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A table of contents for *Irish Biblical Studies* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ibs-01.php

The Tabernacle and Life "in Christ", Exegesis of
2 Corinthians 5. 1-10

Guy Wagner /1

It appears to us that in this passage, noted for its difficulty, sufficient attention has not been given by commentators to the first verse. Here may be found, at the very beginning and, in particular, in the mysterious term skenos (tabernacle), what may be described as the problem of the text.

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

0. Michel² remarks that the use of eschatological terms is especially surprising. More precisely, however, it is not the terms that are surprising but their use to denote the glorified body. Oikodome (building) denotes for Paul the edification of the Church or the Church itself over against the temple (1 Cor 3.9; 14.3,5; 2 Cor 10; 12.19; Eph 2.21; 4.12 and these do not include the passages where the verb oikodomeo is used). The term oikētērion (house) is found in the compound form katoikētērion (dwelling-place) in Eph 2.22 to denote also the Church compared with the temple. The term cheiropoiētos (made with hands) is a usual term in the OT to signify idols. In the NT, as we will see later, it describes the temple of Jerusalem, given over to destruction. Finally, skenos, synonymous with the feminine skene, is the term used both in the LXX and the NT to signify the tabernacle.

Is it necessary, in these circumstances, because oikia (house) at the start of the verse signifies the body to set aside all these texts to look for parallels in Hellenism or Gnosis? It seems to us a good method to explore the NT context first.

The Contrast: earthly temple - heavenly temple

Three passages which refer to the heavenly temple require our attention: Acts 7 (Stephen's speech), Hebrews 8 and 9 and Revelation 11.19 and 21. Among the manifestations of the divine grace in Israel, Stephen mentions the gift of the tabernacle, "Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses, directed him to

to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen."
(Acts 7.44). This is a clear reference to the text of Exodus 25.40, "See that you make them after the pattern... shown you on the mountain." Then, in Hebrews 8.2, we read, "(Christ is) a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man." Then, in v5, before the express quotation of Isaiah 25.40 we read: (The Jewish priests) serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary." It appears to us very likely, if not certain, that the author of the book of Acts has given a summary - all too brief - of an earlier text in which, as in the epistle to the Hebrews, the text of Exodus served to show that the tent set up by Moses was merely a human work, a copy of the invisible reality. But another equally significant comparison should be added to this. After recalling the entrance of the Ark into Palestine (Acts 7.48), Stephen continues: "David....asked leave to find a habitation (skēnōma) for the house (oikos) of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house (oikodomēsan oikon) for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands." Then follows the quotation from Isaiah 66.1, "Heaven is my throne....what house will you build for me?"

Then, in Hebrews 9.11-24, it is affirmed that Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by hands, like the Jerusalem temple, but heaven itself. We know that Philo himself used this text from Exodus as a basis for his Platonic theology and the Rabbis, for their part, spoke of the heavenly temple copied by Moses. But their intention was to show that the copy, even if earthly, was still an authentic copy. For Christian texts, however, this is not the understanding. Here the emphasis is on the decaying nature of the temple and the tabernacle, as only transient tokens, doomed to destruction. For the origin of this opposition to the temple of Jerusalem it is certainly to the teaching of Jesus that we must turn, and it can be interesting to compare his attitude to that of the sectaries of Qumran. Such radically anti-Jewish calling into question of the temple, however, is supported by many OT texts. Texts like Isaiah 66.1, 1 Kings 8.27 and many others insist that every human work is only an approximate manifestation of the divine reality. God always transcends every object that would signify his presence. He reveals himself in eschatological times. In this

confidence Revelation 11.19 declares that then "God's temple in heaven will be opened and the ark will appear." At 21.22 it is said that there will no longer be any temple. It is only another way of saying the same thing. Heaven itself will be the temple or, more exactly, God himself will be heaven (v23) . On the one hand, the tabernacle, like the temple, is a sign of the presence of God. That is why, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the tabernacle will be with men (21.3). But, on the other hand, the temple is a human work, i.e., not so much an inadequate sign as a reality of the ancient world. In this sense, it was disappearing.

The reader will have noticed the similarities in our verse with the various texts just quoted. It cannot be accidental that the terms: God's dwelling, house not made with hands, in the heavens, tabernacle, are linked together in these different passages. This shows that there did exist in primitive Christianity a group of speculations on the temple, sufficiently known and wide-ranging for us to find evidence in such diverse passages. We will have an opportunity to see that there are many other passages that continue this reflection. Thus we can explain the words Paul uses to introduce our verse, "For we know", where he makes a reference to a theme quite familiar to his readers.

The temple and the glorious body

But these thoughts on the heavenly temple constitute only one approach to the difficulty. We have to ask now whether, in speaking of this dwelling, Paul was thinking of heaven as compared with the temple or of the glorious body which will be given to each believer. It cannot be denied that there is a certain indeterminateness in the expressions used by the apostle. Since this "dwelling" corresponds to the earthly house, the perishable body, it does seem that it has also to do with the glorious body. But is it necessary to choose between these two explanations?

A study of the eschatological thought of the early Christians shows that it is not descriptive. The event of the resurrection had the effect of placing the Christians in a situation where everything was made new.

Every human certainty was turned upside down and seen in a new perspective. Thus we can explain a certain incoherence in the terms used by the apostle and, generally, by the writers of the NT, besides the necessarily inadequate and indeterminate character of the images used. The resurrection of Christ, that divine intervention, placed a fundamental line of demarcation between what is divine and what is human, what God will do in his kingdom (and has already done at Easter) , and what man is and does in this passing world.

If we examine what Paul says of the glorified body in 1 Cor 15, we see that he is intent essentially on contrasting the future body with the actual body. Such corporeity is not put forward to show the identity of the individual under two successive aspects - this identity is simply assumed - but to indicate the reality of the divine work substantially achieved after the parousia. The adjectives - glorious, powerful, spiritual, heavenly, incorruptible, show that the new reality will be under the sign of the immediate presence of God. All that is under the sign of death will disappear. We will be truly in the heavenly temple. In the epistles as well as in Revelation we only find intimations of the world to come in order to show the divine nearness and the renewal that will issue from it. Our body as such cannot enter into the heavenly dwelling. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 5.50) . The body is doomed to total annihilation (kataluthē) and the new reality is beyond expression.

But it is necessary to mention other passages where the temple and the risen body are united or opposed and in particular Mark 14.58. O. Michel in the article quoted above raises the problem of the connections between this text and ours without giving an answer.

The verbal resemblances are striking. False witnesses come forward who affirm: "We have heard him say, 'I will destroy (katalusō) this temple made with hands and in three days I will build (oikodomeō) another not made with hands.'" The mention of three days is enough to indicate that we have a reference to the resurrection but John 2.19 comes in with a very important confirmation. After the account of the purification of the temple, which the author placed at the start of the Gospel to indicate its importance, Jesus declares, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." And since the Jews are surprised, the evangelist

adds the clarification, "He was speaking of the temple of his body. So when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this and believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said." /9

In the form in which they are given to us, these two sayings are to be attributed to the community. /10 Here yet again we find a reflection of the theme of meditation raised earlier. A clarification, splendid for the understanding of the text is presented - the contrast between the risen body and the temple made with hands. We may note that Paul speaks only once in reference to the glorious body of the risen One (Phil 3.21). Again, as in 1 Cor 15, he does this to show that it is a heavenly body and quite different from our earthly body. This contrast between what is human and what is divine is to be found constantly where the resurrection is mentioned. As a result, it can be said that the body of Christ is not so much the person of Jesus of Nazareth raised to the right hand of God as a cosmic reality which can be described either as a body or as a temple. Moreover, according to 1 Cor 15,20, the resurrection, already effected, anticipates the eschatological reality. This resurrection is already showing its results in the life of those who are linked to Christ. Thus, such a reality is not only future but is already present. This explains the paradoxical fact that the phrase "body of Christ" never denotes his dead body, but very often the community of believers! The body of Christ is an eschatological dimension but a dimension already realized. It is a cosmic reality. Every man is called to share in it by faith and by baptism. It is this that explains why Paul can say successively that the church is the body of Christ (1 Cor 12.27) and the temple of God (1 Cor 3.16). A passage in the epistle to the Hebrews (10.19) explains the identification in this way: "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the veil - that is to say, his flesh - and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near....". The living way which opens up for us access to the heavenly temple stands for the resurrection, understood as the elevation of Christ to God's side. The reality of death is indicated by the word "flesh" here synonymous with "body". The word "house" denotes both

the temple and the new Israel i.e., the Church. /11 Access to God is open for us henceforth by the resurrection, and that in the life of the Church, as the rest of the passage shows. Paul, the epistle to the Hebrews, the epistle of Peter (1 Pet 2.4-6), the texts quoted from Mark and John agree in affirming that, through the resurrection, the Christian community, as the locus of the presence of God, /12, takes over from the temple. The affinities between Mark 14.58 and 2 Cor 5.1, stem from a group of reflections on the resurrection, the temple and the community, common to those Christians whose thought is known to us from the NT. /13

The Tabernacle

It remains for us now to explain the enigmatic term skēnos, an important word since Paul returns to it on two occasions in what follows. We have to remind ourselves first that, for Paul, it is not only the community which is the receptacle of the Holy Spirit but each believer individually. Christ who lives in the Church, his body, also lives in each of the members of the body: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor 6.19). In Col 2.11 he says the same thing in a different way, "You were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christyou were also raised with him." /14 In Rom 8.10 he also writes, "If Christ is in you, although the body should be dead...." /15 These texts are peculiar in that they speak of the body from two opposite, yet related, points of view. On the one hand, the body is given over to death and must be stripped off; on the other hand, it is the seat of the life of Christ or the temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul expressed this also in 4.16 where he speaks of the outer man perishing and the inner man being renewed day by day. /16 We have to conclude, then, that the word skēnos, with its reminder of the temple, is used by Paul of the presence of Christ in us in the verse.

It need not be awkward that the tabernacle and not the temple is involved. Both, individually, were signs of the presence of God among his people. Revelation refers to two texts which seem to us to have had more importance for the thought of the first Christians than would appear at

first sight (Rev. 21.3). They speak of the moment in the heavenly Jerusalem when God will be with men: "Sing and rejoice, daughter of Zion, for I am coming and I will make my dwelling among you (kataskēnoō) (Zech 2.14) and "I will establish my sanctuary among them for ever and my dwelling (kataskēnōsis) will be among them" (Ezek. 37.26). /17
The expectation of this eschatological reality, noted in the case of the temple, is also present in the Johannine prologue in the case of the tabernacle: "The Word made his dwelling among us" (eskēnosen)."

In the story of the Annunciation (Lk 1.35) the angel said to Mary that the power of God would overshadow her (episkiazō). The verb comes from Exodus 40.35 (LXX) in reference to the tabernacle and its use shows that a link is made between Christ and the tabernacle. In Acts 15.16 the prophecy of Amos is quoted (9.11), "I will build again the tabernacle of David (anoikodomēsō tēn skēnēn) which has fallen.... I will set it up again that the remnant of men may seek the Lord." This fallen tabernacle which God raises up clearly means, for the author of Acts, Christ dead and risen. "Kurios", as always in the NT, denotes Christ and the "remnant" speaks of the moment when, through the resurrection, the Gentiles will come to Christ and make their entrance into the Church. In John 7 Jesus reveals himself to the crowd at the Feast of Tabernacles and the gift of living water recalls the miracle of the rock in the desert and the river flowing out from the temple of Ezekial. The story of the Transfiguration, in its mention of the three tabernacles, shows traces of a coming together of Moses, the tabernacle and Christ.

Are we to conclude from this that the term "tou skēnous" must be understood quite simply as a synonym of the inner man of 2 Cor 4.16? This would lead us to view the genitive as a real genitive. It must be noted, of course, that Paul shows himself taken up with the contrast between the frail appearance of his wretched body and the treasure it carries. This treasure does not only stand for the gospel, but the life of the Risen One in it (4.10). This life is carried in a vessel of clay. The onlooker, on the outside, can only see the outer man who bears the marks of his coming destruction. But the apostle looks to the unseen, i.e., the future and already present work of God and he knows that his inner man - mysterious but real - is being renewed.

The following verses, however, show that this explanation is not enough. Indeed the figure changes for Paul writes immediately afterwards, "in this tent" (vss2,4). For the Jew who has attended the feast of tabernacles, the tent is not only the sign of God's presence but the summons to travel on into the wilderness. So Paul in these chapters speaks of his apostolate, his struggle and his weariness. To be in the tent is to be under the sign of the Risen One - we would have to say even under the power of death and resurrection - but at the same time, in the daily struggle of the earthly life. The heavenly temple alone, indestructible as it is, will provide the traveller with his stable and definitive dwelling. In the allusive, succinct style of the passage, the genitive is neither a real genitive nor altogether an epexegetic genitive. The "skēnos" is not simply the casing of the earthly house nor is it to be confused with it. It is the person already renewed seen from a new angle. Hence we translate the genitive by an apposition followed by an exclamation mark. The genitive distinguishes and unites all at once. Paul, with this simple word, begins a fresh way of conveying the meaning of his present life: by the sign of the presence of the risen One and yet of incompleteness!

The neuter "skēnos" instead of the expected feminine has its explanation, in our view, in the influence of the verb "skēnoō" and the substantives derived from it (skēnōsis; skēnōma) and further in the ambiguous but assured link made by Paul between the body and the tabernacle, requiring a neuter rather than a feminine. /18

Such an explanation casts light on the exegesis of the following verses and gains, in return, an important confirmation, "... Here indeed we groan and long to put on our heavenly dwelling (v2), so that by putting it on, we may not be found naked (v3). For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (v4). He who prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee (v5). So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord (v6), for we walk by faith, not by sight (v7). We

are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord (v8). So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him (v9). For we must all appear before the judgment seat, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body." (v11)

In these verses, the ideas intersect and entwine in a complex way. The fear of judgment is linked by Paul with the expectation of the heavenly dwelling. But before taking up this point, we may note a change in metaphor. In v2, at the very start, Paul joins together the thought of clothing with that of dwelling in the formula "to be clothed with a heavenly home." Later, he distinguishes them. In vss 2 to 5, the main theme is expressed by the verb duō and its compounds; in vss 6 to 8, on the other hand, it is expressed by the verb dēmō, with the coupling in vss 6,8, and 9 of endēmō-ekdēmō alternating.

We will begin with the latter metaphor, altering the order of the verses slightly for clarity of expression.

The believer will leave his heavenly home

In the vss6 ("...at home in the body we are away from the Lord") and 8 ("we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord"), Paul asserts, in a way that leaves no room for discussion, that to be completely with the Lord, he will have to leave the body. This shows that the body, as we have noticed above, is not, in the thought of the apostle, a kind of substance guaranteeing the permanence of the person. Here we have an echo of the verb "destroyed" (kataluthē) of v1. The earthly body is not required to submit to any modification but will be destroyed and then abandoned. When Paul writes in 1 Cor 15.37, "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.....And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel", he underlines rightly that there is a hiatus between the former reality and that which is new. An act of God is required which is nothing less than a new creation whatever its appearance; this is what the verb "Zōpoiein" shows. The bare kernel is not some substance that will continue but the former body which is disappearing. And if Paul continues, "God will give it a body..",

Wagner, Tabernacle, IBS 3, July 1981

we should see in the "it" not so much the grain as the person whose identity is stated without being explained.

As in Phil 1.23-24 Paul expresses here the expectation of an immediate communion with Christ after death. It is obvious that this hope fits awkwardly into the cosmic conception of the resurrection such as we find in 1 Cor 15.20ff and 1 Thess 4.13ff. According to these texts it is only after the parousia that the believers will receive their glorious body. This inconsistency can already be seen in the OT and Judaism. /19 Faith in the resurrection, far from dissipating it, accentuates it. The man who considers that the eschatological times have already begun and that the power of the resurrection has already broken in within the life of the believer, can neither abandon the parousia as a cosmic drama nor conceive of a new intermediate period intervening between the death and the return of Christ, for "nothing can separate us... from Christ." Speculation on the way in which these events will take place is, however, very relative. Everything is seen from the central reality already taken place. This gives the eschatology a character more existential than descriptive.

But the resurrection, however decisive it may be, should not be taken for the parousia. Paul knows that as long as he sojourns in the mortal body, he is far from the Lord. That is why, in spite of the event that has taken place, his journey still resembles that of Abraham who heeded God and gave him obedience in his venture of faith. "We walk by faith and not by sight." (v7) This verse should be set alongside that of 1 Cor. 13.12, "Now we see in a mirror dimly" and that of Rom. 8. 24,25, "We hope for what we do not see" (blepomen) This parallel shows that the passage which comes just before ours (2 Cor.4.18), is to be understood from a temporal and not hellenistic perspective: "We look to the things that are (still) unseen (mē blepomenona)." The epistle to the Hebrews says much the same in its definition of faith, "the conviction of things which (can) not (yet) be seen." (11.1) Indeed, throughout chapter 11, the writer shows that the witnesses of the old Covenant looked beyond their earthly horizon without yet seeing the object of their expectation (11. 13,26,27). They were strangers and pilgrims, on the way to the true homeland. Christians had the privilege of being able to

"look to Jesus" (12.2) but they too are travellers as much as the others (1 Pet.2.11). The verb "peripateō" which, for want of a better word, we have translated "walk", shows that Paul draws a parallel between his life of wandering as apostle and that of Abraham who, according to Hebrews, lived in a tent and that of the Hebrew people, also in the wilderness. Their onward walk is like a parable of the Christian's pilgrimage to the heavenly country. This is one of the reasons indeed why the epistle to the Hebrews deals with it as such length. In 1 Cor. 10.1-10 Paul again shows that the Christian's situation remains, in many respects, like that of the Israelites in the desert.

The metaphor of clothing

In vs 6 to 9, Paul, in seeing his situation under the concept of the body as an earthly house which must be abandoned, underlined the distance which still separates him from the Lord. In vs 2 to 5, on the other hand, he uses the metaphor of clothing to give an account of the event which has already taken place in his life as a Christian. Three aorist participles occur in turn: re clothed (v3), God having prepared us; God having given us the Spirit as a guarantee (v5).

These three verbs express, in a different way, the same thing. We will begin by examining the last two. "Katergasamenos" expresses the action of God who brings in the power of the resurrection to the life of the believer. If Paul proceeds to recall the gift of the Spirit as "guarantee", he does it to show that now already this gift is something of the eschatological reality. We have to do here with a real anticipation of what will be fully achieved, given fully at the moment of the parousia.

What then does the verb "clothed" mean? Has it to do with the expression of the bodily state? /20 Paul would then be concerned about not losing the actual body that clothes him but putting on over it the glorified body. Such a concern would be in flagrant contradiction with the expectation expressed in vs 6 to 9. But it must be noted also that the metaphor of clothing does not suit the body of flesh as such. Doubtless in a text like Job 10.11 where he speaks of the creation of man, we are told that God clothed him with skin and flesh - a meditation on Genesis 2.17.

It would be a mistake to conclude from this that a distinction should be drawn between the true substance of man and the body that clothes him. In contrast with this unique text in Job - to which indeed that very Hellenized text of Wisdom is to be added - there is a whole series, LXX and NT, where the verb "duō" and its compounds have as their complement a moral or religious term. God or man is clothed with might (Isaiah 52.1), with power (Ps.93.1), with righteousness (Ps. 132.9) etc.. In the NT we have "clothed" with the armour of God (Eph.6,14), the arms of light (1 Thess. 5.8), the power of God (Luke 24.49) and especially the new man (Col.3,10) and Christ himself (Gal 3.27 and Rom. 13.14). The last two expressions have a quite special importance for the understanding of the text. We have here exactly the thought expressed by the two participles, "having prepared", "having given", of v5, mentioned at the start of the section - the eschatological reality already present. The metaphor of clothing comes from the thought of a given righteousness, as in the vision of Zechariah 3.4 where the high priest is clothed with sumptuous robes. /21

The compound verb - a very rare term - "ependuō" is to be given its full meaning. The believer will not put on his glorious body over the earthly body (since this will be destroyed). In this case, a term which might have sufficed would have been "allagēnai" (transform). He puts it on over the new being, the inner being and, of course, without suppressing it. /22 This transformation will, then, no longer be merely an invisible reality of the order of faith but a reality substantially achieved. And this will coincide, according to the end of v4, with the destruction of the mortal body, "that what is mortal may be 'swallowed up (katapothē) by life' ", according to Isaiah 25.8. /23

If this body, insofar as it is mortal and insofar as it separates the believer from his Lord - according to v6 to v9 - corresponds to the earthly house of v1, such a body insofar as it is already under the sign of the presence of Christ and of the influence of the Spirit, corresponds to the tabernacle to which Paul makes an all-too-fleeting reference in the first verse.

The Pauline Mystique

It is our intention further to expound the other

teaching given in this passage not only to complete the exegesis of the passage but to show all the implications of the terms "en tō skēnei" (in the tent).

"And here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling. For, while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety....." (v2 and v4). What we have here is not the groan of flesh being murdered, but, as in Romans 8.23,26 the sigh of the Spirit. Because the Spirit is the "arrabōn" (earnest, guarantee), tasting of the heavenly reality, he stirs up a fervent desire for total fulfilment. The participle "baroumenoi" (lit."burdened") should then be understood from the substantive "baros" ("weight of glory") mentioned by Paul just before (4.17). If Paul says "in this tent" ("here") and not "in the body" or "in the house", he does so because the term suggests the reality already given and the onward march, the journey of the apostle by faith. In this ambiguous situation in the life of the believer, he already sees in advance the world sighing for its glorious transformation (Rom.8.22). He feels within himself the groanings (like those of a woman in travail) of the Spirit. Thus the position of the Christian, contained in the words "en tō skēnei" (in the tent), is characterized by an intense straining after the glorious future. It is a mystique of hope.

But in addition to this straining after fulfilment, we have something else, closely bound up with the first, driving him to action. This does not surprise us from one who wrote Philippians 3.12, "I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own." The call of the apostle which is one and the same with the appearance of the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, was both the illumination anticipating the glorious vision and the command given to preach the gospel, and, in particular, to Gentiles (Gal.1.12,15,16). Paul is aware that a task has been entrusted to him. He is responsible for it and will have to render an account (1 Cor.9.17). Thus the Damascus event became the source of mystical power, of hope and, at the same time, of action and witness. Shortly before our text, Paul, in speaking of his apostolate, unites the power of the resurrection with faith, and faith with the word it is commissioned to utter (4.11,16). The expectation of heavenly happiness does not deflect him from

his present responsibility. If he is tempted for a moment to forget his task, he quickly takes it up again. (Phil 1.24). Whether the uncertainty of the present situation continues or comes to an end by a premature death, the essential thing remains, he declares, "to please the Lord." (v9). For there is no heavenly life without judgement. /24 "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ...." (v10). In this judgement it is not a matter, properly speaking, of salvation or damnation, but a kind of sifting like that of 1 Cor.3. 13-15. The proof will then be given as to what has been acceptable in this life and what has not. Every piece of valuable material will survive and the one responsible will get his reward; what is counterfeit will, on the other hand, be destroyed. V10 is to be understood as an unveiling of what is still hidden and of a test which, when it is completed, will be a matter not so much of salvation or damnation but of reward or shame.

In v3 we believe Paul is already expressing this fear of judgement. /25 In successive strokes, first obscure, then clear, Paul, in vss 3-4 and 9-10, speaks of the self-searching evoked by the prospect of judgement and the responsibility deriving from it. All this is already contained in the simple expression, "in the tent". Salvation is viewed as an onward march under the eye of the master and a concern to make known the message received. Grace could not set the man who receives it in an easy complacency like that of a man of property who considers he is free from all risk. Eschatology is also a threat. Paul reminds the Corinthians of this on many occasions - something they were all too inclined to forget (1 Cor.3.13;4.5,10; 6.10; 10.1-13 etc) - and he himself is in the front of those who live in a productive uneasiness.

"So that by putting it on we may not be found naked." (v3) The verb "to be found" is sometimes used as a synonym almost for the simple "to be" but it does suggest, however, the look of someone else directed to one's self. Here it is, of course, the look of God. We have an illuminating parallel in Phil 3.9-12, "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things.....that I may gain Christ (7,8) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own based on Law but that which is through faith in Christ.... the righteousness from God that depends on faith (v9) that I may

know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (y10) that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead,"

/26 Paul has no longer any need to earn his salvation since the righteousness of God is conferred by sheer grace. The concern to "win Christ", however, remains one of the essential elements of his thought. On the day of judgement he wants to be found by God, arrayed in the robe of righteousness. /27 This righteousness is only real as it compels one to action. It is only then the presence of the triumphant Christ and not a soporific illusion. /28 In 1 Cor.9 where Paul speaks of his ministry, he ends his discussion with these words, "I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."(v27)

The conjunction ei (if) and its copulae ge kai (v3) introduce a conditional phrase which can be put in this paraphrase, "But let us not forget that the attempt will not be successful unless, on the day of judgement, God indeed finds us clothed with his righteousness." /29 The adjective "naked" (gumnos) in this case has only a privative sense, "without the clothing of righteousness". It does however have the notion of shame associated for every Jew with the state of nudity. /30

Finally, when Paul writes in v4, "For while we are in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed", we have to give the verb "would" a very strong meaning. Paul has reproached the Corinthians with a facile complacency, and has placed his own action over against their fallacious "gnostic" assurance. The true mystic is one who exerts his will. Any other mystic is not in Christ and can only end with the loss of salvation. This is what Paul wants to avoid. "I press on to win Christ." (Cf. Phil 3.12) /31

Paul does not develop his thought by methodically linking together a succession of somewhat fixed concepts. He does not express himself like a thinker disclosing his teaching after having methodically distinguished all its elements. Rather the apostle gives an account of the discovery he has made, of the situation in which it placed him and placed the world. This he does in a swift and unexpected way, using words and images derived mainly from

the OT. He relies on a series of reflective themes, common to the early Christians and makes rapid allusions to them. Words are signs used to remind the reader of an impression or argument. /32 He can juggle with words in a way that surprises us but which was clear to the first readers who grasped quickly each suggestion.

The unity of these verses and, at the same time, their significance are given to us in a way which eludes the hasty reader and which is not understood by the careful reader if he ignores how evocative they were for a Jew. The word "skēnos" recalls the period in the wilderness and the feast of tabernacles. All of this is transposed by the Christian but is none the less important. We have to do here with the presence of Christ and at the same time with the distance which still separates the traveller from the heavenly temple. It is an onward march in peril and hope.

Thus understood, the passage fits in perfectly in the total context of chapters 1 to 7 of the epistle. If Paul sees himself already in the triumphal chariot of the conquering Christ (2.14), it is too in the weakness of the crucified. In the intermediate period in which we are placed, strength and weakness, resurrection and death are inseparable. It is especially in the two epistles to the Corinthians that Paul attacks the false assurance of those who believe they are already in glory. The believers are still on the way. They must fight with courage. /33 They remain under the gaze and judgment of God, The believer is only truly "en Christō" only if he knows himself to be "en tō skēnei".

Notes

1. This article first appeared in Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses N.4, 1961 as "Le tabernacle et la vie en Christ"; Exegese de 2 Corinthiens 5.1 to 10; it is here produced by kind permission of Pastor Guy Wagner, Pastor of L'Église réformée de France, and a member of the distinguished panel of translators responsible for the French Ecumenical Version of the Bible; English translation is by the Editor of IBS.

2. TWNT, V, p149, L.24
3. See Lev. 26.1,30; Isaiah 2.13;10.11;16.12;17.8;19.1;21.9; 30.7;46.6 etc; see also Acts 17.24.
4. These words are quoted from Ps.132.5. Several mss have corrected "oikō" to "Theō" to harmonize with the LXX. The word "oikos" sums up a speculation to which we will return.
5. Philo, Vita Mosis, II, 71-74. On the Rabbis, see Héring, Ep. aux Hébreux, Comm.NT., XII, p77, N.1, and G. Schrenk, art. "Ieron", in TWNT, III, p239-40.
6. See O. Cullman, L'opposition contre le temple de Jérusalem. Motif commun de la théologie johannique et du monde ambiant, NTS, Vol 5, April 1959, p157
7. The event radicalizes thus the dualism which is not only temporal but spatial or, better, ontological. The present 'we have' shows that the dwelling is now ready in the eternity of God.
8. See also Matt. 22. 23-32
9. The early Christians searched everywhere in the OT for prophecies of the resurrection. They found them in passages which surprise us such as Ps.2 and 110; Hosea 6.3; Amos 9.11 (see Acts 15.4). In 2 Kings 20.5 we have a text to which not enough attention has been given since it is nowhere quoted. Hezekiah healed - and in a way as the following song has it - raised, "climbs on the third day to the temple" For the way in which the early Christians understood the resurrection and the evidence they found in the Scriptures of the resurrection, cf our work, La resurrection de Jésus-Christ et la formation de la christologie; thesis, Paris 1960
10. Cf. the commentary on these two words in Père Congar's book, Le mystère du temple (Lectio divina, 22). His exposition would have been more complete if he had put (or been able to put?) these words in their right place, at the same time as the statements in the epistles.
11. The identification has been prepared for by the twofold meaning of the word "oikos" (in Hebrew baït),

the temple and house of Israel. It is interesting to note that the Rule of Discipline of Qumran (8.5-6 and 9.5-6) describes the community in these words: "house of holiness for Aaron". Cf for the comparison "Church-Temple", O Michel, TWNT, IV, p890ff and V, p122 to 155 and Y.M.J. Congar, op.cit., p181ff

12. See also John 4. 21-24
13. The verb kataluō is used for the destruction of the temple (Mk 14.58; 13.12; 15.29 and Acts 6.14), for the destruction of the Church (Rom. 14. 19-20, cf also Acts 5.38),
14. It is interesting to note that cheiropoiētos, like kataluō, is used of the law (here under the aspect of circumcision. The Jewish Temple, circumcision and the prejudices from which Paul has been set free (Gal 2.18) are human works which the death of Jesus has destroyed.
15. Cf also Col 1.27
16. It is not a matter, properly speaking, of two substances but of two different determinations of being, of two different ways of looking at it. Substantialist terminology is not explained merely by hellenistic contamination, but quite simply by the common language which expresses being in terms of things, which spontaneously materializes.
17. The importance of Zechariah for the elaboration of the account of the entry into Jerusalem and the Passion is well-known; cf the allusions to Ezekial in Heb 13.20 and 2 Cor 6.16.
18. The text of Wisdom 9.15 (the perishable body weighs upon the soul and the tent (skēnos) of clay makes the spirit heavy) shows that the term was used in Alexandrian Judaism. There is, of course, no allusion to the tabernacle here. But it could not be concluded that an allusion is not to be found in the odd genitive of Paul. Paul's reasoning is, however, totally different from that of Philo.
19. According as hope is viewed from a cosmic or individual point of view, eschatology is described as an overthrow

of the entire world (Dan 7 to 12; Isaiah 26 and 60 etc) or as immediate union with God after death (Ps 73.4; Job 19.26 etc). So it is misleading to explain (with H. Windisch, M. Goguel etc) this incoherence by hellenistic influence.

20. For this interpretation cf J. Héring's commentary on 2 Corinthians (Delachaux and Nestlé).
21. Ancient commentators without exception have interpreted the term in a moral or spiritual sense: "If we have not been stripped of faith or works." (Theodoret, Ambrosiaster, Pelagius etc). "The faithful who appear before the presence of God, clothed with Christ and adorned with his righteousness, receive the glorious garment of immortality." (Calvin). Cf also some modern commentators: "If we have put on Christ in this life" (K von Hoffmann, A Schlatter). G. Schrenk (TWNT I, p558) also says that God will examine the reality of the spiritual life of the Christian.
22. Allo is right to comment that every explanation which does not take into account, or sufficiently into account, the prefix of this very rare composite verb should be avoided. Commentary on 2 Cor., p123.
23. The same quotation is found in 1 Cor 15.55. Paul at this point writes, "For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality." This does not mean that the glorious body will be placed on top of the actual body, but, in the logic of the whole chapter, what is actually under the sign of the first Adam (earthly) will be transformed into the image of the new Adam. It will be noticed that the verb "to clothe" has two abstract words as object, imperishability and immortality.
24. The perspective of the final judgment does not fit very well the level of objective description of the unfolding of the eschatological events. It has none the less an absolutely primordial importance for the thought and life of the apostle. The originality of the Pauline mystique is precisely the inclusion of this juridical aspect. It is not necessary so much to speak of a juxtaposition of two lines in his thought, mystical and juridical, as to

describe Paul's position 'sui generis' before God and the world, the result of his initial discovery in the resurrection. In the passage, it is clear that everything depends on the phrase en tō skēnei, not unlike an en Christō!

25. A. Oepke (TWNT, I, p773-775 and II, p318-321) recognizes that Paul is speaking of judgment from v3 onward, but thinks that Paul is afraid of being treated as someone condemned, i.e., to remain for ever without his body as a result of God's verdict. The endusamenoī for him only takes up the ependusasthai of v2.
26. Righteousness, then, comes from heaven, like the new Adam (1 Cor 15.48), like the house of v1 of this passage. But as it manifests itself in this aeon, in this mortal body, it cannot yet be taken hold of except by faith. It still leads us on the road to the promised land, with Christ, but in a tent!
27. The parallels to this eurethē are Dan 6.22 (LXX); Matt 24.46; Gal 2.17; 1 Peter 1.7 and Rev 20.15 in addition to Phil 3.10.
28. R. Reitzenstein (Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen, 3rd ed., p354ff), in comparing this passage with Hermetic texts, perceived rightly that the inward man was confused with the new reality which the believer put on as a garment. But he did not indicate that it is not Paul but rather gnosis which thinks of a substance guaranteeing magically salvation.
29. It is well-known how many difficulties this conjunction has presented to grammarians and exegetes who did not recognize that we have to do with judgement in this verse. Allo rightly said that all the grammarians did was to follow the exegetes in their uncertainties! The only passage where we find an ei ge kai is Gal 3.4, "Did you experience so many things in vain?-if it really is in vain!" The phrase has the same meaning as in our passage, "Your discovery of grace has been for nothing. Take care! At the judgment, it will not be "for nothing" but for your shame!"
30. It is not surprising that those who wish to see in this

gumnos an incorporeal state (likewise Oepke), only find parallels in Greek philosophers! The true parallels are symmetrical with those indicated for the duō. Cf especially Matt 22.12, Rev 16.15 and 19.18

31. R. Bultmann (Théologie du NT., p198) sees in this "we do not wish to be stripped" a polemic against the viewpoint of Gnostic Corinthian opponents. They would have wanted a beyond which was not corporeal. This is a wrong interpretation of Paul in v9 if here his preoccupation had been to prove the corporeal character of the future life. If there is a polemic thrust in this verse, it is directed against the composure of the Corinthians for whom salvation is a thing acquired and not life "in a tent" !

32. Bultmann considers that the language of Paul is often inadequate because he expresses existential truths in an objective language. But he does not see that Paul, without having thought out methodically the problems of language, is conscious of this inadequacy. It appears to us certain that Paul knew, at least intuitively, that a language is a language. That is surely why he plays about so freely with words and expressions. Bultmann, the victim of his conceptual rigour, finds difficulty in understanding this play. This may be seen, for example, in his commentary (KEK, Meyer 1976, 2 Cor. p135) where he is attracted by Reitzenstein's explanation (see N.28 above) but he dismisses it peremptorily with this mere affirmation: "Inward man cannot be understood as a garment." This is true for the logic of Bultmann but not for Paul's language, since, in his view, a man can be clothed with Christ or the new man (Gal 3. 27 and Col 3.10)

33. The oun of v6 takes up the fundamental leitmotif (4.1,16).