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Interpretations of the Metaphor “Spiritual House” In 1 Peter 2:4-10 and Their Implications for the Indwelling of Divine Presence

Cory Wetterlin

In the Old Testament, divine presence was a physical presence-to-physical presence relationship with God. If one wanted to come to God, he could approach his presence within the Sanctuary or Temple. Divine-human encounters before the construction of the earthly Temple were also presence-to-presence, such as Moses’ meeting at the burning bush and Jacob’s wrestling with the Angel of the Lord.¹ The New Testament begins with the same paradigm. The Messiah enters the world as Immanuel, “God with us” (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23). Therefore, the followers of Jesus interacted with him on a face-to-face basis, which was a more tangible and visible type of interaction than some of the encounters in the OT. At the end of the New Testament, a similar interaction occurs with the fulfillment of the promise of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. The holy city will descend and God will once again dwell among his people; he will be their God and they shall be his people (Rev 22:3-4).²

However, a problem arises during the time between Christ’s ascension and his second coming. Jesus promised that another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come (John 14:16, 26). This fulfilled his promise never to leave or forsake his people (Matt 28:20). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is manifested in real and visible ways (especially at Pentecost) and his power is displayed in the works of the church. However, the paradigm seems to shift; no longer is there a

1. “First, regardless of whether Gen. 32:31 (EVV 30) originally belonged to the account of Jacob’s nocturnal wrestling-match or not, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that in its present context the verse identifies the God whom Jacob saw ‘face to face’ with the ‘man’ with whom he had wrestled. Secondly, in view of the reference to the descent of the pillar of cloud in Exod 33:9, it is generally considered that YHWH was present on those occasions when he is described as speaking to Moses ‘face-to-face.’ Thirdly, there are no indications of Divine Presence in the context of Deut 34:10. YHWH’s ‘face-to-face’ knowledge of Moses is frequently understood as an expression of the intimacy of the unique relationship, which existed between them, but few if any scholars relate it explicitly to an experience of the Divine Presence.” Ian Wilson, *Out of the Midst of the Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 77.

2. Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary of the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 600, 605, 609.

face-to-face relationship with God; now there is an indwelling, divine presence.³ There are two primary interpretations of what indwelling actually means. First, the sacramental interpretation focuses on the Eucharist and the transformation of the form or substance of the bread into the actual presence of Christ.⁴ Believers who receive the host once it has been transformed thus has the divine presence within them. It also remains within the tabernacle in the altar of the church as long as the host is there.⁵ Second, pantheism suggests that all is God and pantheism suggests all is in God. Such beliefs extend the sacramental system to the cosmos. Everything is within God while God is also beyond all and cannot be contained in the creation.⁶

The biblical view of the indwelling of the Spirit, however, does not change the paradigm. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is taking in the words of God and submitting the life of the individual believer to the authority of Christ in one's life (John 14:23). The Holy Spirit may come upon the individual and the power and providence of the Spirit can work within the life of the individual, but ontologically, the divine presence remains outside the individual believer. Yet, God is still among his people, as ever he was. When Christian believers gather and call upon the name of Jesus, he is in their midst (Matt 18:18).⁷ Corporately, the church is a temple of the Holy Spirit in which the Holy Spirit moves and dwells (1 Cor 6:19). Many passages in the New Testament make reference to the divine presence among the body of believers and there are many different interpretations imposed on those passages. One such passage is found in 1 Pet 2:4-10.

The face-to-face paradigm of divine presence found in the OT at the time of the first advent of Jesus in the NT and after the second advent of Jesus in the New Jerusalem poses a question regarding the divine presence for the waiting period between Jesus' ascension and Second Advent. The question for this research is in what way, if at all, the concept of the spiritual house of 1 Peter addresses the issue of divine presence.⁸

3. J. M. Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2006), 3-4, 54-55, 125.

4. "He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially in the Eucharistic species." Catholic Church., *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1994), 283.

5. Catholic Church., *Catholic Catechism*, 348.

6. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Pantheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 8.

7. "Thus this presence of Jesus 'in their midst' is not just the regulation of disputatious church members, or a good feeling, or a practiced cultic expression, or religious acknowledgment of a corporate desire. It is real empowerment when God's little people gather in Jesus' name. It is the social and religious experience of his gathered people being filled with divine authority, focus and cohesion for the ordinary and extraordinary events in the life of their community." David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel* (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 199, 183.

8. Jerry Truex clearly suggested that Peter does deal with questions of the presence of God along with questions of the atonement and identity and obedience. He also called out 1 Peter 2:4-5 as a "stunning response" the questions of divine presence. Jerry Truex, "God's Spiritual House: A Study of 1 Peter 2:4-5," *Direction* 33, (2004): 186.

The way in which to answer the question of whether the spiritual house in 1 Pet 2:4-10 addresses the issue of divine presence is first to define the term spiritual house (*pneumatikos oikos*). This study compares and contrasts the two major interpretations of this term as a temple or household.⁹ These two options are strongly related to the interpretation of spiritual sacrifices; therefore, the second step of this research will be to present the different views on the meanings of spiritual sacrifices. Finally, the arguments will be summarized and some conclusions drawn about how the concept of spiritual house and spiritual sacrifices help to answer the question of divine presence in the time of waiting.

This study will be limited to exegetical studies of 1 Pet 2:4-10. The questions of authorship, date of composition, audience, and literary genre of 1 Peter are not included in this study unless it becomes relevant for the exegetical information of the particular passage. While there is much more information within the verses of 1 Pet 2:4-10 regarding Jesus (for example Jesus as the cornerstone of the spiritual building), this study does not deal with all of the details of interpretation for the entire passage. Instead, it focuses on the interpretation of the terms “spiritual house” and “spiritual sacrifices,” while only mentioning other exegetical details from the passage as they relate to these two concepts.

Interpretations of “spiritual house”

The word *oikos* in 1 Pet 2:4-5 is interpreted in many different ways, as John Elliott made clear; several examples include a physical house, a family or clan,

9. The authors supporting the temple interpretation are Francis D. Nichol ed, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., 7 vols.; Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976), 7:560; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 127-129, 131-132; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BEC 21 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 148-149; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC 37 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 105; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, TC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 90; Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays*, TC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1981), 160; M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter*, ANT (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999), 98-99; Ernest Best, “1 Peter 2:4-10: A Reconsideration,” *NovT* 11, (1969): 280; Truex, “God’s Spiritual House,” *Direction*, 189; Dennis E. Johnson, “Fire in God’s House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter’s Theology of Suffering (1 Pet 4:12-19),” *JETS* 29, (1986): 290-293; John S. Marshall, “A Spiritual House an Holy Priesthood (1 Peter ii.5),” *ATHR* 28, (1946): 227; David Hill, “‘To Offer Spiritual Sacrifices’ (1 Peter 2:5): Liturgical Formulations and Christian Paraenesis in 1 Peter,” *JSNT*, (1982): 61. The authors supporting the household interpretation are J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC 49; (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 100, 105; John Hall Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 415, 417; John Hall Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: With a New Introduction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 168, 170-175, 180, 183-184, 189, 201-202, 207. While the weight of evidence would seem to be on the temple side, Elliott did such extensive exposition on the household position that most of the authors who choose the temple interpretation refer to and interact with Elliot’s work. I did also find one author who specifically chose the middle way of saying it is both temple and household. Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 414.

a household, and the metaphorical interpretation of temple.¹⁰ Elliott argued that it is the context of the passage that provides the proper interpretation of the term, which he argued to be household. However, the modifier of *pneumatikos* leaves this interpretation up for debate. The scholastic literature abounds with the debate between two basic positions, temple or household. The vast majority of scholarship is on the side of temple, but Elliott's work is so extensive that most scholars address his conclusions. This study will start with the majority position of the spiritual house interpreted as temple.

Temple Interpretation

Spiritual House. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary simply states that because the house pertains to the spirit, it is therefore considered the temple of God.¹¹ The modifier "spiritual," added to *oikos*, is the primary connection for most scholars to call it a temple. The house is considered spiritual by R. J. McKelvey because of the cultic language and insinuations of worship seen in the rest of the passage. For example, there are the spiritual sacrifices that are to be offered, believers who are both living stones that make up the temple and who resemble the living stone, Jesus Christ; these believers are also made into a priesthood that offers the accompanying sacrifices. McKelvey moved away from the notion that the house is called spiritual because it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He stated that because the author of 1 Peter does not directly mention the divine presence, it is better to recognize the spirituality of the house because it is made up of "consecrated persons" who are spiritually dedicated and who offer their obedient lives as spiritual sacrifices.¹² For McKelvey, the spiritual interpretation is based on the cultic worship focus in the passage.¹³

The rest of the temple interpretation camp, on the other hand, suggests that Peter is referring to a spiritual temple precisely because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, as well as the idea of "a place of true worship and spiritual sacrifice."¹⁴ Karen Jobes suggested that because the temple is made up of living stones, as Jesus is a living stone, this passage also suggests the close relationship with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.¹⁵ Jobes also emphasized the unity of the spiritual house, which is derived from "God's presence, the one Cornerstone, and

10. "*Oikos/oikia* designates, variously, a building, dwelling, residence; a room or chamber; a hall or meeting place; a storehouse or treasury; a palace; a building in which a divinity is thought to reside, a temple; a burial chamber or tomb; a household, family or lineage; household goods, substance, estate, inheritance; a reigning house or dynasty; a clan, tribe, tribal confederation, nation or state; and a social, commercial or religious organization or community." (Emphasis added) Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: a Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, 182.

11. Nichol, *SDABC*, 7: 560.

12. McKelvey, *The New Temple*, 128-129.

13. McKelvey, *The New Temple*, 131. Elliott proposed that the direct response to worship is the focus of 1 Peter and suggested that "it is as the place of worship that 1 Peter is most interested in the new temple" (p. 131). However, this and similar interpretations fail to note that nowhere in the rest of 1 Peter is this supposed interest in worship made explicit. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 242. Marshall also emphasized the joint spiritual sacrifice made by the members of the spiritual house as an act of worship. Marshall, "A Spiritual House," 227.

14. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 148.

15. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 364.

a unity of purpose.”¹⁶ Divine presence clearly plays a significant role in Jobes’ interpretation of spiritual house as the temple.

Thomas R. Schreiner followed along the same line, even discounting “some scholars” who are hesitant to use (or shy away from) the term temple. Following the LXX in using the verb *oikodomeo* in direct connection with *oikos* to speak of the OT temple, Schreiner believed the NT church represented in this passage by the term spiritual house is the new temple of God and said: “The house is ‘spiritual’ (*pneumatikos*) because it is animated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷

J. N. D. Kelly also suggested that Christians are God’s temple “with Christ as the foundation and the Spirit dwelling in them.”¹⁸ He made reference to Jesus’ speaking of raising a temple not made by hands to replace the physical temple in Jerusalem, suggesting that this new temple will be the Christian community. He also brought out the Qumran communities’ understanding of the congregation and community being the house of God.¹⁹

Edward Selwyn took the interpretation of the temple a step further. He not only suggested the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but also the sacerdotal nature of the temple.²⁰ Eugene Boring agreed; while some might suggest that *oikos* is a household, “the context indicates we have temple imagery.”²¹ Truex replaced the Jerusalem temple with the indwelling Christ of the Christian community.²²

Dennis E. Johnson pointed to the OT language of sanctuary to suggest the temple imagery of 1 Pet 4 and uses 2:5 as further confirmation of the temple language within the book.²³ Johnson also tied Peter’s language to the language of Paul in Eph 2:21-22 “... (Christ), in whom the whole building, as it is joined together, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”²⁴ Johnson clearly connected the temple language of 1 Peter to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Johnson also brought out the judgment parallels between 1 Peter and the judgment in the OT. Judgment in 1 Pet 4 starts with the house of God and Johnson referenced Ezek 9 and Mal 3:1-5 in which Yahweh comes to the temple to begin judgment. While Johnson recognized the language in Hebrews of the heavenly sanctuary, he suggested that Peter maintains that there is still an earthly temple composed of living stones.²⁵

Within the passage of 1 Pet 2:4-10, v. 9 is often seen as a parallel to vv. 4-5. There is a significant word used in v. 9, which is significant to both parties of interpretation (temple and household). The use of *baseilion* is understood as a

16. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 149.

17. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 105. In his footnotes of this same page Schreiner directly addressed Elliott’s household position, stating that Elliott “underestimates the significance of the temple as God’s house in the OT.” Ernest Best also made the same tie between the verb *oikodomein* and *oikos* in the LXX and showed that *oikos* occurs ten times as often as *naos*, which is the next most common word used. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 280.

18. Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 90.

19. Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 90.

20. Selwyn, *The Epistle of St. Peter*, 160.

21. Boring, *1 Peter*, 98-99.

22. Truex, “God’s Spiritual House,” 189.

23. Johnson, “Fire in God’s House,” 290.

24. Johnson, “Fire in God’s House.”

25. Johnson, “Fire in God’s House,” 293.

substantive by both camps, rather than an adjective. That is, instead of *royal* modifying *priesthood*, they are seen in apposition. The believers are built into a spiritual house whose cornerstone is Christ, who is both a royal residence and the priesthood. Kelly, Selwyn, and Best all represented this translation on the side of the temple interpretation of spiritual house.²⁶ Best even admitted to an agreement with Elliott on this interpretation of *baseilion*. The main reason for this interpretation seems to be the enhancement of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If the Christian community becomes a royal residence, the divine presence among God's temple is more strongly represented.

The arguments for the temple interpretation of "spiritual house" have been presented. There are direct ties between the "spiritual house" and the "spiritual sacrifices." We will, therefore, turn to the temple camp's interpretation of spiritual sacrifices.

Spiritual Sacrifices. The major theme of what the spiritual sacrifices are in 1 Pet 2:5 is the surrender of life and conduct to the will of Christ. The SDA Bible Commentary suggests that the "sacrifices characterized by a spirit of love and devotion to God in contrast with the animal sacrifices of the ritual system had come to reflect little more than compliance with form. Only those who worship Him 'in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23, 24) can offer sacrifices that are 'acceptable to God.'"²⁷ McKelvey continued the theme of sacrifices being part of the cultic worship language of 1 Peter, listing some of the options as evangelism, good works, suffering, prayer, hospitality, and humility offered by the spiritual priesthood in line with the other themes of the epistle.²⁸

Schreiner saw the modifier "spiritual" in relation to the work and influence of the Holy Spirit, as is the spiritual house. Schreiner brought in Elliott's interpretation of the sacrifices being the believer's holy life, Achtemeier's interpretation of the sacrifices evangelism, and Michael's reference to the sacrifices of both worship and conduct.²⁹

Kelly agreed with the others that the spiritual sacrifices include the life and conduct of the believer. He referred to the Qumran recognition of the OT prophets' focus on prayer, praise, thankfulness, a broken and contrite heart, and a life of justice and compassion as spiritual sacrifices.³⁰ Kelly also included the interpretation, which is unique to the temple group, of the spiritual sacrifices as the Eucharist. He saw the Eucharist as the culmination of an offering of thankfulness.³¹ Selwyn tied his interpretation of the spiritual house having sacerdotal connotations to the spiritual sacrifices having a proper sacerdotal sense as well: "Here the word is used in its proper sense of a sacerdotal act. It would be especially appropriate if the Eucharist were in the author's mind..."³² Selwyn

26. Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 97; Selwyn, *The Epistle of St. Peter*, 167; Best, "1 Peter 2:4-10," 288-289.

27. Nichol, *SDABC*, 7: 560.

28. McKelvey, *The New Temple*, 129.

29. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 107.

30. Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 91.

31. Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 92.

32. Selwyn, *The Epistle of St. Peter*, 161.

continued to express the Eucharist as the union of the Church's sacrifice with faith as an outward expression of God on one side and man on the other.³³ Boring and David Hill, who also interpreted spiritual house as temple, did not accept the Eucharist as part of the spiritual sacrifices because Peter does not make specific reference to the Eucharist in the passage, emphasizing instead the major theme in 1 Peter of the totality of Christian living.³⁴

In summary, the temple interpretation understands Peter's use of spiritual house to be a transition, if not a replacement of the Jerusalem temple with the new temple of the Christian community indwelt by the Holy Spirit (with the exception of McKelvey who left out the component of divine presence). For some, both the temple and the sacrifices hold a sacerdotal meaning; for others, the sacrifices are simply those sacrifices influenced by the Holy Spirit and a part of worshiping God in both spirit and truth. After exploring the scholars who interpret spiritual house and temple and their understanding of spiritual sacrifices, this study will now move on to those who hold the household interpretation.

Household Interpretation

Spiritual House. The household interpretation is largely a sociological interpretation of the language in 1 Peter. This interpretation seeks to take in the entirety of the social structure and rule of life and conduct for the Christian believer in the whole book of 1 Peter. The emphasis is on the community formed, which is represented by the spiritual house, rather than any cultic temple language.³⁵ While Elliott acknowledged the possibility that *oikos* can be interpreted as temple, he saw the larger context of 1 Peter clearly showing household as the better option.³⁶

Elliott was the primary voice of this argument; others who suggested this interpretation relied on Elliott. Elliott's argument was much too extensive for this paper and therefore, only the major points will be highlighted. The first of these points is the use of *oikos* outside of the Bible. *Oikos* is used by the Egyptians to express the whole land of Egypt as the household of Pharaoh. In other words, all that Pharaoh rules over is considered part of his household. According to Elliott, Philo shows the regular connection between politics and the household metaphor. The family is the place where *oikos* begins and then extends into the residence, land, property, and personnel, as well as the finances and economic management of the household.³⁷ The head of the household was seen as the *Pater Patriae* of all the members of the family; the servants of the household were also understood to be part of one large family unit under the *Pater Patriae*.³⁸ Elliott saw this language transfer into the language of 1 Peter and into the society of Bithynia.³⁹ Peter's use

33. Selwyn, *The Epistle of St. Peter*, 162-163.

34. Boring, *1 Peter*, 101; Hill, "Spiritual Sacrifices," 61.

35. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 100.

36. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 241.

37. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 172-173.

38. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 175.

39. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 180.

of *oikos* household would, therefore, reflect this social reality as he talks about the roles of servants, husband, wives, masters, elders, and younger men.⁴⁰

The second point of interpretation for Elliott was demonstrated in the use of covenantal language. Elliott pointed out that throughout the OT, Yahweh made his covenants with the House of Jacob or the House of David: "This covenant established the basis of Israel's union with God as its exclusive kingly ruler, its collective identity as God's special elect and holy people."⁴¹ Spiritual household, therefore, is to be understood as a house of the spirit through the new covenant with the Christian believers. The believers who make up the house of the spirit are those who accept the rule of Christ in their lives and recognize God as their *Pater Patriae*.⁴²

Elliott then moved on really to discount the temple interpretation. For Elliott, temple was too narrow an interpretation for *oikos*; it limited the spiritual house only to the cultic rituals of worship, rather than an entire life encompassing surrender.⁴³ Elliott also explained the usage of *oikos* in the NT; he showed that the majority of times *oikos* was used, it referred to a home or domestic form of society. The terms *hieron* and *naos* are the conventional terms for temple in the NT.⁴⁴ While Elliott did recognize the usage of *oikos* with the verb *oidodomein* in the LXX to represent temple, he did not see the same usage in the NT, nor therefore, in the context of 1 Peter.⁴⁵ Elliott continued with a missional argument for household. The NT transitions from people gathering in the temple of God to households, which are filled with the Holy Spirit. The church moves and expands, based on households (*oikos*) and churches (*ekklesia*), which met in houses. Many households united together as the household of the Spirit.⁴⁶

The divine presence was just as significant for Elliott as it was for the temple. The Holy Spirit now dwells in and among the community of believers, the household of God. This is seen in Elliott's interpretation of *basileion*. As mentioned before, the substantive interpretation of *basileion* as the royal residence is accepted both by those who interpret spiritual house as temple and by Elliott who proposed the household paradigm. Elliott considered the household as the divine residence.⁴⁷ He pointed to the same divine dwelling within the households of the OT in the tents (*oikos*) of Shem.⁴⁸

Overall, Elliott developed the household interpretation of spiritual house extensively to include the social history of the time of the writing of 1 Peter, the context of the LXX and NT, and the immediate context of 1 Peter itself. It is important to look at Elliott's interpretation of spiritual sacrifices as well.

40. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 207.

41. Elliott, *1 Peter*, AB, 419.

42. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 186, 201, 207.

43. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 194.

44. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 197. Further down on this page Elliott made what I consider a weaker point of his argument, the dismissal of the spiritual modifier for *oikos*. He saw this as the only possible language that may link *oikos* to temple and simply brushes it aside for the significance of the rest of the context. There is clearly cultic language in this passage that needs to be connected: spiritual, sacrifice, priesthood, etc.

45. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 241.

46. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 222.

47. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 168-169.

48. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 170.

Spiritual Sacrifices. The interpretation of spiritual sacrifices by Elliott and others who held the household interpretation is not much different from the interpretation of those of the temple camp. As previously mentioned, those who held to the temple interpretation actually cited and agreed with Elliott's interpretation of spiritual sacrifices. Sacrifices include the possibility of praise and thanksgiving, holy and honorable conduct, upright behavior and the other household duties of the spiritual community. Elliott, while acknowledging the possibility of the Eucharist, also rejected it because of a lack of certain evidence in 1 Peter.⁴⁹ Elliott also included the declaration of "praise of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light," from v. 10. This is the ground for the evangelistic interpretation of spiritual sacrifices.⁵⁰

In summary, the household interpretation is focused on the spiritual house being the household of the Spirit. The household is still the royal residence of the Holy Spirit dwelling among his community. Elliott based this interpretation on the larger context of 1 Peter and interpreted the spiritual sacrifices accordingly as well performed household duties of the community.

Summary and Conclusions

It seems that both the household and the temple interpretations have merit. The "spiritual" modifier of house along with the other cultic or sanctuary language of sacrifices and priesthood seem too significant to ignore, which Elliott did in order to emphasize the household and reject the temple. Johnson's additional imagery of the judgment beginning in the temple for the OT and in 1 Pet 4 makes an even stronger case for the inclusion of temple for the interpretation of spiritual house. These evidences are found in the context of 1 Peter itself without over-laying Paul's understanding on Peter's writing to include all of Paul's temple imagery of the new Christian Community.

The household interpretation also has clear support in the context of 1 Peter. The sociological instructions for conduct and holy living within a system of community under Father God are very clear. Added to this is Elliott's evidence of the use of *oikos* in the NT to represent the domestic sense of household in both the societal structure of Egypt and the Roman household. I agree with Elliott that the NT shows a transition away from the building of the Jerusalem temple as the dwelling place of God to the households and communities of believers. The divine presence is no longer limited to the *shekinah* in the Holy of Holies, but is amongst the people wherever they may gather in the name of Jesus to worship in spirit and in truth. However, this shows temple transition to the community as temple as well as household.

49. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 422.

50. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 421.

This study agrees with Charles Bigg, Truex, and Nijay Gupta who accepted both interpretations, but who are also open to Elliott's criticism of such a position.⁵¹ Essentially, it is unsound to disregard either interpretation.

Interpretations of "spiritual sacrifices"

The interpretation of spiritual sacrifices is the same on both sides of the argument, except concerning the understanding of the Eucharist. It makes sense that this argument would come from the side of the temple interpretation, especially from a sacramental system of thinking. The Eucharist is the very presence of Christ. Therefore, if the temple is to be indwelt by the presence of Christ, the Eucharist must be present. Christ's presence is what makes the house spiritual and is, therefore, directly referenced in such a system.

Because I do not subscribe to a sacramental system in the sense of transubstantiation and the real presence of Christ as being or embodied in the host, I do not see the Eucharist as a necessary part of an interpretation of the spiritual sacrifices. I am more inclined to connect it with the general context of 1 Peter concerning holy living and the conduct of the spiritual household, as well as the immediate context of the passage, which, in 1 Pet 2:10, includes offerings of praise to the one who has led believers out of darkness.

Implications for the understanding of divine presence

The theme of divine presence is considered to be a part of 1 Peter in reference to the spiritual house by each of the interpreters discussed, except McKelvey. Divine presence is made all the more significant by the interpretation of *baseilion* as the substantive divine residence. The answer to the research question for this study as to whether 1 Peter has anything to say about divine presence according to the scholars is an affirmative. Even though there is not a direct reference to the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the community, the modifier "spiritual" infers the connection.

I believe the household/temple combination can give us some significant insight into how to interpret divine presence in the time between Christ's ascension and his second coming. The Bible supports an external face-to-face relationship with God in the OT temple and with the incarnated Jesus during his first advent and after his second. This is in contrast to an internal indwelling ontological relationship. To be a part of the household of Yahweh was to be in a

51. Bigg used the language of both the house and the temple. Bigg, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, 128. Truex suggested that "both then and now, the use of the metaphor 'spiritual house' (1 Pet. 2:5) is not limited to a single meaning or set of mental images. Thus we are not forced to choose either family or temple as its meaning. Both sets of images were within the cultural and linguistic grasp of the first readers, and both sets of images disclosed new realities for understanding the traumatic historical and social crises they faced. 1 Peter encourages its recipients not to be passive observers of traumatic events or powerless victims of other people's opinions. Rather, it empowers the readers to choose. They do not need to search for home; they can choose to be home and family for the homeless. They do not need to wonder where God is in all of this; they can choose to be the place of God's presence in the world here and now. In this way, they are the people of God." Truex, "God's Spiritual House," 190. Gupta also suggested that Peter may have meant to include both although he leans towards temple language. Nijay Gupta, "A Spiritual House of Royal Priests, Chosen and Honored: The Presence and Function of Cultic Imagery in 1 Peter," *PRS* 36 (2009): 71, 76. Elliott, however, called for a decisive alternative. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 194.

covenantal relationship with him and accept his rule over one's life. We find the same type of relationship described in 1 Peter through the household language and his emphasis on holy living. J. M. Hamilton made it clear that there was an internal working of the Holy Spirit for the regenerative work of salvation in the OT, rather than an ontological indwelling. However, rather than staying consistent with this understanding for the NT Church, he believed Christ establishes the ontological indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁵²

I see evidence in 1 Peter of what a continued external relationship with God would look like in this interim time. Rather than an individual indwelling, the community of believers is built up into a spiritual house of living stones in which the divine presence dwells. The believers then offer spiritual sacrifices of their lives in covenant with God as their head of household. They are empowered by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit working in them to make them living stones just as their cornerstone (Christ) is also a living stone raised to life by the power of the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 2:4-10 clearly offers significant insight into the question of the divine presence during this time of eschatological waiting for the second coming of Christ.

52. Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence*, 3-4, 54-55, 125.