

A Historical-Theological Survey on the Heavenly Sanctuary Existence

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Abstract

Most of Christians doubt the existence of the heavenly sanctuary. They think that its reality is unreasonable and has no sound biblical evidence. Some scholars argue that this is an isolated doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventists that has no parallel in the Christian doctrine in the past. This paper attempts to highlight the concept of the heavenly sanctuary in the history. Using the documentary research model and analyzing resources by historical-theological approach, this research concludes that heavenly sanctuary existence is not an isolated doctrine in the Christian history. There are periods of the acceptance and rejection of its existence. A major reason of rejection during the patristic period was the acceptance of dualistic concept and allegorical interpretation among Christians. This article's purpose is to provide a survey on the development understanding about heavenly sanctuary from the pre-biblical period to current days.

Keywords: *heavenly sanctuary, ANE literature, church fathers, reformers, adventist pioneers*

Introduction

The existence of heavenly sanctuary has become a debate for centuries among the scholars. There are two main views about the nature of heavenly sanctuary.¹ First is a literal view. The proponent of this concept believes that there is a real existence of the sanctuary in heaven. The second group claims that there is no heavenly sanctuary. The adherents of this view argue that when the Bible says about the sanctuary in heaven, it is only a figure or symbol and has no relationship to its real existence.²

Seventh-day Adventist holds a literalistic view on the nature of heavenly sanctuary.³ However, most of evangelical scholars do not believe its actuality and accuse

¹Niels Eric Andreasen, "The Heavenly Sanctuary in the Old Testament." In *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Arnold Wallenkampf and Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1981), 67.

²William G. Johnson, "The Heavenly Cultus in the Book of Hebrews—Figurative or real?" In *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Arnold Wallenkampf and Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1981), 363-365.

³Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993), 62.

the Adventists believe an isolated doctrine that has never been believed by Christians in the past. Even few Adventists rejected its existence. These different interpretations can be traced back in the history of Christianity. Since there is no attempt on surveying historical-theological development of the existence of the sanctuary in heaven,⁴ this research provides its development understanding throughout the centuries. In this article, the word “sanctuary” and “temple” are used interchangeably. The author presumes that they are identical. This study helps to understand why there are different opinions about the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

Discussion

An Assumption of the Heavenly Sanctuary Existence: In the ANE Literature

The ancient Israel believed in the existence of sanctuary in heaven. However, they were not living in isolated area. They lived with the nations, in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) which had their own concept about the heavenly realm. These people thought that their gods lived in heaven and their temple should be there as well. However, there is a doubting about this concept.⁵ There are some scholars think that there was no sufficient evidence in the ANE literature about the appearance of the heavenly sanctuary.⁶ The following section indicates that there are some records to support its presence.

Sumerian Literature

Archaeology contributes to a better understanding of the ANE communities about the nature of the sanctuary in heaven. Gudea cylinders dated about 2125 BC was discovered. These artifacts showing that Sumerian society believed at the description about the heavenly sanctuary. The cylinders’ record is about a dedication chant of a temple for a Sumerian god, Ningirsu. These cylinders told about the account of Gudea, the king of Lagash. This king had a dream where he was shown the plan to build a temple which dedicated to Ningirsu.⁷ Gudea saw in his dream that “there was a warrior who bent (his) arm holding a lapis lazuli plate on which he was setting the ground-plan of a house.”⁸ In the house that he built, “Gudea had painted [i.e., temple] (to recall) the splendor of

⁴There are some works about the historical-theological development of the heavenly sanctuary but they are not specific on the development understanding on the existence of it. The compilation of these works is re-edited by Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1989).

⁵George B. Gray, “The Heavenly Temple and the Heavenly Altar,” *The Expositor* 5 (1908): 546.

⁶Gerhard von Rad, “Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” in *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. Claus Westerman (London: SCM Press, 1963), 17; See also Buchanan, “The heavenly Temple,” 394-402.

⁷Diane M. Sharon, “A Biblical Parallel to a Sumerian Temple hymn? Ezekiel 40-48 and Gudea.” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 24 (1996), 99-109.

⁸Dietz Otto Edzard, *Gudea and Dynasty*, The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Early Periods, vol. 3/1 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1997), 71-72.

heaven.”⁹ For Sumerian, this account indicated their faith in the existence of the sanctuary in heaven, even though, it was not mentioned in detail¹⁰ since he was at a dream. Nevertheless, Gudea’s paint about the heavenly temple shows Sumerian’s assumption about its existence.

Akkadian Literature

A story of Etana comes from 21th century BC contributing to the idea of the heavenly sanctuary. The similar story is also found in Old Babylonian, and Assyrian version. The author of this story assumed was King of Ur. It noted a king of Kish, Etana went to heaven riding by his eagle.¹¹ As they (the king and the eagle) reached the heaven, they passed through several gates which names were Anu, Ellil, Ea, Sin, Shamash, Adad, and Ishtar. The king saw a house and came in. Inside the building, he saw a woman sitting on a throne.¹² The king could identify that the house referred to a heavenly temple of a god, namely Ishtar.¹³ This description indicates that, in the Akkadian literature, the heavenly temple and a god’s residence were at the same place. The other notion is that “heavenly temple/sanctuary functioning as a royal palace of the deity.”¹⁴

The other Akkadian literature about the description of the heavenly sanctuary is from Hammurabi’s law. The king made a written code of laws carved on a stone at Susa.¹⁵ At the introduction of the laws, he wrote that he was the person “who made famous the temple of Ebabbar which is akin to the abode of heaven.”¹⁶ Apparently, the “abode of heaven seems to refer to a specific place located in heaven where the deity dwells.”¹⁷ Thus, Akkadian communities assumed that the heavenly sanctuary existed.

Ugaritic Literature

Ugaritic communities supposed the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. Their literature told a story about Danel, a childless king. One day, he came to Baal asking him to intercede his request to El, a chief of Ugaritic gods, for a son. Finally, Danel had a son. He named him as Aqhat. However, the son died few years later and the king wept for seven years. In one occasion, the king wanted to deliver food to gods in heaven, he entered a temple and burnt incense. The word “heaven” may indicate “for heavenly sanctuary of the deities.”¹⁸ Ugaritic literature points out their assumption of a sanctuary in heaven.

⁹Ibid, 86.

¹⁰Elias Brazil de Souza, “The Heavenly Sanctuary /Temple Motif in the Hebrew Bible: Function and Relationship to the earthly counterparts.” (PhD Dissertation, Andrews University, 2005), 32.

¹¹William W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of the Scripture: Canonical Composition from the Biblical World* [COS] (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 1: 453.

¹²Ibid, 1: 457.

¹³Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamia Cosmic Geography*, Mesopotamian Civilization 8. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 208.

¹⁴Souza, *The Heavenly Sanctuary*, 40.

¹⁵J.I. Packer, Merrill Chapin Tenney and William White, *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 114.

¹⁶Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 77.

¹⁷Souza, *The Heavenly Sanctuary*, 40.

¹⁸Ibid, 61.

The other Ugaritic story recorded about heavenly sanctuary was Baal cycle. This literature reported about “the story of Baal’s rise to kingship over the gods by his defeat of the forces of chaos, Sea and Death.”¹⁹ One day, Baal came to Athirat and asked her to be his intercessor to El asking for allowing him to build a temple in heaven after his defeating over Yam. El granted his request.²⁰ Based on this writing, the sanctuary in heaven was not static but dynamic because it included building a temple or sanctuary. Ugaritic communities assumed that there was the existence of sanctuary in heaven.

Egyptian Literature

Egyptian communities presumed the existence of the the sanctuary in heaven. Pyramid texts are inscriptions written on the wall of kings and queens pyramids in Egypt from several dynasties (ca. 2350-2160 BC). Several texts mentioned some of spells that they believed could make the dead arouse and “ascent to the sky.”²¹ One of the sentences was “he shall not ascend to the mansion of Horus which is in the sky on that day when judgment is made.”²² This statement shows that “the mansion of Horus” as the place of judgment. The mansion of a God was believed by the ancient pagan as the temple of him.

Another ancient Egyptian literature was coffin texts. There are hundreds of coffin texts found, several of them show that the Egyptians assumed on the heavenly sanctuary. The inscription of one of the texts is “O my soul, my spirit, my magic and my shade, open the doors of the sky, throw open the gates of heaven, may your ornament be secured on yourself so that you may enter to the great god who is in his shrine and see Re in his true shape.”²³ The ancient Egyptian believed the existence of the temple of their gods in heaven.

The reality of the heavenly sanctuary was assumed by Ancient Near Eastern communities. Their literature demonstrated that every god had their own temple in heaven. The function of the place was also as a dwelling place of God. The nature of it is not static. In the writings, they indicate that the place is dynamic that there are many activities such as accepting prayer, build a house or temple, and decide the destiny of creature beings. It was also described as the place of judgment.

An Acceptance of the Heavenly Sanctuary Existence: In the Scripture

For the ancient Israel, the presence of the heavenly sanctuary was not an unusual matter. God Himself revealed the existence of this temple to Moses in the Old Testament and he made the earthly temple according to the pattern that he has been shown. New Testament continued this idea.

Old Testament

¹⁹Michael David Coogan, ed., *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 75.

²⁰Souza, *The Heavenly Sanctuary*, 67.

²¹Paul J. Achtemeier, “Pyramid text,” *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 844.

²²Raymond Oliver Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Text*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 172.

²³Raymond Oliver Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Text*, (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 193), 2: 134.

The Scripture mentions several texts about the actuality of the heavenly sanctuary. The Old Testament gives some evidences about its existence. God told Moses to build a sanctuary which had its pattern in heaven. God said, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*” (Ex 25:8-9 NKJV). The word “pattern” comes from the Hebrew word *Tabnît*. The term relates to the heavenly sanctuary three times in the Old Testament (Ex 25:9, 40) and all are mentioned by God Himself. Thus, the presence of the heavenly sanctuary was a revelation of God to Moses. Few centuries later, Stephen testified that Moses built the earthly sanctuary based on the pattern that God has shown him (Acts 7:44).

New Testament

The New Testament writers maintained the idea of the existence of heavenly sanctuary even more obvious than the Old Testament. LXX translates the word *Tabnît* (pattern) in Ex 25:9, 40 as *túpos*. This word also appears in the New Testament relates to the “pattern” of sanctuary that Moses has received from God (Acts 7:44 and Heb 8:5). Luke, the author of Acts of the Apostles, and Paul, the author of Hebrews, agree about the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. Paul, indeed, called the earthly sanctuary as “the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb 8:5) and the heavenly sanctuary as “the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man” (v. 2). He also stated that the sanctuary in heaven if compared with the earthly is much “greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands” (v. 11). Paul also mentioned that Jesus is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary (v. 24). John, the apostle, testified the reality of the heavenly sanctuary in the book of Revelation (7:15; 11:1, 2, 19; 14:15, 17; 15: 5, 6, 8; 16: 1, 17). Thus, scripture accepts the existence of the heavenly sanctuary consistently from Pentateuch to the Revelation.

A Denial to the Heavenly Sanctuary Existence: In the Early to Middle Ages

Greek philosophy influenced many cultures especially when Roman empire ruled over most part of the world. Even though the Roman had defeated the Greece kingdom and planted the military authority in many kingdoms but Greek philosophy has been accepted in many places. The using of Greek Koine rather than latin as lingua franca in the territory of Roman empire proved its excellency. Greek philosophy taught that heaven was static and immutable. Thus, dynamic activities in heaven was impossible. This idea led to the denial of the actuality of the heavenly sanctuary which requires process and progress.

Philo and Platonism

Philo Judaeus (25 BC-40 AD) was a Jew but grew in Alexandria. This city was influenced by the Greek culture and Philo was raised in Jewish faith but in Greek philosophy mindset. He has Greek perspective when he read the Old Testament. Dualism was one of Greek philosophy characteristics and infiltrated many scholars including Philo. He held Pentateuch as the most authoritative writing, and “the method Philo used to harmonize Scripture with the teaching of the philosophers was allegorical interpretation.”²⁴

²⁴Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Philo Judaeus,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*,

From this perspective, he understood the heavenly sanctuary as an allegory. He wrote, “The highest, and in the truest sense the holy temple of God is, as we must believe, the whole universe, having for its sanctuary the most sacred part of all existence, even heaven, for its votive ornaments of the stars, for its priests the angels who are servitors to his powers, unbodied souls, not compounds of rational and irrational nature.”²⁵ Philo believed that heavenly sanctuary represented the whole universe and made its reality blur. He also tried to understand the heavenly beings as allegory. For Philo:

An angel is an intellectual soul or rather wholly mind, wholly incorporeal, made (to be) a minister of God, and appointed over certain needs and the service of the race of mortals, since it was unable, because of its corruptible nature, to receive the gifts and benefactions extended by God... (Therefore) of necessity was the Logos appointed as judge and mediator, who is called ‘angel.’”²⁶

Plato philosophy influenced Philo more than any major Jews scholars. He was prominent to promulgate Plato’s idea. He also understood the Bible through the philosophy of Plato.²⁷ Philo was part of middle Platonism school.²⁸ In Platonism, they believe on dualistic that is “the unseen is the ultimately real---the seen is transient.”²⁹ In this idea, they saw God as “permanent”³⁰ and “transcendent models, mathematical in form, of which the things of this world are images and constitute the contents of the Divine Mind.”³¹ That is why he understood that the temple of God as whole universe and the heavenly things are static. This method was followed by several church fathers.

Athanasius

Athanasius was born in the midst of rich and high rank family at the end of third century. He received education in Alexandria and “he is also familiar with the theories of various philosophical schools, and in particular with the developments of Neo-Platonism.”³² Since his youth, often time, his parents found him quoting Plato and later became a pupil of Origen.³³

His view about the nature of heavenly sanctuary, actually, was following Philo’s idea. However, he “recognized the continuity between the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and His priestly ministry in heaven where Christ was performing a work of propitiation,

(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988) 2:1684.

²⁵Philo in William G. Johnsson, “The Heavenly cultus in the Book of Hebrews—figurative or real?” In *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Arnold Wallenkampf and Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1981), 366.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Philo Judaeus,” 2:1684.

²⁸David Noel Freedman, “Platonism,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* [ABD](New York: Doubleday, 1996), 5:379.

²⁹William Johnsson, “The Heavenly cultus,” 366.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹David Noel Freedman , “Platonism,” *ABD*, 5:379.

³²Philip Schaff ed., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series* [NPNF] Vol. IV, Athanasius: Select Works and Letters. (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 1.

³³Ibid.

redemption, sanctification, and judgment.”³⁴ Regarding the sanctuary in the book of Hebrew chapter six and nine, he said, “so again in the Christ Himself we might be highly exalted, being raised from the dead, and ascending into heaven, ‘whither the forerunner Jesus is for us entered, not into the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.’”³⁵ It seems that he understood the heaven itself as the sanctuary. Therefore, he denied the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. He allegorized its existence. Moreover, “church fathers did not explore in detail the priestly work of Christ in heaven. Their main emphasis was on Christ’s priestly work on the cross where He offered Himself as a sacrifice.”³⁶ In addition to that, they added the saints, apostles and the most important is the priest to be mediators in heaven.³⁷ The historical background of Athanasius and the worldview he had, made him hard to receive the dynamic dimension of heavenly sanctuary. Even though he recognized the ministry of Jesus in heaven but it does not mean that the work of Jesus is happening in the heavenly sanctuary because even though he believed on the existence of heaven but not on the heavenly sanctuary. The reality of the sanctuary in heaven was doubted apparently as he maintained his dualistic and allegoric concept while studying the Bible.³⁸

Methodius

Methodius was a bishop at Lycia and then moved to Tyre, Phoenicia to hold the same office. In 312 AD he died because of the persecution at that time. The only extant writing of him is *Banquets of the Ten Virgins*. In his writing, he had a “tendency to allegorical interpretations of Holy Scripture.”³⁹ This method was obvious as he considered, “The Hebrews were commanded to ornament the Tabernacle as a type of the Church.”⁴⁰ It means that the sanctuary was allegorized as the pure or holy church.⁴¹ He also interpreted that the heavenly sanctuary as “the city in heaven.”⁴² This statement indicates that he did not accept the existence of the heavenly sanctuary.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus was a bishop of Lyons in the second century. He claimed that in his early years he was in Smyrna when Polycarp was as bishop. He was well known because his arguments against Gnosticism. He is considered as the first systematic theologian.⁴³ As he

³⁴Angel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 403.

³⁵Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against Arians* 1.11.41 (NPNF, 4.330, trans John Henry Newman and Archibald T. Robertson).

³⁶Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” 403.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., “Methodius: Introduction,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, Julius Africanus, Anatolius and Minor Writers, Methodius, Arnobius*, vol. 6, The Ante-Nicene Fathers [ANF] (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 307.

⁴⁰Methodius, *Banquets of the Ten Virgins* 5.7 (ANF, 6:328, trans William R. Clark).

⁴¹Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” 403.

⁴²Methodius, *Banquets of the Ten Virgins* 5.7 (ANF, 6:328).

⁴³David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1996), 3:457.

talked about the temple in first Corinthians, he spiritualized it, as he explained, “And not only does he (the apostle) acknowledge our bodies to be a temple, but even the temple of Christ”⁴⁴ Therefore, “Irenaeus identified God’s temple with the believer.”⁴⁵ This allegorization blurred the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

Venerable Bede

In the middle Ages, the theological foundation of Bible doctrine has been laid by church fathers. The influence of dualistic idea was predominant at this time. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was not questionable but the intercessional work was also done by many saints. The role of Virgin Mary as intercessor was starting “popularized in the church.”⁴⁶ In this era, the sense of heavenly sanctuary as the Christian Church was prominent and apparently it was the predominant understanding among the scholars.

Venerable Bede reflected this idea. He wrote about the Israelites’ temple but it was in allegorical exposition. In this work “he argued, following patristic writers, that the tabernacle was a symbol of the church.”⁴⁷ The idea of the heavenly sanctuary in the middle ages was still influenced by church fathers who saw the heavenly sanctuary as a symbol but denied its reality.

It is difficult for the church fathers and also the middle ages theologians to have a new interpretation about the sanctuary because they still held dualistic thinking as their presupposition. This methodology guided them to maintain allegorical interpretation when they studied the sanctuary in heaven.

The Restoration of the Heavenly Sanctuary Existence: In the Reformation and Puritan Period

In the reformation period, reformers attempted to put the Bible as the primary standard for faith and practice. The slogan *sola scriptura* was helpful to bring some important truths back to its track, even though, to restore the whole truth needed some process and time. Several reformers in this period made an effort to restore the realistic concept of the heavenly sanctuary.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther was born in 1483, at Eisleben, Germany. Luther published his 95 theses on October 31, 1517 as a protest to the sale of indulgences. His views about the ministry of Jesus was “He arose from the dead, that He ascended into heaven, and that He sits at the right hand of God, not in order to be idle and while away His time there, but to save us all from sin, death, and the power of the devil.”⁴⁸ He believed that Jesus the only

⁴⁴Irenaeus, *Irenaeus Against Heresies* 5.6.2 (ANF, 1:532 eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe).

⁴⁵Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” 403.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Martin Luther in Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” 404. See also V. Norskov Olsen, “The atonement in Protestant Reformation Thought,” In *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 453.

mediator in heaven. There were no saints, Mary or even the Disciples of Christ could help him in his intercessory in heaven. However, his statement about the nature of heavenly sanctuary was not so clear even though he believed that “our present and future redemption hinges on the reality that He went to heaven, ‘not in order to be idle.’”⁴⁹ The work of Jesus in heaven, for Luther was a reality. His work was showing a dynamic activity of Jesus for our salvation and not static. In spite of Luther’s restoration of Jesus’s intercessory in heaven, however, there was no specific recognition about the heavenly sanctuary. Luther’s idea was an advance effort to restore the mediatorial work of Jesus in heaven. Further restoration idea about the heavenly sanctuary was made by Calvin.

John Calvin

Calvin was the first reformer that explicitly mentioned about the presence of the heavenly sanctuary. In Basel, he wrote *institutes* which mean the principles of the Christian faith. About the intercessory work of Jesus in heaven he wrote, “For we, though in ourselves polluted, in him being priests (Rev 1:6), offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary, so that the sacrifices of prayer and praise which we present are grateful and of sweet odour before him.”⁵⁰ He confirmed the reality of the sanctuary in heaven when he wrote, “The meaning is that once by His death He made expiation for our sins to reconcile us to God, and now, having entered heavenly sanctuary, He appears in the presence of the Father for our sakes that we may be heard in His name.”⁵¹ This statements are showing his confidence of the heavenly sanctuary reality.

Puritan

The Puritan was a significant movement in English Protestants back to 16th and 17th centuries. This group showed a great concern about the ministry of Jesus in heavenly sanctuary. John Owen said “the actual intercession of Christ in heaven ... is a fundamental article of our faith, and a principal foundation of the consolation of the church” (on Heb. 7:23–25).⁵² The Puritan’s leader accepted the ministry of Jesus in heavenly sanctuary based on the book of Hebrews and the “existence of a heavenly sanctuary was standard theology among Puritans divines.”⁵³ The puritan thought that the teaching about the intercessory of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary was very important for them.

In the middle ages, the dualism concept was still impressed in the mind of scholars and it made them difficult to see the dynamic and the reality of heavenly sanctuary. However, in the reformation times, there was a great change. When the Bible was read and understood with the light of Holy Spirit, they could more understand the reality of heavenly sanctuary, its dynamic and meaning in their life. There was also a change in philosophical

⁴⁹Ibid, 289.

⁵⁰John Calvin, *Institute of the Christian Religion* (Grands Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1957), II:15, 6; I:432.

⁵¹John Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: Second Corinthians, Timothy, Titus and Philemons*, David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grands Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 212.

⁵²Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” 403.

⁵³Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*. (Cambridge, Eng.: James Clarke, 1981), 109.

paradigm at that time - from Platonic dualism, to Aristotelian nominalism. However, the significance of the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary would be further clarified by Seventh-day Adventists.

The Clarification of the Heavenly Sanctuary Existence: In the emergence of Seventh-day Adventists

Seventh-day Adventists were able to clarify the need of Jesus's intercession in the heavenly sanctuary and at the same time clarify the existence of it. One of the significant doctrines in this denomination is heavenly sanctuary. Since the pioneering period of this church, the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary played an important role in their theological system.

Hiram Edson

On October 23, 1844, Hiram Edson went to encourage some of the Millerites to be faithful to the Lord. In the midst of his journey, at field corn, he had an insight and this experience was published in 1921. He wrote:

“Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, He, for the first time, entered on that day into the second apartment of that sanctuary, and that He had a work to perform in the most holy place before coming to the earth.”⁵⁴

This understanding made Edson together with Hahn and Crosier studied this idea further. They come to a conclusion that on October 22 1844 that Jesus was continuing His ministry from holy place to the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary. In the statement of Hiram Edson, he believed in the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

O. R. L. Crosier

He was the first one among Sabbatarian Adventist wrote about the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. He explained about the atonement work of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary that Jesus “did not begin the work of making the atonement, whatever the nature of that work may be, till after His ascension, when by His own blood He entered His heavenly Sanctuary for us.”⁵⁵ This statement was the first record among Adventists about the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

Ellen G. White

Ellen G. White, one of the co-founders in the seventh-day Adventists, confirmed Crosier's idea on the reality of heavenly sanctuary. A year later in a letter to Curtis on April 21, 1847, E. G. White recommended this article:

⁵⁴H. M. Kelley, “The Spirit of 1844,” *Review and Herald [RH]*, June 23, 1921, 5. In this article, for the first time the experience of Hiram Edson at the field was known by public. The author got an unpublished writing of Hiram Edson from his daughter, O. V. Cross.

⁵⁵Owen Russel Loomis Crosier, “The Law of Moses,” *The Day- Star Extra*, January 9, 1846, 41.

“The Lord showed me in vision, more than one year ago, that Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the sanctuary, etc; and that it was His Will, that Brother Crosier should write out the view which he gave us in the Day-Star Extra, February 7, 1846. I feel fully authorized by the Lord, to recommend that Extra, to every saint.”⁵⁶

Even though Crosier later rejected his own idea,⁵⁷ but the investigation to this subject was still continued by the pioneers. Ellen White got visions about this doctrine when she said, “The sanctuary in heaven, in which Jesus ministers in our behalf, is the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy.”⁵⁸ She sustained the reality by writing, “Thus those who were studying the subject found indisputable proof of the existence of a sanctuary in heaven. Moses made the earthly sanctuary after a pattern which was shown him. Paul teaches that that pattern was the true sanctuary which is in heaven. And John testifies that he saw it in heaven.”⁵⁹ These statements indicates her firm faith about the existence of the heavenly sanctuary.

James White

The other co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventists, James White, expressed his belief in the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. He wrote, “This heavenly sanctuary is called by Jesus ‘my Father’s house.’” He explained the heavenly sanctuary as “the great antitype of the earthly building.”⁶⁰ He also mentioned that the earthly sanctuary was only “a representation of the heavenly sanctuary itself” based on Hebrews 8:2.⁶¹ Then he compared the rite of these two sanctuaries that if the earthly sanctuary is cleansed by the blood of the animals, “the heavenly sanctuary must be cleansed by better sacrifices, that is, the blood of Christ.”⁶² These records shows how was strong his belief in the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

John N. Andrews

J. N. Andrews, another pioneer of SDA church, expressed the same belief with his adventist contemporaries. After studying the topic deeply, John Andrews supported this truth openly in 1853. “The Bible repeatedly testifies that the earthly sanctuary which consisted of two holy places...; which pattern was a representation of the heavenly sanctuary itself. Heb 8:1-5; 9:23. We therefore believe that the heavenly tabernacle consists of holy places also.”⁶³ He also stated, “In Rev. 15:5, the heavenly sanctuary is designed by this same term, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in Heaven. . . . that this is equivalent to the temple of the tabernacle of the ten commandments in heaven.”⁶⁴ These expressions demonstrate his conviction on the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

⁵⁶E. G. White, “To Bro. Eli Curtis, New York City,” in *A Word to the “Little Flock,”* ed. James White (Brunswick, ME: [James White], 1847), 12.

⁵⁷Arnold. V. Wallenkampf, “Challengers to the Doctrine of the Sanctuary,” *Doctrine of the sanctuary*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, (Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 198.

⁵⁸Ellen Gould White, *Christ in His Sanctuary*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1969), 91.

⁵⁹Ellen Gould White, *Christ in His Sanctuary*, 92.

⁶⁰James White, “The Sanctuary,” *RH*, August 18, 1863, 92.

⁶¹James White, “Our Faith and Hope,” *RH*, March 1, 1870, 82.

⁶²James White, “Our Faith and Hope,” *RH*, March 22, 1870, 105.

⁶³J. N. Andrews, “The Antitypical Tabernacle,” *RH*, August 28, 1853, 61.

⁶⁴J. N. Andrews, “The Order of the Events in the Judgment,” *RH*, January 4, 1870, 12.

Uriah Smith

Uriah Smith agreed with the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. He studied the doctrine and gave biblical support for the literal existing of the heavenly sanctuary in the Scriptures.⁶⁵ He wrote, “This heavenly sanctuary is called by Jesus ‘my Father’s house,...by David, Habakkuk, and John, the temple of God in heaven...God’s holy mountain.”⁶⁶ On another occasion he penned, “it is the heavenly sanctuary in which the decision of all cases is to be rendered.”⁶⁷ He continued to explain that the ministry of Jesus in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary is “the closing part of his work as priest.”⁶⁸ Thus, this pioneer also was in favor for the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

Seventh-day Adventists pioneers believed in the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. Indeed, they provided the explanation why Jesus needs to do his final work in the heavenly sanctuary. Something that was beyond the understanding of the reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Challenging Idea Against the Heavenly Sanctuary Existence: Dissenters Among Adventists

Some of Adventists challenged the idea of the heavenly sanctuary existence. This understanding was much or less influenced by their denial of the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.

Dudley M. Canright

The first ordained pastor who rejects this doctrine was D. M Canright (1840-1919). He held various positions in the Seventh-day Adventist church like administrator and member of General Conference committee. Later in 1887, he resigned and became a Baptist minister. He wrote a book, *Seventh Day Adventist Renounced*, to challenge the Adventists’ doctrines.⁶⁹ He believed that all the Adventist teachings are based on this sanctuary doctrine, and if the doctrine is rejected, the distinctive of Adventist doctrines are not sound.⁷⁰ He stated that the sanctuary doctrine in Adventist originally based on the writing of Crosier and not the inspiration of Ellen Gould White. However, Crosier rejected this idea. If the founder of the theory had rejected his own, therefore, this doctrine was not self-defense.⁷¹ He believed that the sanctuary in heaven as illogical concept.⁷² Thus, he rejected the existence of this heavenly sanctuary.

John Harvey Kellogg

J. H. Kellogg was one of prominent workers from 1870s to early 1900s. His

⁶⁵P.A Gordon, *The Sanctuary, 1844, and the Pioneers*, 35.

⁶⁶[U. Smith], “Synopsis of the Present Truth no. 15,” *RH*, February 18, 1858, 117.

⁶⁷Uriah Smith, “Thoughts on the Book of Daniel,” *RH*, August 2, 1870, 52.

⁶⁸Uriah Smith, “Time of the Judgment of Rev. 14:7,” *RH*, January 20, 1874, 44.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰D. M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventist Renounced* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1889), 128.

⁷¹*Ibid*, 119.

⁷²*Ibid*, 127.

pantheistic idea that God was in everywhere influenced his own understanding about heaven and finally the heavenly sanctuary. In one of his conversions with W. A. Spicer, he believed “There was no place in this scheme of things for angels going between heaven and earth, for heaven was here and everywhere. The cleansing of the sanctuary that we taught about was not something in a faraway heaven. ‘The sin is here . . . [Dr. Kellogg said, pointing to his heart], and here is the sanctuary to be cleansed.’”⁷³ Kellogg rejected the existence of the heavenly sanctuary since his presupposition about heaven was at everywhere.

Several oppositions to the existence of the heavenly sanctuary in the seventh-day Adventists believed that this understanding was a cultic idea. They did not believe this

for several reasons. Once they rejected the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary prepared the way to refuse its existence.

Summary and Conclusion

There were developing understanding about the existence of the heavenly sanctuary. Among the ANE communities, they assumed the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. However, their assumption based on a story or dream without any direct revelation or encounter with the heavenly being. That is why this period is called as *assumption* era. The biblical accounts explicitly provide the existence of the sanctuary in heaven, thus, people who believed this interpretation were living in *acceptance* period. The acceptance of dualistic and allegorical ideas to understand the Scripture made church fathers denied the existence of the heavenly sanctuary. This age is called as *denial* to its reality. The reformers returned the belief on the actuality of heavenly sanctuary. This resurgence period is namely as *restoration* phase. Further explanation was given by the Seventh-day Adventists on the heavenly sanctuary existence relates to the ministry of Jesus for atonement is a reason to call this age as *clarification*. However, some dissenters from this denomination against the heavenly sanctuary existence made this period as *challenging* era. The last phase is an opportunity for Seventh-day Adventists to study further on this specific topic to meet the current need.

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⁷³W. A. Spicer, “How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis,” Copy A, p. 19-20 in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 5: 289-290.

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