

A new temple

By [Chris Brundage](#)

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After Solomon built the Temple, or rather, after his laborers built it, he stood and offered a prayer for its dedication. In his prayer, he admitted that the Temple, for all its human splendor, could not contain or limit God. “But can you, O God, really live on earth? Not even all of heaven is large enough to hold you, so how can this Temple that I have built be large enough?” (1 Kgs 8.27 GNT) It is a wise observation. The temptation is strong to assume the structure you have built holds all of God. In *The Evolution of Faith*, Philip Gulley remembers a time when night-vision goggles enabled him to see vastly more stars than he was accustomed to viewing. He used this experience as an analogy, noting that what we know of God is only a sliver of all that God may be. This is cause for reticence in our claims about God, he says.

The truth is we do not know how God may be active in the lives of people of other faiths, or of no formal faith at all; just as we do not know how God was active in the lives of our human ancestors tens of thousands of years ago, long before any present day religion was established and codified. I see no inherent contradiction in acknowledging these things and in believing what the New Testament asserts, that Jesus of Nazareth was God in human form, that he is alive now, and that the role of his disciples today is to bear witness to him to the ends of the earth. Christians see Jesus a new Temple, a place where God is uniquely present. But as Solomon wisely noted 3000 years ago, this presence does not exhaust all that God is or may be.

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