

INTERPRETATIONS OF SPIRITUAL HOUSE IN 1 PETER 2:4-10 AND THEIR  
IMPLICATIONS ON THE INDWELLING OF DIVINE PRESENCE

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**Introduction**

Divine presence in the Old Testament was a physical presence-to-physical presence relationship with God. If one wanted to come to God they would approach his presence with in the Sanctuary or Temple. The encounters before the temple were also presence-to-presence with Moses at the burning bush and Jacob wrestling with the angel of the lord.<sup>1</sup> The New Testament begins with the same paradigm. The Messiah enters the world as Immanuel, "God with us."<sup>2</sup> The followers of Jesus interacted with him on a face-to-face basis all the more tangible and visible than some of the encounters in the OT. The promise of the New Jerusalem in Revelation is the same. 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.<sup>3</sup>

The problem lies in the in between time of Christ's ascension and his second coming. Jesus promised another comforter, the Holy Spirit would come.<sup>4</sup> He promised never to leave or

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<sup>1</sup> "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, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>2</sup> Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23

<sup>3</sup> Rev 22:3-4, Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary of the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2009), 600, 605, 609.

<sup>4</sup> John 14:16, 26

forsake his people.<sup>5</sup> The Holy Spirit is manifested in real and visible ways at Pentecost and his power displayed in the works of the church. But the paradigm seems to shift, no longer is there a face-to-face relationship with God now there is an indwelling divine presence.<sup>6</sup> There are two primary interpretations of what indwelling actually means. The sacramental interpretation focuses on the Eucharist and the transformation of the form or second substance of the bread into the actual presence of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Each believer who receives the host once it has been transformed thus has the divine presence within them and it remains within the tabernacle in the altar of the church as long as the host is there.<sup>8</sup> Pantheism suggests that all is god and the newer branch of panentheism extends the sacramental system to the cosmos.<sup>9</sup> Everything is within god while God is also beyond all and cannot be contained in the creation.

The biblical view of the indwelling of the Spirit however does not change paradigm. The indwelling of the holy spirit in the taking in of the words of God and submitting the life of the individual believer to the authority of Christ in ones life.<sup>10</sup> 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 of the individual believer. God is still among his people as ever he was, which Christian believers gather and call upon the name of

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<sup>5</sup> Matt 28:20

<sup>6</sup> J. M. Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2006), 3-4, 54-55, 125.

<sup>7</sup> "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, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1994), 283.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 348.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 8.

<sup>10</sup> John 14:23

Jesus he is in their midst<sup>11</sup> and corporately the church is a temple of the Holy Spirit among which the Holy Spirit moves and dwells.<sup>12</sup>

Many passages in the New Testament make reference to the divine presence among the body of believers and there are many different interpretation imposed on those passages. One such passage is found in 1 Peter 2:4-10.

The face-to-face paradigm of divine presence within the OT, the time of the first advent of Jesus in the NT, and after the second advent of the Jesus in the New Jerusalem poses a question of divine presence for the waiting period in between Jesus ascension and second advent. In what way is the Holy Spirit present with the Christian church during this time of waiting? The question for this research is in what way, if at all, does the concept of the spiritual house of 1 Peter address the issue of divine presence?<sup>13</sup>

The way in which to answer the question of whether the spiritual house in 1 Peter 2:4-10 addresses the issue of divine presence is first to define spiritual house (*pneumatikos oikos*). This study compare and contrast the two major interpretations of this term as a temple or household.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Matt 18:18., 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 acknowledgement 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, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 199, 183.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor 6:19

<sup>13</sup> Jerry Truex clearly suggests that Peter does deal with questions of the presence of God along with questions of the atonement and identity and obedience. He also calls out 1 Peter 2:4-5 as a "stunning response" the questions of divine presence. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*, 186.

<sup>14</sup> The authors I found supporting the temple interpretation are: Jerry Truex, "God's Spiritual House: a Study of 1 Peter 2:4-5," 33, 2 (2004). The authors I found supporting the household interpretation are: Francis D. Nichol ed, (Rev. ed., vol. 7 of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: The Holy Bible with Exegetical and Expository Comment*; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), 560, R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London, UK: Oxford U.P., 1969), 127-129, 131-132, Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (vol. 21; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 148-149, Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (vol. 37; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 105, J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of*

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 I will summarize the arguments and draw out some conclusions 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 the exegetical work done of 1 Peter 2:4-10. I will not engaged the questions of authorship, date of composition, audience, or literary genre of 1 Peter unless it becomes relevant for the exegetical information of the particular passage. While there is much more information with in the verses of 1 Peter 2:4-10 regarding Jesus as the cornerstone of the spiritual building for example I will not deal with all of the details of interpretation for the entire passage. Instead I will focus 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.

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*Jude* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1989), 90, Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), 160, M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1999), 98-99, Ernest Best, "1 Peter 2:4-10: A Reconsideration," 11, 4 (1969): 280, Truex, "God's Spiritual House: a Study of 1 Peter 2:4-5," 189, Dennis E. Johnson, "Fire in God's House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter's Theology of Suffering (1 Pet 4:12-19)," 29, 3 (1986): 290-293, John S. Marshall, "A Spiritual House an Holy Priesthood (1 Peter ii.5)," 28, 4 (1946): 227, David Hill, "'To Offer Spiritual Sacrifices' (1 Peter 2:5): Liturgical Formulations and Christian Paraenesis in 1 Peter," 16 (1982): 61. While the weight of evidence would seem to be on the temple side, Elliott does extensive exposition on the household position that most of the authors who choose the temple interpretation interact with Elliot's work. I did also find one author who specifically chooses the middle way of saying it is both temple and household. J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (vol. 49; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1988), 100, 105, John Hall Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (vol. 37B; New York, N.Y.: 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, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1990), 168, 170-175, 180, 183-184, 189, 201-202, 207.

## Interpretations of “spiritual house”

The word *oikos* in 1 Peter 2:4-5 has many interpretations available to it as John Elliot makes clear; anything from a physical house, a family or clan, a household, to the metaphorical interpretation of temple.<sup>15</sup> Elliot argues that it is the context of the passage, which provides for the proper interpretation of the term, which he argues to be household. But 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 Elliot’s work is so extensive that most scholars are debating with him and many mention him by name. 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 seemingly unaware of the debate simply states that because the house is pertaining to the spirit it is therefore considered the temple of God.<sup>16</sup> The modifier of spiritual added to *oikos* is the primary connection for most 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 including spiritual sacrifices which are to be offered and that the believers who are the living stones, which make up the temple in resemblance of the living stone, Jesus Christ, are made into a priesthood who are offering said

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 414. and Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 182. “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)

<sup>16</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: a Social-scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: With a New Introduction*, 560. Vol. 7.

sacrifices. McKelvey moves away from the notion that the house is called spiritual because it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He states that because the author of first Peter does not directly mention the divine presence it is better to recognize the spiritual-ness of the house because it is made up of “consecrated persons” who are spiritually dedicated and offering their obedient lives as the spiritual sacrifices.<sup>17</sup> For McKelvey the spiritual interpretation is based on the cultic worship focus in the passage.<sup>18</sup>

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 “a place or true worship and spiritual sacrifice.”<sup>19</sup> Karen Jobes suggests that because the temple is made up of living stones, as Jesus is a living stone, this passage is also suggesting the close relationship with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.<sup>20</sup> Jobes also emphasizes the unity of the spiritual house which is derived from “God’s presence, the one Cornerstone, and a unity of purpose.”<sup>21</sup> Clearly divine presence plays a significant role in Jobes’ interpretation of spiritual house as the temple.

Thomas R. Schreiner follows along the same line even discounting “some scholars” who hesitate from the term temple. Following the line of the LXX in using the verb *oikodomeo* in

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<sup>17</sup> Nichol, 128-129.

<sup>18</sup> McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*, 131. Elliot gives direct response to worship being a focus of 1 Peter, “R. J. McKelvey (The New Temple [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969], pp. 124-32) suggests that “It is as the place of worship that 1 Peter is most interested in the new temple” (p. 131). But this and similar interpretations fail to note that nowhere in the rest of 1 Peter is this supposed interest in worship made explicit.” Ibid., 242. Marshall also emphasizes the joint spiritual sacrifice made by the members of the spiritual house as an act of worship. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: a Social-scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: With a New Introduction*, 227.

<sup>19</sup> Marshall, “A Spiritual House and Holy Priesthood (1 Peter ii.5),” 148.

<sup>20</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 364.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 149.

direct connection with *oikos* to speak of the OT temple, Schreiner believes the NT church represented in this passage by the spiritual house is the new temple of God and says: "The house is "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) because it is animated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit."<sup>22</sup>

J. N. D. Kelly also suggests that Christians are God's temple "with Christ as the foundation and the Spirit dwelling in them."<sup>23</sup> He makes 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 brings out the Qumran communities understanding of the congregation and community being the house of God.<sup>24</sup>

Edward Selwyn takes the interpretation of the temple a step further, he not only suggesting the indwelling of the Holy Spirit but also the sacerdotal nature of the temple.<sup>25</sup>

Eugene Boring agrees, while some might suggest that *oikos* is a household "the context indicates we have temple imagery."<sup>26</sup> Truex goes all the way to replacement of the Jerusalem temple with the in dwelling Christ of the Christian community.<sup>27</sup>

Johnson works with the OT language of sanctuary to point out the temple imagery of 1 Peter chapter 4 and uses 2:5 as further confirmation of the temple language with in the book.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 105. In his footnotes of this same page Schreiner directly addresses Elliot's household position stating that Elliot "underestimates the significance of the temple as God's house in the OT." Best also make the same tie between the verb *oikodomein* and *oikos* in the LXX and shows that *oikos* occurs ten times as often as *naos* which is the next most common word used. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 280.

<sup>23</sup> Best, "1 Peter 2:4-10: A Reconsideration," 90.

<sup>24</sup> Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 160.

<sup>26</sup> Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays*, 98-99.

<sup>27</sup> Boring, *1 Peter*, 189.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, "Fire in God's House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter's Theology of Suffering (1 Pet 4:12-19)."

Johnson also ties 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."<sup>29</sup> Johnson clearly connects the temple language of 1 Peter to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as well. Johnson also brings out the judgment parallels between 1 Peter and the judgment in the OT. Judgment in 1 Peter 4 starts with the house of God and Johnson references Ezekiel chapter 9 and Mal 3:1-5 in which Yahweh comes to the temple to begin judgment. While Johnson recognizes the language in Hebrews of the heavenly sanctuary he suggests that Peter maintains that there is still an earthly temple composed of living stones.<sup>30</sup>

Within the passage of 1 Peter 2:4-10, verse 9 is often seen as a parallel to verses 4-5. There is a significant word used in verse nine, which is significant to both parties of interpretation (temple and household). The use of *baseilion* is understood as a substantive by both camps rather than an adjective. Instead of royal modifying priesthood they are instead seen in apposition. The believers build into a spiritual house whose cornerstone is Christ is both a royal residence and priesthood. Kelly, Selwyn, and Best all represent this translation on the side of the temple interpretation of spiritual house.<sup>31</sup> Best even admits to an agreement with Elliot 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.

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 293.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 97. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 167. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays*, 288-289.



The temple interpretation of “spiritual house” has been represented, 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 Peter 2:5 is the surrender or 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 that 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.”<sup>32</sup> McKelvey continues 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.<sup>33</sup>

Schreiner sees the modifier spiritual in relation to the work and influence of the Holy Spirit, as is the spiritual house. Schreiner brings in Elliot’s interpretation of the sacrifices being the believer’s holy life, Achtemeier’s interpretation of evangelism, and Michael’s reference to both worship and conduct.<sup>34</sup>

Kelly agrees with the others that spiritual sacrifices include the life and conduct of the believer referring to the Qumran recognition of the OT prophets that prayer, praise, thankfulness, a broken and contrite heart, and a life of justice and compassion.<sup>35</sup> Kelly also includes the interpretation, which is unique to the temple group, of the spiritual sacrifices as the Eucharist. He

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<sup>32</sup> Best, "1 Peter 2:4-10: A Reconsideration," 560.

<sup>33</sup> Nichol, 129.

<sup>34</sup> McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*, 107.

<sup>35</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 91.

sees the Eucharist as the culmination of an offering of thankfulness.<sup>36</sup> Selwyn ties 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...”<sup>37</sup> Selwyn continues to express the Eucharist as the union of the Church’s sacrifice with faith as and outward expression of God on one side and man on the other.<sup>38</sup> Boring and Hill, who also interpret spiritual house as temple, do 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.<sup>39</sup>

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 leaves 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 worshipping God in both spirit and truth. After exploring the writers 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.

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<sup>36</sup> Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 92.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 161.

<sup>38</sup> Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays*, 162-163.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 101. Boring, *1 Peter*, 61.

## Household Interpretation

### “Spiritual House”

The household interpretation is largely a sociological take on 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.<sup>40</sup>

While Elliot acknowledges the possibility that *oikos* can be interpreted as temple he sees the larger context of 1 Peter clearly showing household as the better option.<sup>41</sup>

Elliot is the primary voice of this argument, others who suggest this interpretation rely on Elliot. Elliot’s argument is much too extensive for this paper and therefore will only be highlighted to get some of the major points across. 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 is ruling over is considered as part of his household. According to Elliot, 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, personnel, as well as the finances and economic management of the household.<sup>42</sup> The head of the household was seen as the Pater Pariae all the members of the family as well as the servants of the household were seen as one large family unit under the Pater Pariae.<sup>43</sup> Elliot sees this language transfer into the language of 1 Peter as well as it comes into the

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<sup>40</sup> Hill, "'To Offer Spiritual Sacrifices' (1 Peter 2:5): Liturgical Formulations and Christian Paraenesis in 1 Peter," 100.

<sup>41</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, 241. endnote.

<sup>42</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: a Social-scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: With a New Introduction*, 172-173.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 175.

society of Bithynia.<sup>44</sup> Peter's use of *oikos* household would therefore reflect this social reality as he talks about the roles of servants, husband, wives, masters, elders and younger men.<sup>45</sup>

The second point of interpretation for Elliot is caught up in covenantal language. Throughout the OT Elliot points out that Yaweh makes 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."<sup>46</sup> 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 Pariae.<sup>47</sup>

Elliot then moves on to actually discount the temple interpretation. For Elliot temple is too narrow of an interpretation for *oikos* it limits the spiritual house only to the cultic rituals of worship rather than an entire life encompassing surrender.<sup>48</sup> Elliot also explains the usage of *oikos* in the NT showing the majority of times *oikos* is used it refers to a home or domestic form of society. The terms *hieron* and *naos* are the conventional terms for temple in the NT.<sup>49</sup> While Elliot does recognize the usage of *oikos* with the verb *oidodomein* in the LXX to represent

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 180.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 207.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 419.

<sup>47</sup> Elliott, *I Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 186, 201, 207.

<sup>48</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: a Social-scientific Criticism of I Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: With a New Introduction*, 194.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 197. Further down on this page Elliot makes what I consider a weaker point of his argument, the dismissal of the spiritual modifier for *oikos*. He sees 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.

temple he does not see the same usage in the NT nor therefore in the context of 1 Peter.<sup>50</sup> Elliot continues 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.<sup>51</sup>

The divine presence is just as significant for Elliot as it is for the temple. The Holy Spirit now dwells in and among the community of believers the household of God. This is seen in Elliot'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, as well as Elliot and the household paradigm. Elliot considers the household the divine residence.<sup>52</sup> Elliot points to the same divine dwelling within the households of the OT in the tents (*oikos*) of Shem.<sup>53</sup>

Elliot develops 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 Elliot's interpretation of spiritual sacrifices as well.

### **“Spiritual Sacrifices”**

Spiritual sacrifices for Elliot and others who hold the household interpretation is not much different from those of the temple interpretation. As previously mentioned, those who hold to the temple interpretation actually cite and agree with Elliot's interpretation of spiritual

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 241. Endnote.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 222.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 168-169.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 170.

sacrifices. Sacrifices include the possibility of praise and thanksgiving, holy and honorable conduct, upright behavior and the other household duties of the spiritual community. Elliot, while acknowledging the possibility of the Eucharist also rejects it by lack of certain evidence in 1 Peter.<sup>54</sup> Elliot also includes the declaration of “praise of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light,” from verse 10. This is the ground for the evangelistic interpretation of spiritual sacrifices.<sup>55</sup>

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. Elliot bases this interpretation of the larger context of 1 Peter and interprets the spiritual sacrifices accordingly as well performed household duties of the community.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

#### Interpretations of “spiritual house”

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 to significant to brush them aside as Elliot does in order to emphasize the household and reject the temple. Johnsons additional imagery of the judgment beginning in the temple for the OT and in 1 Peter chapter 4 make even a 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.

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 422.

<sup>55</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 421.

The household on the other hand 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. Adding to this Elliot's evidence of the use of *oikos* in the NT to represent the domestic sense of household and the societal structure of Egypt as well as the Roman household. The present author agrees with Elliot 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 regulated to the *shekinah* in the Holy of Holies but is amongst the people where ever they gather in the name of Jesus to worship in spirit and in truth. But this shows temple transition to the community as the temple as well as household.

In trying to have both interpretations this study agrees with those like Charles Bigg, Truex, and Gupta and opens itself to Elliot's criticism of such a position.<sup>56</sup> But it is irresponsible to disregard either interpretation.

#### Interpretations of "spiritual sacrifices"

The interpretation of spiritual sacrifices is united except concerning the option 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

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<sup>56</sup> Bigg uses the language of both the house and the temple. Ibid. Truex suggests 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." Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 128, 190. Gupta also suggests that Peter may have meant to include both although he leans towards temple language. Truex, "God's Spiritual House: a Study of 1 Peter 2:4-5." Elliot however calls for a decisive alternative. Nijay Gupta, "A Spiritual House of Royal Priests, Chosen and Honored: The Presence and Function of Cultic Imagery in 1 Peter," 36, 1 (2009): 71, 76, 194.

must be present. This presence is what makes the house spiritual and therefore is directly referenced in the understanding of such a system.

Not coming from a sacramental system in the sense of transubstantiation and the real presence of Christ is the host; I do not see the Eucharist as necessary to be and interpretation for 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 includes offering praise to the one who has lead believers out of darkness in 1 Peter 2:10.

#### Implications for the understanding of divine presence

Divine presence is considered to be part of work of 1 Peter in reference to the spiritual house by all those except McKelvey whether a part of the temple or household interpretation. 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 paper as to whether 1 Peter has anything to say about divine presence according to the scholars is and affirmative. Even though there is not a direct reference to the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the community the modifier of “spiritual” infers the connection.

I believe the household/temple combination can give us some significant insight into house to interpret divine presence in the time between Christ’s ascension and his second coming. The bible supports and external face-to-face relationship with God in the OT temple as well as with the Incarnated Jesus during is first advent and after his second as well rather than and internal indwelling ontological relationship. To be a part of the household of Yahweh was to be in covenantal relationship with him and accept his rule over your life. We find the same nature of relationship described in 1 Peter through the household language and his emphasis on holy



living. J. M. Hamilton makes it clear that there was an internal working of the Holy Spirit for regenerative work of salvation in the OT rather than an ontological indwelling. But rather than stay consistent with this understanding for the NT Church he believes Christ establishes and ontological indwelling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

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.

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<sup>57</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: a Social-scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: With a New Introduction*, 3-4, 54-55, 125.

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