

J. Daniel Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle. A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2016). Pp. 208. \$19.99. ISBN 978-08-010-16-202 (Paperback)

ADAM KUBIŚ

Institute of Biblical Studies, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
e-mail: adamkubis@kul.pl
ORCID: 0000-0003-4961-2254

The author, J. Daniel Hays, serves as dean of the Pruet School of Christian Studies and professor of biblical studies at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, USA. The book under review is divided into eight chapters, followed by end notes (six pages in total), bibliography (four pages), index of subjects (five pages) and index of Scripture and other ancient sources (four pages). Hays presents an overview of the concepts of both the tabernacle and the temple as reflected in the Old and New Testaments. He starts with a review of Hebrew and Greek terminology used to refer to the tabernacle and/or the temple (chapter 1) and then delves into the interpretation of the Garden of Eden narrative (Genesis 2–3), detecting there the concept of Eden as God's garden temple (chapter 2). In the following chapters Hays presents crucial issues connected with the biblical description of the tabernacle built by Moses (chapter 3); the construction of Solomon's temple (chapter 4); the departure of God from the temple as described in the Book of Ezekiel, the biblical image of Cherubim, Seraphim, and the "Living Creatures", and the question of what happened to the Ark of Covenant (chapter 5); the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian exile, including a treatment of the reconstruction works carried out first by the Hasmoneans and then, on an incomparably more extensive scale, by Herod the Great; the rise of synagogues and their place in the life of ancient Jews; and the corruption of the priesthood in Herod's temple (chapter 6). In the penultimate chapter, Hays deals with the theme of the temple of God in the New Testament. Invoking key Scriptural passages, he unfolds the NT picture of Jesus understood as both the cornerstone and the temple, as well as the image of Christians defined as the temple. In his understanding, Ezekiel's vision of the new temple (Ezekiel 40–48) refers to "realities brought about by Jesus Christ in the New Testament and probably realized in the new Jerusalem described in Revelation 21–22" (p. 182). The eighth and final chapter, 4 pages long, brings forth some conclusions for the present reality of the Church and Christians, understood as the temple.

Some of the many strong points of Hays' book deserve to be mentioned here. First of all, the reader is thrilled by the pleasant graphical layout of the publication. Throughout, the text is accompanied by many colorful photographs, drawings, diagrams and Jerusalem Temple layouts, all complemented with incisive descriptions and legends. Other pages contain boxes quoting biblical passages relevant to the topics under discussion. The book also contains four tables. All these features enhance the pleasure of reading the book and, more importantly, are truly helpful in following the text.

Secondly, Hays must be praised for bringing together a significant body of data, sufficient to present a comprehensive, yet surely not exhaustive, view of the biblical concept of God's dwelling places. Thanks to this effort, which encompasses the entire sweep of the biblical story, many readers will undoubtedly find some new and insightful information, material perhaps missing from studies devoted to specific biblical passages or historical periods.

Personally, on at least two points, I find Hays' observations fresh and innovative. First, he points out the importance of the east-west axis in the development of the narrative in the first chapters the Book of Genesis, and in the story of the burning bush at the beginning of the Book of Exodus. Some commentators (e.g. V.P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1–17*, 352) already noted that certain events in Genesis 1–11 have consistently been identified with the east. Just to recall the facts, Adam and Eve are driven eastward out of the garden temple in Eden. The cherubim with flaming swords are placed at the eastern entrance to Eden. Cain runs away eastward. The people building the city and the tower of Babel have marched to Shinar from the east, or toward the east (11:2). Hays notices, however, that Moses by contrast leads his flock "to the *far side* of the wilderness" (Exodus 3:1), where the adverb אָחַר can have the meaning of "west of, the west side of" (cf. HALOT, *ad loc.*). As Hays comments, "Perhaps it is just geographical coincidence, but in light of the repeated, symbolic 'to the east' banishment of the people in Genesis 3–11, this movement 'westward' followed by an encounter with God himself is significant" (p. 30).

The second novelty for me, provided by Hays, was his thesis that the construction of Solomon's temple was, if not unwanted by God, at least not superintended by God. Thus, it creates a telling contrast with the construction of the tabernacle. Hays states: "The clear and unmistakable focus throughout the tabernacle construction story in Exodus 25–31 and in Exodus 35–40 is on constructing the tabernacle exactly as God has explicitly and verbally commanded the Israelites to construct it. God initiates the construction of the tabernacle, he gives explicit instructions on how to construct it, he demands total obedience to the details he provides, and he empowers the workmen with the skill needed to carry out the work. From the start to finish, it is a work conceived, designed,

and superintended by God. Although it follows the same basic literary structural form, the account of the construction of the temple in 1 Kings 5–8 is dramatically different. The contrast is startling. God is not involved. He does not initiate the construction of the temple, give any design input, or superintend the construction. Indeed, instead of being dominated by God and his verbal directives, the temple construction story is dominated by King Solomon and two Canaanites from Tyre” (p. 72-73). These comparisons between Solomon's temple and the tabernacle, as well as between Solomon and Pharaoh, by highlighting such important differences, are thought provoking indeed.

But Hays takes this analysis a step further, proposing that Solomon's temple, in the eyes of the biblical writer, was somehow imperfect. This temple, in Hays' words, “is not a step forward in Israel's relationship with God, a supposed improvement on the tabernacle, but rather a step backward” (p. 87). Yet, in light of some passages in First Chronicles, Hays' claim could be judged unwarranted. First of all, in 1 Chronicles 28:6, God says directly to David that his son, Solomon, will build the temple. Moreover, in 1 Chr 28:10 we read that God has chosen Solomon to build “a house for a sanctuary”. It clearly states that God indeed was involved in the building of Solomon's temple. Secondly, according to 1 Chr 28:19, David was inspired by God as to the precise designs of the future temple. Thus, Solomon's temple was not merely a copy based on a pagan blueprint. Obviously, Hays' position can be defended, since he explicitly states more than once that his thesis applies specifically to the narrative found in 1 Kings. Nevertheless, he adopts in this book a canonical perspective, aiming to present a unified concept of the temple throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. He does in fact use the data found in 1 Chronicles in describing Solomon's temple (see pp. 87-100). That being so, the reader would rightly expect some mention of the *vision* of the temple found in 1 Chronicles, and the author's critical comparison of the views of the temple reflected in 1 Kings *versus* those in 1 Chronicles. In fact, the reader senses a disconnect, without resolution, between Hays' thesis and the larger body of evidence. If the temple is “un-orthodox”, as Hays implies, why does God's glory dwell in it? If this temple is “a step backward” in Israel's relationship with God, why would the biblical authors put Solomon's temple at the chronological center of the biblical narrative, i.e. 480 years after the Exodus and 480 years before the return from Babylonian exile?

Another questionable thesis is Hays' contention that God's glory never returned to the temple after its destruction by the Babylonians, and that God's glory only really returned with Jesus' presence in the temple: “God [...] tells them that ‘the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house’ (Hag. 2:9), a prophecy that is fulfilled not by the huge temple that Herod later builds but by the arrival of Jesus Christ” (p. 129); also, “The

fact that the presence of God does not take up residence in the second temple is important to keep in mind. The returned exiles do reconstruct a scaled-down, ‘economy’ version of the temple, but God directs them toward the future in regard to the coming of his glory to this temple. That is, this temple is built, but it is connected to the expectation of God coming in the future in a new and spectacular way. This expectation will be fulfilled with the advent of Jesus Christ” (p. 131); and “Then when the second temple is built, first during the time of Haggai and then by King Herod the Great, *there is no mention of the return of the presence of God to dwell in the temple* [emphasis by J.D. Hays]. The presence of God does not return to the temple until Jesus Christ walks in through its gates” (p. 167). These three quotes demonstrate the great emphasis which Hays places on the idea of the lack of God’s glory in the second temple until Jesus Christ comes into its precincts.

In my opinion, the above thesis, while true from a purely narratological point of view (as there is no explicit biblical narrative talking about the coming of God’s glory to the temple, except perhaps Hag 2:9), such a notion does not seem to be shared by the authors of the NT and the early Church, not to mention Jewish writings of the Second Temple period and later rabbinic writings like the Mishnah. While Hays applies the canonical approach to this question of God’s glory in the temple – a framework he embraces throughout the entire study – it must be noted that the NT seems to imply the presence of God in Herod’s temple. First of all, the tearing of the veil in the temple, described by all three synoptics, would be pointless without the NT authors’ conviction about God’s presence dwelling in the sanctuary. Of course, one might argue that this sign was intended only for the Jews, who did not believe in Jesus. That is, while those Jews were convinced of God’s presence in the temple, Jesus’ followers were aware of the lack of God’s presence in the temple. However, in the light of evidence from the Book of Acts, early Christians shared the conviction of their contemporaneous Jewish compatriots about the true presence of God in the second temple. For example, early Christians prayed regularly in the temple (cf. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 22:17), offered sacrifices there, and practiced some purification rituals before entering its inner courts (cf. Acts 21:26; 24:18). Obviously, they could have gathered there because of the lack of any other suitable place for prayer for the rapidly growing group of Jesus’ followers. They might also have chosen this place as a logical, convenient venue to preach and evangelize other Jews, gaining new converts (cf. Acts 5:20-21.25.42). Yet why would they practice the purification rituals and perform sacrifices if, to them, the temple was not connected with God’s presence? Did they maintain such practices only to avoid scandal, ostracism and persecution? It seems rather that the early Christians truly connected the temple with God’s dwelling place and God’s presence (cf. Acts 25:8).

As to the general organization of the material in the book, one can easily perceive a lack of proportion between the amount of analysis dedicated to Old Testament passages (five chapters) *versus* the treatment of New Testament texts (one chapter). In short, Hays is very prolific in unfolding the Old Testament imagery of the temple, but at the expense of the related New Testament imagery, an imbalance that might leave some readers feeling a bit shortchanged.

In the bibliography, generally a useful tool for those who want to probe deeper into the topic of Hays' book, I nevertheless noted a lack of important studies on the temple in the Fourth Gospel, e.g. M.L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us. Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 2001); A.J. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body. The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (JSNTS 220; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press – London: Continuum 2002); P.M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock 2007); and M. Barker, *King of the Jews. Temple Theology in John's Gospel* (London: SPCK 2014).

To sum up, Hays has written an informative and thought-provoking study, one whose content is easily accessible to all readers, even those not acquainted with advanced biblical studies. The book is recommended for all those who want to gain a competent grasp of the concept of God's dwelling places in the Bible.