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The Theology of Paul's Cultic Metaphors: A History of Research (Chapter One of Worship that Makes Sense to Paul)

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Chapter One

The Theology of Paul's Cultic Metaphors: A History of Research

1.1 Introduction

In this précis of the most significant contributions on the topic of Paul's cultic metaphors, our scope will be limited (wherever possible) by giving attention to the most influential treatments, but special interest will be directed towards those studies focused on non-atonement metaphors and those that concentrate solely on Paul's letters. Finally, we will try to narrow the field of discussion further by attending specifically to what *theological* conclusions are made.

1.2 Historical-canonical approaches

In the 20th century, two works stand out as key contributions to the subject of cultic language in the New Testament (with a concentrated chapter on Paul's letters). The first, appearing in 1932, is by Hans Wenschkewitz, entitled, *Die Spiritualisierung der Kultusbegriffe: Tempel, Priester und Opfer im Neuen Testament*.¹ Wenschkewitz, essentially utilizing a *religionsgeschichtlich* approach, attempted to chart a progression in the Bible towards a more spiritualized conception of cult. He saw Greek philosophy, especially Stoic thought, as a particularly strong influence on early Christianity. Accordingly, then, Paul's life and letters are read in this light.²

Wenschkewitz began his review of 'Paul' with a consideration of the evidence from Acts. He observed that this portrait of Paul was one whose attitude towards cult was complex for he supported cultic vows and prayed in the temple (Acts 21.6-7; 22.17). Wenschkewitz concluded, though, that too

1 Wenschkewitz 1932.

2 It is indicative of studies in this methodological vein that Paul's tendency to spiritualize cult is inherited from 'primitive Christianity', especially the theology of the so-called Hellenists; see, in support of Wenschkewitz, Fraeyman 1947: 408-11.

much cannot be made of these actions as we cannot ascertain whether Paul was accommodating to the Jews apart from his own (personal) theological convictions.³

Turning directly to the Pauline corpus, Wenschkewitz rightly observed that Paul's use of temple language is rarely 'literal' (insofar as he refers directly to the Jerusalem sanctuary). Rather, Paul's employment of such imagery is connected to the idea of 'numinous awe' for the sake of ethical admonition.⁴ The fact that Paul can call the individual believer a 'temple' led Wenschkewitz to conclude that the apostle was especially in line with Stoic philosophy and Hellenistic Jewish thinkers like Philo.⁵ Indeed, Wenschkewitz detected a tension in Paul, between his Jewish influences that appreciated the body and the pessimistic attitudes of the Hellenistic philosophers who limited the value of the material. For Paul, the body was given a new estimation especially because of the somatic resurrection of Christ.⁶

Another difference that Wenschkewitz detected between Stoic and early Christian thought, despite similarities in cultic interpretation, is the latter's interest in community formation. He concluded:

Weder in der Stoa, noch bei Philo treffen wir diesen Gedanken, denn hier war alles auf den Einzelnen, auf das Individuum eingestellt. Es ist sehr zu beachten, daß auch in diesem Stück das Christentum den Individualismus bricht, indem es eine durchaus individualistisch gemeinte Form der Umdeutung des Tempelbegriffes so wendet, wie es der im tiefsten nicht individualistischen neuen Religion entspricht.⁷

Another feature is notable in Wenschkewitz's interpretation of Paul. He did offer some reflection on the rhetorical use of Paul's metaphors as some, such as those in 1 Corinthians, were deployed, at least in part, to create a sense of community among the Corinthian believers such that they would be less likely to succumb to false teaching.⁸ However, overall, Wenschkewitz focused on the moral dimensions of the ideas and attitudes expressed in Paul's cultic metaphors which discouraged the kind of wanton hedonism that went unnoticed in pagan religions. Here we have, again, this mixing of Jewish and Hellenistic influences where Jewish morality is fused with Greek philosophy. What was striking for Wenschkewitz is the fact that the terminology that Paul used was clearly from the LXX. Again, 'Wir haben also bei Paulus auf der Basis der hellenistischen Spiritualisierung des Tempelbegriffes eine christliche und ein jüdische Komponente festgestellt'.⁹

3 Wenschkewitz 1932: 110-11.

4 Wenschkewitz 1932: 111.

5 Wenschkewitz admitted, though, that Stoics would not have conceived of the 'body' as a divine place of residence; 1932: 111.

6 Wenschkewitz 1932: 111.

7 Wenschkewitz 1932: 112. A serious criticism of Wenschkewitz's view here is offered in Gupta 2009f; see also §1.5 (Analysis).

8 Wenschkewitz 1932: 113.

9 Wenschkewitz 1932: 113.

A major catalyst for this shift towards a spiritualized interpretation of cult is the death of Christ, according to Wenschkewitz (e.g. 1 Corinthians 5.7). He acknowledged, though, that this line of reasoning is not obvious when only Paul's letters (and Acts) are considered, but in light of the whole New Testament. Rather, what was most obvious for Wenschkewitz was the moral aspect of the cultic language.

At the end of his chapter on Paul, Wenschkewitz summarized his findings concisely: Paul's concept of cult was Hellenistic insofar as he saw Stoic spiritualization to be a fitting paradigm for understanding worship in light of the death of Christ. However, Paul maintained a Jewish appreciation for 'Leiblichkeit' and also a primary interest in the community. Though Paul was not the first to consider Christ's death an atoning sacrifice, the paradigm of how he viewed λογικὴν λατρείαν was unique. This involved the ideas that the church had no temple, but worshiped through the Holy Spirit; and there was no hierarchical priesthood, but every person could offer himself to God.

Recent scholarly appraisals of Wenschkewitz's research tend to be quite negative, but I fear that some have not read past the title of his work. Methodologically, there are a number of concerns with his interpretation including a casual amalgamation of findings from Acts and the Pauline letters as well as a hasty juxtaposition of 'Hebrew' and 'Greek' thought. And, of course, his paradigm of spiritualization seems to be read into many of the Pauline texts, rather than arising from them.¹⁰ Nevertheless, his deep interest in the social and ethical dimensions of the cultic texts seems to be more cogently developed. Theologically, Wenschkewitz was convinced that Paul does, in fact, 'spiritualize' and de-institutionalize cult based on an understanding of the atoning work of Christ. Unfortunately, it seemed to have been enough for Wenschkewitz to look for a lowest common denominator in terms of what effect this 'spiritualization' was meant to have on the churches to which Paul wrote. Though Paul had a distinctive voice on occasion, Wenschkewitz was content to find the great apostle happily singing the chorus in unison with the other New Testament voices when it came to spiritualizing cult.

The project that Robert J. Daly took up, forty years later, in his published doctoral thesis, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen*,¹¹ in many ways picks up where Wenschkewitz left off. Daly reveals that the motivation behind the research for this work was not simply to attend to how the New Testament writers re-conceptualized cult. Rather, his primary

10 A. Hogeterp's research (2006) (see below) attempts to draw a more historically accurate picture of Paul within the matrix of Jewish thought in the first century.

11 Daly 1978a; an abridged and simplified version of this work appears under the title *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (1978b).

interest was in Origen's use of cultic language, which led him to an intensive investigation of the major influences on this topic. Daly begins with the ostensibly foundational notion that religions often require sacrifice because it was an event that brought humanity and divinity together in a special way. Following from the fact that Christianity has no ritualized sacrificial practices, he explores the question: how, if at all, can Christians use the language of sacrifice in a meaningful way? Essentially, Daly goes on to interpret the New Testament in a way not dissimilar to Wenschkewitz as he concludes that, because Christ is the *fulfillment* of cult, sacrifice is not done away with but re-interpreted in light of Christ.¹² Again, like Wenschkewitz, Daly proceeds with a synthesis of the Synoptics, Acts, Paul, Hebrews, John, and Revelation. Our attention will focus on Daly's view of Paul.

Daly divides Paul's 'theology of sacrifice' into three: (1) the Christians as a new temple, (2) the sacrifice of Christ, and (3) the sacrifice of (i.e., performed by) the Christians.¹³ Briefly, in terms of the second category, Daly observes that Paul interpreted the death of Christ as both a Passover and sin offering that demonstrated a fulfillment of and supersession beyond the Old Testament rites.¹⁴ In the first category, Christians as the new temple, Daly sees much diversity in Paul's statements, from referent (individual versus group) to background (generic versus Scriptural). Daly makes the striking comment that Paul appears to link this concept to the reception of the Spirit, and that where Paul's pneumatology is found, so also his conception of person/community as temple.¹⁵ Finally, Daly examines the role that 'sacrifice' plays in Christian worship. What he finds implicitly paradigmatic is the death of Christ as a sacrifice. If Christians are expected to be self-giving, it is in imitation of Christ.

Daly seems to take a *heilsgeschichtlich* approach to Paul's cultic metaphors where Christians offer sacrifice, not out of cultic duty, but gratitude to God. And cultic language is transferred to the realm of ethics where a life of virtue and dedication to the Christian mission is idealized. Daly falls prey to many of the same methodological missteps as Wenschkewitz such as an appeal to the Hellenized language in Paul and the so-called Semitic interest in the body. Daly's analysis offers another example of a canonically-oriented study that attempts to synthesize the perspectives of the New Testament writers. Unfortunately, he gives little time and care to the unique circumstances and literary objectives of each author. In his defense, though, he struggled to

12 Daly does utilize the term 'spiritualization', but chooses to give it a very broad meaning where cult is ethicized and/or reinterpreted (1978a:4-5a).

13 Daly admits that this categorization comes from his study of Origen which he then reads back into Paul (1978a: 3).

14 Daly 1978a: 236-40.

15 Daly 1978a: 233.

synthesize a massive amount of literature, spanning many hundreds of years and including dozens of authors.

Just a few years before Daly submitted his doctoral thesis, and nearly a decade before he published his work, R.J. McKelvey published his own monograph (*The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*) on the subject of 'the church as God's new temple'.¹⁶ Again, we have a pan-New Testament study that concentrates on a cultic image; in the case of Daly it was 'sacrifice', here it is 'temple'. But, whereas Wenschkewitz and Daly traversed on philosophical territory by engaging in a discussion of the 'spiritualization' of cult, McKelvey took a different approach and sought out to determine how and why Jewish conceptions and traditions of the heavenly temple were appropriated by New Testament writers. Drawing on background material in the Old Testament, early Jewish literature, and ideas of the heavenly temple in Greek thought as well, McKelvey concluded that the early Christians inherited many ideas of temple and cult that were adjusted and re-framed in light of Christ (and particularly Jesus' own attitude towards the temple). In contrast to the tendency of Wenschkewitz to focus almost exclusively on Philo and the Stoics, McKelvey brings to bear research from the Dead Sea Scrolls in particular. In the end, though, McKelvey does affirm the basic direction in which Wenschkewitz and Daly take the cultic language of the New Testament: it is transferred to the domain of daily worship specifically for the purpose of encouraging ethical living. McKelvey's unique contribution, though, is his demonstration of how early Christians were driven by a thoroughgoing eschatology which is evidenced in their belief that they lived in the time of fulfillment marked by the 'new temple': 'The New Testament declares that God has fulfilled his word of promise made by the prophets and erected a new and more glorious temple'.¹⁷

While McKelvey's study offers another salvation-historical approach to temple imagery in the New Testament, it differs from Wenschkewitz insofar as the former perspective is driven by evidence from Jewish tradition and a literary-historical methodology whereas the latter drew heavily from the philosophy of religion. As a more exegetically- and textually-rigorous investigation, McKelvey's research has been well-received and marks an important shift in approaches to cultic language in the New Testament. If early Christian reflection on cult was to be understood appropriately, scholars came to see that it must be studied within its own historical, literary, and social context. This leads us to a specialized kind of research on cultic metaphors in Paul and the New Testament: the comparative-historical.

¹⁶ McKelvey 1969: vii.

¹⁷ McKelvey 1969: 179-80.

1.3 Comparative-historical approaches

While Wenschkewitz found appealing parallels between Philo's use of cultic language and that of early Christianity, McKelvey was able to profit from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls which were unknown to Wenschkewitz. When these Qumranic documents were available for wider scholarly research, it was found that striking similarities existed between how these sectarians used scriptural language and symbols and that of the New Testament writers (especially in the Pauline and Johannine literature). Naturally, some interest was directed towards the use of sacrificial, sacerdotal, and, especially, temple language. In the 1960's and 1970's, two studies appeared on this topic: Bertil Gärtner's *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (1965) and Georg Klinzing's *Die Umdeutung des Kultus in der Qumrangemeinde und im Neuen Testament* (1971). The latter's research was more concentrated on the ideology of the Qumran community with only a third of the book devoted to the New Testament, whereas Gärtner devoted two-thirds to the New Testament. A particularly important methodological insight arose from Klinzing's investigation. By studying the habits of the Qumran community and their ritual practices, he became convinced that the term 'spiritualization' is misleading in terms of their cultic attitudes since they devoted much attention to how, for instance, meals were to be eaten and community membership was regulated.¹⁸ Comparing what is found in the New Testament, Klinzing also, in line with McKelvey, draws attention to the importance of an apocalyptic perspective for understanding the *Umdeutung* of cultic (and especially temple) language.¹⁹

Gärtner's contribution to the discussion is a sustained reflection on relevant New Testament texts in dialogue with Qumranic thought for the purpose of uncovering how and why certain arguments arose. Only two texts from the undisputed letters of Paul are treated (2 Cor. 6.14-7.1; 1 Cor. 3.16-17), but Gärtner detected several emphases based on 'resemblances' with the temple symbolism of the Dead Sea Scrolls: the identification of the faithful community as the temple of God, an emphasis on the 'dwelling' of God in the community, the holiness of this community, the importance of purity, and an oppositional stance towards outsiders.²⁰

Where many scholars have questioned Klinzing and Gärtner is in the eagerness to attribute to Paul, at times, a dependence on Qumranic 'tradition'.²¹ However, Gärtner admits that such a proposal is weakened by the

18 See the section 'Zum Begriff 'Spiritualisierung'' (pp. 143-7).

19 Klinzing 1971: 221-24.

20 Gärtner 1965: 60; generally see pp. 49-71.

21 See Gärtner 1965: 49-50; Klinzing 1971: 166-96.

fact that the use of temple symbolism in the Dead Sea Scrolls was based upon 'a particular kind of self-consciousness in which the temple was considered to have been replaced by a living community'.²² To attribute to Paul the same kind of interests is question-begging. Perhaps, though, the lasting theological significance of this historical-comparative work is a recognition that the early Christians were not alone, as an eschatological community, in thinking that they were living in a time where God was doing a 'new thing' and was present among his faithful people in a special way in light of 'recent events'.²³

1.4 New approaches

Approaches to Paul's cultic language can be understood by comparison with the evolution of the study of the Gospels. There was a time when many scholars treated the Gospels as texts whose final forms covered up the authentic or pristine Jesus traditions. Thus, historical tools were necessary in order to get at what lay concealed beneath. However, an evolution took place where the evangelist himself was taken seriously as an author and story-teller and it was seen to be either irresponsible or simply unhelpful to cut away at his text which he so carefully redacted and composed, infusing it with his own theological emphases.²⁴ Similarly, with Paul, scholars came to realize that his letters are more than 'evidence' of his thought. They are carefully composed letters written for specific reasons to communicate very critical messages. They are 'words on target' as Christiaan Beker often put it. Thus, a handful of newer studies on Paul's cultic imagery have sought to take seriously this rhetorical character of his words and study history and theology *in context*.

This brings us to our first example, a literary study of cultic metaphors, by David L. Olford: 'An Exegetical Study of Major Texts in Romans which Employ Cultic Language in a Non-Literal Way' (1985). This unpublished doctoral thesis (Sheffield University) examines Paul's use of sacrificial and priestly language as 'a part of the expression of his thought'.²⁵ By limiting the scope of his concentration to Romans, Olford was able to sustain a more focused exploration of the 'use' of cultic language than had been undertaken previously. Such an approach did not prevent Olford from thinking historically, though, for he had in mind that Romans was a particularly

22 Gärtner 1965: 56.

23 For the Qumran community, the 'recent events' were the judgment of the Jerusalem temple and the formation of the pure and faithful community; for the early Christians, it was the death and resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit (see Gärtner 1965: 139).

24 For a brief overview of this development in Gospels research, see Dunn 2003: 92-97.

25 Olford 1985: 1.

interesting specimen for consideration – especially as a letter written by a Jew to a Christian church at the beginning of the partings of the ways. Thus, Olford writes, ‘Paul, a man grounded in Judaism, involved in the Christian mission to the Gentiles, and concerned with Jew-Gentile relations, [offers] a use of cultic language particularly worthy of note’.²⁶ What marks out Olford’s angle from his predecessors is his rhetorical mindset as he sought to observe the use and impact of cultic language in Romans ‘viewed within the letter as a whole’.²⁷

Though Olford is interested in the ‘theology’ of such language, he argues that a holistic framework does not exist that can account for the many occurrences of cultic metaphors. Therefore, ‘the burden of proof lay upon those who would seek to unify the various uses of cultic language, especially within a theological structure’.²⁸ Also, Olford is less inclined to read such metaphors from a *heilsgeschichtlich* standpoint as it might lead one to the conclusion that Paul was purposely opposing the Jewish cult and speaking polemically. Such a finding distracts one from the literary purposes of such imagery that need to be investigated keeping in mind the situation, structure, and manner of argumentation found in any given document (such as Romans). In Romans, Olford comes to the conclusion that Paul’s cultic language bears an ‘apologetic’ function regarding his ministry. With respect to the gospel, they clarify and enhance his message ‘grounding the eschatological gospel in religious tradition, as expressed in the OT, and revered at Rome’.²⁹

Though Olford did not outline any kind of sophisticated methodology, his focus on the rhetorical *purpose* of such language within the context of one letter adumbrated the kind of literary approach that many others would follow (whether conscious of his work or not). Though I find the term ‘apologetic’ limiting, it does carry the idea that cultic metaphors could be utilized to position ‘his eschatological gospel within a tradition of familiar religious ideas’.³⁰ When it comes to a larger synthesis, Olford makes no attempt to construct a ‘theology of cult’, as it were, but ties the cultic language to important theological concepts such as gospel, ethics, and apostleship. Thus, Olford has offered a rhetorical study that takes research forward by allowing Paul’s own process of thought in metaphor-making to take shape within the scope of one letter.

John Lanci’s study, *A New Temple for Corinth* (1997), is also a literary-focused monograph, but concentrates exclusively on 1 Corinthians. In

26 Olford 1985: 2.

27 Olford 1985: 2.

28 Olford 1985: 432.

29 Olford 1985: 433.

30 Olford 1985: 436.

particular, Lanci is interested in how temple metaphors are used in this epistle (especially 1 Corinthians 3.16-17). He takes the discussion in a different direction from previous studies on temple imagery (e.g. McKelvey, Wenschkewitz) by reflecting, not only or primarily on Paul as 'theologian', but as a Diaspora Jew writing to an ethnically diverse church in a Corinth filled with temples. Indeed, what Lanci finds distressing in previous scholarship is the immediate presumption that, if Paul refers metaphorically to a 'temple', he must mean *the* Jewish temple: 'faced with the need to persuade this particular audience, a largely gentile one in Central Greece, what kind of reference would Paul allude to when he conjures up the image of a temple? The one in Jerusalem? Or one of the sanctuaries down the Lechaion Road in the center of their own town?'.³¹

Lanci subtitles his book 'Rhetorical and Archaeological Approaches to Pauline Imagery' which obviously reveals his methodology. The 'rhetorical' aspect is explicated by Lanci immediately in his very specific research question, 'What role does the image of the community play in Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians?'.³² The 'archaeological' approach involves looking at ancient Greco-Roman conceptions of what temples were like, and how they functioned in society. The exigency that necessitated Lanci's archaeological approach is the concern that when scholars read 1 Corinthians as a text, they are often compelled to make links *intertextually* (i.e. with other 'texts'), but such a tendency has the potential for neglecting 'the physical reality of temples in Corinth'.³³

When Lanci deploys this methodology on 1 Corinthians, he makes two important conclusions about the use of temple metaphors. First, the consistent appearance of construction imagery in the letter is quite deliberate and furthers the overall agenda in 1 Corinthians of addressing the problem of competition and factionalism that plagued this young church. Paul's temple metaphors, then, play an important role in encouraging unity. Thus, Lanci concludes, 'rather than inviting the Corinthians to understand themselves as a new temple replacing the one in Jerusalem, Paul uses a metaphor, which both Gentile and Jew could understand, to present and then anchor the motif of community upbuilding which runs throughout the letter'.³⁴

A second argument that Lanci makes is that temples acted as 'centering images' in a city which stood for the 'common good' and aided in concretizing communal identity.³⁵ Here Lanci notes the social implications of the rhetoric

31 Lanci 1997: 3.

32 Lanci 1997: 5.

33 Lanci 1997: 6.

34 Lanci 1997: 5.

35 Lanci 1997: 90, 128, 134.

of 1 Corinthians. Temples, in the Greco-Roman world, were 'intimately bound up with a people's history and sense of self-understanding'.³⁶ What more powerful ideological symbol could be used to combat the immature self-centeredness that was plaguing the Corinthian believers? The church, Lanci argues, must become the kind of place where the common good is sought and where the true identity of the people (as God's holy ones) is secure: 'in each case, a deity's temple was a powerful image of the unity of the people who worshipped that deity. Such a temple invited stronger social adherence; at the same time, it served as an advertisement to outsiders of the power of the deity and the advantages of affiliation with its cult'.³⁷

We have gained much, methodologically, from Lanci's concern with determining the 'theology' of Paul's temple metaphors. In his critique of those who see Paul as replacing the Jerusalem temple, he especially points out how comparing Paul with the Qumran community is quite dangerous as the *purpose* of the transfer of cultic imagery does not appear to be identical.³⁸ Though he does not state it in this way, Lanci is concerned not only with what Paul says *theologically*, but how his words *do* something. He articulates it as such: 'Paul's images in 1 Corinthians are not mere stylistic entertainments. They are deliberate rhetorical devices designed to convince people to behave in a certain way in the future'.³⁹ Though Lanci does not spend much time supporting this methodologically, he hints at the important cognitive aspects of rhetoric and how metaphors can shift epistemology. Thus, in his conclusion, he boldly asserts that Paul was intent on using temple imagery because it 'lights the fire of the imagination'.⁴⁰

Though the advancements that Lanci has made in the study of cultic metaphors is significant, three concerns are worth observing. First of all, the communal dimension of the temple imagery in 1 Corinthians 3.16 is beyond dispute, but the equally important use of *ναός* in 6.19, which focuses on the individual body, means that one should not press this social aspect of 'temple' too far.⁴¹ Secondly, Lanci's insistence that Paul was not specifically referring to the Jerusalem temple is not an open-and-shut case. Though Lanci is correct

36 Lanci 1997: 90.

37 Lanci 1997: 134.

38 See Lanci 1997: 13-19. The same kind of point is made by C.K. Barrett in comparisons of the Gospel of John and the Dead Sea Scrolls: 'John and the Qumran Community rejected the temple for different reasons: John because the true worshiper must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4.24); the community because the temple was impure and used a false calendar. Not every verbal contact between the Gospel and the Scrolls signifies a material connection' (1975: 79n. 43).

39 Lanci 1997: 115.

40 Lanci 1997: 134.

41 See my forthcoming article entitled 'Whose Body is a Temple (1 Cor. 6.19)? Paul Beyond the Individual/Communal Divide', *CBQ* (2009; see Gupta 2009f).

that ναός could be used in reference to any kind of temple, the combination with πνεῦμα has a strong Jewish precedent in, for instance, Josephus' *Antiquities* where he narrates Solomon's prayer: '...I humbly beseech you that you will let some portion of your spirit come down and inhabit this temple (μοῖράν τινα τοῦ σοῦ πνεύματος εἰς τὸν ναὸν ἀποικίσαι)' (8.114).⁴² Additionally, in 1 Corinthians 3.17, Paul refers to this ναός as ἅγιος - a term for holiness that was more commonly used by Hellenistic Jews than other religious groups at that time. David Horrell observes that one should not necessarily presume that Paul avoided writing in reference to Jewish things or in Jewish ways just because his audience was composed mostly of Gentiles. He reasons, 'As with his use of Scripture, Paul may have (unconsciously?) assumed, rightly or wrongly, that his converts shared such knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1 ff.)'.⁴³

A final critique, and perhaps the most crucial, involves Lanci's rhetorical approach. Traditionally, the purpose behind a rhetorical interpretation is to chart the author's method of discourse in order to understand better the process of argumentation and the means of persuasion. However, Lanci seems to propose a different strategy. He claims that 'this project is not an attempt to uncover *the* meaning of the text for all people in all times'. Rather, he is interested in developing 'a plausible reading of the text, rather than to discover the original intention of its author'.⁴⁴ I have two concerns with this. Firstly, I am not convinced that a rhetorical approach to 1 Corinthians can avoid engaging in the intentions of the author. Secondly, Lanci *does* seem interested in the intention of Paul as he repeatedly refers to Paul's 'use(s)' of temple metaphors and makes strong claims about the apostle's knowledge and deployment of rhetorical devices.⁴⁵ Indeed, a climactic statement is made in Lanci's conclusion that specifically seems to highlight Paul's intentions: 'Paul returns to this image several times in the letter after introducing it, and he alludes to building and construction throughout 1 Corinthians in order to keep the imagery working within his rhetorical argument against dissension and in favor of the common good'.⁴⁶ Though I consider Lanci's literary method to be a major advance in how cultic imagery in Paul is studied, I find his bias against authorial intent to be unsustainable when taking a rhetorical approach.⁴⁷

42 See also *T.Zeph.* 1; *T.Benj.* 9.4. For further evidence that Paul has the Jerusalem temple specifically in mind, see Fraeyman 1947: 391.

43 Horrell 1999: 711.

44 Lanci 1997: 3.

45 Thus: '...Paul understood the power that images might bring to a rhetorical argument' (1997: 121).

46 Lanci 1997: 134.

47 See the discussion of biblical interpretation and authorial intent found in Hirsch 1967. Francis Watson rightly emphasizes that the text itself cannot be so neatly divided from the author as it is the embodiment of his or her intentions, the product of a 'communicative act'

It is arguable that a better model is demonstrated by the 2008 study *The Offering of the Gentiles* by David J. Downs. This monograph is not about cultic metaphors in the first instance, but rather an exploration of the 'theological aspects' of the relief fund for Jerusalem.⁴⁸ Based on texts such as Romans 15.16 (within the wider context of 15.14-32), Downs concludes that 'Paul metaphorically frames his readers' responsive participation in the collection as an act of cultic worship, and in so doing he underscores the point that benefaction within the community of believers results in praise to God, the one from whom all benefactions ultimately come'.⁴⁹ Though I am not convinced that Paul is referring to the collection in Romans 15.16, I found Downs' overall cognitive-literary method to be an improvement upon Lanci's in terms of recognizing how metaphors work cognitively as well as rhetorically, as elements of discourse and rhetoric. Especially when Downs considers both theological and literary dimensions of Paul's rhetoric, he frames the research question nicely: 'What roles...do Paul's cultic metaphors play in the attempt to determine the theological significance of the Jerusalem collection for Paul's mission as apostle to the Gentiles?'⁵⁰ Downs is particularly influenced by conceptual metaphor theory (which we will attend to in chapter two) which observes that 'metaphors can provide a frame through which we view the world' and 'the introduction of a metaphor into a particular rhetorical context is potentially also an invitation to reframe one's view of reality'.⁵¹ Downs, then, comes up with the theological formulation 'COLLECTION IS WORSHIP' to synthetically sum up how Paul conceptualizes the theological import of the relief fund. Re-framing the collection as a 'religious offering', Downs argues, subverts conventions of gift-giving and projects it onto a wider horizon where 'God is...the source of and power behind every act of human beneficence'.⁵²

Downs' approach has the benefit of being socio-historically sensitive, rhetorically-driven, and theologically reflective. This eclectic approach offers

between the author and intended readers (see 1997: 98-103). Watson argues: 'Authorial intent is the principle of a text's intelligibility, and cannot be detached from the text itself' (1997: 123). Attempting to put his finger on the pulse of the concern with authorial intent, Watson differentiates between 'verbal meaning' of a statement and the 'contextual significance'. The verbal meaning is clearly determined by 'the words, the conventions that govern their usage, and the specific intentions expressed in their use'. Contextual significance involves how the text might have meaning within the life of a reading community. This contextual significance will change when a new context is introduced. When it comes to verbal meaning, then, Watson reasons that readers do not *create* this meaning, but *receive* it (1997: 103-4).

48 Downs 2008: 2.

49 Downs 2008: 28-29.

50 Downs 2008: 120.

51 Downs 2008: 122.

52 Downs 2008: 164.

great potential and allows Paul's letters to be read as having a targeted point springing from various theological convictions.

Another recent contribution has been made by A. Hogeterp in his *Paul and God's Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence* (2006). Though Hogeterp wishes to undertake a 'historical' analysis, it is best categorized under newer literary approaches because his aim is not to determine Paul's attitudes towards cult, but rather to determine 'what...Paul's cultic imagery signif[ies] in view of Paul's gospel mission to the Diaspora'.⁵³ Hogeterp's investigation is particularly 'historical' insofar as he spends nearly 200 pages (almost half of the book) on Jewish attitudes towards the temple and cult (with additional perspectives on the 'Jesus movement') before turning to Paul's letters. Hogeterp argues that a 'spiritualization' approach to Paul's cultic metaphors is anachronistic as it 'tends to take later theological developments [that arose after the destruction of the second temple] and the historical situation of the parting of the way between Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE as a referential framework for the perspective of Paul'.⁵⁴

By the time that Hogeterp has finally arrived at his analysis of 1 and 2 Corinthians, he reveals that his research interest is, in fact, theological: 'My starting point for discussing Paul's cultic imagery in the Corinthian correspondence is that Paul's theological message expresses itself significantly and irreplaceably through cultic imagery'.⁵⁵ More specifically, Hogeterp shows interest in these metaphors as they express 'a coherent moral perspective in Paul's theology'.⁵⁶ Indeed, much like Lanci and Downs, he finds that a rhetorical analysis must take place lest the text be plundered for a 'theology' apart from context. His method for performing this rhetorical methodology involves a consideration of the 'exigence' and 'audience' of the letter as well as 'certain constraints' which, in the case of 1 Corinthians, recognizes the issue of division in the church and also their suspicion that Paul is not eloquent.⁵⁷

Hogeterp's analysis of the various cultic metaphors in 1 and 2 Corinthians is impressively detailed and full of numerous rhetorical and historical insights. However, when it comes to synthesizing these metaphors or looking at the bigger picture, he does not have much to conclude. From a negative standpoint, Hogeterp is not convinced that Paul's use of cultic imagery can be distilled to support the idea of a new cult, developed by the apostle, that is

53 Hogeterp 2006: 22.

54 Hogeterp 2006: 8.

55 Hogeterp 2006: 296.

56 Hogeterp 2006: 298.

57 Hogeterp 2006: 300-311.

meant to 'substitute' the old one.⁵⁸ Essentially Hogeterp has a variegated approach that recognizes the rhetorical nature of such metaphors that should be studied in context and on a one-by-one basis. Nevertheless, he does not leave the subject without any attempt at drawing the pieces together. He proposes a 'paideutic purpose' for these metaphors as they serve the role of 'teaching the Corinthians a holy way of life'.⁵⁹ Again, one can see Hogeterp in nodding approval of the ethical interpretations of Paul's cultic metaphors that go back all the way to Wenschkewitz.

On a theoretical level, I find Hogeterp's approach successful in paving the way for a theological approach to this subject. I consider his model to be underdeveloped as far as which passages count as 'cultic' and in terms of what metaphors do and how.⁶⁰ Also, I appreciate his meticulous examination of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the literature of the 'Jesus-movement', though I will not attempt to repeat the same kind of historical investigation but let his work stand as the background for our study of Paul's cultic metaphors. Finally, his narrow focus on 1 and 2 Corinthians is understandable given the necessarily limiting scope of a doctoral dissertation (here in published form). However, he seems to conclude that 1 and 2 Corinthians furnish the best context in which to study Paul's cultic metaphors.⁶¹ The study that we will undertake is not limited to such a view, but attempts to explore the whole corpus of the undisputed letters in order to account for as much material as possible. Indeed, I have not come across a monograph length study that has given due attention to Philippians, for instance, even though several cultic metaphors are easily recognized therein (e.g. Phil. 2.17; 4.18). Therefore, we will advance beyond Hogeterp's work in terms of methodology (with a more nuanced approach for detecting and analyzing metaphors) as well as a wider scope (which includes 1 Thessalonians, 1-2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians). Finally, we will offer more constructive conclusions regarding Paul's cultic metaphors and his theological convictions. Particularly, we wish to press beyond general labels like 'ethics' and 'holiness' to those specific mindsets, behaviors, and convictions that underlie and expand outward from these cultic metaphors.

We conclude this section with a summary of and interaction with a significant recent monograph by Martin Vahrenhorst on *Kultische Sprache in den Paulusbriefen* (2008). The kinds of questions that Vahrenhorst asks and

58 See Hogeterp 2006: 384.

59 Hogeterp 2006: 384.

60 For example, the labeling of 1 Corinthians 10.14-22 under the subject of 'cultic imagery' is somewhat unusual (see appendix 1) as it is not a clearly metaphorical use of sacrificial and temple language (whereas his other examples of cultic imagery are all metaphorical); see 2006: 353-8. The problem, perhaps, has partly to do with the imprecision of the term 'imagery'.

61 See Hogeterp 2006: 23.

many of the issues with which he engages overlap considerably with those in this study. He is, first and foremost, interested in where Paul uses cultic language (in the undisputed letters) as well as *how* (literary aspects) and *why* (theological aspects).⁶² Additionally, he also considers critical socio-historical questions. He gives serious attention to both the Jewish history and practice of cultic worship as well as strands of non-Jewish ('nichtjüdischen') cultic participation that inform the context especially as found in the *Leges Sacrae*.

His exegetical investigation of Paul's letters progresses chronologically and develops the use of cultic language within its specific context as a correspondence to his Jewish and non-Jewish converts. Vahrenhorst concludes, time and time again, that this rich imagery ties together Paul's soteriology, ecclesiology, and ethics. The act of God in Christ has transformed who his followers are (identity) and their ability to enter into relationship with him. An important corollary is that the Christian life is shaped by God's making his new temple his own people.⁶³ Throughout the course of the study, Vahrenhorst emphasizes how often cultic language, in his estimation, is applied to Paul himself and how he serves as a model for the community of the kind of life in God that takes seriously transference to the realm of God.

Vahrenhorst's study is limited, however, by three methodological weaknesses. In the first place, his choice of examining cultic 'Sprache' is too broad and makes it difficult for him to treat all the relevant passages. Most of the passages he discusses are cultic metaphors, but some are more literal occurrences (as in Romans 1.18-32). However, if he opens the door to literal cultic language, where does it end? For example, he does not discuss 1 Corinthians 12.2 at all. Secondly, he does not define the term 'cultic' sufficiently to establish which texts are relevant to the discussion.⁶⁴ His criteria seem, at times, haphazard and unrestrained. This leads to an extensive coverage of Paul's undisputed letters. What further complicates this problem is Vahrenhorst's view that Paul's holiness and purity language is 'cultic'. This is largely assumed (rather than argued for) and it is certainly a contentious subject deserving of further defense.⁶⁵ Purity language especially could be used in all sorts of contexts that are not related to cult.⁶⁶ In a sense,

62 See 2008:2, 'Diese Arbeit untersucht die *Funktion* der kultischen Sprache in den paulinischen Briefen vor dem Hintergrund ihrer religionsgeschichtlichen Bezüge um Judentum und in der paganen Welt' (emphasis added).

63 See 2008: 5.

64 For example, Vahrenhorst treats 1 Corinthians 4.13 as 'cultic' when viewed from the perspective of scapegoat imagery (2008: 155-7).

65 We will argue that holiness language has strong correlations with cult, but holiness imagery should not be labeled as cultic *per se* (see §2.13).

66 Consider, for example, how purity language is found in the Psalms with reference the promises of God; this purity is one that happens when dross is removed from silver (Ps. 12.6).

then, Vahrenhorst's monograph serves more as an examination of cultic language with a wider interest in purity and holiness.⁶⁷ This does not mean his conclusions are invalidated, but the breadth of his study means that the utility of his findings for our investigation is limited.

Another serious concern, from a socio-rhetorical perspective, with Vahrenhorst's approach to Paul's cultic language is his conclusion that these kinds of images are powerful precisely because they exist as a point of commonality between Jews and non-Jews. According to Vahrenhorst, Paul can explain and clarify his understanding of the gospel through cultic language because it offers a shared idiom.⁶⁸ I am not concerned with this conclusion socially or phenomenologically, in the sense that everyone in the ancient world had cultic experiences as an individual, family, and community. What I find more tenuous is Vahrenhorst's argument that Paul purposefully employed non-Jewish cultic terminology (evidenced in verbal overlap with texts like the *Leges Sacrae*) with this purpose in mind. In the first place, many of the terms that Vahrenhorst places within a non-Jewish cultic context also appear in some Jewish cultic contexts. For example, he repeatedly relates the wordgroup ἀγνίζω/ἄγνος to the non-Jewish cultic usage.⁶⁹ There is no reason to turn to non-Jewish usage, however, when the appearance of this wordgroup is prominent in Hellenistic Jewish literature as well.⁷⁰ More significantly, Paul does not use the cultic terms ἱερός or σέβωμαι which were common in non-Jewish language. Were he trying to do this sort of bridge-building, one might expect an intentional employment of these terms familiar to non-Jews.

The critiques that I have raised do not gainsay the importance of Vahrenhorst's wider point that cultic language possesses a surfeit of meaning that can communicate something about life with God in light of Christ in a dynamic way for Paul's converts. Another important theological contribution Vahrenhorst makes regards the question of synthesis. In a discussion of 'Ein Kontinuitätsmoment im paulinischen Denken', he concludes that Paul's use of cultic language aids in understanding how God has transferred believers, Jews and non-Jews, from a position of alienation with God to a status of acceptance in his presence.⁷¹ This can be expressed in the language of justification and righteousness (as in Galatians and Romans). But Paul found cultic language

67 See 2008: 323, 'die Verwendung kultischer Begrifflichkeit in den Paulusbriefen vor dem Hintergrund ihrer jüdischen und nichtjüdischen Kontexte'.

68 See, for example, his conclusions in 2008: 225-7.

69 See Vahrenhorst 2008: 81-91; 172-176.

70 See, for example, Josephus *Ant.* 1.341-2; 3.197-9, 258; 4.80; 5.45; 9.272; 10.42; 12.38, 145, 318, 418; 18.85, 94; cf. Philo *Spec.* 1.107; 2.30, 145.

71 He expresses it this way: 'Kultische Begrifflichkeit dient Paulus unter anderem dazu, den Statuswechsel des Menschen zu beschreiben, der aus der Gottesferne herausgeholt und auf die Seite Gottes versetzt wird' (2008: 346).

especially suitable for communicating this idea of belongingness, freedom, empowerment, and restoration to a healthy relationship ('heilvollen Beziehung') with God.⁷²

Vahrenhorst has aided in advancing the discussion of the theology of Paul's cultic metaphors in a number of ways. Limiting his focus to Paul's (undisputed) letters allowed him to discern what distinctive themes and interests emerge. Rhetorically, he has come to a cogent conclusion regarding the coherence of his cultic language. As with other studies (e.g. Hogeterp and McKelvey), however, his synthesis is too broad. Essentially, cultic language is used to explain to readers how Christ has offered a way into the presence of God (soteriology) and that this new situation has serious implications (ethics). Though our own study will build off of similar basic conclusions, but we will argue for a more detailed synthetic conclusion that arises from the way Paul uses cultic metaphors.

1.5 Analysis

In this review of previous approaches to the theology of Paul's (non-atonement) cultic metaphors, we have discovered many interesting pathways taken. Studies like that undertaken by Wenschkewitz have tried to chart the movement from the practice of the cult to the 'spiritualization' of cult in the New Testament and beyond. Though Wenschkewitz offered a very detailed analysis, he often presumed what was happening in the New Testament texts in comparison with Stoic and other Hellenistic thought. Also, through modern work in ritual theory and the social-sciences, we are beginning to see how much anti-material and anti-ritual biases in current and prior generations have skewed scholarly perspectives.⁷³

Other scholars have taken an approach that focuses on the progress of salvation history, where cult is de-materialized for the sake of recognizing the fulfillment of sacrifice in the life and death of Christ (i.e. Daly). And, others yet have concentrated on *Heilsgeschichte* and eschatology (McKelvey) giving attention to Jewish tradition and apocalyptic expectation. Again, however, Paul's unique contribution, apart from the rest of the New Testament writers, is lost for the sake of developing some pan-New Testament synthesis.

72 Vahrenhorst 2008: 346. He is insistent, though, that cultic language is not the center of Pauline thought *per se*, but only as an expression of 'Entfaltung des In-Christus-Seins' (2008: 347).

73 More of this problem is discussed in the chapter on 'spiritualization' and methodology (chapter two).

Those who have attempted to limit themselves to a comparison between the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Gärtner, Klinzing) have offered more sophisticated approaches and have explored in depth the kinds of attitudes that lead one to speak of cult in a non-literal way. The tendency, though, has been to see a high amount of overlap between Paul and the Qumran sectarians while downplaying the major differences. Such an imbalance has misled many to believe that the so-called 'theology' of the Dead Sea Scrolls contains the key to unlock the theology of Paul.

In the last two decades or so, there has been a small, but substantial, group of researchers who have attempted to give more weight to the social factors involved in Paul's ministry as well as the rhetorical aspects of his letters as targeted pieces of communication (especially Olford, Lanci, Hogeterp, Vahrenhorst). Olford and Hogeterp both come to the conclusion that 'ethics' is a primary issue in Paul's cultic metaphors. Unfortunately, this is a broad category that ends up offering very little to the discussion. Lanci proposes that a major component of at least the temple imagery is the importance of unity and community formation (which is also highlighted by Wenschkewitz). Again, though, even Paul's temple language is varied enough to limit the comprehensiveness of such a statement (e.g., 1 Cor. 6.19). Vahrenhorst draws soteriological, ethical, and ecclesiological threads together via Paul's cultic language, but the conclusions are quite vague.

The ways in which this thesis will build upon, but also advance beyond, previous research is by concentrating on Paul's cultic metaphors *as* metaphors, and especially as a symbolic means of expressing his theology to churches dealing with and responding to a number of concerns and problems. What this means, then, is that a 'theology' of his cultic metaphors is not unreachable, but it will take a more nuanced approach to venture beyond overly simplified synthetic conclusions.

Another important element is the foundation for such a study: the actual passages that are consulted in Paul's letters that 'reveal' his theology. Though a small group of texts (such as 1 Corinthians 3.16; Romans 12.1; Philippians 2.17) is unanimously considered to be relevant, the inclusion of various other passages are decided upon in sometimes haphazard ways (Wenschkewitz, Vahrenhorst). Thus, another significant contribution of this study will be a methodologically sensitive selection of more subtle texts that may illuminate Paul's theology in various ways.⁷⁴ Only after such work has been done will there be the possibility of handling these texts in ways that make it possible to work towards a theological and ethical framework.

74 For a comparison of the various texts that scholars appeal to as 'cultic' (from a non-atonement perspective), see appendix 1.