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‘He Saw Heaven Opened’: Heavenly Temple and Universal Mission in Luke-Acts

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Abstract

Numerous scholars have argued that in Luke-Acts the location of sacred space or divine presence passes from the Jerusalem temple to Jesus, Christian believers, or both; in Acts, this transfer is understood as integral to the universal mission. The present article argues that such studies overlook the important motif of *heaven* as temple, which plays a role in Jesus’ trial and crucifixion and the Stephen and Cornelius episodes. Using Edward Soja’s spatial theory, previous studies’ binary categorisation of temple space is critiqued. The heavenly temple disrupts and reconstitutes understandings of sacred space, and thus undergirds the universal spread of the Way.

Keywords: sanctuary; cult; cosmos; mission; spatial theory; Edward Soja

1. Introduction

The Jerusalem temple is writ large across Luke’s two-volume work. Numerous scholars have argued that Luke transfers symbolic significance or functions from the temple to the person of Jesus, and/or to the nascent Christian community, even if they vary on the details. This transfer is in turn understood as an integral component in the centrifugal missionary movement traced through Acts, as sacred space or access to God passes to the Spirit-indwelt community and the places it inhabits throughout the known world, even to the centre of empire in Rome itself. The present article critiques this picture by drawing attention to heaven, and to the ways in which Luke portrays heaven as a sacred or cultic space. I first offer a brief categorisation of scholarly positions, before focusing on three pivotal scenes: Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, Stephen’s speech and martyrdom, and the encounter between Cornelius and Peter. I then synthesise these readings with reference to the threefold taxonomy of Edward Soja’s spatial theory, arguing that the heavenly sanctuary functions in a thirdspatial manner to disrupt extant secondspace conceptions of temple and purity, and thus prompts the early Christian movement’s reconfiguration of contemporary Jewish secondspatial categories. It is this reconfiguration that drives forward the universal mission, as the realisation that access to the heavenly sanctuary is available through Jesus and the Spirit enables full gentile inclusion.

2. The Temple, Jesus and the Community in Luke-Acts Scholarship

In scholarship on the temple in Luke-Acts, there are a range of views with regard to what happens to the temple’s significance or function, particularly as the divine dwelling place,

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as a centre for worship, or as a witness to God's wisdom. Some argue that the temple's significance transfers to or is represented in Jesus.¹ Others suggest that it is conveyed instead to the Christian community, perhaps especially in its prayer.² A related view highlights the importance of the house or household as the new economic, physical and symbolic centre for the itinerant followers of the Way.³ Divine presence in Jesus and in the community need not be mutually exclusive, of course, and a number of scholars see a transition of the divine presence to Jesus and, subsequently, to the nascent Christian community via the outpouring of the Spirit (without entailing a diminishment of divine presence in Jesus).⁴

Secondly, there are a number of ways in which these perspectives are related to the universal or gentile mission as it is portrayed in Acts. This can be along the lines of a transformation or recalibration, as for example in Joel Green's construal: 'Rather than serving as the gathering point for all peoples under Yahweh, [the temple] has now become the point-of-departure for the mission to all peoples.'⁵ The relation can be construed in terms of replacement, with other institutions (house, church) better suited to universal mission. So, for Geir Otto Holmås, it is the Christian community rather than the temple that becomes the 'house of prayer' throughout the world (note Luke's omission of 'for all nations' from Isa 56.7 in Luke 19.46), with the temple's exclusivism ceding to the universalistic emphasis of Acts.⁶ For Daniel Marguerat it is the house(hold) rather than the temple that has become the place for the spread of the gospel, in line with God's transcendence and his universality.⁷ And for Deok Hee Jung, unlike the static and potentially defiled or even idolatrous space of the temple, the dynamic and fluid sacred space of the church expands to fill the whole world.⁸ At times a more directly causal relationship is posited, as in Philip Esler's (somewhat value-laden) socio-historical reconstruction: 'the mission to the Gentiles only got underway when a few Jews in the Holy City were

¹ K. Baltzer, 'The Meaning of the Temple in the Lukan Writings', *HTR*, 58.3 (1965) 263–77; C. R. Hutcheon, "'God Is with Us": The Temple in Luke-Acts', *SVTQ* 44 (2000) 3–33; G. R. Lanier, 'Luke's Distinctive Use of the Temple: Portraying the Divine Visitation', *JTS* 65 (2014) 433–62.

² J. B. Green, 'The Demise of the Temple as "Culture Center" in Luke-Acts: An Exploration of the Rending of the Temple Veil (Luke 23:44–49)', *RB* 101 (1994) 495–515; H. Ganser-Kerperin, *Das Zeugnis des Tempels: Studien zur Bedeutung des Tempelmotivs im lukanischen Doppelwerk* (NTA 36; Munster: Aschendorff, 2000) ch. 6; N. H. Taylor, 'The Jerusalem Temple in Luke-Acts', *HVTSt* 60 (2004) 459–85, at 481; G. O. Holmås, "'My House Shall Be a House of Prayer": Regarding the Temple as a Place of Prayer in Acts within the Context of Luke's Apologetical Objective', *JSNT* 27 (2005) 393–416; T. Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity* (WUNT 11/291; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 191–206; P. H. Rice, *Behold, Your House Is Left to You: The Theological and Narrative Place of Jerusalem Temple in Luke's Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016).

³ J. H. Elliott, 'Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions', *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 211–40; D. Marguerat, 'Du temple à la maison suivant Luc-Actes', *Quelle maison pour Dieu?* (ed. Camille Focant; Lectio Divina, hors série; Paris: Cerf, 2003) 285–317; Ganser-Kerperin, *Das Zeugnis des Tempels*, ch. 7. For the wider Greco-Roman context in relation to Paul specifically, see D. L. Balch and A. Weissenrieder, *Contested Spaces: Houses and Temples in Roman Antiquity and the New Testament* (WUNT 285; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

⁴ Taylor, 'Jerusalem Temple'; D. H. Jung, 'Fluid Sacredness from a Newly Built Temple in Luke-Acts', *ExpTim* 128 (2017) 529–37. For a critique of the identification of Jesus and church with temple, see J. B. Chance, *Jerusalem, Temple and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988) 35–45.

⁵ Green, 'Demise of the Temple', 512.

⁶ Holmås, 'Temple as a Place of Prayer', 397–8, 415–16.

⁷ As Marguerat notes, 'aux yeux de Luc, la domus romaine est le lieu d'expansion de l'Évangile' ('Du temple à la maison', 312; cf. 311–16).

⁸ Jung, 'Fluid Sacredness'.

far-sighted enough to see that continued devotion to the Temple cult and to the Messiahship of Jesus were fundamentally incompatible'.⁹

In all of this, it is noteworthy that attention focuses on the *Jerusalem* temple and on the *earthly* plane of the expanding mission of the early Christian movement (cf. Acts 1.8).¹⁰ This is understandable, given the extensive material relating to both of these features across Luke-Acts. Yet even where cultic language that does not relate to the temple is noted, it tends to be treated on a purely horizontal level, as representing the movement away from Jerusalem and therefore away from the temple.¹¹ An eschatological variation on this theme remains horizontal, albeit temporally rather than geographically: either the deferred hope for a heavenly temple, or the eschatological role of earthly Jerusalem and its temple.¹² However, this focus runs the risk of overlooking the vertical axis which is so important to the hinge between Luke and Acts (the dual account of the ascension), and which stands as a fundamental presupposition of the whole of the book of Acts.

This article opens up an important perspective that previous studies have neglected, by taking into account the role of *heavenly space* and not just *earthly geography* in Acts.¹³ It demonstrates that heaven as temple or as cultic space is an important part of Luke's far-reaching temple theology, and moreover that it serves the universal mission of Acts. In this respect, then, the article offers a correction to earlier work by demonstrating that the binary relation of Jerusalem temple to universal mission (however construed) in fact needs to be triangulated with regard to the cosmic temple.

3. Jesus: A Vision of God's Garden Sanctuary

At first sight, Luke's account of Jesus' trial and crucifixion would seem to have less connection with heavenly temple than Mark's. Mark's account is structured with a widely recognised *inclusio* between the tearing ($\sigma\chi\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$) of the heavens at Jesus' baptism and of the temple veil at Jesus' death, reinforced by the confession that he is 'son' (Mark 1.10; 15.38). Although Matthew, like Luke, disrupts this *inclusio* by changing the verb for the opening of heaven to the more expected $\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\gamma\omega$, he nevertheless amplifies the cosmic aspect by including a 'mini-apocalypse' between the veil tearing and the centurion's confession. Luke removes any verbal *inclusio* not only by avoiding $\sigma\chi\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ at the baptism, but also by changing the wording of the centurion's confession ('this man was righteous' rather than 'son of God'). There are nevertheless features of Luke's passion that establish both cosmic and cultic associations. Before examining Jesus' trial and death, we take in the wider context.

The importance of the temple in Luke's Gospel is widely noted, including its largely positive portrayal at the outset as a site of Zechariah's vision (Luke 1.8–23), Jesus'

⁹ P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 163.

¹⁰ Michael Bachmann emphasises the centrality of Jerusalem and its temple, whilst recognising their christological and ecclesiological significance for Luke; his focus is entirely earthly (*Jerusalem und der Tempel: die geographisch-theologischen Elemente in der lukanischen Sicht des jüdischen Kultzentrums* (BWANT 109; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980)).

¹¹ See e.g. Holmås' treatment of cultic language in the Cornelius episode, where he highlights the gentile/priest and house/temple contrasts with Zechariah ('Temple as a Place of Prayer', 412–13). See also Esler's reading of Cornelius' prayers as 'accepted by God in lieu of the sacrifices which he was not allowed to enter the Temple to offer himself' (*Community and Gospel*, 162).

¹² Ganser-Kerperin, *Das Zeugnis des Tempels*, ch. 8; Chance, *Jerusalem, Temple, and the New Age*, 47–85.

¹³ This approach is similar to (albeit more modest in scope than) M. Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts* (SNTSMS 146; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

presentation with further prophecies (2.22–38) and his pre-teen escapade among the teachers (2.42–50). The temple complex becomes a site of confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders (e.g. 19.45–20.8; 20.19–20) and a locus for Jesus' teaching (e.g. 19.47; 20.1; 21.1, 5, 37), and the Gospel ends with it as the setting for the disciples' ongoing prayer and worship (24.52–3). Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple in the context of the wider prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction (21.5–6; cf. 21.20–4), but no directly negative comment is passed on the temple itself. These references largely operate on the earthly plane with respect to the Jerusalem temple, yet they also acknowledge it as a place of meeting with or revelation from God. In the case of Luke 24, the temple is closely associated with the ascension: to continue their worship of the risen Lord Jesus, the disciples return to the temple in order to bless God. Indeed, the more contentious scenes within the temple presuppose its status as Jesus' 'Father's house' (2.49), and protest at the failure of the current leadership to recognise this in their practice.

Turning now to Jesus' trial, Luke's account is brief and omits the false charge regarding temple destruction (though cf. Acts 6.14). When the high priest insists, 'if you are the Messiah, tell us', Jesus' response combines Dan 7.13 and Ps 110.1: 'from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God' (Luke 22.69). Two features are noteworthy. First, Luke omits Mark's introductory 'you will see' and the phrase 'coming on the clouds of heaven' from Daniel. These omissions reshape the saying into a statement of Jesus' objective position and status, reducing the emphasis on human experience and redirecting the focus towards Jesus' resurrection and ascension rather than his eschatological return.¹⁴ Secondly, Luke adds the phrase ἄπὸ τοῦ νῦν, which further modifies the temporal location. Jesus' heavenly location is a proleptic reality – not fully inaugurated until his ascension (and even then, hidden from many on earth) – but one that is presaged and demonstrated at his trial and, as we shall see, at the crucifixion.¹⁵ What is more, the reference to a heavenly throne is evocative of the temple in general and the most holy place in particular, because the temple is patterned on heaven itself. This episode, for Luke, sets up the significance of heavenly sacred space as Jesus' location even before the narrative reaches the ascension.

During the crucifixion, Luke's account of the second criminal's exchange with Jesus includes the promise that 'today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23.43). The word παράδεισος in the Septuagint refers to gardens, pre-eminently the garden of Eden (e.g. Gen 2.8; Isa 51.3), but it clearly transfers here to a heavenly realm (cf. 2 Cor 12.4; the two senses coalesce in Rev 2.7). This would appear to intimate Jesus' imminent heavenly destination. The various symmetries between Eden and the tabernacle/temple are widely recognised,¹⁶ and we will see below a further creational-cosmological connection in Luke's crucifixion account.

Immediately after this scene, Luke recounts Jesus' death. He omits from Mark the cry of Ps 22.1 and the associated confusion and offering of a drink. The effect of this is to bring the timing of the darkness (from the sixth to the ninth hour) much closer to the veil tearing and Jesus' death. These timings are mentioned by Mark and Matthew, but only in Luke-Acts is the significance of the ninth hour elucidated as the hour of prayer.¹⁷ Luke

¹⁴ L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991) 359–60.

¹⁵ So E. Franklin, 'The Ascension and the Eschatology of Luke-Acts', *SJT* 23 (1970) 191–200, at 192. Martin Bauspieß makes this point more fully, tracing connections between Jesus' trial and that of Stephen ('Die Gegenwart des Heils und das Ende der Zeit: Überlegungen zur lukanischen Eschatologie im Anschluss an Lk 22,66–71 und Apg 7,54–60', *Eschatologie – Eschatology. The Sixth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium: Eschatology in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (WUNT 272; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 125–48, at 139).

¹⁶ So e.g. J. D. Levenson, 'The Temple and the World', *JR* 64 (1984) 275–98, at 297–8.

¹⁷ See Acts 3.1; cf. Cornelius, 10.3, and the allusions to the daily *tamid* sacrifices which took place at these times in Luke 24.53; Acts 10.2; so also D. D. Sylva, 'The Temple Curtain and Jesus' Death in the Gospel of Luke', *JBL* 105

recounts the veil tearing before Jesus' death, rather than after it as in Mark and Matthew. This turns Jesus' cry of commending his spirit (which is unique to Luke) into a response to the veil tearing – a response that is a prayer to God, a 'communion at the last moment before his death with the Father'.¹⁸ The response of the centurion is to praise God, and the crowds beat their breasts, a sign of repentance. Praise is an activity which has clear links with temple worship, and breast beating is an action which Luke has elsewhere portrayed in Jesus' parable as the appropriately humble, penitent response of the tax collector *in the temple*, an attitude which results in justification (Luke 18.13; note also 23.27).

In order to demonstrate that these cultic associations are also cosmological, we need briefly to consider Second Temple Jewish cosmology. Just as Eden is temple-shaped, so also heaven itself or even the whole cosmos can be construed as a sanctuary.¹⁹ This more developed cosmology has its roots in the Old Testament. With regard to the veil specifically, in Gen 1 the firmament divides the waters (1.6–7) and the lights in the firmament divide day from night (1.14–18; Hiphil of בָּדַל in both cases). The firmament thus functions in the same way as the tabernacle curtain which divides holy from most holy place (Exod 26.33, again with the Hiphil of בָּדַל), a function also reflected in the wall of Ezekiel's eschatological temple (Ezek 42.20; cf. the priests' role in distinguishing holy from common, Lev 10.10). The wider association of cosmos with sanctuary, as well as the specific connection of firmament with veil, persists and develops in the Second Temple period. Josephus identifies heaven with the tabernacle's most holy place, as God's portion, and the earth and sea with the holy place, which constitutes two thirds of the tabernacle space (*Ant.* 3.180–2; cf. Philo, *QE* 2.91, 94). In speaking of the veil, Josephus describes its material as 'like an image of the universe', with the coloured threads representing the elements (*JW* 5.211–14; *Ant.* 3.183; cf. Philo, *QE* 2.85). Moreover, as the cosmos is a temple, the rhythms of each day – and particularly the rising and setting of the sun – are naturally associated with the heavenly worship offered by angels (as attested e.g. in 4Q408; 4Q503; *ShirShabb* 13; T. Ab. 4.4[B]).

In this perspective, Luke's juxtaposition of the evening hour of sacrifice and prayer with the tearing of the temple veil in the context of an emphasis on heavenly phenomena suggests that the cosmic sanctuary is in view. The three hours of darkness are common to all three Synoptics, but Luke spells out a co-incident entailment of this statement using a genitive absolute phrase: τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλιπόντος, the sun stopped shining (Luke 23.45). This is highly uncharacteristic of Luke, who normally removes redundancies from Mark rather than introducing them, especially temporal/meteorological markers: compare Mark 1.32 (ὥρας δὲ γενομένης, ὅτε ἔδυσ ὁ ἥλιος) with Luke 4.40 (δύνοντος δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου), and note Luke's omission of the timing of the crucifixion in Mark 15.25. More is going on here than mere naturalistic explanation or reduplication. In Luke 22.53 darkness is symbolic of evil, and is contrasted with Jesus teaching openly *in the temple*. Equally, while the sun can be simply a natural phenomenon for Luke (Luke 4.40; Acts 27.20), signs relating to the sun portend the eschaton (Luke 21.25; Acts 2.20) and, on the third telling, Paul's vision of Jesus is described as 'a light from heaven, brighter than the sun' (Acts 26.13; cf. the brightness of the transfiguration scene, Luke 9.29, 31, 34–5).

(1986) 239–50, at 245. The collocation of διὰ παντός (denoting the *tamid*) with the ninth hour in 10.2–3 is particularly suggestive: see further below.

¹⁸ Sylva, 'Temple Curtain', 243.

¹⁹ On which, see J. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 111–44, though he underplays the distinction between a temple within heaven and heaven itself as a temple, and thus overplays the distinction between cosmos as temple and temple in heaven. The precise construal of the relationship does not substantially affect my argument here.

The focalisation of the sun's absence during the period of darkness highlights the fact that at the ninth hour, concurrent with the veil tearing, *the sun begins to shine again*.²⁰ The hour of the evening sacrifice, the rending of the sanctuary veil and the transition in the heavens that allows the sun's light through once more are simultaneous events.²¹ Collectively, they prompt Jesus' response of commending his spirit to God as he dies. Here Jesus' statement at his trial of his heavenly location ἄπὸ τοῦ νῦν is salient: in the commendation of Jesus' spirit into heaven, Luke alludes back to the trial and forward to the ascension. The veil tearing functions as a narrative device to elucidate the cosmic phenomena surrounding Jesus' death, and it elucidates them in cultic terms.

4. Stephen: A Vision of Jesus' Priestly Heavenly Presence

We turn now to Stephen's trial, speech and execution in Acts 6–7. There is much discussion of this speech in the literature, as a window into potential historical and social data about the early Christian movement, or into a source that Luke has redacted – and, consequently, the extent to which it confirms or contradicts his wider stance towards the temple, among other things.²² I take it that in its setting in Acts, Stephen's speech seeks to answer the charges laid against him: that he blasphemes against Moses, God, 'this holy place' (the temple) and the Law (Acts 6.11–14).²³ In the course of his speech, Moses is vindicated and honoured, God is portrayed as a transcendent agent, and the Law is described as living oracles ordained by angels; Stephen's accusers, by contrast, are the ones who persecute the prophets (including Moses: see 7.37), oppose the Holy Spirit and have not kept the Law (7.51–3).

By comparison, the temple receives an apparently cooler reception. Some suggest that the static temple built by Solomon is condemned, in favour of the dynamic, moveable tabernacle (compare Acts 7.44 with 47–8).²⁴ The statement that 'the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands' (7.48) uses the term χειροποιήτως, which elsewhere in biblical literature denotes idols.²⁵ This coheres with the condemnation of the wilderness generation's idolatry (7.39–43).²⁶ However, the notion that God does not live in earthly dwellings applies equally to the tabernacle, which is described as instituted by God

²⁰ The veil tearing should be associated more closely with Jesus' death than with the darkness, as it coincides with the end of the darkness. So Sylva, 'Temple Curtain', 242–3; contra R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 1103–6.

²¹ The Gospel of Peter 6.22 makes explicit the sun's shining again at the ninth hour, although it disrupts the synchronisation as this occurs after the veil tearing and the removal of Jesus from the cross.

²² So e.g. Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 131–63. He rejects a fully positive reading of the temple in Luke-Acts on the basis of Stephen's speech (contra Bachmann, *Jerusalem und der Tempel*), and also discerns a Hellenistic community of Jews whose sympathy to the marginalisation of Godfearers with respect to the temple led them to reject it altogether. Taylor, by contrast, argues that Stephen expresses views consistent with both Hebrew and Hellenist Christianity, and that the movement as a whole was temple-critical (N. H. Taylor, 'Stephen, the Temple, and Early Christian Eschatology', *RB* 110 (2003) 62–85).

²³ Following G. N. Stanton, 'Stephen in Lucan Perspective', *Studia Biblica* 1978, iii. *Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors* (JSNTSup 3; Sheffield: JSOT, 1980) 345–60; so also D. D. Sylva, 'The Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46–50', *JBL* 106 (1987) 261–75.

²⁴ Marguerat tilts in this direction when he claims that 'Luc érige ainsi en modèle canonique le mode de présence divine à Israël durant l'exode et l'entrée en Canaan' ('Du temple à la maison', 306). See the opinions cited, and counter-argument mounted, in E. Larsson, 'Temple-Criticism and the Jewish Heritage: Some Reflexions on Acts 6–7', *NTS* 39 (1993) 379–95, at 388–94.

²⁵ E.g. Lev 26.1, 30; Isa 2.18; 46.6; cf. Acts 17.24.

²⁶ Sylva argues that Stephen is refuting the charge that Jesus will destroy the temple made by hands ('Acts 7:46–50', 269–72).

(7.44, alluding to Exod 25.9, 40); it is supported by a scriptural quotation (Isa 66.1–2), and it is a sentiment expressed by Solomon himself at the institution of the temple (1 Kgs 8.27–30).²⁷ There is, further, no clear contrast between the mention of the temple in v. 47 and the discussion of the tabernacle which immediately precedes it (δέ; contrast ἀλλά in v. 48).²⁸ In all, then, Stephen's counter-charge is not so much against the temple itself as against the people's attitude to it and to the God whose presence it represents.²⁹

What is more, it is precisely the nature of heaven as sanctuary that Stephen stresses. This emphasis builds through the speech, and alongside a consistent focus on heaven there is a more ambivalent stance towards the land and Jerusalem. God's glory appears to Abraham outside the land, but directs him towards the land (Acts 7.2–3). Alongside the prediction of his descendants' slavery in Egypt comes the promise that 'they shall come out and worship me in this place' (7.7). This citation of Exod 3.12 has 'this place' (Zion/the temple) rather than 'this mountain' (הַר, MT/ὄρος, LXX; i.e. Horeb). Egypt receives heavy emphasis, as does Shechem as the final resting place of Jacob and the ancestors (7.9–16). Moses's ministry begins when he receives a vision at Sinai (7.30–3), and he later receives living oracles from angels, also at Sinai (7.38). The people turn to idolatry precisely at the point when Moses is up the mountain (7.42–3). God institutes the tabernacle, based on a heavenly pattern (7.44), and it travels with the people, and is replaced by the temple under Solomon (7.47). God's actual dwelling in heaven, elucidated in the terms of Isa 66.1–2, is not surprising; this is, after all, the God who has appeared and given revelation from heaven throughout the history narrated by Stephen. What becomes more explicit in this quotation is the specifically cultic nature of heaven. It is God's throne and the earth is his footstool, language which has royal as much as cultic connotations, but which is further determined in temple terms by the use of 'house' and especially 'resting place', which evokes the imagery of a sanctuary.³⁰

This construal of heaven as sanctuary sets up the close of the speech. Stephen looks into heaven and sees God's glory, and Jesus at God's right hand (Acts 7.55). There are clear echoes of the experience of Abraham and Moses (7.2, 30–3, 38, 44), and also of the combination of Dan 7.13 and Ps 110.1 found in all three synoptic Gospels.³¹ When Stephen reports this vision to the crowd, he adds 'I see the heavens opened' (τοὺς οὐρανοὺς διηνοιγμένους, 7.56; cf. ἀνεῳχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανόν, Luke 3.21). The parallels with Jesus' death in Luke have been widely noted: both commit their spirits to a heavenly figure; their deaths follow immediately and are described similarly (τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐκοιμήθη, Acts 7.60 / τοῦτο δὲ εἰπὼν ἐξέπνευσεν, Luke 23.46); and they are buried by righteous men (Acts 8.2 / Luke 23.50–3).³² In light of the cosmic significance of the veil tearing in Luke's passion, in both cases these final words are prompted by a heavenly opening. In Luke's hands, these two episodes belong together; the cultic and cosmic aspects of Stephen's death reinforce those of Jesus' death, and vice versa.

In addition to the framing of the climax of Stephen's speech established by the Isaiah 66 citation, two further details cement the cultic understanding of his vision. First, God's glory (Acts 7.2, 55) is a key term for explaining the way in which God might dwell in an

²⁷ Sylva, 'Acts 7:46–50', 265–7 establishes this connection at greater length.

²⁸ Sylva, 'Acts 7:46–50', 263–5.

²⁹ So e.g. B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 275. Contra C. R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989) 80–1, 98–9.

³⁰ For 'resting place' (נוח / בְּנוּחָה; ἀνάπαυσις/κατάπαυσις), see 2 Chron 6.41; Ps 132.8, 14.

³¹ Matt 22.44 // Mark 12.36 // Luke 20.42; Matt 26.64 // Mark 14.62 // Luke 22.69. Note that Ps 110.1 also mentions a 'footstool', which potentially resonates with Isa 66.1.

³² Sylva, 'Temple Curtain', 243–5. Recognition of these parallels may have influenced early textual transmission: Jesus' prayer of forgiveness is apparently modelled on Stephen's (cf. Luke 23.34 with Acts 7.60).

earthly sanctuary, as Israelites down the ages recognised precisely the issue that Stephen highlights and circumvented it by reference to the Name, the Shekinah and so forth.³³ Secondly, an unusual detail, repeated twice, is that Jesus is *standing* at the right hand of God (7.55–6). This does not match Ps 110.1, in which an exalted Lord is invited to *sit* at YHWH's right hand, nor can it be found in any other allusion to Ps 110.1 in the New Testament. This is the most frequently cited or evoked Old Testament verse across the New Testament, and it is often quoted or paraphrased using terminology of sitting, being or exaltation, but nowhere else with 'standing'. Commentators are baffled by this and suggest that it may be that Jesus is standing ready to receive Stephen's spirit,³⁴ to testify for him as a court witness or to judge those who deny him.³⁵ A more convincing and coherent explanation, however, lies in the fact that standing is the appropriate posture of a priest, and indeed of the angels in heaven in their priestly function. Jesus is thus presented as a priest, standing in the heavenly sanctuary in service of God most high.³⁶

Stephen's speech, then, calls attention to the heavenly sanctuary as the true dwelling place of God and of Jesus, the Son of Man now exalted to priestly service. This transcendent perspective condemns the limited vision of his hearers, which attaches to the Jerusalem temple in an idolatrous and disobedient way. Yet this is not so much to point away from the temple *tout court* towards the presence of God in Jesus and the community, but rather to point away from the Jerusalem temple in and of itself and towards the heavenly sanctuary as the abode of God and of the risen, ascended Lord Jesus. The opening of this sanctuary to Stephen may pertain specifically to his martyrdom, but it is consonant with his proclamation of heaven as God's dwelling.³⁷ In the narrative of Acts, Stephen's killing 'serves as a catalyst of mission'³⁸ (8.1–3); but it is not the case that God's transcendence is directly correlated with universal mission.³⁹ Rather, in Stephen's speech Luke highlights God's localisation in the heavenly sanctuary, which is accessible from myriad places and not only from 'this place', Jerusalem and its temple. Stephen's survey of salvation history demonstrates that God's presence was, by divine ordinance, accessed in tabernacle and temple, and that it has also always been available at his initiative in other ways, times and places. It is to this latter theme that Luke shifts the emphasis as his narrative progresses.

5. Cornelius: Full Gentile Participation in Heavenly Worship

The privileging of heavenly sanctuary and worship over earthly is a theme that continues in the Cornelius episode. Cornelius is introduced as devout and Godfearing, committed to almsgiving and prayer (Acts 10.2). He prays 'constantly' (NRSV): the term *διὰ παντός* is a technical term in the LXX for the *tamid*, the regular, twice-daily sacrifices in the

³³ Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 153. His conclusion that Acts 7.48 is 'outside the mainstream of Jewish opinion' overreaches, as Stephen's statement is qualified by his recognition of divine ordinance behind the tabernacle, and of the importance of place earlier in the speech (as e.g. Koester, *Dwelling Place*, 85 recognises).

³⁴ E.g. Sylva, 'Temple Curtain', 244 n. 13.

³⁵ D. G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Pillar NTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 267 outlines these possibilities and opts for the last.

³⁶ So D. M. Moffitt, 'Atonement at the Right Hand: The Sacrificial Significance of Jesus' Exaltation in Acts', *NTS* 62 (2016) 549–68 (esp. 564–5).

³⁷ Sleeman describes Acts 7.55–6 as 'the culmination of what 7:49–50 projected, the heavenly "house" not built by human hands that resolves debate concerning the cultic and cosmic dimensions of God's presence raised in these earlier verses', *Geography and the Ascension*, 165.

³⁸ Peterson, *Acts*, 268.

³⁹ As e.g. Marguerat suggests: 'sa radicale transcendance [sc. de Dieu] ... est mise au service de l'universalité de Dieu', 'Du temple à la maison', 316.

tabernacle and temple.⁴⁰ As we have already seen, Luke is aware of the importance of these daily sacrifices as times of prayer (Acts 3.1), and the phrase διὰ παντός here and in Luke 24.53 should be understood as ‘regularly’ or ‘twice-daily’ rather than ‘constantly’.⁴¹ In a striking confirmation of this point, in the very next verse Cornelius’ vision occurs ‘at the ninth hour’: it is during his time of prayer, coordinated with the afternoon *tamid* sacrifice, that he receives an angelic visitation (Acts 10.3). Readers of Luke-Acts already have reason to see the ninth hour as not simply the hour of prayer, but as a time of day particularly susceptible to divine action (Luke 23.44–8; Acts 3.1–10).

The angel’s words to Cornelius affirm his piety, and inform him that his prayers and almsgiving ‘have ascended as a memorial before God’ (Acts 10). The term ‘memorial’, μνημόσυνον, occurs in Lev 2.2, 9; 6.15 to describe the grain offering (translating זוכרה, from the root זכר ‘to remember’), and also in Sir 45.16 in association with Aaron’s incense offering (note the *tamid* in 45.14). There are also parallels between Cornelius and Zechariah in Luke 1: both are upright figures (Zechariah is righteous and blameless, Cornelius devout and Godfearing) and receive an angelic visitor, who informs them that their prayers have been heard.

The scene moves to Peter in Joppa, who is also engaged in prayer, at the sixth hour (i.e. midday, Acts 10.9). This time of prayer is not correlated with the morning or evening sacrifice, but a thrice-daily pattern coordinated with the daily sacrifices and with an additional prayer at noon is attested in the Second Temple period alongside the twice-daily.⁴² Peter too receives a vision, which explicitly involves the opening of heaven (Acts 10.11; cf. 7.56 and Luke 3.12). Heaven is the source of the lowered sheet containing animals in Acts 10.16, and is emphasised in the retelling in 11.5. It seems likely that the giver of the vision is Jesus and not God, given that Peter addresses the one who speaks to him as ‘Lord’ (10.14), that the voice refers to God in the third person (10.15) and that Peter argues, refusing to comply *three times* (10.16; cf. Luke 22.34, 56–62).⁴³ Just as Cornelius’ vision joins an array of angelic visitations throughout Luke-Acts, so Peter’s vision joins a series of heavenly openings with (since the ascension) Jesus at the right hand of God.

Peter sees the forbidden animals and is instructed to kill and eat; in response, he protests that he has never eaten anything κοινός or ἀκάθαρτος. These are technical terms, referring to what is ‘common’ (as opposed to holy) and ‘unclean’ (as opposed to clean). They relate to the *kashrut* food laws, which are a derivation and extension of the purity laws surrounding Levitical worship.⁴⁴ Peter does not, so far as Luke relates, kill and eat,⁴⁵ instead, the vision’s meaning becomes clear to the reader once Peter reaches Cornelius’ house two days later (Acts 10.23–8; to Peter it seems to have been clear from the moment

⁴⁰ Especially in the Pentateuch, where διὰ παντός qualifies cultic items or activities, in particular the regular offerings, twenty-five times in Exod 25.30; 27.20; 28.30, 38; 30.8; Lev 6.6, 13; 24.2, 8; Num 4.7; 28.10, 15, 23–4, 31; 29.6, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38; Deut 33.10. There are only five non-cultic occurrences of the term: Lev 11.42; 25.31, 2; Num 9.16; Deut 11.12.

⁴¹ So D. Hamm, ‘The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke’s Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5–25; 18:9–14; 24:50–53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30)’, *CBQ* 65 (2003) 215–31; ‘Praying “Regularly” (Not “Constantly”): A Note on the Cultic Background of *dia pantos* at Luke 24:53, Acts 10:2 and Hebrews 9:6, 13:15’, *ExpTim* 116 (2004) 50–2.

⁴² See e.g. Dan 6.10; Ps 55.17 and R. T. Beckwith, ‘The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church in Relation to its Jewish Antecedents’, *EvQ* 56 (1984) 65–80, 139–58.

⁴³ So Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension*, 226.

⁴⁴ A key study here, supportive of the non-abrogation/anti-abolitionist reading, is J. R. L. Moxon, *Peter’s Halakhic Nightmare: The ‘Animal’ Vision of Acts 10:9–16 in Jewish and Graeco-Roman Perspective* (WUNT 11/432; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

⁴⁵ Indeed, the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 insists on observance of certain purity regulations – but not the full *kashrut* – by gentiles, such that while *distinctions* between gentiles and Jews are not entirely effaced, any *divisions* that these might potentially cause are removed.

he decided to go with Cornelius' emissaries, 10.29 and cf. 11.12). Cornelius falls down to honour him (the verb προσκυνέω is characteristically translated 'worship', so NRSV, though it can indicate other forms of reverencing), and is quickly corrected (10.25–6). This is a curious error, given that Cornelius did not attempt to worship the angel in his vision; it appears he mistakes Peter for an angel or other heavenly being.⁴⁶ Whatever the reasons for it, this action fronts questions of worship and not only of purity.

Peter explains that, although it is 'unlawful' (ἀθέμιτος) for him to associate with gentiles, nevertheless God has shown him that he should not call any *person* (ἄνθρωπος) common or unclean (Acts 10.28). He associates the same purity terminology (κοινός and ἀκάθαρτος) from his vision with human beings and not with animals or food. Significantly, the Spirit twice tells Peter not to make a distinction, both in the narrative and in Peter's account to the Judean believers (μηδὲν διακρινόμενος, 10.20; μηδὲν διακρίναντα, 11.12; cf. 15.9); in the second case it is explicitly not distinguishing among human beings, and the same meaning holds for the first.⁴⁷ The verb διακρίνω has a wide semantic range and can evoke the dividing function of the priests and the sanctuary veil or wall, as is notably indicated by its use to describe the discerning or judging function of the priests in Ezekiel's eschatological temple, immediately after their didactic role in teaching the people to distinguish holy from common and clean from unclean (Ezek 44.23–4 LXX). Peter again applies cultic language to people when he responds to Cornelius' account of his vision by describing all who fear God and practise righteousness as 'acceptable' (δεκτός) to him.⁴⁸ While Peter is still in mid-flow, the Holy Spirit is poured out on his hearers, a divine passive made explicit in the retelling (compare Acts 10.44–5 with 11.15–18), an occurrence that, at Pentecost, originates from heaven (2.2), and which suggests that Cornelius and his associates are considered forgiven and pure.⁴⁹

The whole of the Cornelius episode, then, is a challenge to the regulations governing association with gentiles, but it is so because of a reconfiguration of the more fundamental and prior distinctions in operation in the Jerusalem temple. Cornelius is portrayed in terms befitting a devout Jew, and receives benefits that hitherto in Luke-Acts only privileged Jews have received. These benefits, moreover, have strong associations with both the temple and Jerusalem. Yet Cornelius has not become a proselyte but remains a Godfearing gentile. Are we then to conclude that 'the Temple has not been opened up to non-Jews; it has been replaced'?⁵⁰ Such a conclusion fails to take account of the place of heaven in the narrative, and the consistently careful and positive use of cultic categories and terminology. The evidence considered above strongly suggests that Cornelius is engaged in temple-shaped worship of God in heaven, and the events that unfold vindicate this worship and incorporate him fully into the people of God. The transition, then, is not from the Jerusalem temple to the new community via Jesus; it is, rather, a transition from the temple to a refocalisation on what the temple was always and only imaging, the heavenly sanctuary. This transition validates cultic categories and at the same time expands them in a way that partially undoes their instantiation in the Jerusalem temple in the era of Israel. The heavenly temple is accessible to Jews and gentiles alike, in a way that the Jerusalem temple never was; the distinction of peoples no longer obtains, *precisely because* access to the celestial sanctuary through Jesus and the Spirit enables all people everywhere to worship Israel's God.

⁴⁶ Peterson, *Acts*, 333. This is potentially something of a type scene, given the parallel mistaking of Paul and Barnabas for Hermes and Zeus (Acts 14.11–18).

⁴⁷ Contra NRSV, which translates 10.20 as 'without hesitation'; this is a possible meaning of διακρίνω, but in the context of Acts 10–11 partiality (10.34) and distinctions between peoples are in view.

⁴⁸ E.g. Exod 28.38; Lev 1.3; Isa 56.7; cf. Phil 4.18; Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension*, 239.

⁴⁹ Moffitt, 'Atonement at the Right Hand', 560–2.

⁵⁰ Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 162.

6. Temple Space and Sojan Spatiality

In order to synthesise the readings of Jesus, Stephen and Cornelius offered here, I will revisit and integrate the findings of each section with reference to the insights of critical spatial theory. There has been something of a topographical or spatial turn in biblical studies in the past couple of decades, reflecting a wider critical trend.⁵¹ The insights of the theorists Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey and Edward Soja⁵² – all of whom broadly agree on a threefold categorisation of space, usually denoted in Soja's terms as firstspace, secondspace and thirdspace – have been widely applied in the humanities and social sciences, and have also been found generative for reading biblical texts.⁵³

Firstspace is material, physical and objective, the world as we perceive it. We inhabit firstspace, and as well as moving through it might seek physically to circumscribe and appropriate it. Secondspace is space as it is mentally conceived and articulated or projected; it is space in the abstract, a conceptual, cognitive and symbolic world. Secondspace involves the projection or production of knowledge through discourse or practice, and thus is often a way of attempting to impose fixity and order on the encountered reality of firstspace. It is not however necessarily derivative or dependent on firstspace, but has its own integrity and even, arguably, dominance.⁵⁴

Space has often been understood under these two categories alone. Lefebvre's major contribution was to introduce a third category of social or lived space, which has been endorsed and expanded by Harvey and Soja. Thirdspace is lived space, an unpredictable other which disrupts the binary relation between space-as-it-is and space-as-we-construe-it.⁵⁵ Soja describes it as follows:

an-Other world, a meta-space of radical openness where everything can be found, where the possibilities for new discoveries and political strategies are endless, but where one must always be restlessly and self-critically moving on to new sites and insights, never confined by past journeys and accomplishments, always searching for differences, an Otherness, a strategic and heretical space 'beyond' what is presently known and taken for granted.⁵⁶

As Soja articulates it, thirdspace is a '*lived space as a strategic location* from which to encompass, understand, and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously'.⁵⁷ It is, therefore, a disruptive space but also a constructive one in which new understandings are forged: it 'seeks to disorder, deconstruct and tentatively reconstitute in a different form the entire

⁵¹ Note the AAR/SBL 'Constructions of Ancient Space Seminar' and the resultant five-volume *Constructions of Space* series published by T&T Clark. For useful introductions and surveys, see E. C. Stewart, 'New Testament Space/Spatiality', *BTB* 42 (2012) 139–50; P. Schreiner, 'Space, Place and Biblical Studies: A Survey of Recent Research in Light of Developing Trends', *CBR* 14 (2016) 340–71; Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension*, 22–56.

⁵² H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (trans. D. Nicholson-Smith; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); E. W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996).

⁵³ Sleeman sounds a note of caution against uncritical adoption of spatial theory, in that Soja's theory itself is of course not a value-neutral toolkit (M. Sleeman, 'Critical Spatial Theory 2.0', *Constructions of Space v: Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (ed. G. T. M. Prinsloo and C. M. Maier; LHBOTS 576; London: T&T Clark, 2013) 49–66).

⁵⁴ E. W. Soja, 'Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination', *Human Geography Today* (ed. D. Massey, J. Allen and P. Sarre; Oxford: Polity, 1999) 260–77, at 266.

⁵⁵ Thirdspace seeks 'to break out from the constraining Big Dichotomy by introducing an-Other' (Soja, 'Expanding the Scope', 268).

⁵⁶ Soja, *Thirdspace*, 34.

⁵⁷ Soja, *Thirdspace*, 68 (emphasis original).

dialectical sequence and logic'.⁵⁸ Alongside this key notion of *disruption*, another important aspect of thirdspace is *possibility*: it has the potential to transform first- and second-space, but this is not automatic.

Spatial theory is particularly applicable to Luke-Acts because of the noted importance of place, both the journey to Jerusalem in Luke and the spread outwards from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth in Acts (though with notable circles back to Jerusalem). Matthew Sleeman has applied Soja's taxonomy to Acts, as a fruitful way to account for Luke's 'heavenly Christocentrism'⁵⁹ as disruptive of purely historical or purely earthly readings. In signalling scholarship on the temple in Luke-Acts at the outset of this article, I noted the danger of binary construals of the spatial transition that is in operation, in Acts in particular. This can often lead either to a reaffirmation of the Jerusalem temple's importance, or (more commonly) an abrogation of its functions in favour of Jesus, the Christian community or the households in which they meet. This, I contend, is an example of what Soja describes as the geographical imagination's confinement by 'an encompassing dualism, or binary logic'.⁶⁰ Instead, as I have shown, these horizontal transitions need to be triangulated with respect to an ever-present (even if often-muted) heaven-as-sanctuary.⁶¹ In spatial-theoretical terms, heaven is the vehicle for a thirdspatial shift which transforms the understanding of the Jerusalem temple, Jesus and the community.

To begin, we can name a number of the firstspaces encountered in our three scenes from Luke's narratives. These include the Jerusalem temple and various other locations in Jerusalem, such as the high priest's house, and Pilate's and Herod's residences as the sites of Jesus' trial(s). The temple courts are the location of the daily prayers and of early Christian meetings, and the site of Stephen's speech. Outside Jerusalem's walls we have noted the Skull as the site of Jesus' crucifixion, and an unspecified place where Stephen is stoned. Moving further afield, there is the town of Caesarea, where Cornelius is based, and his is one among several houses in Acts. It is also important to note that heaven is the firstspace location of the ascended Jesus: while Luke gives minimal details, heaven is understood as a physical space to which the bodily Jesus travels in his ascension, in line with ancient cosmologies.⁶² In this regard it bears clarifying that heaven functions thirdspatially *only in its disruption and reconstitution* of earthly first- and second-space, and not inherently; it is the interaction between the heavenly and earthly realms that engenders this transformation.

Turning to secondspace, from the perspective of the Jewish authorities (within and outside the early Jesus-followers) there is a clear conception of the temple and Jerusalem as central. This reflects the wider centrality of the temple within Second Temple Judaism. The ethnic and purity distinctions in operation there also determine the secondspatial mapping of all other areas of Israel's life: food and other purity regulations, including association with non-Jews. From the perspective of the followers of the Way, this secondspatial conception is at first largely affirmed, or at least not contradicted, but it is progressively modified as Acts continues.

This reconstitution of secondspace occurs through a series of thirdspatial interruptions, which are heavenly in origin. In this way, heaven functions as a catalyst for the reconceptualisations that are in operation throughout Luke-Acts. There are intimations of this in Zechariah's vision in the temple, and in Jesus' baptism and transfiguration.

⁵⁸ Soja, 'Expanding the Scope', 269; Sleeman speaks of thirdspace imagining 'new meanings or possibilities for shaping spatial practice' (*Geography and the Ascension*, 45).

⁵⁹ Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension*, 56 (emphasis original).

⁶⁰ Soja, 'Expanding the Scope', 264.

⁶¹ Soja speaks of 'thirthing' and of a 'trialectic' conceptualisation of the world, e.g. Soja, 'Expanding the Scope', 262, 268.

⁶² So Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension*, 51.

Ultimately, Jesus arrives at a settled conviction of his own future ascended state. The opening of heaven enables him to commend his spirit in a proleptic fulfilment of this ascension, and leads to the confession of the centurion and the repentance of the crowd, a dual response which is an intimation of the inclusion of gentiles which will follow in the Cornelius episode. His ascension becomes the prerequisite for the sending of the Spirit and the events of Acts.

As Stephen stands in the firstspace of the temple complex, he points to a secondspatial construal of reality deeply embedded in Israel's history and texts, whereby heaven is God's sanctuary and the tabernacle and temple have only ever been derivations (Acts 7.44; Exod 25.40). This map has, for Stephen, been both confirmed and transformed by Jesus' ascension, such that Jesus is now also present with God in the heavenly sanctuary. His description of this reality culminates in a thirdspatial interruption in which he sees into heaven, which in turn triggers his martyrdom and the firstspatial scattering of many of the believers, causing the word to be proclaimed further afield.

For Cornelius, in gentile territory, there are intimations that he already accesses God in heaven, even if in some sense unwittingly. His and Peter's visions (a duo of coordinated thirdspatial interruptions) lead Peter and ultimately the whole church to re-envisage secondspace so that boundaries can be crossed and temple purity distinctions discarded, at least insofar as they apply to people outside the Jerusalem temple.

In sum, then, *it is the thirdspatial function of heaven, and specifically of heaven-as-sanctuary, that enables the remapping of the early Christian movement's secondspace.* This remapping is, in one respect, the re-establishing of a secondspatial conception that is found in Israel's tradition: heaven is the true sanctuary, the tabernacle and temple derived copies. The Jerusalem temple no longer exists at the time when Luke is writing, but it maintains its integrity within Luke's narrative world: the distinction between Jew and gentile continues to obtain.⁶³ Yet this distinction is not to persist anywhere other than the Jerusalem temple, because the heavenly temple as inhabited by a priestly Jesus and as the source of the outpouring of the Spirit allows for no such boundaries. In this respect, the secondspatial reconfiguration that Luke charts cuts more sharply against the grain of contemporaneous Jewish secondspace: not only is heaven the primary sanctuary (a point with which most Jews would agree), it is now open to all who, by faith, can see it.

7. Conclusion

Previous studies of the temple in Luke-Acts have been right to note a transfer of cultic prerogatives and functions to Jesus and to his first followers. They have, however, largely missed a crucial element of the way in which this transfer occurs. This article has drawn attention to evidence that Luke construes heaven as a sanctuary, in line with a wide stream of Second Temple Jewish thought. It is the priority of this heavenly sanctuary as the location (following the ascension) of the presence of God in Jesus and the departure point of the Holy Spirit now poured out on God's people that forms the essential presupposition for the universal mission. God's place and presence is not now everywhere instead of exclusively in the temple; it remains pre-eminently in heaven. Yet through Jesus this place is now accessible from any place, to those who have the Spirit. Just as this new reality prompts the call to all people everywhere to repent, so also it entails a 'humbling of earthly space'.⁶⁴ This humbling applies to Rome and its courtrooms and governors' residences, and also to Jerusalem and its temple. The earthly temple is not

⁶³ Acts 21.26 relates Paul's observance of sacrificial custom and purity regulations, while 21.27–9 strongly implies that Trophimus' entry into the temple is the crowd's *perception*, and did not actually take place.

⁶⁴ Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension*, 261.

rejected or abrogated: as we have seen, its purity laws and distinctions between Jew and gentile are still respected within Luke's narrative. But it is relativised, humbled, with respect to this new cultic reality. At the same time, other more lowly places such as execution sites outside Jerusalem's walls, prison cells, a riverside prayer space in a town with no synagogue, and even a gentile centurion's house in Caesarea, are exalted by their relation to the heavenly sanctuary and the God who dwells within it.

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