apropos: “The Johannine references to these two sacraments [baptism and Eucharist], both the more explicit references and those that are symbolic, are scattered in scenes throughout the ministry. This seems to fit in with the gospel’s intention to show how the institutions of the Christian life are rooted in what Jesus said and did during his life. Moreover, among the four gospels it is to John most of all that we owe the deep Christian understanding of the purpose of baptism and the eucharist. It is John who tells us that through baptismal water God begets children unto himself and pours forth upon them his Spirit (John 3:5; 7:37–39). Thus, baptism becomes a source of eternal life (John 4:13–14), and the Eucharist is the necessary food of that life (John 6:57). Finally, in a dramatic scene (John 19:34), John shows symbolically that both of these sacraments, baptismal water and eucharistic blood, have the source of their existence and power in the death of Jesus. This Johannine sacramentalism ... reflects the essential connection between the sacramental way of receiving life within the Church at the end of the first century and the way in which life was offered to those who heard Jesus in Palestine.” Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 234. Correll’s sentiments are similar: “Why ... is it that the Fourth Gospel mentions the sacraments at all in connection with the earthly life of Jesus? ... The one aim is to link up in this way the earthly life of Jesus with the life of Christ who is alive and working in the Church; that is, to state the identity between the Jesus of history and the Christ who is present in the liturgy.” *Consumatum Est*, 77.

143 Coloe, *God Dwells With Us*, 200.

Forgiveness of Sins and the New Temple

During the account of the suffering, death, and burial of Jesus, the themes treated in the last discourse remain in the background, until he is once again reunited with the disciples as a group in John 20:19–23, when he breathes on them the Spirit, bestowing the power to forgive sin. This brief but powerful scene should be understood as a conferral of those things promised to them when last he was with them, that is, during the last discourse.¹⁴⁴

Jesus had promised his disciples peace¹⁴⁵ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁶ Now he definitively confers both these gifts.¹⁴⁷ Particularly dramatic is the transmission of the Spirit to the disciples: this event has been anticipated since the beginning of the gospel both explicitly¹⁴⁸ and implicitly through the use of water as a symbol for the Spirit,¹⁴⁹ and it has just been “pre-enacted” at the cross.¹⁵⁰

Remarkably, here in John 20:22–23, the gift of the Holy Spirit is associated with the power to forgive sins:

He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

This declaration to the disciples must be understood in relation to John 1:29, Jesus’ first appearance in the gospel, where he is hailed by John the Baptist: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Although in this way the evangelist introduces Jesus to the reader as the one who “takes away sin,” there is not a single instance of Jesus *explicitly* forgiving sin in the entire gospel. Now, to be sure, if one had time, a good case could be developed from the text of the gospel itself that the signs Jesus performs are symbolic of release from sin.

144 So Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1035–1036.

145 John 14:27; 16:33.

146 John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13.

147 John 20:19, 21, 22.

148 John 1:32; 3:5; 7:39.

149 John 4:10–15; 7:38; 9:7, 11; 19:34.

150 John 19:30. “For John this is the high point of the post-resurrectional activity of Jesus and ... in several ways the earlier part of this chapter has prepared us for this dramatic moment.” Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1037.

The evangelist regards those in sin as spiritually sick,¹⁵¹ blind,¹⁵² and dead;¹⁵³ thus Jesus' miracles of healing may rightly be seen as *types* of liberation from sin.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the fact remains that, although Jesus' mission is announced from the start as the "taking away of sin," this is never enacted personally by Jesus in the gospel (in contrast to the synoptics, compare Mark 2:5). Rather, the power to forgive is explicitly devolved upon the disciples through the power of the Spirit at the end of the gospel. The message to early Christians is clear: it is through the apostles that they will experience Jesus' ministry of "taking away sin." Significantly, *this was a function performed in the old covenant through sacrifices at the Temple.*¹⁵⁵

Once again we recall Jesus' words to the disciples during the last discourse: "He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father." Earlier I argued that this statement is elliptical—the complete thought is "greater works he will do, because I go to the Father, and thus the Spirit will be given [compare John 16:7]." Now in John 20:22–23, the Spirit is being given to the disciples, enabling them to forgive sins. Could the "forgiveness of sins" be at least an aspect of the "greater works" which the disciples will do? The plausibility is high: in the evangelist's hierarchy of value, what is greater, the curing of body or of soul? The removal of physical blindness or spiritual blindness? The restoration of physical life or spiritual life? To pose these questions is almost to answer them.

151 John 5:14.

152 John 9:40–41.

153 John 5:25.

154 With regard to the healings in John 5 and 9, for example, Cullmann argues: "The evangelist has undoubtedly in mind that other water in which forgiveness of sins is gained through Christ. In that act of baptism the miracle of forgiveness of sins takes place. *Christ's miracles of healing are continued in baptism.*" *Early Christian Worship*, 87. Emphasis added.

155 Beale's comments on this theme are apropos: "Jesus' various statements [in the synoptics] that he can forgive sin could also suggest that he is beginning to replace the Temple. ... [T]he Temple was the divinely instituted place where sacrifices were offered for the forgiveness of sins, but now Jesus has become the divinely instituted location where forgiveness is to be found." *Temple and Church's Mission*, 177. Beale's principle holds true in John 20:23 as well, only here Jesus is conferring the "templeness" on his disciples as the *locus* of forgiveness. The narrative of John began with a symbolic judgment on the ineffective Jerusalem Temple (John 2); it ends with the "building" of a new Temple, the body of disciples, later called the *ekklesia*. "If [the] link with John 7[:38–39] can be maintained, then Jesus' breathing the Spirit on the disciples could be considered a part of a commission of and an enablement for them to be part of the new Temple and to expand its borders, so that others in the world may be included (on which see John 17:18–23). The primary message they are to announce in their mission is the forgiveness of sins (v. 23), which, as we have seen in the synoptic gospels, became the function of Jesus instead of Jerusalem's Temple. ... Jesus' breathing into the disciples might well be considered to incorporate them into the new creation and Temple." *Temple and Church's Mission*, 199.

As we have seen, Jesus' "catecheses" following the performance of signs consistently attempted to lead the listener from the "earthly" to the "heavenly." He relativizes the importance of the signs understood as physical miracles, ("Do not work for food that perishes," John 6:27) while pointing to their ultimate significance ("I am the bread of life," John 6:35). Hence, we are justified in affirming that, for the evangelist, the "forgiveness of sins" administered by the apostles constitutes a "greater work" than a physical miracle of Jesus.

One may proceed further and ask, How will this forgiveness of sins be administered? The evangelist does not explain. Apparently his first readership knew how the apostles would dispense the forgiveness of sins and needed no further explanation. We, more distant from the sources of the apostolic tradition, are less certain of the evangelist's intent. One proposal is that the forgiveness of sins is to be mediated through the apostolic preaching, through which the apostles introduce people to the forgiveness of sin available in the gospel. While such an interpretation has appeal, especially since it fits the instinct among many that the early Church was non-sacramental and non-hierarchical, it is striking that *explicit* emphasis on the preaching role of the apostles is difficult to find in John's Gospel.¹⁵⁶ Thus, while the mediation of forgiveness of sins through preaching may be an aspect of the meaning of John 20:23, it is probably less central in the intent of the evangelist.

Can one say that one aspect of the "greater works" that involve forgiveness of sins through the power of the Spirit is, in fact, the administration of the sacraments, for example, baptism?¹⁵⁷ The evidence that this was within the intent of the evangelist is surprisingly strong. George Beasley-Murray summarizes the evidence:

In the light of the missionary commission of Matt 28:19, the record of the mission of preaching in the Acts of the Apostles, and the association of the forgiveness of sins with baptism in the letters of the New Testament, it is likely that baptism is *assumed* here, as in Luke 24:46–47; compare Acts 2:38.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Perhaps the strongest passage in this regard is John 17:20: "I pray ... for those who believe in me through their *word*," which assumes the preaching ministry of the apostles. But see Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1042, quoted below.

¹⁵⁷ Interestingly, Brown allows that the power to admit to baptism may be an aspect of the authority to "forgive sins" conferred in this passage. See *John XIII–XXI*, 1041–1044. Brown does not note the fact that Jesus nowhere explicitly forgives sin in John. Perhaps thinking of the synoptics, he declares: "In his ministry Jesus forgave sin ..." *John XIII–XXI*, 1043.

¹⁵⁸ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 384. Brown adds further support: "There is little internal support in Johannine theology for interpreting vs. 23 as a power to preach the forgiveness of sins. ... There is better internal Johannine support for relating the forgiveness of sins to admission to baptism, for some of the Johannine passages that have a secondary baptismal symbolism touch

Of course, the Catholic Church has long seen in John 20:23 a biblical basis not only for baptism but for the sacrament of penance as well. Is this ecclesiastical eisegesis? Significantly, Beasley-Murray, Brown, and other John scholars point out that the primary readership of John's Gospel was the Church itself, that is baptized persons; therefore, the evangelist's intent in emphasizing the apostolic power to remit sin in John 20:23 seems unlikely to be limited only to pre-baptismal sins.¹⁵⁹

I believe that the disciples in John 20:22–23 are being commissioned to continue the ministry of reconciliation of Jesus, the “Lamb who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). This completes what Jesus had initiated in the footwashing scene in John 13:1–20. Footwashing was part of the ritual cleansing prescribed for priests in Exodus (Exod. 29:4; 30:17–21; 40:30–32).¹⁶⁰ As scholars such as the Protestant, Ernst Lohmeyer, and the Catholic, André Feuillet, have noticed, Jesus' action in John 13 is a preparation of the apostles to share in his own priestly consecration, a consecration that he imparts to them through his “high priestly” prayer in John 17.¹⁶¹ Now, in John 20, through the conferral of his Spirit, the apostles enter into the full share of Jesus' own ministry of priestly reconciliation.

on the question of sin. ... It is important that the Church Fathers of the first three centuries understood John 20:23 in reference to the baptismal forgiveness of sins.” *John XIII–XXI*, 1042.

159 Here the comments of Baptist scholar Beasley-Murray are pertinent: “[This] raises a further question, namely, whether the saying [20:23] is limited to entry into the Church or whether it applies also to life within the Church. ... This gospel is directed to the Church, wherein believers stand continually in need of forgiveness of sins, and discipline at times has to be exercised regarding offending members. ... When Church organization is sufficiently developed to ordain officers, it is inevitable that they play a role in such processes. ... From this statement in v. 23 the Roman Catholic Church has evolved the sacrament of Penance. Protestants find this difficult to accept. ... It is significant, however, that [in pastoral ministry, when] dealing with sin and guilt, an authoritative word of forgiveness is required from a representative of the Lord. ... The churches have need to learn from one another.” See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 384. Beasley-Murray's assertions about the development of “Church organization” and about the Church instituting the sacrament of penance as an exegetical development from John 20:23 are simply false historically. However, his comments are remarkable as an admission from a non-Catholic that the logic of John 20:23 involves a continuing exercise of the authority to forgive sins within the life of the Church, whose actual form would have to resemble what, in fact, the rite of penance has become within the Catholic Church. Brown's treatment of the passage (*John XIII–XXI*, 1042–45) is more complex, but affirms, albeit indirectly, that baptism and penance as practiced now by the Church are legitimate manifestations of the general grant of the power to forgive sins in 20:23. That is, these sacraments fall within the scope of the intent of the evangelist, although one cannot limit the meaning of 20:23 to these or the other sacraments. We should recall, too, the important conclusions of Oscar: “Baptism and Lord's Supper: here we have the once-for-all sacrament and the repeatable sacrament of forgiveness, but both in the same way anchored to Christ's death on the cross. The evangelist sees this meaning of both sacraments foreshadowed in the events of Jesus' life.” Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 71.

160 Compare Lev. 8:6; Num. 8:6–7.

161 “Through the washing of feet, Jesus makes his apostles the priests and leaders of the eschatological community and his own associates in the final kingdom.” André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of*

Further, their works of administration of forgiveness may rightly be considered among the “greater works” that Jesus promised in the last discourse that his disciples would perform (John 14:12). In my treatment of the last discourse, I suggested that the “greater works” could have been, among other things, a reference to the Spirit-empowered administration of the sacraments. Now, in John 20:22–23, we see the bestowal of the Spirit and the power to forgive sins. Hence, I think we are correct, based on a careful consideration of the text, that John intends us to read this as conferring upon the apostles some form of sacramental ministry.¹⁶²

Sign, Spirit, and Sacrament

John presents Jesus as the new Temple promised by Israel’s prophetic Scriptures, and as the personal fulfillment of the all the feasts celebrated in the Temple. In fact, this is one theological idea: Jesus’ fulfillment of the feasts is an aspect of his role as the Temple.¹⁶³

Yet for Christian readers of John’s Gospel—whether in the first century or the twenty-first—it is not satisfactory to stop at the affirmation that “Jesus is the new Temple.” Christ has ascended; how is he still the Temple for us? How, where, and through what means is this fulfillment continued?

In Jesus’ last discourse, we observed the theme of the commissioning of the disciples to continue the work of Christ after his departure. In John 14:2–3, the Temple imagery applied to Christ’s body in John 2:19–21 transfers to Christ’s Mystical Body, his disciples. Our exegesis showed how this community of disciples, the *ekklesia*, will now also be the Temple, since God dwells in them and they in God. Jesus promises the disciples that they will do the same “works” that he did, and indeed, “greater works than these,” because the Holy Spirit will be given to them.

Christ and his Ministers, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 164, here concurring with the views of Ernst Lohmeyer, *Lord of the Temple: A Study of the Relation Between Cult and Gospel*, trans. Stewart Todd (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1962). On Jesus’ “high priestly prayer,” see Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ*, 121–166. Compare Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 290–292.

162 As Cullmann comments, “Clearly the sacraments mean the same for the Church as the miracles of the historical Jesus for his contemporaries.” *Early Christian Worship*, 70.

163 “Jesus’ fulfillment of the Jewish feasts and the Temple are both connected with the nature and content of God’s provision for all his people. Jesus is and gives the true food and true drink that deliver believers from thirst and hunger. He accomplishes this by offering his flesh and blood for the life of the world and sending the Spirit to enrich believers with the salvific benefits of his sacrificial death. Thus he simultaneously fulfills the Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Dedication, and the Temple. Looking at the Temple in particular, he fulfills and replaces it as the place of sacrifice and the place from which God pours out his abundant provision upon his people.” Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 196. Remarkably, Hoskins sees no connection here with a sacramental fulfillment in baptism and Eucharist.

“Works” are a synonym of “signs” in the Gospel of John. The “signs” Jesus performs in the gospel are frequently manifestations of his fulfillment of the Temple and its feasts: the feeding of 5,000 represents a new Passover, for instance. Moreover, the “signs” of Jesus are not ends in themselves, they point to Jesus’ identity, and further, they point forward to Jesus’ presence in the sacraments. For example, in John 3 and 6, Jesus engages in a catechesis that seeks to lead his interlocutors from the “signs” to the reality they signify. In John 9, the sign itself is so closely analogous to the sacrament of baptism that the entire narrative is a kind of mystagogy, or sacramental catechesis. The climax of John’s Gospel is the narrative of Jesus’ final sign, his death and resurrection. And here all the signs of the gospel are fulfilled in a sacramental way—Jesus has departed, given up his Spirit, and from the new Temple of his body, the baptismal water and Eucharistic blood flow.

The post-resurrection narratives in John show us how Jesus’ fulfillment of the Temple is to be extended in time by the “Temple” of his disciples. They, too, will perform signs and works, earthly signs that point to heavenly realities, the “greater works” of the sacraments that extend the light of Christ’s forgiveness to those walking in darkness. They, too, will give his flesh and blood not for the nation only, but for the life of the world, to gather into one the children of God scattered abroad.¹⁶⁴ In these greater works of the sacraments we see Jesus’ ultimate fulfillment of the Temple and its festivals and liturgy.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, it was through the Temple festivals and liturgy that the people of the old covenant experienced the Temple for what it really was—the site of reconciliation and communion with God; thus, they bear an analogy to the sacraments of the new covenant.¹⁶⁶ In the

164 Compare John 6:51; 12:52. Recall, too, Cullmann’s argument that “the Gospel of John regards it as one of its chief concerns to set forth the connexion between contemporary Christian worship and the historical life of Jesus. ... It traces the line from the Christ of history to Christ the Lord of the community.” *Early Christian Worship*, 37–38.

165 Compare our conclusion with the opinion of Schnackenburg: “They [the Johannine communities] were churches in which liturgical and sacramental life was flourishing. ... Their worship was the eschatological culmination of all worship practiced until then, transcending even the Jewish service of the Temple. Their pasch replaced and fulfilled the pasch of the Jews. ... In the sacraments they possessed testimonies and vehicles of the continuing redemptive acts of Jesus Christ (1 John 5:6), and obtained living and abiding union with the Son of God and through him perfect communion with God (John 6:56). ... It cannot be disputed that the Johannine Church experienced the word of Christ and the person of Christ as present in its solemn worship (comprising word and sacrament).” “Is There a Johannine Ecclesiology?” in *A Companion to John: Readings in Johannine Theology (John’s Gospel and Epistles)*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (New York: Alba House, 1977), 247–256, at 254–255.

166 “Already in the Old Testament we find that the cult was the primary means of communion between God and his chosen people. The cult of the new covenant has its foundation and its centre in the Eucharist which Christ himself instituted.” Correll, *Consummatum Est*, 4. “It was not Jesus’ purpose to establish a new non-liturgical religion as a substitute for the old cult. Rather St. John saw the old cult as attaining its fulfillment and perfection in and through Christ. All

sacraments of the new covenant, we come to the new Temple, the Body of Christ, his Church.¹⁶⁷ And in the sacramental liturgy of the new Temple we experience the healing, life-giving, and reconciliatory reality of dwelling with God, receiving the promise he made to his people from of old.¹⁶⁸

that the old Jewish cult had stood for and expressed was fulfilled in Jesus, who himself was the centre of the new Christian cult." Correll, *Consummatum Est*, 52.

167 "Although the Fourth Gospel does not refer to the Church as the Temple of God, it contains the theological bases for this Pauline title." Hoskins, *Jesus as Temple*, 198.

168 Cullmann expresses it this way: "Since Christ is the center of all worship, all the media of the past ... (purificatory rites, washings, baptism of John) are replaced by the media of grace, in which Christ ... communicates himself ... in the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper." *Early Christian Worship*, 118.