Book Review


Heavenly sanctuary, earthly sanctuary – has not all been said from an Adventist point of view? It is astonishing that to date there is no comprehensive, scholarly collection analysing the pertinent references that includes not only biblical findings but also ancient Near Eastern (ANE) and early Jewish literature. This has now changed due to this fundamental work on the relationship between the heavenly and earthly sanctuary. By providing lexiceme and other linguistic studies, motif studies considering stylistic devices, as well as interdisciplinary comparisons, this work traces Jewish, Christian and ANE temple conceptions. With an almost detective-like instinct, the authors uncover astonishing details.

This volume is the result of an annual Theological Forum of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in Silang, Cavite, Philippines. The 20 articles written by 16 authors focus on the heavenly sanctuary rather than the earthly one. 14 authors have a Th.D. or Ph.D. in Religion or Theology; two are Th.D. candidates.

The articles demonstrate a widespread belief in a heavenly sanctuary with practical consequences as it was an “integral part of Israel and the early church” (p. 339). The importance of the earthly temple rituals with their original heavenly realities are to contribute to a better understanding of “the death of Jesus on the cross, as well as other aspects of the Christian faith which are at times described in ritual terms” (pp. 339–340). Moreover, the focus on the heavenly temple as “idealized and glorious archetype” (p. 340), and the earthly temple as corresponding model aim at a de-hellenization and de-spiritualization of Christian theology about heaven. In short, this is a reference collection from an Adventist point of view and mainly from the point of view of Fundamental Belief no. 24.
It is difficult to select individual articles for review because many provide detailed, and sometimes controversial, insights. As an Assyriologist I will have a different view of the contributions than that of a theologian. Therefore, I shall focus especially on the ANE article and, subsequently, on the OT ones.

The first contribution by Elias Brasil de Souza (pp. 9‒28) analyses the ANE sources (Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Egyptian). As a former member of the *Collegium Mythologicum*, an interdisciplinary, scientific research group on ancient myths in Göttingen, Germany, and also in my dissertation in Assyriology, I have researched Mesopotamian texts on temple creation, among others. That is why I am going to discuss this interesting article at length.

De Souza understands the earthly temple in the Sumerian texts as “related to a heavenly counterpart” (p. 11). However, the *heavenly* temple is the actual “command centre where the deity makes decisions and performs activities related to the administration of his domain” (p. 13). Though, this does not quite do justice to the Sumerian sources: One of the passages from *Enki and Sumer* (traditional: *Enki and the World Order*) that he cites (p. 13), is precisely a decision of fate for the country of Sumer that Enki makes in *Sumer* and not from the heavenly sphere. The temple concept of the ancient Sumerians is furthermore clarified by a text that is not mentioned in the article: In the Sumerian *Innana Robs the Heavenly House*, heaven comes to earth in the form of the temple; heaven virtually becomes a part of the earth, and has already laid out the entire Sumerian civilization in itself.¹ The heavenly essence of the earthly temple and the ability of the gods to manifest themselves in different places, and thus also in the earthly temple, results in the earthly temple being a living place for divine legal decisions in the sense of a divine centre of power. Thus, the Sumerian *Kesh Hymn* also describes the earthly temple as the third cosmic entity besides heaven and earth. Sume-

---

rian earthly temples (not only the heavenly prototypes) are real cosmic, numinous, living organisms. In this case, it would have been helpful to consider further recent ANE research.\(^2\)

De Souza’s brief but concise analyses of the Akkadian sources reveal an interesting phenomenon: The reflection of heavenly temple reality in the earthly temple also includes concrete temple rituals and the decoration of temple rooms. I have also encountered this phenomenon of Akkadian (and most notably Sumerian) texts in my dissertation. De Souza’s article would profit from additional insights: the changed temple conception in *Enuma Elish*. In this text, a vertical axis is assumed, in which the temple in Babylon forms the centre on the earth’s surface with the heavenly temple above and the temple in the midst of the earth below.\(^3\) The earthly temple is, then, the indispensable connecting link of this axis. Its importance is also shown by the cult pedestal in the forecourt of the Marduk temple in Babylon, where every year on New Year’s Day, the exaltation of Marduk as king of the gods is re-actualized and the destiny is decided anew for Babylon, the king and the whole country. The earthly temple rituals, therefore, have a direct effect on the gods, who could reside in both entities (earthly and non-earthly temples). The direction of movement of these rituals is, therefore, not from heaven to earth, but the other way round!

The evaluation of Hittite sources points to a divine assembly in the heavenly temple and a corresponding earthly counterpart. De Souza’s profound analyses of the Ugaritic *Story of Aqhat* show the same phenomenon as the Akkadian texts: Rituals addressed to the gods in the earthly temple have a direct effect on the gods in the heavenly counterpart. Here the earthly temple is not just a shadow of material, heavenly reality, but a *complement or extension* of it.

---


His research from Egyptian sources shows that the *heavenly* temple as a place of divine gatherings and legal decisions is emphasized more than the earthly temple.

The conclusion of the article sums it up: Heavenly temples as “archetype[s]” are “in close relationship and dynamic interaction with their earthly counterparts” (p. 28). The fact that this dynamic interaction was much more extensive than mentioned in the article does not diminish the importance of this article for the Adventist understanding of the ANE belief in heavenly temples. Furthermore, de Souza’s article is the first Adventist study with texts from three millennia and in four languages on that specific subject.

The next section deals with the heavenly temple in the OT and its relationship to the earthly one: in the Pentateuch (chapter 2), historical books (chapter 3), Psalms (chapter 4), Isaiah and Zechariah (chapter 5) and Daniel (chapter 6). These studies contain fascinating and detailed observations. As an example, I will discuss the contribution of Felix Poniatowski to the texts of the Pentateuch (pp. 31‒41). Poniatowski recognizes three phases of worship in the Pentateuch (cf. p. 41): The altar was for the patriarchs the “foot of the heavenly temple” (p. 41). Thus, Jacob’s place of theophany (Gen. 28:12‒15) is mentioned as “house of God” and “gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:17), although there was no building, but later an altar and a memorial pillar (Gen 35:7,14). The altar was an “extension of the heavenly realm” (p. 35), where you crossed over to the heavenly sphere, to the heavenly “house of God.” Since the construction of the tabernacle under Moses, the earthly tabernacle was the “territory of heaven on earth” (p. 39). In Deuteronomy, a shift happened, and God’s presence became hidden and spiritual and the earthly tabernacle became a “shadow of the heavenly temple” (p. 41). The temple concept in the Pentateuch reads in the article as follows: The heavenly temple gets a gate on earth in the form of the altars of the patriarchs (Gen.) – heaven comes down on earth in the form of the earthly temple (Ex.) – the earthly temple becomes a shadow of the heavenly temple (Deut.).

It is striking that the articles in this section interpret the earthly temple as visually and functionally corresponding to the heavenly counterpart with each having two compartments. As the main reason for these two compartments in both temples, the authors interpret *tabnît* (Ex. 25:9,40) as visual “model, pattern” of the heavenly temple for the earthly temple (cf. Felix
Book Review

Poniatowski: pp. 38–39; Patrick Enoughé Anani: pp. 47–52); thus, the cherubim over the ark of the covenant in the earthly Most Holy Place are seen as the counterparts of the cherubim at God’s heavenly throne (cf. David Tasker: p. 61 [Psalms]). Starting from the earthly sanctuary, they conclude with the heavenly sanctuary. In my opinion, there is a weakness in the argument here. Since there are no explicit spatial statements about the design of the heavenly sanctuary (= prototype) in the OT, we would have to be cautious in drawing conclusions about them from the design of the earthly temple (= counterpart). Other visual words with an earthly equivalent, such as “image” in Gen. 1:26–27, do not necessarily imply a visual equality of God and his “image” (= mankind). The prototype defines the correspondence and not the other way around. Nor does this literal temple concept take into account that God meets the respective people in their imaginary world and relates to them where they are. To what extent can visions of the heavenly temple in the Prophets or similar poetic descriptions in the Psalms be interpreted literally? Genre-specific research can tie in here. Even after the arguments presented in this volume, it remains open for me whether the functional conceptions common to the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries demand exact spatial correspondences between the two in the OT. Nevertheless, the collection is excellently researched with a lot of secondary literature.

The New Testament sections comprises ten articles: Luke-Acts (chapter 7), John 14:2 (chapter 8), Pauline texts (chapter 9), 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (chapter 10), Hebrews (chapters 11–12), 1 Peter 4:17 (chapter 13) and Revelation (chapters 14–16). As an Assyriologist, this is not my field, and therefore, my evaluation is done with the caveat of being a non-specialist.

An example is the thrilling article by Kim Papaioannou about John 14:2 (pp. 123-134). He shows with his lexeme studies the connection between Jesus as temple, the believers (individually, corporate) as temple and the heavenly temple in John 14:2 and 14:23. John indicates that the physical body of Jesus will replace the earthly temple in Jerusalem (p. 130). This new temple will be enlarged by Father and Son on earth as they dwell in the believer (individually, corporate), thus making the believers the extended Jesus temple temporarily until its consummation in the heavenly temple (pp. 132–133). He interprets the heavenly temple as a “glorious building in line with Jewish and Christian apocalyptic depictions of heaven” (p. 134). Cf. also the next article by Mario Phillip (chapter 9) about believers (individually and
corporate) as complementary to the heavenly temple in Paul’s metaphoric language.

The last section contains four articles about early Jewish literature: non-canonical apocalyptic (chapter 17), *Book of Watchers* (chapter 18), *Testament of Levi* (chapter 19), and rabbinic literature (chapter 20). They provide insight into how widespread the idea of the heavenly temple was with real architectural structures and angels as priests.

An epilogue with a condensed summary of the results completes the book. The conclusions at the end of each article as well as comprehensive bibliographical information in the articles and the index of text passages, which invite further studies, are extremely helpful.

Adventists (theologians, other academics, pastors, interested laypersons), who need arguments for Fundamental Belief no. 24, are well advised to consult this anthology. However, a critical examination of the material without the background of the Adventist doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary in mind has not been attempted in this volume. This comprehensive collection is also suitable for non-Adventist theologians and Assyriologists for further research.

Kerstin Maiwald is an Assyriologist, Research Associate at Theologische Hochschule Friedensau and Managing Editor of *Spes Christiana*. She is preparing her defended dissertation in Assyriology for publication by an academic publishing house. E-mail: kerstin.maiwald@thh-friedensau.de