

FIRE IN GOD'S HOUSE: IMAGERY FROM MALACHI 3 IN PETER'S THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING (1 PET 4:12-19)

Dennis E. Johnson*

I. INTRODUCTION: TRANSLATION AND CONTEXT

The work of translation may appear to the beginning student of the original languages of Scripture to be a simple process of looking up Greek or Hebrew words in a lexicon and replacing them with English equivalents (with perhaps some rearrangement of word order). On further reflection, however, translation proves to be a far more complex process. In a real sense an adequate translation can only be the final result of the whole process of exegesis and interpretation of a Biblical text. This essay concerns the effect of interpretation on translation.

At least since James Barr subjected certain trends in Biblical and theological studies to the critique of modern linguistic science, Biblical scholarship has become more sensitive to the error of what Barr called "illegitimate totality transfer."¹ Words do not bring with them into every context in which they are used their whole semantic field, the whole range of meaning and associations that they may bear in other contexts. Rather, each context automatically limits the "meaning" that the word can contribute to that context. Thus the proper objective of a word study in the process of exegesis is not simply to survey the whole range of meaning that a word is thought to accumulate through its use in diverse contexts. Rather, the aim should be to determine the word's meaning in the specific text under consideration.²

Now I have no serious quarrel with this linguistic principle, nor with the proper warning against "illegitimate totality transfer." But a proper application of the principle of context in word studies must give attention not only to the word's immediate literary context but also to more distant literary contexts to which the author may be making conscious allusion. Particularly in a text in which the NT author is consciously directing his readers' thoughts to OT backgrounds, translational equivalents should be chosen for key words that allow the OT allusions to be seen through the translation as well as doing justice to the word's immediate context. The main thrust of this essay is that certain modern translations—notably the *NIV*, which I greatly admire and

*Dennis Johnson is academic dean and associate professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California.

¹J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University, 1961) 217-219.

²G. D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 83.

consistently use in teaching and preaching—have, in my judgment, apparently considered the context of 1 Pet 4:12–19 too narrowly and have therefore chosen certain translational options that obscure, for the reader of the English text, the OT imagery through which Peter intends to encourage his readers in the face of suffering. My particular concern is with the rendering of *pyrōsis* by “painful trial” (v 12) and of *oikos* by “family” (v 17) because these two decisions may virtually prevent the reader of the *NIV* (and the *TEV*, and to a lesser extent certain other versions) from recognizing the underlying motif of the Church as the temple of God, to which God has come as a refiner’s fire through the presence of the Spirit and through the pain of suffering in fulfillment of Mal 2:17–3:5. But, one might ask, is a temple motif really the substructure of this portion of 1 Peter?

II. TEMPLE IMAGERY IN 1 PET 4:12–19

Peter’s main purpose in writing his first epistle is to fortify his addressees in Asia Minor to endure suffering with patience.³ Occasionally Peter speaks of situations in which the suffering of Christians may arise not from religiously motivated oppression but from the general presence of injustice and pain in the fallen world (2:18–20; 1:6). More often, however, when Peter identifies the source of his readers’ sufferings it becomes evident that it is their bearing the name “Christ’s people” (*Christianoi*,⁴ 4:16; cf. v 14) and their transformed lifestyle that is leading to opposition from their former companions in pagan idolatry and sensuality (4:4). Persecution is taking the form of slander and verbal abuse (4:4, 14), accusations of wrongdoing (2:12; 3:16) that possibly lead to legal hearings before local magistrates in which a defense (*apologia*) must be presented (3:15). Christian women face difficult marital situations with husbands who “do not obey the word” (3:1–6).

It is difficult to know for certain whether matters had deteriorated beyond the point of verbal assault into physical violence, but it seems likely that this further step had been reached at least in some of the provinces addressed. Accounts in Acts affirm the rapidity with which verbal opposition to the gospel could be translated into action, especially when the message of Christ was portrayed as an alien ideology that would undermine civic pride and local economic interests (Acts 16:19–24; 19:23–31). There may also be an implication in 2:20; 4:15–16 that Christians were suffering for their faith treatment similar to that meted out to rebellious slaves, murderers and thieves.

Peter’s readers have lacked a visible, tangible connection with Jesus both during his earthly ministry and now, of course, during his heavenly enthronement (1:8). This lack has apparently not diminished their love and joy. They share in the blessing pronounced by Jesus on “those who have not seen and yet believe,” to which Peter may be alluding (John 20:29). Nevertheless the pres-

³For a general survey of the material on suffering in the epistle see G. E. Kirk, “Endurance in Suffering in 1 Peter,” *BSac* 138 (1981) 46–56.

⁴On the origin of the name *Christianoi* on the lips of those outside the faith see F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972) 231–232.

ence of concrete, visible suffering in combination with the invisibility of the risen Christ could tempt the readers to a sense of abandonment by God. D. Hill observes that

the Christians of Asia Minor . . . are suffering not only by reason of the absence of a tangible relationship but also because of the seeming contradiction between the promise of renewal implied in the resurrection and the actual situation of trial and persecution in which they find themselves.⁵

Peter's pastoral approach to the churches facing such suffering is explicitly theological. He reminds them that for the Christ himself suffering necessarily preceded "the glories," as the Spirit of Christ had foretold through the ancient prophets (1:11; cf. 2:21–25; 3:18–22). He calls them to recognize their status as refugees, aliens who can no longer be "at home" in the culture and world system around them (1:1; 2:11). He employs the image of the fiery process of metal refining as a paradigm, calling attention to the proving and purifying functions that suffering can fulfill (1:7).

In the alienation that they are experiencing from their former lifestyle and associates, Peter's readers need positively to see the new identity that has been given to them in union with Christ. Though formerly "not a people," they have now been showered with the high titles and privileges bestowed on the people of God of old at Mount Sinai (2:9–10; cf. Exod 19:5–10). Moreover as they "come to Christ," the living, selected and priceless cornerstone, they are being built into a "spiritual house" (*oikos pneumatikos*), a living temple in which spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God are offered by a holy priesthood (2:5). The presence of the covenant God in the midst of his people, which had set apart the Jerusalem sanctuary, has now become the hallmark of the assembling congregation of Asia Minor, who recognize by faith the inestimable value of Christ the cornerstone.

These two themes—the suffering of the Church and its identity as the living house of God—converge in 4:12–19. This can be seen especially against the OT background of three constructions in this passage.

1. *The "firing" among you that has come to test you (4:12)*. Although it is possible that Peter's selection of the noun *pyrōsis* to describe his readers' afflictions implies that some were being burned at the stake for their faith or suffering the loss of homes or businesses through arson,⁶ this literal interpretation of the word is not the most likely one. Neither internal nor external evidence suggests that opposition to the Christian faith took these forms in Asia Minor during the period under consideration.⁷

Far more likely is a metaphorical use of the term drawn from the use of

⁵D. Hill, "To Offer Spiritual Sacrifices . . ." (1 Peter 2:5): Liturgical Formulations and Christian Paraenesis in 1 Peter," *JSNT* 16 (1982) 52.

⁶E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (New York: Macmillan, 1969) 221.

⁷*Ibid.*; F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (3d ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1970) 190; D. C. Arichea and E. A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the First Letter from Peter* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980) 145–146.

intense heat in the smelting of precious metals to refine and “prove” the metal’s genuineness. Although the only other uses of *pyrōsis* in the NT refer to the conflagration that is said to consume Babylon in the vision of Revelation (18:9, 18), the use of both the noun and the cognate verb *pyroō* in the LXX establish its connection with the refining process and illustrate the antecedents of Peter’s metaphorical use in 4:12. Especially relevant here is Prov 27:21 (LXX): “A means of testing (*dokimion*) for silver, for gold a firing (*pyrōsis*), but a man is tested (*dokimazetai*) through the mouth of those who praise him.” The same conjunction of terms associated with the smelting process appears in Peter’s assurance to his readers in 1:6–7 that their trials (*peirasmois*, appearing also in 4:12) are for the purpose that the *dokimion* (here perhaps in the sense of “tested, proven quality”) of their faith—which is more valuable than gold that perishes, though proved through fire (*dia pyros de dokimazomenou*)—may be found to result in glory at Jesus’ revelation.⁸

Similarly, the verb *pyroō* conveys the act of heating metals to refine and purify them. Ps 66:10 (LXX 65:10) not only illustrates the verb’s place in the vocabulary of metallurgy but also provides another OT precedent for Peter’s metaphorical application of the image: “. . . because you proved (*edokimasas*) us, God, you heated (*epyrōsas*) us, as silver is heated (*pyroutai*).” Similarly in Zech 13:9, having declared that he will utterly destroy two-thirds of his people and leave only one-third, Yahweh announces: “And I will lead the third through fire, and I will heat (*pyrōsō*) them as silver is heated (*pyroutai*), and I will prove (*dokimō*) them as gold is proved (*dokimazetai*).”⁹

As a final example we turn to the prediction in Mal 3:1 ff. of the coming of the Lord (LXX: *kyrios*; MT: *hā’ādōn*), who is identified with the angel of the covenant, to his temple:

“And who will endure the day of his entry? Or who will withstand his appearance? Wherefore he comes as a refiner’s fire (*pyr chōneutēriou*) and as washers’ soaps. And he will sit, smelting (*chōneuōn*) and purifying (*katharizōn*) silver and gold; and he will purify (*katharisei*) the sons of Levi and will pour them out as gold and as silver; and they shall be those who bring to the Lord a sacrifice in righteousness.”¹⁰

Although some of the crucial vocabulary differs from that which appears in our passage, the metaphor is clearly the same as that which we find in the OT passages previously cited as well as in 1 Peter 4. Of special interest is that the Lord’s coming is to his temple, where he sits enthroned to refine those who minister there. A further parallel to 1 Peter 4 lies in the movement of the account in Malachi 3 from the purification of the Levites to the judgment and destruction of those who have utterly rejected the covenant with Yahweh (3:5–6). When the fire imagery reappears in Mal 4:1 it portrays the day of the Lord

⁸For another early Christian use of the metaphor of metal refining see *Did.* 16:5.

⁹See also Isa 1:22, 25; Jer 6:27–28; Ezek 22:17–22; Prov 17:3.

¹⁰The translation is of the LXX, which is a fairly close rendering of the MT and very possibly the form in which Peter would have used the OT in writing to Gentile or mixed congregations in Asia Minor.

as a burning furnace that will utterly consume the arrogant and the evildoer. As we shall see, Peter's thought runs in the same direction: The fire of God's presence comes first to the "house of God" to purify and prove those who serve in his presence, and then it moves out in the eschatological judgment to consume the godless and disobedient (1 Pet 4:17-18).

Malachi 3-4 alludes to one of the visible portrayals of the divine presence that permeates the OT, from Abraham's vision of the theophanic torch-furnace "passing through the pieces" to secure his covenant promises to Abraham (Gen 15:17), through the exodus and the manifestation of divine glory at Sinai and over the tent of testimony, and climaxing in the prophets' announcements of the eschatological disclosure of the fire of God's glory and judgment.¹¹

Peter will go on to assure his readers that the *pyrōsis* they are undergoing is not a symptom of the Lord's absence from them but rather is a token of his presence (v 14), an anticipation and inauguration of the eschatological inbreaking of the purifying glory of God (vv 17-18). An examination of these latter verses will confirm the conclusion that *pyrōsis* in v 12 is an intentional allusion to the refining eschatological fire of God's presence.

2. *The Spirit of Glory and of God rests on you (4:14)*. This verse contains one of the few explicit mentions of the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter (see also 1:11-12).¹² The language here is almost certainly dependent on Isa 11:2, in which it is promised concerning the Branch from Jesse's root: "and the Spirit of God will rest on him" (LXX: *kai anapausetai ep' auton pneuma tou theou*).

There may well be, however, another strand of OT background to this passage as well—namely, the motif of the temple sanctuary as the "resting place" (LXX: *katapausis*) of Yahweh (1 Chr 6:31; 28:2; 2 Chr 6:41; Ps 132:7-8, 14; Isa 66:1-2).¹³ In the wanderings of the wilderness generation the completed tabernacle was overshadowed by the cloud as the tent was filled with the Lord's glory, and the progressive movements in the Israelites' pilgrimage were dictated by the ascent of the fiery cloud or by its remaining on the tent (Exod 40:34-38). This manifestation of the divine presence stands behind the phenomenon of the tongues as of fire that came to rest (*ekathisen*) on each of those gathered on the day of Pentecost when the Church received the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2:3). It is not at all unlikely that such an event should be in the apostle's mind as he speaks of the Spirit as resting on his readers.

This possibility is made more probable by the description of the Spirit as "the Spirit of glory" (*to tēs doxēs . . . pneuma*). The genitive *tēs doxēs* picks up the theme of the hope of rejoicing at the final revelation of Christ's glory, inasmuch as Peter's readers presently share in Christ's sufferings (v 13). M. G.

¹¹F. Lang, "pyr," *TDNT* 6. 936.

¹²Beare, *First Peter* 192, sees this as a major difference from Paul and the early Church generally but does not apparently give weight to the implicit reference to the Spirit in Peter's use of the adjective *pneumatikos*.

¹³One of my students, Charles E. Hill, has drawn my attention to the OT identification of the sanctuary with the "resting place" of God in an unpublished paper on Heb 4:11.

Kline has presented a case for understanding the theophanic manifestation of the "Glory-cloud" in the OT as a visible disclosure of the presence of the Spirit of God.¹⁴ And a number of commentators on our passage have seen in the description of the Spirit a reference to the manifestation of the Shekinah in connection with the tabernacle and temple. C. Bigg, for example, comments that the Spirit "rests upon the Christian as the Shekinah rested on the Tabernacle."¹⁵

Further confirmation for the temple imagery that underlies this reference to the Spirit's resting upon believers is to be found in Peter's earlier description of the Church as a "spiritual house" in which "spiritual sacrifices" are offered by a holy priesthood (2:5). The point of the adjective *pneumatikos* is not primarily the immateriality of the new sanctuary and sacrifices, nor their genuineness in contrast to the preparatory physical sanctuary and its cultus,¹⁶ but rather their permeation by the life-giving Spirit of God. In this respect Peter's ecclesiology closely parallels that expressed in Eph 2:21-22: ". . . (Christ), in whom the whole building, as it is joined together, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." With this text we may compare 1 Cor 3:16-17, in which the Church's identity as the temple of God is explicated in terms of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. P. Minear comments on the expression "spiritual house" in 1 Pet 2:5:

This house is spiritual because indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Its character is determined by the Spirit; the character of the Holy Spirit is determined by this house. As God builds this house out of the cornerstone and living stones, the Spirit is at work in the construction.¹⁷

One further comment is appropriate at this point. In contrast to F. W. Beare, who understands Peter to be speaking in 4:14 of occasional visitations of the Spirit on believers only at the times of their persecution,¹⁸ I find the text to lead to the opposite conclusion. The verb *anapaueitai* stands in the present tense, and the subordinate clause that introduces the assurance of the Spirit's presence is not temporal ("when [*hote* or *hote 'an*] you are ridiculed") but conditional ("since, inasmuch as [*ei*] you are ridiculed"). Thus we are led to conclude that suffering in the name of Christ is a token of the constant presence of the divine

¹⁴M. G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 35-56.

¹⁵C. Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (ICC; New York: Scribner's, 1901) 177; cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *The First Epistle of Peter* (London: SCM, 1950) 102; Selwyn, *First Peter 222-223*; A. M. Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 160-161.

¹⁶So Selwyn, *First Peter* 291.

¹⁷P. S. Minear, "The House of Living Stones: A Study of 1 Peter 2:4-12," *Ecumenical Review* 34 (1982) 242; cf. B. Gartner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (SNTSMS 12; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965) 73. Note also the reference by J. A. Fitzmyer in *JBC*, p. 365, to "a new temple in which the bonding material is not race, but the Spirit."

¹⁸Beare, *First Peter* 192.

Glory-Spirit with afflicted Christians, "inspiring and endowing you permanently."¹⁹

Though Peter's readers do not now see Jesus, they nevertheless participate in a foretaste of the disclosure of his glory, and they may be assured that their present sufferings—far from being an indication of God's abandonment or of the failure of the hope promised in Christ's resurrection—are in fact another indication that Christians are the new temple of God on which his Spirit rests and in which his fiery presence is purifying and proving his dwelling place.

3. *The time for judgment to begin from the house of God (4:17)*. In this verse the noun *oikos* could be interpreted as referring to a literal house, a building (*KJV*, Phillips), or as speaking of the occupants of a house, the "household" (*RSV*, *JB*, *NEB*, *NASB*) or "family" (*NIV*), or, removing the metaphor altogether, "God's own people" (*TEV*). Joining the majority of modern versions (or, rather, influencing them) in interpreting *oikos* as the persons occupying a house, a household, are a considerable number of contemporary interpreters.²⁰ It would appear that the parallel structure of "from the house of God" and a following phrase "from us" has influenced the interpreters in the direction of a personal rather than an architectural understanding of *oikos*. Especially noteworthy is the argument of J. H. Elliott that the household structure of the early Christian community unlocks not only the meaning of the expression *oikos tou theou* but also the unifying structure of 1 Peter as a whole.²¹

There are, however, serious objections to the personal interpretation of *oikos tou theou* in 1 Pet 4:17. First, in a passage that, as we have seen, contains various reminiscences of OT texts that relate the coming and presence of God among his people to a temple/tabernacle sanctuary, Peter has again selected a term that has roots in the OT. In the LXX when *oikos* is joined with the genitive *theou* or *kyriou* its semantic field is narrowed to exclude, so far as our evidence shows, the concept of "household" (dwellers in a house). In the LXX "house of God" refers exclusively to a sanctuary in which God meets his people. J. Goetzmann concludes:

It is questionable whether, in the OT, the idea of the "house of God" is transferred from the temple to the congregation worshipping there, in the same way that a transference of meaning has taken place from "house" (dwelling place) to "family" (community). All the statements about the house of God remain firmly attached to the earthly sanctuary.²²

He goes on to observe that, even in its metaphorical application to the Christian

¹⁹J. Moffatt, *The General Epistles: James, Peter, and Judas* (MNTC; New York: Harper, n.d.) 157; cf. Arichea and Nida, *Handbook* 149: "Its resting on you denotes the continuing and constant presence of the Spirit."

²⁰Bigg, *Peter and Jude* 181; Moffatt, *General Epistles* 159; Cranfield, *First Peter* 104; Fitzmyer, *JBC*, p. 368; D. Senior, *1 and 2 Peter* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1980) 84.

²¹J. H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 165–237.

²²J. Goetzmann, "House," *NIDNTT* 2. 247–248; cf. O. Michel, "*oikos*," *TDNT* 5. 120.

community in the NT, "the concept of the house of God remains confined to the idea of a spiritual building and is not extended in the sense of the family," attributing this limitation to the fixed nature of the OT expression.²³ O. Michel's analysis of the NT material agrees: "The motif of the *oikos tou theou* is referred to the community, yet it is not really a metaphor for the *familia dei*, but *oikos* remains an actual house, a spiritual, supra-terrestrial, divine, and heavenly structure."²⁴

A second problem with the interpretation that takes the *oikos tou theou* to refer to God's household is the probable allusion in this verse to OT texts that speak of the purifying judgment of God as coming first to his sanctuary. Notable in this connection is the vision of Ezekiel (chap. 9) in which the prophet sees the glory of Yahweh coming to the threshold of the temple (v 3) and summoning the agents of his judgment to slay the idolaters in Israel: "And you must begin from my holy place" (LXX: *kai apo tōn hagiōn mou arxasthe*). In obedience to this command the six slayers begin from the elders who were inside in the house (*en tō oikō*; 9:6).

Even more to the point is the reference to the coming of the Lord in judgment to his temple in Mal 3:1-5. Although Ezek 9:6 may well have influenced 1 Pet 4:17 verbally (*archomai apo*), conceptually it is Mal 3:1-5; 4:1 that provide the pattern for the escalation of eschatological judgment as it moves out from the house of God to those outside the covenant. Peter does, of course, find the same principle expressed in Prov 11:31, which he cites in 4:18. But the origin of his train of thought in 4:17b should be traced to Mal 3:1-5. The thought is simply this: If the purifying fire of God's eschatological visitation, which we—his living temple—presently experience by the Spirit, entails for those united to Christ such anguish as Peter's readers are undergoing, what shall the consummation of that purifying divine presence mean for those who have rejected God's good news—if not a conflagration of utter destruction?

J. N. D. Kelly therefore concludes: "As in ii.5, the Church is pictured, not as a 'household' (RSV; NEB), but (as Ezek. ix.6, which is in the writer's thoughts, shows) as God's temple or sanctuary."²⁵ With this view the judgment of C. Spicq concurs in his reference to

the assembly of the Christian community, designated as the "house of God" . . . doubtless with reference to Ez 9, 6 and Ml 3, 1-5 where the purification begins with the sanctuary and the priesthood.²⁶

The preferable rendering, then, of *oikos tou theou* in 1 Pet 4:17 is simply "house of God" in its OT sense: the temple in which the fire of God's glory

²³Goetzmann, "House" 250.

²⁴Michel, "*oikos*" 127.

²⁵J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (London: A. and C. Black, 1969) 193.

²⁶C. Spicq, *Les Epitres de Saint Pierre* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1966) 160: ". . . la communauté chrétienne, désignée comme 'maison de Dieu' (1 P 2, 5; 1 Tm 3, 15; cf. Jn 8, 35; He 3, 6), sans doute par référence à Ez 9, 6 et Ml 3, 1-5 pour la purification commence par le sanctuaire et le sacerdoce." See also Stibbs, *First Peter* 160.

burns, which is now in fact the Christian community composed of "living stones." Though the reference is certainly to persons ("And if from us first," v 17b), the imagery stresses their identity as the holy place of God, the true locus of the manifestation of the divine glory by the Spirit.

By this consistent employment of the imagery of the Lord's coming as a refiner's fire drawn from Mal 3:1-5 Peter has placed his readers' sufferings in the perspective of their identity as the new temple of God. Their present troubles are the inauguration of the messianic baptism of Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16-17), which cleanses those who bear Messiah's name that they may rejoice at the revelation of his glory and which will finally consume his enemies (2 Thess 1:7-8—where, as in 1 Pet 4:17, the enemies are described as those who do not obey the gospel). From this perspective afflictions for the name of Christ become themselves an occasion of joy, a cause for gratitude for the present resting of the Spirit of glory and of God on the new, living sanctuary.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Modern translations—notably the *NIV*, which is widely used by evangelicals—would have done well to recognize the pervasive motifs of the Church as the new temple of God and the presence of God as a refining fire in 1 Pet 4:12-19. In 1 Pet 4:12 the *NIV* translates *pyrōsis*, in combination with *pros peirasmon*, as "painful trial," thereby obscuring the original's connotation of fire and thus the metaphor of metal refining. Similarly the *NIV* translators have removed the ambiguity of the construction *oikos tou theou* in 4:17, translating it "family of God," obscuring from the view of English readers Peter's use of temple imagery and allusion to Malachi 3. If the *NIV* translators, for example, had given more weight to the influence of Mal 3:1-5 and related OT passages on 1 Peter 4, they might well have arrived at renderings of the key terms that would have allowed the reader of the English text at least the possibility of discerning this OT background. Somehow a way should be found to put the "fire" back into *pyrōsis* instead of translating it with the bland "painful trial," and the *oikos tou theou* must again appear as the sanctuary, surrounded by associations of awe and holiness, filled with the bright glory of God.

Interpreters will do well to appreciate the richness of Peter's typological interpretation of the OT temple as finding its fulfillment in the "spiritual house" composed of living stones, the NT Church now composed even of those who formerly were "not a people." The epistle to the Hebrews teaches that the new covenant order transcends the old inasmuch as those who worship through Jesus have been granted access to the heavenly sanctuary, the archetype after which the old covenant tent and temple were modeled (Heb 8:1-6; 10:19-25; 12:22-24). Peter complements this perspective by asserting that there is yet an earthly temple—but it is no longer one composed of dead stones and limited to one location. It is the assembly of those who belong to Messiah Jesus and who are united in the Spirit of God.

Peter's placing of present sufferings not only in the perspective of our future hope of glory but also in the perspective of our identity as the temple of God is of great pastoral value in counseling those whose sufferings tempt them to feel abandoned by God. Such individuals need to see that the presence of those

sufferings that fall to us in spite of—and especially because of—our desire to please God should be viewed as a token of God's glorious presence with them by the Spirit and an (admittedly painful) instrument of his purifying grace. It is in fact on this practical, pastoral note that the apostle himself concludes: "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their lives to their faithful Creator as they do good" (4:19).