

A River Flows From It:
The “Sanctuary Doctrine” and the Hydrological Ecclesiology of the Temple
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Adventist Society for Religious Studies
Annual Meeting: Ecclesiology in Doctrine and Practice
San Diego, CA
Nov 22, 2014

Introduction

Within Seventh-day Adventism, what is known as the “sanctuary doctrine” or “sanctuary truth” has been central to its historical and theological self-identity. Deriving largely from the eschatological prophecy of Dan 8:14, yet including other texts in Daniel as well as in Leviticus, Hebrews, and Revelation, it has focused on such concepts as Jesus Christ’s two-phase, high priestly ministry in heaven, the antitypical Day of Atonement, the “Investigative” or “Pre-Advent” judgment, and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. After the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, in which the Adventist hope of Jesus Christ’s second coming was dashed, those that kept their belief in the calendrical fulfillment of Dan 8:14 in 1844, while revising their understanding of what took place in that year, saw that text and the related sanctuary concepts become central to their belief system and a major component of their ecclesiological identity.

And from the earliest post-Disappointment years, the sanctuary doctrine has been viewed as foundational and fundamental to Seventh-day Adventism,¹ despite its controverted and turbulent history.² It has been variously called the “outstanding truth of Seventh-day Adventists,”³ the doctrine that has “distinguished Seventh-day Adventism from nearly every

¹Cf. James White, who in 1850 confidently claimed that “the subject of the sanctuary . . . lies at the foundation of our faith and hope” (*The Advent Review* [special combined number, 1850]; in Ellen G. White, *Christ in His Sanctuary* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1969], 8); Ellen White, who in 1906 asserted that “the correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith” (Ellen White, Letter 208, 1906 [in *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 221]), and who in 1911 emphasized the importance of Dan 8:14 when she wrote that “the scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and central pillar of the Advent faith was the declaration, ‘Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed’” (*The Great Controversy* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911], 409); and LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), 77.

²In 1971 Froom noted that “the Sanctuary truth, more than any other basic Adventist teaching, has—quite apart from non-Adventist opposition—been subject to attack from within all through our denominational existence.” Yet, he declared, “these underminers have all finally left us, and have usually fought us. They have, however, all ultimately come to naught—without exception. Their unhappy wreckage is scattered across the years” (*Movement of Destiny*, 543). In less than a decade, however, Adventism was shaken to its core over the doctrine.

³Louise Kleuser, *The Bible Instructor in Personal and Public Evangelism* (1949; repr., Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2007), 107.

belief system on earth”⁴ and through which all other doctrines can be taught,⁵ and the “very heart of [the Seventh-day Adventist] message.”⁶

Currently the sanctuary doctrine, subsumed under the concept of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, remains the twenty-fourth in a list of Adventism’s twenty-eight fundamental beliefs.⁷ Nevertheless, even some of Adventism’s foremost critics have agreed that the fundamental centrality of the sanctuary doctrine is more substantial than just one out of twenty-eight beliefs. For instance, former Seventh-day Adventist minister and Bible teacher Dale Ratzlaff wrote in 2013 that “the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment and cleansing of the heavenly Sanctuary based upon Daniel 8:14 is indeed the central pillar of the Adventist faith. Some Adventists may disagree; however, it is.”⁸

Seventh-day Adventism has never engaged ecclesiology with as much fervor as it has eschatology. Nevertheless, it is striking that of the various biblical metaphors for the church (e.g., corporal, familial, agricultural, architectural),⁹ the ecclesiological image of the church as a temple (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21),¹⁰ while certainly not ignored, has never found a similarly resounding or pivotal level of interest as Adventism’s eschatological interest in the heavenly temple has. In this presentation I intend to sketch how a renewed study of the ecclesiological temple can reinvigorate the sanctuary doctrine so central to Adventism, expanding its horizons to include the life-giving, healing, and nourishing presence of the Spirit of Jesus, biblically symbolized as water flowing from the temple.

⁴Chris Blake, *Swimming Against the Current: Living for the God You Love* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 79. Cf. Froom: “The one distinctive, separative, structural truth—the sole doctrinal teaching that identifies and sets Seventh-day Adventists apart from all other Christian bodies past and present—is what we have always designated the ‘Sanctuary truth.’” This truth “was the earliest post-Disappointment position to be discerned and taught,” and “it has never lost that pivotal position” (*Movement of Destiny*, 541); and Richard M. Davidson: “For a century and a half the doctrine of the sanctuary has continued to lie at the foundation of Adventist theology and mission and has remained the most distinctive contribution of Adventism to Christian thought” (“In Confirmation of the Sanctuary Message,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 2 [1991]: 93).

⁵Kleuser, *The Bible Instructor*, 108: “Every other doctrine we hold as present truth may be taught through a study of the sanctuary.” Cf. C. Mervyn Maxwell, “Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology: An Historical Survey,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 516: “The sanctuary doctrine is related to everything else Seventh-day Adventists believe. . . .”

⁶Kleuser, *The Bible Instructor*, 108. Cf. Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 542, in which he warned that “any deviation or dereliction” from the sanctuary doctrine “strikes at the heart of Adventism, and challenges its very integrity”; and the title of Roy Adams’ book, *The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993).

⁷See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 347-69.

⁸Dale Ratzlaff, “No Reason to Exist Without the Central Pillar,” *Proclamation Magazine* 14 (Spring 2013): 6.

⁹Cf. such images as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27), branches of a vine (John 15:1-8), a chosen race (1 Pet 2:9), a flock (1 Pet 5:1-3), a holy nation (1 Pet 2:9), the household of God (1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17), and a pillar (1 Tim 3:15). See, e.g., Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

¹⁰This image derives from the Second Temple, Solomon’s Temple, and the wilderness tabernacle.

Water Flowing from the Temple

Numerous biblical texts describe water, streams, or rivers flowing from the earthly temple and its heavenly analogue. For instance, Ps 36:7-9 describes humans dwelling in the shadow of God's wings (a reference to the cherubim in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary), feasting on the abundance of his house (the same sanctuary), and drinking from the stream or river (נַחַל) of his delights (עֲרֵן¹¹) that must originate within that same sacred structure. In Joel 3:18 (MT 4:18) God promises Judah that its glorious future will include mountains dripping with new wine, hills flowing with milk, stream beds (or, "ravines": נַחֲלֵי מַיִם) flowing with water, and a fountain or spring (מַעְיָן) flowing from the house of YHWH—the temple—and watering the Valley of Acacias (אֲתֵת-נַחַל הַשִּׁטִּים).

In Ezek 47:1-12 the prophet Ezekiel describes water flowing east from the south side of the altar within the visionary temple complex. That flow of water becomes progressively deeper and deeper until it's higher than one's waist, and one can swim in the deepening river. The river flows east from the temple towards the Jordan Valley and enters the Dead Sea, where it "heals" or makes fresh (רַפָּיָה) its salt water (47:8, 9). Everything lives where the healing water flows, in particular, a variety of fish; the marshes and swamps, however, remain salty. All kinds of trees grow along the riverbank where the water flows from the temple, and they provide fruit every month as food and leaves for healing. In this utopian, visionary portrayal, the river from the temple thus brings life, healing, and fertility to virtually everything it touches.

In Ps 46:4 the psalmist declares that a river exists whose streams bring gladness to Jerusalem, the city of God. In a cosmic judgment scene in Dan 7:10, a fiery river flows from the heavenly throne of the Ancient of Days.¹² And Zech 14:8 prophesies that living waters will flow out from Jerusalem—half to the eastern sea (i.e., the Dead Sea), and half to the western sea (i.e., the Mediterranean), both in summer as well as in winter.¹³ These texts assume a motif of water flowing from the temple—whether earthly or heavenly.

A river flowing from the temple. Yet where does one find a river or a stream actually—historically, really—emanating from the Jerusalem temple and providing life, fertility, and healing for the thirsty ground and people? Seventh-day Adventist depictions of the temple

¹¹The Hebrew word is the plural of the same word translated in Gen 2 as "Eden."

¹²Cf. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis ("The High Priest as Divine Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Dan 7:13 as a Test Case," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers*, Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 36 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1998], 174 (Dan 7 "is ultimately Temple centered"); André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. André Lacocque (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 124-25 ("The vision in chapter 7 has the Temple as its framework"); and Marvin A. Sweeney, "The End of Eschatology in Daniel? Theological and Socio-Political Ramifications of the Changing Contexts of Interpretation," in *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 256-260, who concludes that "the visions of Daniel 7-12 are permeated with priestly imagery, symbolism, and concepts" (p. 260).

¹³Grant Macaskill states that this text thematically parallels the image of the life-giving river in Ezek 47:1-12 ("Paradise in the New Testament," in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 76).

rarely—if ever—illustrate this. It is missing, it is unknown, it is forgotten, it is unimportant, it is confusing, or it is inconvenient. It is an impossible river, since neither Solomon’s Temple nor the Second Temple “actually” had a river flowing from the sanctuary.

Flowing Water, Flowing Spirit

But it is clear that the literary world of the sanctuary did have a place for a river flowing from the sanctuary. Of what was it a symbol?

Within the Israelite cult, there was no statue or image within the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary. There was an image, however, and that image was the high priest. The high priest was dressed like the idols and images of the gods of other religions,¹⁴ and his typical, daily regalia replicated material found on the inside of the sanctuary.¹⁵ As such, he as the Image of YHWH replicated aspects of the interior of the sanctuary—where YHWH resided.

In the literary symbolism of the sanctuary cult, if one read about waters flowing from the sanctuary, one would thus assume there might be water imagery associated with the dress of the high priest. And there was. Philo of Alexandria understood the purple dye utilized in the sanctuary fabrics to symbolize water, since the dye was derived from a sea snail (*Congr.* 1.117; cf. *Mos.* 2.88).¹⁶ Furthermore, in contradistinction to the Hebrew Bible, which indicated that the pomegranate figures attached to the hem of the foot-length, hyacinthine robe of the high priest were made out of blue, purple, and scarlet material (Exod 28:33-34; 39:24-26 [LXX 36:31-33]), he instead indicated that these were golden in fabrication (*Mos.* 2.110). But what is of interest here is that he understood the pomegranates to be symbolic of water (*Mos.* 2.118-21, 133; *Spec.* 1.93-94).¹⁷ He understood that the hyacinthine robe, symbolizing the element of the air (ὁ ἀήρ), was the chariot (τὸ ὄχημα) from which was suspended both the earth, symbolized by floral imagery on the hem of the robe, and water, symbolized by the pomegranates (*Mos.* 2.121). He further solidified his conclusion regarding the pomegranates based on linguistic considerations: the Greek word for pomegranate, ῥοῖσκος, was etymologically derived from the “flowing”

¹⁴See Fletcher-Louis, “God’s Image, His Cosmic Temple and the High Priest: Towards an Historical and Theological Account of the Incarnation,” in *Heaven on Earth*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 85-91.

¹⁵Cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (1980; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 42-47, 52. On pp. 44-45 he notes that the water that flows from the temple in Ezek 47 flows on one of the sides (or, “shoulders”: עֲרֹבַי) of the temple (47:1-2), and that this same word is used with reference to the dress of the high priest (Exod 28:12, 25, 27; 39:7, 18, 20).

¹⁶On this color as well as on blue and the scarlet, see Ross E. Winkle, “‘Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man’: Dress Imagery in Revelation 1 as an Indicator of High Priestly Status” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2012), 93, n. 50. The “blue” is hyacinth or bluish purple, while the “purple” is reddish or Tyrian purple.

¹⁷Cf. Gert Steyn, “Elements of the Universe in Philo’s *De Vita Mosis*: Cosmological Theology or Theological Cosmology?”, *In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi* 47/2 (2013), Art. #699, pp. 2-5, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v47i2.699>. The Bible does not indicate what meaning the pomegranates had, contrary to C. Houtman, who refers to Prov 25:11 to conclude that they symbolize the Word of God (“Of the Pomegranates and the Golden Bells of the High Priest’s Mantle,” *Vetus Testamentum* 40 (1990): 225; cf. p. 227).

(ῥύσις) of water (*Mos.* 2.119; *Spec.* 1.93).¹⁸

These are but two examples that demonstrate that liquid imagery was associated with the dress of the high priest, and thus the temple.¹⁹ Moreover, some understood the dress of the high priest to more particularly symbolize not just water but flowing or “living” water. Within the New Testament, the book of Revelation portrays the “one like a son of man” standing in a sanctuary setting indicated by the seven golden lampstands (1:12) and wearing the hyacinthine robe of the high priest (1:13),²⁰ and that would assume that his foot-length robe implicitly has the pomegranate figures hanging from it. There is no indication, however, that any symbolic reference to flowing water is being communicated with the assumed aspect of this high priestly garment.

Nevertheless, after the initial description of the one like a son of man dressed in the high priestly robe and sash, a seven-part, further description ensues two verses later (1:15). John describes the voice of the one dressed in this high priestly robe and sash as sounding like “many

¹⁸This linguistic connection between “pomegranate” and “flowing” is possible: ῥόα, a word related to ῥοῖσκος and also meaning “pomegranate,” may have derived from ῥοῦς, which means “stream” (Robert Beekes, with the assistance of Lucien van Beek, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* [Leiden: Brill, 2010], s.v. ῥόα).

The historian Josephus saw the purple color embroidered into the temple veil representing the sea (*A.J.* 3.183; *J.W.* 5.213). He noted that this same color (along with gold, scarlet, and hyacinth) was part of the high priest’s sash (*A.J.* 3.154; *J.W.* 5.213, 232). But he appears to have also provided a different interpretation of the pomegranates, working from the understanding of the hyacinthine robe representing the sky or firmament (*A.J.* 3.184: ὁ πόλος). Consequently, he understood that while the golden bells attached to the hyacinthine robe represented thunder, the interspersed pomegranates represented lightning (*A.J.* 3.184; *J.W.* 5.231: ἀστραπή).

Josephus knew who Philo was and was aware of at least some of Philo’s writings (Gregory E. Sterling, “A Man of the Highest Repute’: Did Josephus Know the Writings of Philo?”, *Studia Philonica Annual* 25 [2013]: 101-113; Sterling concludes that Philo’s works “easily eclipsed” those of Josephus “in exegetical and philosophical sophistication” [p. 113]). Josephus probably shared a common exegetical tradition with Philo about the cosmological meaning of the sanctuary cult, but it is possible that he subscribed to a separate exegetical tradition in which the pomegranate was associated with lightning because of linguistic reasons related to the Semitic storm god Rammān, who was associated with thunder, lightning, and rain. This particular god’s Hebrew consonantal spelling (e.g., 2 Kgs 5:18: רַמְמוֹן; LXX Ρεμμων) is the same as the Hebrew word for pomegranate (e.g., Joel 1:12: רַמְמוֹן; LXX ῥόα). Whether the latter association was a purposeful parody by the Hebrew scribe to denigrate the foreign god is certainly possible. See Robert Cohn, “Form and Perspective in 2 Kings V,” *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (1983), 178; John Gray, *I and II Kings: A Commentary* (London; Philadelphia, 1964), 456; Walter A. Maier III, “Hadadrimmon,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:13. Note that LXX Zech 12:11 translated the reference to the weeping for Hadad-rimmon (רַמְמוֹן) in the plain of Megiddo into mourning for the “pomegranate grove” (ῥοῶνος) cut down on the plain. On this, see the discussion in Leonard L. Thompson, “Lamentation for Christ as a Hero: Revelation 1:7,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000): 686.

Alternatively, Josephus may have subscribed to an exegetical tradition like Philo in which the pomegranate (ῥοῖσκος or ῥόα) was linguistically associated with a verb meaning “flow, run like water, stream” (ῥέω). The phenomena of lightning (ἀστραπή) is similar to that of a thunderbolt (κεραυνός). In *Mos.* 2:56 Philo describes thunderbolts that fell or “flowed” from heaven (κεραυνοὶ ῥέυτες ἐξ οὐρανοῦ). This would make Josephus’ interpretation of the pomegranates symbolizing lightning closer to Philo’s pomegranates symbolizing flowing water, since both water and thunderbolts (similar to lightning) could be described as “flowing.”

¹⁹Note also, for instance, the laver in the courtyard of the sanctuary, which in the account of Solomon’s Temple was explicitly called the “Sea” (ים; 1 Kgs 7:23-25, 39, 44).

²⁰See the discussion in Winkle, “Dress Imagery in Revelation 1,” particularly pp. 152-98 and 277-306.

waters” (ὕδατων πολλῶν)—an allusion to Ezek 43:2, which described the return of the glory of God from the east, the glory sounding like “many waters” (מַיִם רַבִּים).²¹ The noisy reference to his voice is the exact center and the only audible aspect of this detailed description.²² As the visionary narrative flows into chaps. 2-3, the voice of “many waters” becomes the voice of the Spirit of Jesus²³ that speaks (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In a sanctuary setting, the “many waters” flow from the mouth of the high priestly Jesus in messages of love, encouragement, warning, and rebuke to the seven churches of Asia Minor—encompassing both the river of life and the river of judgment (cf. Dan 7:10). Thus in John’s inaugural vision and the subsequent messages to the seven churches, the motif of flowing water in a sanctuary setting is associated with—and is a symbol of—the Spirit. This would not be unusual, since there are a number of references in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish writings, and the New Testament that symbolize the Spirit by water.²⁴

Revelation 7:17 describes Jesus, the Lamb, guiding the “great multitude” of God’s people to fountains/springs of living water (ζωῆς πηγᾶς ὑδάτων). The eternal culmination of the flowing river is envisioned in John’s description of the New Jerusalem, where the Alpha and Omega promises that he will give water from the fountain/spring of living water (πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος) as a gift (21:6; cf. 22:17: ὕδωρ ζωῆς). The New Jerusalem itself is where the river of living water (ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς) flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, providing water to the paradisaical tree of life that produces fruit each month and has leaves that heal the nations (22:1-2).²⁵ There is no temple in the New Jerusalem since God and the Lamb are its ultimate, eschatological temple (Rev 21:22). Consequently, the river of living water that flows

²¹LXX Ezek 43:2 instead has φωνὴ τῆς παρεμβολῆς ὡς φωνὴ διπλασιαζόντων πολλῶν (“a voice of an encampment [or, “army”], like the sound of many redoubling [their shouts]”). Cf. Ezek 1:24, where the sound of the wings of the four living creatures is like the sound of many waters, which there is also compared to the voice of YHWH, or the sound of a tumult (or, rainstorm), or that of an army.

²²καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν λυχνιῶν ὅμοιον υἶδὸν ἀνθρώπου ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ περιεζωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώην χρυσᾶν.

[Head/hair]	ἡ δὲ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ αἱ τρίχες λευκαὶ ὡς ἔριον λευκόν ὡς χιῶν
[Eyes]	καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόξ πυρὸς
[Feet]	καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης
[Voice]	καὶ ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν
[Hand]	καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἀστέρας ἑπτὰ
[Mouth]	καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ῥομφαία δίστομος ὅξεια ἐκπορευομένη
[Face]	καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ.

Cf. Ganoune Diop, “Jesus Christ in the Midst of His People: A Study of Revelation 1:9-22,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8 (1997): 42, who takes it as a chiasmic structure.

²³It is Jesus, since the “one like a son of man” in 1:13 indicates that he was dead but is alive (1:18).

²⁴See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1105, who lists such texts as Ezek 36:25-27; John 3:5; 4:10-24; *Pesikta Rabbati* 1.2; and *Odes Sol.* 6:7-18.

²⁵This alludes to the liquid imagery in Ezek 47:1-12, Joel 4:18, Zech 14:8, and Gen 2:10 (cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 1103).

from the throne of God and the Lamb essentially flows from the “temple” that is God and the Lamb.

While many Christians see Revelation’s New Jerusalem in fairly literal terms, it is essential to see John’s description as containing symbolic meaning. For instance, the Lamb marrying its bride, the city, cannot be taken literally (21:2, 9), and neither can the measurements be taken literally (21:16-17).²⁶ Such being the case, the river of living water would make coherent sense as a liquid symbol of the Spirit, flowing from the temple—from God and the Lamb—and bringing life, healing, and blessing to all.²⁷

In the words of Heb 11:32, “what more could I say? For time would fail me to tell of” texts in which God is described as a fountain/spring of water (Jer 2:12-13; 17:12-13; cf. 15:18); texts explicitly or implicitly associating the outpouring of the Spirit with water (e.g., Isa 11:2, 9; 32:14-15²⁸; 44:3-4); the archetypal sanctuary in the story of Eden, with the river watering the Garden and then dividing into four rivers (Gen 2:10-14)²⁹; Creation and Edenic imagery in the tabernacle and Solomon’s temple, in which the associated hydrological awareness would resonate³⁰; references to luxuriant trees in the sanctuary, flourishing implicitly because of irrigation (e.g., Ps 52:8; 92:12-15); the repeated water imagery in the gospel of John (e.g., 4:4-15; 6:35; 19:34),³¹ particularly the rivers of living water that Jesus asserts will later flow in the

²⁶The measurements and numbers associated with the city are multiples of the number twelve (21:16-17), associated with the tribes of Israel and the apostles (21:12-14). Moreover, the city is a golden cube (21:16, 18, 21), like the Most Holy Place of the temple. The city’s foundations are made out of twelve precious stones similar to the twelve stones of the high priest’s breastpiece (21:19-21). The city has gigantic gates made out of pearls (21:21), yet the gates are never closed (21:25). The river of living water flows from the throne of God and the Lamb (22:1). The inhabitants will have the name of God and the Lamb on their foreheads (22:4; cf. 14:1). Taking these literally can create interpretive problems.

²⁷Cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 1104; Macaskill, “Paradise,” 77-78. Macaskill argues that the throne appears in association with the Spirit in Rev 1:4, 4:5, and 5:6, and since the Spirit is not dissociated from the throne in these passages, it must be seen before the throne and proceeding from it in Rev 22:1-2; the river of living water fulfills this role (*ibid.*, 78). Macaskill also notes that the resulting “life that is enjoyed by the occupants of the New Jerusalem is in no way separable from the presence of God. Nor is it in any way separable from the atoning work of Jesus, since it proceeds from the throne of the Lamb” (*ibid.*, 77).

²⁸Note that justice and righteousness resulting from the Spirit being poured out like water. See Amos 5:24, where justice rolls on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream. With the foundation of God’s throne being justice and righteousness (Ps 89:14; 97:2), it makes sense to understand the Spirit flowing from the throne of God and producing justice and righteousness (cf. Isa 32:5-6).

²⁹On this and much more, see, e.g., Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, Biblical Tools and Studies 15 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 76-91; and T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 25 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

³⁰The literature is vast; see, e.g., William P. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 73-89.

³¹See, e.g., Larry Paul Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 145 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); and Wai-ye Ng, *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation*, Studies in Biblical Literature 15 (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

outpouring of the Spirit (14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 20:21-22; cf. Acts 2:1-18)—arguably flowing from Jesus, the temple (7:37-39; cf. 2:19-21),³² and yet in probable Johannine ambiguity also understood to be flowing out from the believer³³; Paul’s references to drinking the liquid Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 5:18-20; cf. 1 Cor 10:1-4); and much, much more. In all of these portrayals, the overall imagery finds coherence in the water, fountains, springs, and rivers streaming, flowing, gurgling, and gushing from the sanctuary, bringing nourishment, life, freshness, healing, blessing, and abundance.

Ripples to Torrents

I would like to briefly suggest just three areas in which an enriched understanding and appreciation of the imagery of water flowing from the sanctuary into and through the temple of the community of believers could positively impact Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. First, just as the Spirit of God was associated with the Jesus’ baptism in the waters of the Jordan River (Matt 3:13-17 and par.), so could we conceptualize the waters of the Spirit of Jesus flowing from the heavenly temple when people are baptized, symbolizing their Spirit-immersion, new life, and fruitfulness to the church community and the world beyond.³⁴

Second, as disciples of Jesus we are compared to branches on Jesus, the vine (John 15:1-8). We can only bear “fruit” by being connected to the vine (15:4), and producing fruit is the evidence and proof of our discipleship (15:8). But such “fruit” comes from the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), even as fruit grows on vines and fruit trees not only because of good soil but also because of water irrigation (Jer 17:8; 47:1-12; Rev 22:1-2). The fruit of the Spirit, consisting in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22-23), and every other spiritual gift, derives from the river of the Spirit flowing from the temple of Christ’s heavenly intercession into the lives of disciples.³⁵

And third, as the waters of the Spirit flow from the heavenly temple where Jesus intercedes into the human temple of his church, they cannot be constrained, stopped up, or held back unless we resist.³⁶ They continue to ripple and flow outward from us into the world around

³²On the difficulties in John 7:37-39, again, the literature is vast. See, e.g., D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 321-29; and Joseph R. Greene, “Integrating Interpretations of John 7:37-39 into the Temple Theme: The Spirit as Efflux from the New Temple,” *Neotestamentica* 47 (2013): 333-53.

³³On this, see Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 318-19.

³⁴Since John the Baptizer baptized either “in” or “with” water (ἐν ὕδατι), the parallel would yield Jesus baptizing “in” or “with” the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι) and fire (Matt 3:11; cf. Luke 3:16).

³⁵Cf. Rev 5:6, in which John describes the Lamb having seven horns and seven eyes, “which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth”; and Ellen G. White, “The Outpouring of the Spirit,” *Signs of the Times* (December 1, 1898), par. 2: “Christ determined that when He ascended from this earth He would bestow a gift on those who had believed on Him and those who should believe on Him. What gift could He bestow rich enough to signalize and grace His ascension to the mediatorial throne? It must be worthy of His greatness and His royalty. He determined to give His representative, the third person of the Godhead. This gift could not be excelled. He would give all gifts in one, and therefore the divine Spirit, converting, enlightening, sanctifying, would be His donation.”

³⁶Cf. Acts 7:51; 1 Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30.

us, bringing the possibilities of life and healing to others. As the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness (Mark 1:12), so the rivers of the Spirit compellingly move us into mission to bring the refreshing water of the Spirit to those who thirst—knowingly or not—for Jesus.³⁷

Conclusion

A much subdued—if not mostly missing—element in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the sanctuary doctrine is the dynamic ministry of the Spirit in bringing life, healing, nourishment, and blessing (cf. Ezek 47:1-12; Rev 21-22). I have attempted to suggest in this sketch that a renewed interest in, understanding of, and appreciation for the imagery of the Spirit of Jesus flowing from the heavenly temple into and through the temple of the community of believers and out into the world would greatly enrich Seventh-day Adventism's sanctuary doctrine, the ecclesiological concepts of baptism, discipleship and spiritual gifts, and mission, and enhance its contemporary relevance. In biblical terms, the river(s) would flow, the desolate wilderness would bloom, the fruitless trees would repeatedly bear fruit, and people would be healed and refreshed. It is time for Seventh-day Adventists to irrigate and rehydrate our teaching on the sanctuary, emphasizing that the sanctuary paradigm includes the streaming, flowing, surging, cascading, and gushing work of the Spirit of Jesus in bringing new life, radical healing, flourishing nourishment, and rich blessing to those who drink its thirst-quenching waters.

³⁷See, e.g., Acts 4:8-31; 8:26-29, 39-40; 10:19-20, 38, 44-47; 11:12; 13:4.